

## Not all men geniuses

To the editors,

When looking through the pages of history, I find myself agreeing with Christopher Thurrott's words, "Most of the civilized world's wisdom has originated from . . . men." I do have problems accepting the idea that men still dominate this field. Females began to make their mark in literature with such women as Mary Ann Evans, Jane Austen and the Brontë Sisters, who lead to such writers as Margaret Atwood, Simone De Beauvoir and Antoinette Maillet.

Is power in women such as these incorrectly placed, as suggested by U. Nicornt (not, I suspect, his or her real name)? Is power any more misplaced in Margaret Thatcher than in Muammar Qadhafi?

For centuries the "civilized" world has considered females as a chattel of either the father or husband. Men are not ready to move over and let women enjoy their rightful place in society. The world has progressed a long way since witchburning, but not some of its inhabitants such as the two ideal Zeta Psi candidates, Christopher Thurrott and U. Nicornt.

The words of wisdom written on the editorial pages mainly originate from men, however, Christopher Thurrott amply illustrates that not all words written by men on these pages can be considered words of wisdom.

Yours truly,  
Amanda-Lynn Penny

## Zeta Psi invitation "garbage"

To the editors:

Response to Zeta Psi Invitation—  
Oct. 18

Brothers:

Bet you thought you wouldn't hear from me at all? And after you do, you'll probably wish you hadn't. But alas, how many male chauvinist pigs does it take to clean the men's room? None, (you were correct), because you're all too busy writing this kind of garbage so that you'll feel O.K. about yourselves. Do you always judge your own worth by devaluing others—in this case—women? That's unfortunate because I can't see how there's anyone out there who could possibly be beneath you (no pun intended). These feelings you have of grandeur are only delusions. However, in your case(s), I think that's healthy. I don't think your psyche could handle any realization of your true calibre—not unless it has evolved since the primal horde. In reference to your mentalities this is probably not the case. You might want to use this lack of progression as an excuse and the *Gazette* could reply by suggesting that they published your little invitation for posterity's sake. But what has posterity ever done for any of us? Well, at least in this case it has helped to make us realize that real misogyny, (that means 'woman hating' Zeta Psi) does exist on this campus. If you feel O.K. about your little meetings—why don't you send everyone invitations? If you have the

money to waste on this kind of garbage I'm sure you could afford it.

As for the 'Elders Meeting' and the B.Y.O.B.B.D. (bring your own booze, broad and drugs)—if I was a broad, whatever that is, I'd rather be cleaning the men's room.

Kimberly Schaschl  
M.Ed. Psychology

## Where's the beef?

To the editors,

It is interesting to note that among the first changes introduced by our new Progressive Conservative government has been the decision to cut the Department of National Defence's spending by almost \$150,000,000.

This is, of course, what the New Democratic Party has been suggesting all along. But it does seem a little hard on those who actually did vote for Mulroney, believing his promise to "beef up the Armed Forces."

Where now is the beef?

Peter F. Dawson

## Not a sexist text

To the editors:

In reply to your article entitled "Students Say Spanish Text is Sexist" (Elizabeth Donovan, *Dalhousie Gazette*, Nov. 8, 1984), I would like to make a few observations that might help to clarify what seems to be a basic misunderstanding on the part of those students and faculty members who were distressed by some remarks made by one of the characters in my textbook.

First of all, it is important to make a careful distinction between what might be termed "a sexist book" and a book that describes a character who is a sexist. A sexist book would have to be written by an author who consciously or unconsciously sees the world from a sexist viewpoint, and who expresses these views in print. It would be entirely natural for a reader to feel "not particularly enthralled" by the opinions of an author that were patently based on prejudice, ignorance, bias, insensitivity or discrimination, and he might even ask himself how such a book came to be published in the first place. On the other hand, it would be inappropriate for a reader to react this way to a fictional character who clearly does not represent the author's point of view. Instead, a normal reader with a healthy curiosity would probably ask himself why the character was making such villainous comments about members of the opposite sex. If the book in question just happened to be *Spanish One*, and if the reader knew enough Spanish to read it properly, he would soon find the answer to his question in Chapter Five, page 66, where the author explains (in Spanish): "He [Javier] has to exaggerate himself because he is afraid of women. He always speaks badly of them because of his fear, but he doesn't understand this because he is still too young."

Secondly, I would like to comfort and reassure the graduate student at the Maritime School of Social Work (who was worried that the negative images of women as

portrayed by Javier would be reinforced by repetition) by reminding her that the vast majority of students at Dalhousie have mature, fully-developed brains that are unlikely to be swayed by the opinions expressed by an obvious scoundrel, no matter how often they may or may not be repeated in the classroom. I will say, however, that Javier has provided my students with many hours of lively classroom debate, all expressed in excellent Spanish because the subject matter was simple, straightforward and unabashedly black and white.

I must say I am both amused and flattered that the book has proven so successful that the debate has gone beyond the classroom and into the pages of the *Gazette*. I personally have no recollection whatsoever of the beginning language textbooks I studied in my younger years, and this is one of the reasons I decided to write one that would stimulate my students and bring the classroom alive. That I have done so is gratifying to me as I look back on the 10 years of effort I invested in the two editions of *Spanish One*.

Sincerely,  
Sonia Jones, Chairman  
Department of Spanish

## More clarification

To the editors,

Thanks very much for your coverage of the DSU's position on the Board Faculty negotiations ("Student Union on Faculty Dispute," by Mike Daniels).

