

Moran, Gordon. *Silencing Scientists and Scholars in Other Fields: Power, Paradigm Controls, Peer Review, and Scholarly Communication.* Greenwich, Conn. and London: Ablex Publishing (Contemporary Studies in Information Management, Policies, and Services), 1998. 187p. \$73.25, cloth (ISBN 1-56750-342-X); \$39.50, paper (ISBN 1-56750-343-8). LC 97-30773.

This book is difficult to review. It is badly written by the wrong author on an important topic. Furthermore, that topic—how can intellectual “outsiders” get their work published, indexed, collected by libraries, and taken seriously?—means that criticism might appear as more of the censorship the author sees as commonplace in academia.

Gordon Moran raises important issues, including library issues, but does so in ways that demonstrate why scholarly detachment and judicious evaluation of information are important. He also invokes the particular situation of the outsider who persists to the extent of being perceived, and received, as a crank. Moran's passion so affects his writing that one wishes someone else had written the book.

Moran is an art historian who was savaged in the scholarly literature after he proposed that a different artist than commonly thought was the painter of a noted mural in Siena. His experience, naturally enough, led him to a wider interest in how scholars encounter, evaluate, and respond to ideas outside conventional wisdom. This book attempts to ground his experiences, and those of others, in such a wider review of issues and cases. That review, or perhaps its supporting bibliography, may be the most useful achievement of the book.

In trying to situate his case among others, Moran relies on a mix of personal communication, newspaper and scholarly articles, and books. Secondary and journalistic sources are used in place of easily available primary sources, leading one to suspect that Moran wants to accumulate cases rather than analyze them.

Citation of allegations—not warranted in the view of this reviewer who was there at the time—of administrative oppression of the conservative *Dartmouth Review*, relies entirely on an article in *USA Today*.

Because the book is not his first writing on the topic (he cites four earlier articles and monographs), Moran too often makes general statements about cases while referring the reader elsewhere for actual details. This book cannot stand as an independent work containing both arguments and supporting data.

Introducing the topic of “Punishment of Dissidents and the Big Lie,” Moran alludes to an unnamed source:

In a movie that depicted university life under Nazi rule, a professor was asked (by a monitor, either an official ... or self-appointed one) if the blood of Aryans was different. The professor stated ... there was no proof ... This was enough, according to the script, to have the professor sent to prison and fired. He died shortly thereafter ... (it was not clear if he was killed from hard labor [sic] or was actually executed.)

This view of the Nazis is perfectly conventional, but an unnamed and undated film, possibly fictional, fails to qualify as supporting evidence.

Moran refers several times, opaquely, to his battles in art history before finally, in his seventh chapter, providing details of the Guido Riccio mural controversy. The author sometimes refers to his personal experiences in the third person, so that the reader is led some distance into the case before realizing that it is not a corroborating, independent event but, rather, a piece of his running fight.

The same pattern is evident in Moran's discussion of what he considers editorial bias in a medieval-studies reference book. The travails of “a scholar” in dissent occupy several paragraphs before it becomes clear that Moran is the scholar and that this incident requires more context. Only sketchy details are given here,

however, with four citations to Moran's 1991 article in *Reference Librarian*.

In general, the book is an attempt to show that the practice of science and scholarship departs radically from their fundamental principles of peer review, self-correction by testing, and receptivity to new ideas and new information. Apart from his own, and some other cases from art history, most of his examples are drawn from medical research (most especially, that of David Baltimore and the paper in the journal *Cell* that bore his name and was alleged to contain data fabricated by a junior colleague).

Moran's view of the canons of science never considers that no ideals are fully achieved and that the search for truth may be improved, but truth never absolutely reached, by methodological rigor. He quotes a letter hounding alumni for autobiographical statements: "those who submit nothing . . . risk seeing something we made up under your name." "[S]omething shall be said about everyone, regardless of truth, decency. . . ." One may, or may not, find the jocularly facetious letter amusing, but it is a mighty weak reed to support, as Moran would have it, an indictment of moral failing in academe: "For someone studying the phenomenon of toleration of falsification, the compilation of [my] Reunion Directory was a real eye-opener."

Like most authors writing about science in the past forty years, Moran frequently invokes Thomas Kuhn, usually (in Moran's repeated phrase) with reference to "paradigm-busting" opinions and their suppression. And like too many, Moran's use of *paradigm* is meaninglessly looser than Kuhn's. There is a very great difference between the fundamental principles upon which understanding is based—heliocentrism versus geocentrism, in Kuhn's defining case—and differing judg-

ments about which artist painted a mural. Placing oneself alongside Galileo invites invidious comparison.

Why is this book reviewed here? The short answer is that it is addressed to us, in a series of monographs that mostly have far more familiar "library lit" titles. The real answer, however, is that it is addressed to us because Moran expects much, perhaps too much, from librarians, recognizing that whatever the failures of scholarly publishing, libraries and librarians are the final custodians of knowledge and the guarantors of present and future access to it.

Moran expects us, no less than scientists and journal editors, to take utterly seriously our principles of intellectual freedom that he approvingly quotes. He asks us how we are prepared to ensure that our users have access (in all senses) to the unpopular or the unconventional. Some ideas are practical, such as maintaining bibliographies of retracted articles to aid patrons. Others, such as annotating catalog records to indicate that other scholars dissent, say, from an art catalog's attribution of works, would strike most of us as beyond our competence and resources.

That Moran's absolutist expectations of us are more than we can fulfill does not relieve us of responsibility for our roles in scholarly communication. A better book should address these issues. This one by itself will not persuade readers of much except the ability of an injury to influence a person's perspective. As a roster of cases, the book is a useful starting point for considering the never-ending problem of how dissenting scholars can be heard by those whose opinions they challenge. For that reason, and probably only that reason, this book may be considered for acquisition.—*Gregory A. Finnegan, Harvard University.*