

# Letters from our readers

16 May 2013

On “The criminalization of political dissent in America”

A good reminder that failing to heed the lessons of history condemns new generations to repeat idiocies of the past and live under new idiocracies with different names.

Mark M  
Montana, USA  
14 May 2013

On “Homeless in San Diego, California”

I was very moved by this article, since my family of four is homeless in San Diego. We lost our home to predatory lenders and illegal notarization. We were able to get the Secretary of State to revoke the notary commission, but the judge didn’t acknowledge this when we were fighting for our home. We found a rental, but we couldn’t find stable employment, so we lost that too. My husband and I have been trying to find stable employment for two years, but to no avail... and so we’ve stayed at motels, and at a friend’s apartment, which we now have to leave. It’s too small for five people, so we understand. There is no assistance for the homeless population down here. We know, because we are originally from Los Angeles, and there are places there you can find help. So I understand this gentleman’s plight. Wish I could contact him and let him know that we care and are in the same boat. Thank you.

Susan  
San Diego, California  
14 May 2013

On “A new film version of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*”

This is one of the better arts reviews, although with a twist. I know don’t really want to spend the \$10 to see the movie, but I really want to spend the \$10 to get the book and reread it (as well as read *An American Tragedy*). I learned more about *The Great Gatsby* from this review than the three weeks studying it in high

school, which I think is an indictment against how the book is taught. Heaven forbid you learn anything about class relations from public education.

At any rate... Hopefully whenever they inevitably redo *The Grapes of Wrath*, they’ll find someone with a modicum of social consciousness to do it, although there are no lavish parties to film, so it may be a while.

Bryan D  
14 May 2013

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Good review, and right on the money.

Worth noting is Fitzgerald’s own take on things just before he was swallowed and misused by Hollywood. The phrase “an age of excess” so often used by the right to justify abominations in repression and austerity had a very different meaning when F. Scott Fitzgerald invented the term two years after the depression.

Note especially his acute historical sense beginning in 1919 when the “iron heel” of capitalism, as prophesied in Jack London’s novel, came down upon a people who founded an American republic based on constitutional guarantees, now receding into the night of the Republic’s past as in *The Great Gatsby*’s last great lines.

Fitzgerald saw, as now, rights taken away, one by one by the idle rich, but then had that moment a great many had (and I also), at a time of prosperity when my own brother became one of the wealthiest hedge fund artists in Canada’s oil patch and led Gatsby’s lifestyle. I warned him it would all come crashing down having studied your web site—but did not really believe it. Imagine my surprise.

It’s an old story. Let Fitzgerald tell it:

“The ten-year period that, as if reluctant to die outmoded in its bed, leaped to a spectacular death in October, 1929, began about the time of the May Day riots in 1919. When the police rode down the demobilized country boys gaping at the orators in Madison Square, it was the sort of measure bound to

alienate the more intelligent young men from the prevailing order. We didn't remember anything about the Bill of Rights until Mencken began plugging it, but we did know that such tyranny belonged in the jittery little countries of South Europe. If goose-livered business men had this effect on the government, then maybe we had gone to war for J. P. Morgan's loans after all. But, because we were tired of Great Causes, there was no more than a short outbreak of moral indignation, typified by Dos Passos' 'Three Soldiers.'

"Presently we began to have slices of the national cake and our idealism only flared up when the newspapers made melodrama out of such stories as Harding and the Ohio Gang or Sacco and Vanzetti. The events of 1919 left us cynical rather than revolutionary, in spite of the fact that now we are all rummaging around in our trunks wondering where in hell we left the liberty cap—I know I had it—and the moujik blouse. It was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all.

"It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire." But not of revolution, though it was just around the corner in 1931 as they are now.

AL

Toronto, Canada

14 May 2013



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