There are a number of points which need clarification, however.

First, regarding the student union position on the negotiations, I said the student union must take a firm position before the conciliation process ends, not before "job action" is taken.

Second, Mr. Daniels gives the false impression that I am reconciled to a strike by mid-February. Actually, I said that the DFA will probably be in a legal strike position by mid-February, if the conciliation process proves to be fruitless.

Finally, my colleague Alex Gigeroff has not been quoted accurately. He did not say, nor did he mean to suggest, that he questions the integrity of information received by the student union executive from either party.

As members of the Board, Alex,

myself and Greg Hardy have access to the Board bargaining position. However, we are worried about the fact that other students do not have access to all of the relevant information, and are thereby impeded from giving both sides a fair hearing.

Sincerely,  
Geoff Martin, Board Representative  
Dalhousie Student Union

## Nice going

To the editors,

Just thought I'd say "nice-going" to Erin Steuter for the article "Anti-Sandinista Pamphlet on Campus" in the Nov. 15 issue. These "charming" little billets-doux are an unnerving indication of the swing to the far right which is to be seen in sectors of western society. "Conservatism" of the sort elicited by these posters requires only the appropriate catalyst to boost it to the level of fascism.

And while my mouth is open (figuratively), thanks to Saint Mary's University and the Dalhousie Law School for bringing Halifax the wary and concerned voice of Noam Chomsky.

Yers seriously,  
Michael Hymers

## Absolutism and pornography

Rights and freedoms are a relative thing. Often both sides of an issue will represent their case based on equally just rights and freedoms. For just about every basic right we hold dear, an exception to that right can often be found.

For example, in Canada we consider freedom of speech to be of paramount importance, but if you publicly advocate something illegal you are breaking the law. Similarly, if you decide to exercise your right of free speech in a public library, you will be ejected for making too much noise.

In society we try to balance our rights and freedoms in the knowledge that granting one right demanded by one group of people may be taking away rights granted another. Rights and freedoms are seldom absolute in nature for that very reason. In establishing rules for society we try to apply our basic principles within the bounds of what is reasonable.

A recent case in point is the howls of outrage emitting from the mouth of one Bob Guccione, publisher of *Penthouse* magazine. Guccione is screaming "censorship" after copies of his magazine were pulled from Canadian newsstands about a week ago because of a violent pictorial featuring women bound and hung from trees.

By screaming censorship, Guccione is claiming his right of freedom of the press has been violated. But to what extent is freedom of the press an absolute right in the first place?

Aside from the old adage that freedom of the press is restricted to those who own one, there are numerous exceptions to that right.

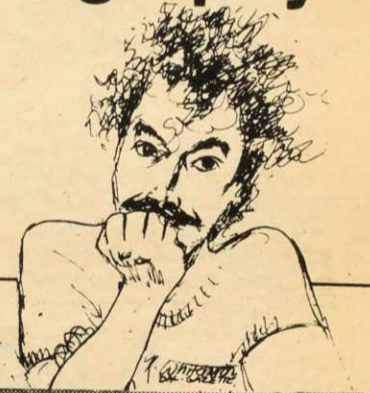
In certain circumstances you cannot print evidence heard in court. You cannot libel someone. You cannot falsely advertise something. In some provinces you cannot carry liquor advertising. You

cannot print hate literature.

These exceptions are all intended to protect people in one way or another. They are a recognition that within the power of the press some guidelines of responsibility have to be set to ensure the greater public good.

Guccione is no fool. He knows,

RICK JANSON



for example, that if his magazine included pictorials of erect penises, *Penthouse* would never get across the border in the first place. It is ironic that although erect penises would be perceived as obscene, pictorials of violence against women would travel the borders as somehow acceptable.

Years after media guru Marshal McLuhan's death Canadian society is only now waking up to the fact that the media does have an impact on society—something the advertising industry has long been aware of.

Whether Guccione decides to advocate violence against women directly through his copy or through the glorification of it in his pictorials, any idiot can come to the conclusion that it has a negative effect on society. Is our need to see women hung from trees so great that we can tolerate the long term effects of such not-so-subtle brainwashing, such as wife battering, rape and assault? Even if only one male in *Penthouse's* half million Canadian readers reacts this way, is it worth it?

The fact that the magazines were pulled off the shelves was a victory of reason over absolutism.

This one edition of *Penthouse* is only the tip of the iceberg and a symptom of a much larger problem in society.

How does one change the attitudes of people who read and are affected by what basically amounts to hate literature directed at women? Not only do magazines such as *Penthouse* and *Playboy* objectify and degrade women, but they serve as their own propaganda tool.

By banning some of the more blatant material, we can limit the worst of it, but we can't legislate the attitudes that make such publications possible.

The banning of one edition of *Penthouse* is perhaps an early victory for a national dialogue on human issues that has recently surfaced. The televised debate on women's issues during the federal election campaign, and the production of such films as *The Burning Bed* and *Not a Love Story* are approaches at such a dialogue at different levels of the cultural spectrum. That dialogue needs to be continued and expanded, as many more victories are required.

Given equal time, money and space as the propagandists of pornography, those who recognize they are oppressed by it could easily start changing attitudes based on values of justice, reason and understanding.

And who are those people oppressed by the politics of pornography?—All of us. It is our right to stand up to it. □