

Letters on the movie *Cold Mountain*

16 January 2004

Below we post letters on David Walsh's review of the movie Cold Mountain.

Thanks for your thoughtful review of *Cold Mountain*.

I liked how you cut to the heart of the problem with the film, that the historical context wasn't dealt with. To me, the script was predictable and the violence was offensive. I wasn't planning to even see this film (it isn't the type of film that interests me), but I wound up seeing it because the film I wanted to see (*Big Fish*) had already started, and I don't like missing the beginning of a film.

JP (whose career ambition for decades has been to be a feature film director)

11 January 2004

Dear David Walsh,

I read your review after seeing *Cold Mountain* on Friday night. This was a very long and very involved movie, which if the director had been given the opportunity, would have rivaled or even matched the time length of *Gone with the Wind*.

This movie had a certain absurdity, with the fact that the main character Inman (Jude Law) was blown up and shot in the neck with a mini ball, then surviving a civil war hospital, shot again after being chained in a deserter chain gang while the fellow prisoners around him were all murdered in cold blood. This is classic Hollywood fare with the hero making it through most of the movie only to die in the arms of his love.

Whether or not we see mainstream movie-making as entertainment or pure artistic form, we see how some parts of certain movies have shown what shapes a nation's beliefs and morals. Out of the Civil War we saw a major political and social change. Slaves were freed, a large part of the population were left dead, wounded and in poverty, and systems of government control were put in place which are in use today, i.e., the home guard, the use of violent force against a so-called enemy, the abolishing of slavery but forming more subtle bars and chains (lower wages, cheap

rundown homes and ghettos), and the lack of voting rights. *Cold Mountain* showed the complete anarchy that people were living under during the Civil War and the fact that above all else people still love one another under the most dire conditions, and in some cases kept people alive in both their body and soul. I believe that the American system of violence was forged in the Civil War through the North's destruction of the South for complete and utter control of the nation as a whole and blueprint for the conquering the world.

MF

11 January 2004

...Midway through the film an unhappy thought suddenly strikes one: despite the talent at work, and the scrupulousness with which any number of details have been approached, these performers are pretending terribly hard to be something that neither they nor anyone else involved in this production have really grasped. Pretending, only playing at. And that fatal idea never leaves one...

I had the same sensation when finally watching *The English Patient* only recently. I had resisted until some spare time during the holidays made me rent the DVD. It seems like a huge "bread and circuses" production to entertain without inciting response. One is left with no reaction, no resolve, no insight. Yet, one is entertained for three hours. This is a skill which is much in demand in today's advanced post-industrial capitalism: to occupy the minds of the public while scrupulously avoiding education. We don't want to lead people out of their bondage, after all, but merely to subdue them.

This is a diabolical form of genius, employed throughout the entertainment and news and even political industries in America, usually under the guise of political correctness. I'd really like to be a fly on the wall in the discussions of these projects. How can one be both an artistic creator and a consummate trivialist at the same time? Is it something imposed on one at an early age and which becomes internalized as an

automatic tendency...some sort of self-censorship or taboo which prevents one from rocking the boat or questioning one's betters?

And on a higher level: who is deciding what the zeitgeist can handle in the way of truthful depictions and moral insights? Who decides that we are too fragile in this epoch to expose the public to revolutionary impulses? How is it decided? American film is becoming junk food precisely because nutrition would give strength for change. Those who decide these matters do not want change. Who are they and how are they able to impose their will thusly?

JS

10 January 2004



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact