

'Death metal' had part in murderers' actions

OUR OPINION: Though the lawsuit may not win, the killers will still pay for their crimes

Two years ago on a late April night, 20-year-old Michael Hayward listened to some death metal music with three of his friends and then walked into a Eugene Dari Mart, where he viciously beat Fran Wall, a 28-year-old store clerk and mother of four, with a metal bar.

As Wall lay dying of her injuries, Hayward, apparently high on LSD, began beating Wall's co-worker, Donna Ream, with the help of his friend Jason Brumwell.

Ream survived the attack.

Now, as Hayward looks at the short end of a long wait on death row, with a 20-year prison term tacked on by a judge trying to make a point, Ream is left with the difficult task of beginning to put the pieces of her life back together.

And now, she's fighting back.

Two weeks ago, Ream filed an \$11 million lawsuit that names her attackers, their parents, two death metal bands and record companies as defendants. Ream filed the lawsuit in a move to hold producers of death metal music responsible for inciting murder among young men with tendencies toward violence.

Unfortunately for Ream, the lawsuit does not have a very good chance of succeeding because of previous court rulings that protect First Amendment free-speech rights. If Ream's lawyer(s) can prove that the bands intended to incite people to commit violence or murder, then the case

could very well have an interesting outcome.

We understand where Ream is coming from with this lawsuit. Her outrage, loss and pain must be an incredibly heavy burden to bear. We hope she can somehow move on with her life.

We have a hard time understanding why people would even want to listen to the kind of "death metal" crap that some would have us accept as music. Probably the only way consumers learn the lyrics of this kind of ear-rupturing trash is by following along with the "song's" printed words. But how does anyone "follow along" with a grinding, crashing assault of instruments and unintelligibly screaming singers?

The four convicted killers shared an interest in the death metal bands Deicide and Cannibal Corpse, whose lyrics graphically describe acts of murder, mutilation and torture. So the four listened to their "music" just before heading over to the Dari Mart, where they proceeded to act out the very garbage they had just filled their minds with.

Yes, the music did play a part in the actions of the killers. Just as television violence has a detrimental effect on children (as recently reported by the Associated Press), violent music can fill a mind with violent thoughts — allowing unstable or drug-twisted minds to commit a crime.

Even if Donna Ream's lawsuit does not come out the way she would like, Michael Hayward's warped mind will rot with the rest of his worthless hide in prison for a long, long time.



Theory of evolution based on science

There appear to be two main camps on the evolution/creationism issue, why not present both sides? After all, they are only theories. Both perspectives on the issue have been represented in recent opinion columns (ODE, March 12, April 16). But there are more than two theories. We must decide which ones we believe.

There are at least as many creation stories (that is, theories) as religions, and at last count, there were far more than two religions (even if you don't count science).

The "equal time" argument, if practiced fairly, would probably result in not more than a few minutes per religion over the entire course of secondary education. The resulting curriculum would certainly be of value from a comparative culture perspective, as well as being aesthetically pleasing and spiritually fulfilling. But it could hardly be viewed as science.

There is no apparent reason to stop at religion. To push the idea further, consider the creation myth featured in Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

In Adams' universe, lab mice are the creators of the Earth and everything on it. Of course, this is silly and no one, with the possible exception of Adams himself, would suggest that this particular creation theory be taught. Yet, in the formal sense, Adams' explanation of the Earth is a theory. It is not, aside from its obvious entertainment charms, a very good theory, but it is a theory.

In fact, anyone with a mind could come up with an alternative theory for the existence of the Earth and things like lab mice and people. You could hardly do worse than Adams. Of course, the trick is persuading others into considering your theory.

There are a variety of ways of persuading — money and coercion come to mind. These are still widely used but are not considered the best methods for deciding what is to be taught. The methods that have been settled on are loosely bundled into something called, imaginatively, "the scientific method." The basic idea of the scientific method is to juxtapose theories against each other and pick the one that manages to be most predictive. When the prediction criterion is used, not all theories are equal.

No other theory makes specific predictions as well as evolution does.

The evolution theory is supported by decades of observations, countless selection experiments,

COMMENTARY

David I. Butcher
Robert Hanner

a well-developed set of conceptual and mathematical models and convincing predictive success.

Creation theory is supported by discredited science, specious arguments, wishful thinking and no specific predictions. There is no support for creationism as an explanatory theory. When creation goes head-to-head with evolution, a patchwork theory, something resembling Frankenstein's monster is formed.

This so-called Creation Science combines the least attractive features of religion and science: the exclusiveness of religion and the tedious jargon of science. When creationism accepts the predictive criterion required of science, it fails to persuade.

There is no reason for creationism to accept the predictive criterion. Without the predictive criterion, however, creationism has no claim to science. But religion need not be science and need not serve the purpose of science. Likewise, religion should not pretend to be science, should not be taught as science and should not receive "equal time."

With creation science's strident calls for equality, we are distracted from the fact that it is one religious theory out of many. Haft's "closed minds reject creationism" is an echo of this call. Narrowing the field of competing theories to a paltry two further bolsters the apparent case for Creation Science by neglecting the evidence. Under this scheme, Scientific Creationism goes from one in a billion implausible explanations to sole competitor in an opinion poll.

Rhetoric aside, Creation Science is not demonstrably better than other religions' creation myths. Further, evolution is itself a collection of alternative theories.

Finally, selecting among these alternatives is a matter of evidence and prediction, not opinion. Creation Science's invitation to ignore the alternatives and the evidence conceals and reveals an agenda that has nothing to do with scientific inquiry.

David I. Butcher and Robert Hanner are graduate students in the biology department.

LETTERS

Remember Holocaust

I would like to compliment and thank the Jewish Student Union and their coordinating sponsors of Holocaust Remembrance Week for providing a very well planned and executed edu-

cational experience, which was carried out with great care.

It was a great feeling to be so warmly welcomed to an event! Thank you.

K.A. Moffo
Russian Department

CORRECTION

The signature block on Bonnie Kanter's letter to the editor (ODE, April 22) should have read "Bonnie Kanter, Women's Center Interim Director and the Women's Center staff." The Emerald regrets the error.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 1155, EUGENE, OREGON 97402

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union.

Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board; signed columns represent the opinion of the columnist.

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