

Publication:The New York Sun; **Date:**Nov 20, 2003; **Section:**Front page; **Page:**1

'Unraveling' a Tale of Two Covers

By **JOSH GERSTEIN** Special to the Sun

Critics judging New York Times columnist Paul Krugman's new book by its cover — its British cover — say it's a shameless appeal to anti-American sentiment.

The text-laden jacket on the American version of Mr. Krugman's book, "The Great Unraveling," is about as visually exciting as the tombstone ads used to announce Wall Street deals.

But the cover on the British edition is altogether different. It features ominous black-and-white photographs of President Bush and Vice President Cheney.

Mr. Bush is depicted as a Frankenstein-like figure whose forehead has been sawed through and whose lips have been stapled shut. A mustache has been painted onto Mr. Cheney's upper lip and the words, "Got Oil?" drip from his forehead. The scene, evocative of numerous anti-globalization protests, appears to be a doctored montage of images from a demonstration last year against a meeting of the World Economic Forum in New York.

Stephen Kirchner, a graduate student, lecturer, and blogger at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, discovered the two-faced marketing effort.

"The cover art just struck me as over the top," Mr. Kirchner said in a telephone interview yesterday. He said he didn't immediately think that the cover he saw in a nearby bookstore was a special one for readers outside America, but he later grew suspicious and looked up the book on Amazon.com and posted his discovery on his Web site.

"The cover artwork for the non-U.S. edition is more characteristic of the shopfront-trashing anti-globalization left than we might expect from a mainstream commentator and publishing house," he wrote.

The discovery caught the eye of a band of vigilant critics of Mr. Krugman who use blogs and Web sites to dissect his columns and speeches.

"What is disturbing about it, is the imagery is violent," said Donald Luskin, the most prominent cyber-critic of Mr. Krugman. Mr. Luskin said he was most troubled by the picture of the president. "It looks like physical violence was done to him," said Mr. Luskin, who operates a site called, The Conspiracy to Keep You Poor and Stupid. He said of the foreign cover, "It's extremely inappropriate for any book that would purport to make serious arguments about serious ideas."

Mr. Krugman's book, which is a collection of his earlier columns, was published in Britain by Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books. Reached by phone in London last night, Rosie Glaisher, a Penguin publicist, said she was unaware of the controversy.

Efforts to reach Mr. Krugman through his publicist and his office at Princeton University, where he is a professor, were unsuccessful. It could not be determined if he was aware of or approved Penguin's cover. W.W. Norton & Co., the American publisher of Mr. Krugman's book, indicated that it was made aware of the British company's marketing plan.

"They would absolutely keep us informed," Norton's president and chairman, Drake McFeely, told The New York Sun. Asked if it was fair to say that his company and Penguin had taken dramatically different tacks in hawking the book, Mr. McFeely laughed heartily and replied, "I agree about that." He said that his firm had deliberately shied away from the dramatic imagery being used to promote the British edition. "We did not need to make this kind of splash," he said.

Mr. McFeely called Mr. Krugman a "household name" in America, but said he does not enjoy that status

overseas. “They have a much trickier publishing proposition in the U.K.,” the publishing executive said.

Mr. McFeely acknowledged that the British jacket would not have been appropriate for an American audience, but he said that he doubted that he or Mr. Krugman had any legal right to reject the cover art used in other countries.

“Would I have used that jacket? No,” Mr. McFeely said. “Am I going to censor what a very good publisher over in the U.K. might think is a good way to handle this book? I’m not going to do that either.”

Timothy Walker, a Manhattan-based media trainer who advises authors on how to promote their books to foreign audiences, defended the British cover.

“It’s absolutely fair game and it’s on target,” he said. “What it sounds like to me is the publisher is calibrating its marketing based on how many people hate George Bush. Proportionately, there are a lot more people who hate George Bush’s guts in Europe,” said Mr. Walker, who moonlights as a “progressive” political commentator.

Evidence of the attempt to goose up Mr. Krugman’s tome for the European audience goes beyond the visual imagery. Various European Web sites, including Penguin’s, give the subtitle as, “From Boom to Bust in Three Short Years.” That line may have been part of the publisher’s early plan, but the subtitle on the British book jacket is “From Boom to Bust in Three Scandalous Years.” The word scandalous is printed in red.

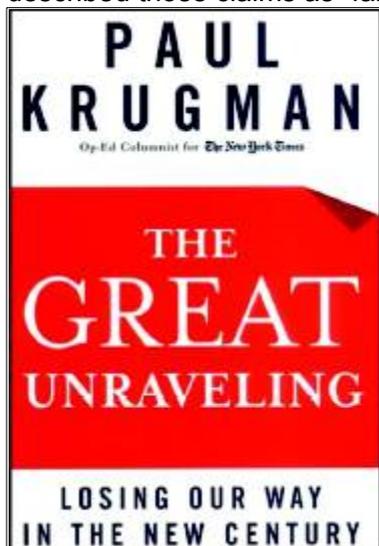
While the British cover is sensational, it could also be viewed as a bait-and-switch. Perennial World Trade Organization protesters, like those depicted on the cover, might not care for Mr. Krugman’s use of the word bogus to describe their arguments against the global trade body.

“Every successful example of economic development this past century” is attributable to globalization, he writes in one piece. In another column, he faults America’s labor movement for “working against the interests of most of the world’s poor.”

While a writer for the online magazine Slate Mr. Krugman once filed a column entitled “In Praise of Cheap Labor.” He has even argued that free trade is a net plus for the global environment.

The book flap comes against the backdrop of an ongoing bitter and acrimonious rhetorical exchange between Mr. Krugman and his critics on the right. In the last few months, Mr. Krugman, an award-winning economist, has managed to parlay his New York Times column into near-superstar status on the political left. His detractors say he has become obsessed with mounting incessant attacks on the Bush administration’s policies and that his economic analysis has suffered.

Mr. Krugman has become so notorious that he has reportedly received death threats, which he has turned over to the FBI. He has accused Mr. Luskin of stalking him, figuratively and literally. Mr. Luskin yesterday described those claims as “false and slanderous.”



HERE AND THERE The American cover of Paul Krugman’s Bush-bashing book, left, and the British version.

