Rushdie Reads from His Works to Captive Audience

Rushdie then walked up onto the stage to a sustained standing ovation. Wrightson presented the citation announcing him honorary visiting professor of the humanities. Because MIT does not bestow honorary degrees, the visiting professorship is an unusual honor. Previous honorary lecturers include Winston Churchill and philosopher Cecil H. Green '23. Rushdie is the first honorary visiting professor.

"It's something that's just created for very, very special situations," Lightman said. In his lecture, Rushdie expressed hope that his visit to MIT could be "the beginning of a long-term relationship with this great institution."

Rushdie was heavily guarded by over 20 State Department agents, Campus Police officers, and Massachusetts state police. "Refuse to be terrorized."

Rushdie began by apologizing for the "chok' and dagga" approach I wanted to do this evening," said Sontag. "And the second thing, not surprisingly, is I want to introduce Salman Rushdie.

Spoken against the "remote control" terrorism used against him, Rushdie said that if this form of terrorism seems to be working, it will be repeated. The only way to stop terrorism is "to say 'I'm not scared of you.' The purpose of terrorism is to terrorize. The only defense against terrorism is to refuse to be terrorized." Rushdie said.

Rushdie then turned to reading several excerpts from Midnight's Children, a novel about a young, telepathic boy growing up in newly independent India. Lightman described the 1981 Booker Award winner as "a masterpiece of world literature."

Last year, Midnight's Children was selected by the Book Club committee as the best English novel of the last 25 years.

Rushdie also read from a short story entitled Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain Convene Their Relationship - Santa Fe, 1492.

At the conclusion of the lecture, Rushdie received another standing ovation. Lightman detained the audience several minutes to allow Rushdie time to safely depart.

Terrorism cannot succeed.

In her introduction, Sontag spoke of Rushdie as "only the most visible individual victim of a worldwide struggle against tolerance," citing other examples of oppressed or threatened authors. Sontag tied Rushdie's situation to the plight of the Bosnians - she was recently named an honorary citizen of Sarajevo after staging a production of Waiting for Godot in the besieged city.

Following the visit to MIT, Rushdie met with President Clinton on Wednesday. "Rushdie's case is a great test of where we stand on the issue of freedom and solidarity and the future of our culture."