

overheated society that seems somehow bent on damaging the very premise on which it is built--freedom--freedom to be wrong as well as right.

Zen Painting of Fall

Virginia creeper, red as a cardinal's cape, climbs piously
Toward heaven, bleeding, and I am awed with the sacrifice.
The dusty tracks made by bicycle riders and jeepsters,
Tennis shoes and woodsmen's boots lead on into a gathering
Of maples, bitten to blush at the edges of withered gold
Like old Greek money, gold like sunlight transferred to
Delicate Japanese papers, and I stuff my frayed pockets,
Richer than any miser for what I hoard there.

Fern and flower continue as best they can, giving green
Is green until frost sneaks behind their perimeter,
Striking them into wooden, crystalline poses, brown
As feathers from a trunk, and I want to thrust them
Into my hair but as with all delicacies of their season,
They are brittle and too elusive.

My skin is shamed by their beauty and my bones curse their
Strength. My pocket wiggles as the leaves

Laugh.

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Our Changing Censorship

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Here is what an intelligent and sensitive parent had to say about Back to School With Betsy in justification of removing the book from school library shelves. "Unfortunate social stereotypes are advanced;" "The book is suffused with sexism;" "They (the books in the series) are typical of an era when authors pretended little girls played in dresses and Mary Jane shoes..."

As we can see from the above, the historical reasons for removing any book have not changed. What have been those reasons? The book contains undesirable information and ideas; the book is dated; the book is corrupting; the book expresses points of view unacceptable to a majority or to a minority; the book lies; the book supports bad political, social and sexual viewpoints; the book advocates misbehavior. The author is unconventional, socially different, immoral, etc.

In every case a protectionist attitude asserts that children or adults need to be saved from influences unacceptable to some group. In every case, the underlying assumption is that people in general are easily swayed, especially by the printed word. The belief in the magic and power of the word in print is still extant 500 years after Gutenberg, even though we know that the influence attributed to books and newspapers is largely dependent on societal factors that often only accidentally concur with the power of print. Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath possessed power that Cannery Row did not, simply because it propitiously caught the conscience of a society already eager for symbolical exemplification of the problem of the depression. If it had been written 30 years earlier, it would have been prophetic and interesting; 30 years later, it would have been like Hard Times, nostalgic.

What is being said about the "Betsy" series is true, but to extrapolate from that truth to its effects on today's children is to exclude all other influences on those children and is tantamount to asking that Robin Hood, tales about King Arthur and his knights, and Tom Sawyer ought to be removed from library shelves, too, on the basis of a fear that children will take them seriously and model their lives on them.

Some modeling indeed will take place (some boys still pretend they are Tarzan; others pretend they are gorillas) within the