

Parking Ticket Blues

Why do people drive cars to school? Because it's too far to walk, I suppose. As good as that reasoning may be, however, I think I may have found a better

way.

Being Oregonians, I'm sure we are all well aware of the ecological and environmental consequences surrounding the

use of the automobile. You know, polluted air, depleted fossil fuel reserves, etc. And this is not to mention all of the expenses involved — gas, oil, insurance, maintenance and, of course, those finance company payments with your good credit.

I guess it's just the fact that spring is in the air that causes me to ponder such things. All of these vibrant, tanned young bodies gracing the landscape; fragrant blossoms bursting into profusions of color; and songbirds singing sweet, romantic melodies. I think I am in love.

With my bicycle, that is. My energy-efficient machine and I can now be seen on any one of the myriad stretches of bicycle lanes in this thoughtfully designed town of ours.

I must confess that things weren't always this way, though. I too was once a complacent motor-car commuter — until I saw the light.

I bought my three-term parking permit back in September,

unsuspecting new student that I was. But considering that I lived clear out in Santa Clara, it only made sense at the time.

So I drove through rain and sleet and snow. Admiring the dedication of all those two-wheeler natives in their green and yellow vulcanized-rubber rain gear, I found a little niche in the far corner of the student parking lot back by 15th Avenue and Moss Street. Who cares if I had to walk 20 minutes to get to my class — at least I had a place to park with my current purple sticker to validate me.

Then a funny thing happened. Barricades emerged. NO PARKING signs sprouted out of nowhere, and lovely meter maids (er, make that meter people, I forgot this is 1987) went around putting white pieces of paper under windshield wipers. Next thing you know there is this new building plum in the middle of the parking lot, and my little purple sticker is resting on my car bumper on some residential street a half-mile on the other side of Mac Court.

Now I'm no dummy — like Bob Dylan mused some two decades ago, "It doesn't take a weather man to know which way the wind is blowing." After moving closer to town, I realized that even riding my bike in the rain made more sense than cursing the lack of parking around here.

Sure, I've had to learn how to dodge those teeming masses that ebb and flow on 13th Avenue and had to dismount on sidewalks and such, but it's been worth it. There have been some unexpected hazards to be dealt with, however.

One recent sunny day, I was pedaling along on the bike path down by Skinner Butte Park, innocently enjoying the songs of birds and exulting in life's simple pleasures. It was then that it happened.

Perhaps it was an apiary escapee or just a wayward wild pollen seeker. Whatever its origin, this buzzing, winged creature that encountered my

open mouth at about 20 mph quickly identified itself by depositing its stinger into my upper lip.

Ouch! So much for bliss and the ecstasy of nature and all that sort of thing.

Now bees, as far as I am concerned, are wonderful little creatures. I mean, honey is a staple part of my diet — a natural alternative to those little white sugar crystals that passed through some refinery — but getting sting-induced blisters is not exactly my idea of a good time.

The moral of this little story, of course, is that it is wise at times to keep one's mouth shut. I'm not sure what all of the hidden implications are, but I'm still a believer in bicycles, and my complaints over inadequate student parking have been reduced to an occasional muttering under my breath.

Indeed, now that I've discovered this wonderful means of alternative transportation, I just shake my head and smile when I pass one of those poor student vehicles that has had an unlucky encounter with the friendly folks from the land of parking tickets.

At least until last week, that is. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I had no choice but to drive my well-rested automobile to campus. And two days in a row, at that.

I saw it coming. An extended conversation with a classmate while my two-hour zone quietly expired. A dubious bit of haste-induced, double-parking maneuvering (everyone else does it) in the student lot out by the counseling and educational psychology building (wherever in the heck that is).

Oh well, after batting two for two on those little white slips of paper under my windshield wipers, my findings are conclusive. Driving cars to campus is for the birds, and our meter people are assuredly some of the most adept around at doing their duty. God bless them, everyone.

— JOSHUA HAMILL



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BOOK VIEWS Literature Review

Dvorak in Love

by Josef Skvorecky
Alfred Knopf, New York 1987
Reviewed by Peter W. Jusczyk

Josef Skvorecky's best-known novel, *The Engineer of Human Souls*, focuses on the life of a Czech immigrant to Canada who ends up teaching North American literature classes to students at a university in Toronto. Much of the action in that novel is drawn from an earlier time during the war when the protagonist was growing up and playing jazz in Czechoslovakia. Told from the perspective of the protagonist, Skvorecky's narrative skillfully slips back and forth between the past and present moments keeping several story lines alive simultaneously. At its best, this technique lends a special immediacy to the way in which the past is tied up in the present. In this case, the result was a carefully drawn portrait of the protagonist that revealed his life in all its complexities. The dilemma of the immigrant, whose past is physically separated from yet irrevocably linked to his present, takes on a universal character when seen as an extension of the separation that time imposes on events in our own pasts.

On the surface, *Dvorak in Love* bears many similarities



\$18.95

the earlier novel. It, too, concerns the journey of a Czech to America, although in this case the protagonist is not a would-be jazz musician but the celebrated classical composer, Antonin Dvorak. Once again, Skvorecky bypasses a chronological description of events in favor of a series of episodes that follow no discernible order. In addition, one finds many of the elements that occupy Skvorecky's earlier works such as humor, music, and a certain tension between spiritual values and physical desires. Moreover, as usual, Skvorecky's writing is engaging and thoroughly readable.

In contrast to Skvorecky's earlier works, *Dvorak's* own point of view is never directly presented. Rather he appears as a figure in events described by an unseen narrator or in anecdotes related by other characters. By moving the

center of attention away from Dvorak, Skvorecky invites a certain risk that his protagonist will not be clearly defined. It is a little like trying to get an impression of an old departed relative from snapshots in a family photo album. One sees the change that the exterior figure goes through without a clear sense of who he was. Ultimately, this approach can prove unsatisfying to one who hopes to understand the individual.

Dvorak is portrayed as a central figure in the development of American music — not only classical music, but jazz as well. Whether the latter is any more than a figment of Skvorecky's imagination is difficult to say. Historical accuracy is not his concern. Instead, the episodes he relates tell more about the inner workings of those who describe Dvorak than about the man himself. Skvorecky seems to be playing with variations on a theme here. *Dvorak's* presence is a theme that recurs in the lives of a diverse group of people. He is the common element that pulls many other lives together. Like his music, we see the influence of the man stretching beyond his life into the lives of others long after his own life has ended. By blurring the focus on his protagonist, Skvorecky has made it easier to see the links between past and present.

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A publication of the Oregon Daily Emerald

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Photo Editor John Giustina
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Cover Illustration by Lorraine Rath

The editors will not be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Submissions must include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Writer's guidelines may be picked up at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, Rm. 300, Erb Memorial Union. Mailing address for Spectrum magazine is P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, Oregon 97403.