

The New Criterion

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Fan mail

by Roger Kimball

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I don't check messages to our letters address very often, which means that I may be missing some amusing (albeit inadvertently amusing) communications. Consider this gem, from a self-described "third world feminist of colour" (original capitalization and punctuation preserved):

this is just to let you know that your journal turned my stomach and made me want to weep- or grab a shotgun, which luckily i dont own. Frantz Fanon is "that early champion of third-world terrorism" and Andrea Dworkin was a pitiabel figure. i am from the third world- India- and i am a proud feminist. you have NO idea the kind of language and agency these people have provided us. By the way? Fanon was an anti-colonialist. and colonialism killed (wiped out whole communities of native americans in the 15th and 16th centuries), colonialism was responsible for the slave trade and colonialism was

repsonsible for apartheid and Jim Crow policies in the U.S. what you do is not serious journalism or critique- to dismiss someone like Fanon like that, and to use such tasteless verbiage is to do the same kind of violence you accused the left of -blurring the boundaries between Bin Laden and Bush. i stumled across your journal by accident, and i wish i hadnt. i wish you didnt exist. but thankfully, you barely create a dent in the awesome work feminists and anti-imperialists continue to do. You dear sirs (white, upper-class and male i presume, for the most part?) are pitiable,

brought to savages countries in the 18th and 19th centuries. India is such an economic powerhouse today because of the legacy bequeathed by her former colonial rulers--a legacy that includes Western technology, the rule of law, better health and hygiene, education, and democracy. It also includes the absence of certain things--suttee, for example, the barbaric practice of incinerating a widow on the funeral pyre of her dead husband, one of many "traditional" customs that the British put a stop to. If the British sinned, it was not because of their colonial rule, but because of the failure of nerve that led them to withdraw too precipitously from colonies that were ill-equipped to govern themselves--colonies in Africa, for example, and India itself. Had Britain had the courage to face down Gandhi and his rabble a few years longer, the tragedy that was the partititon of India might have been avoided.

Of course colonialism comes in different flavors. The Belgians did not acquit themselves honorably in the Congo. But everywhere that Britain went--I cannot think of a single exception--it left better off. Santayana was right when he observed, in *Soliloquies in England*, that

What governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere, the weather in his soul. Instinctively the Englishman is no missionary, no conqueror. He prefers the country to the town, and home to foreign parts. He is rather glad and relieved if only natives will

What so exercised Ms. Sari-in-a-twist was our Notes and Comments for May, which includes said reference to the despicable Franz Fanon--"When the native hears a speech about Western culture," quoth this paragon of third-worldism, he "pulls out his knife--or at least makes sure it is within reach"--and poor Andrea Dworkin, a feminst fruitcake of the first water. As for her being pitiable, what do you think? Here she is on the subject of sexual intercourse; and here she is in propria persona, as it were.

As for colonialism, this third-world feminist of color should get down on her knees and thank Siva that her country was the beneficiary of British colonialism. Without it, she would never have heard of feminism or even of the third world, since the very concept depends upon the freedom, education, and language that the West

remain natives and strangers strangers,
and at a comfortable distance from
himself. Yet outwardly he is most
hospitable and accepts almost anybody
for the time being; he travels and
conquers without a settled design,
because he has the instinct of
exploration. His adventures are all
external; they change him so little that
he is not afraid of them. He carries his
English weather in his heart wherever
he goes, and it becomes a cool spot in
the desert, and a steady and sane
oracle amongst all the deliriums of
mankind. Never since the heroic days
of Greece has the world had such a
sweet, just, boyish master. It will be a
black day for the human race when
scientific blackguards, conspirators,
churls, and fanatics manage to
supplant him.

Roger Kimball is Editor and Publisher of *The New Criterion* and President and Publisher of Encounter Books. His latest books include *The Critical Temper: Interventions from The New Criterion at 40* (Encounter Books) and *Where Next? Western Civilization at the Crossroads* (Encounter Books).