

Deadly criticism cast at novelist, publisher

Somewhere, much-lauded author Salman Rushdie is in hiding, in fear for his life. His book "The Satanic Verses" has been banned in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and South Africa. Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini has placed Rushdie, along with the book's publishers — Penguin Books in the United States — under sentence of death, and he called on "all Moslems to execute them quickly."

In Pakistan, thousands marched on an American arts and information center in what began as a peaceful demonstration of the United States publication of Rushdie's novel. But the march soon turned into a stone-throwing riot, leaving five protesters dead and many more wounded.

Whether Moslems have justification for their outrage we cannot say. Likely, neither can they. That any of them have read the book seems doubtful, since the book has not been published in their countries.

What puzzles us is the reasoning behind the vehement attacks against Americans and anything and anyone connected to the United States.

Rushdie is not an American. He was born in India, and is now a British citizen. Americans have not even had an opportunity to read the book. The American institutions under siege in Pakistan have nothing to do with the book's publication. For example, the American Express travel bureau was stoned, broken into and the furniture set afire. Moslems have released their anger on the closest scapegoats around: American institutions and citizens.

We support the right of people internationally to oppose the publication of any work, and to demonstrate their beliefs, hopefully through non-violent means. But the United States Constitution clearly protects Rushdie's right to publish the book, as well as any other. In the eyes of some, that fact makes our country an evil nation. Protesting against the author and the publishers is one matter. Destroying the property and threatening the lives of people with nothing at all to do with the book is another.

Censorship protests of this type reminds us of the fervor raised over the Martin Scorsese film "The Last Temptation of Christ," a protest raised by outraged Christians, many of whom had made no attempt to see the film. Even though Christians had easy access to "The Last Temptation of Christ" and Moslems generally have no access to "The Satanic Verses," the underlying problem remains the same.

Both Scorsese and Rushdie have reputations as high-quality artists in their respective fields. Both works place religious characters in fictional contexts and take great artistic liberties in doing so. Both men produced works highly offensive to many people. It is the controversy, not the production of the work, that turns an artistic piece into a thing of interest to anyone and everyone who can gain access to it.

Publication of the book will not only proceed in the United States, but "The Satanic Verses" will now no doubt roll right off the presses onto the best-seller list. If Americans who read it are still seen as guilty of crimes against Allah, it will be a shame. Undoubtedly they will remain mystified about the controversy, just as many non-Christians were about the protests surrounding "The Last Temptation of Christ."

Comatose mother suffers as symbol in abortion case

Proponents and opponents of abortion alike should denounce the actions of the two New York men who attempted to stop the abortion of Nancy Klein's child.

Klein lay in a coma caused by an auto accident. Doctors informed her husband Ted that she may never recover, but that Nancy's chances could be improved if the fetus were aborted. Of course, Klein proceeded with the doctors' advice. But when he filed for guardianship of his wife so he could legally make this difficult decision, two men, complete strangers to both Klein and his wife, interfered. One contested Klein's right to guardianship of his own wife, the other by filing for guardianship of the fetus.

Regardless of your feelings about the legalities or moral implications of performing abortions, you should agree the two men had no business endangering the life of a woman they had never met. They simply complicated a private tragedy of the first order and made it public with a sad manipulation of the legal system.

In the end, the two extremists accomplished nothing. In answer to the men's interference, the legal system responded swiftly in two days from the Appellate Division, through the state Court of Appeals and up to the U.S. Supreme Court: No, no, no. We hope the overzealous proponents of abortion got the message. Few answers are absolute. Even the most heartfelt convictions should be tempered by common sense.



"DON'T JUMP! ...OR AT LEAST GIVE ME A CHANCE TO GO MOVE MY CAR!"

Letters

Misdirected

I would like to address the concerns expressed by Joel Montemayor (ODE, Feb. 6) and Myrna J. Bobb. I believe they and others may misunderstand the purpose of the MBA Association (MBAA). The MBAA is a student organization and does not "recruit" students for the College of Business.

Its members consist of students pursuing an MBA and functions just like those clubs consisting of biology majors, Native Americans, or Democrats. It sponsors activities for students in the graduate program, not for those it hopes to get.

There is a needless furor regarding what the MBAA is or is not doing. Holding it responsible for the lack of recruitment of minorities for the MBA program is akin to expecting MEChA to actively recruit Chicano/Latino students or the Student Bar Association to pursue potential law students. While the idea of participating in recruitment is a good one, I hardly suspect any of us are in the position to do so, have the resources, or the time.

While your concerns are valid, your anger is clearly misdirected.

Derek Chinn
MBA student

Amen

You know, there sure have been a lot of disturbing letters to the editor quoting the Christian Bible as absolutely, literally God's truth.

One recent letter pontificated that homosexuals would experience the "woe of going to the bad place."

Like many Americans, I aspire to tolerance. Personally, I respect Taoist advice to be like a stream. I respect a Native American ecological metaphor that we live on the back of a giant turtle. I respect Jesus' wisdom of loving one's enemy.

But some people who claim they're Christians act like reli-

gious "pushers."

To these folks I would say, brothers and sisters, open that Bible, and this time apply an academic method called the "parallel passage technique."

Since we're near the alleged anniversary of Jesus's crucifixion, please turn to that famous tomb scene, near the end. Compare the versions of Mark, Luke and Matthew. Notice they contradict each other about the number of people discovered at the tomb, who they were, when they appeared, where they appeared, how they appeared, and just when that big rock was pushed back from the tomb entrance.

As John Lennon would put it, "Imagine that." Hell, those accounts would not make it through TV's People's Court. That's understandable. The authors were only human, and experts agree those versions were written far after the alleged miracle.

Oh, wait a second! As I type this I'm getting a message! Yes, I guess I, too, have a cable hook-up to God. She's sputtering, "Everyone's a fool, so why not tolerate diversity?"

Can I hear an "Amen" on that, sisters and brothers?

David Oaks
Clerical Specialist
College of Education

Lies

Last week the Emerald was unknowingly used by an organization with policies that the paper regularly speaks out against. What's more, the readers were disappointingly deceived by the usually trustworthy Emerald.

I'm referring to assertions from a press release that were run as news. If you take a look at the Feb. 7 issue, you'll see what I'm talking about. The last paragraph is verbatim of an advertisement that ran in the Oregon Commentator. There

are assertions in the paragraph that are presented as fact because no quotation marks were used nor was a source cited.

The man who spoke is supported by the ultra-right John Birch Society whose purpose for existence is anti-communism. In his speech he lied and deceived the audience, and I am working on an editorial explaining how he did so. I am not making that accusation without the evidence to back it up.

Anyway, I hope the Emerald doesn't allow itself to get used again by such zealous crusaders as the John Birch Society.

Kevin Hornbuckle
Eugene

Marxist?

I'm writing with regard to the "story" that appeared on Feb. 7 in the Emerald which announced former Ethiopian marine corps officer Solomon Belete's speech at the forum room that day.

The unknown reporter violated the first rule of journalism by not supporting his or her assertions that Ethiopia is in a state of "Marxist domination." If there is domination, what makes it Marxist? Did the reporter take time to research the issues in Ethiopia or did she/he simply parrot a press release which happened to run in the trashy Oregon Commentator the same day?

Perhaps the press release was the writer's sole source of "information" about what is happening in Ethiopia. If so, why didn't the reporter cite the press release? Or, if research was done, why didn't we get a fuller explanation of what "Marxist domination" means?

Hopefully this lapse in journalistic ethic and action does not signal a turn for the worse in the usually adequate Emerald reporting.

Tracey May
Eugene

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.