

COMMENTARY

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Monday, March 17, 2003

Two apologies, one good-bye, much good luck

The term is coming to a close, and I have a few loose ends to put in a knot. To begin with, I once again need to apologize to the community. The past week or so has been fast and furious — and that is not an excuse — and two things slipped by that have caused anger and hurt. I don't want to end the term that way, and we made mistakes in both cases.

First, in the editorial board's piece about the offensive content and theft of the Oregon Commentator ("MISSING: First Amendment freedoms," ODE, March 13), we wrote a few sentences badly. Toward the end of the piece, we listed seven groups or individuals that we said might have had motive for stealing the Commentator. Unfortunately, in context some people read our words as suggesting those groups were guilty.

We did not mean any such thing. And I'm sorry that our hasty writing or lack of editing might have left the door open for such an inference to be made. We are not privy to any information about the culprits in the Commentator theft, and we are not suggesting anyone is guilty. Our only point was to show the wide variety of campus organizations that were the subject of the Commentator's ridicule in the most recent issue. We did it poorly, and I apologize.

Second, in a guest commentary on Wednesday ("Americans must end support for oppressive Israeli rule," ODE, March 12), we failed to adequately fact-check and ran claims that very well may be false. At the least, I am unable now to verify the numbers the author cited. Ordinarily, the Emerald requires commentary page authors to provide citations for facts that could be disputed or that provide the basis for an argument.

In this case, we messed up. I have asked the author of that piece to provide citations for his facts, and he has not yet done so. Until such a time as I receive citations, I suggest that readers not believe what was printed. And I apologize for our sloppiness.

Anyone else is also free to provide more information, other facts and additional sources. We welcome submissions from people on every side of the Middle East issue. The topic is complicated and controversial, and the world can only work toward a peaceful solution with extensive dialogue — but dialogue based on confirmed facts.

I know some readers were hurt by the claims made in the piece, and I apologize to them specifically. We don't support the assertions made and we won't allow unverified claims to be printed again.

In the way of good-byes, the Emerald today loses one of its longest-running commentary voices and a valued member of the staff. Editorial editor Pat Payne graduates this term, and the paper will miss him. Since his first column, "Baka to the left of me, Baka to the right," on Oct. 5, 2000, Pat's disdain of groupthink, knowledge of history and unique sense of humor have been an asset to the paper.

Pat's Emerald work has been picked up by national media over the years, most recently with the inclusion of one of his columns in a writing textbook. Thanks for bringing the Emerald wider recognition, Pat, thanks for being a pleasure to work with, and good luck in your career. Keep on keeping the left-wing baka and the right-wing mouthbreathers honest. (P.S. The office couch will miss you, too.)

Finally, good luck to everyone on finals, and stay safe over the break. There is a strong possibility America will be at war when spring term begins, and if that's the case, we will work to bring you as much information about it as possible. Also, when we resume publishing on March 31, we will begin breakneck ASUO elections coverage.

So have fun, let that fake-tan orange glow wear off (you know who you are), and return to campus juiced for more learning, more controversial ideas and more news.

Peace and Joy,
Mike

Contact the editor in chief at editor@dailymerald.com.



Michael J. Kleckner

The editor's office

I break for books

Springtime in Oregon. The timid sun starts to peep through the clouds, but the trails are too muddy to hike or bike. But spring break is a great time to curl up with a good book, rain or shine.

So whether you wish to escape the grim realities of today, or just want to read better prose than mine, here are a few books I heartily recommend.

All of these books have been out for a while, so you can find them in paperback. And in Eugene, you can find most titles at a good used bookstore such as Smith Family, J. Michael's, or Black Sun.

Not every book will please every reader. I can't guarantee that. But I can assure you that I have read and enjoyed every book mentioned here.

"History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters," by Julian Barnes.

As the title suggests, this novel is sweeping in scope and full of wit. The 11 stories are very different from each other, yet they cohere into a whole, and wholly satisfying, reading experience. Recommended for those who enjoy a treat for the mind, or the subtler side of Monty Python.

"The Path to the Spiders' Nests," by Italo Calvino. Calvino is beloved by millions of readers around the world, including this one. His first novel tells the story of Pin, a poor Italian boy who joins a ragtag band of partisans (resistance fighters). Recommended for fans of neo-realist films and coming-of-age stories.

"Woman Hollering Creek," by Sandra Cisneros. This lyrical collection of short stories is disarmingly simple, yet filled with moments of wisdom. Cisneros lets the women in these stories speak in their own

unique voices. Recommended for young women, and the men who want to know more about them.

"Breath, Eyes, Memory," by Edwidge Danticat. Don't let the Oprah's Book Club

sticker fool you. This is a remarkable, compelling tale of a young Haitian-American woman. Its evocations of Haiti, the open-air markets, extended families and social classes alone are worth reading. Recommended for readers who live in, and between, two worlds.

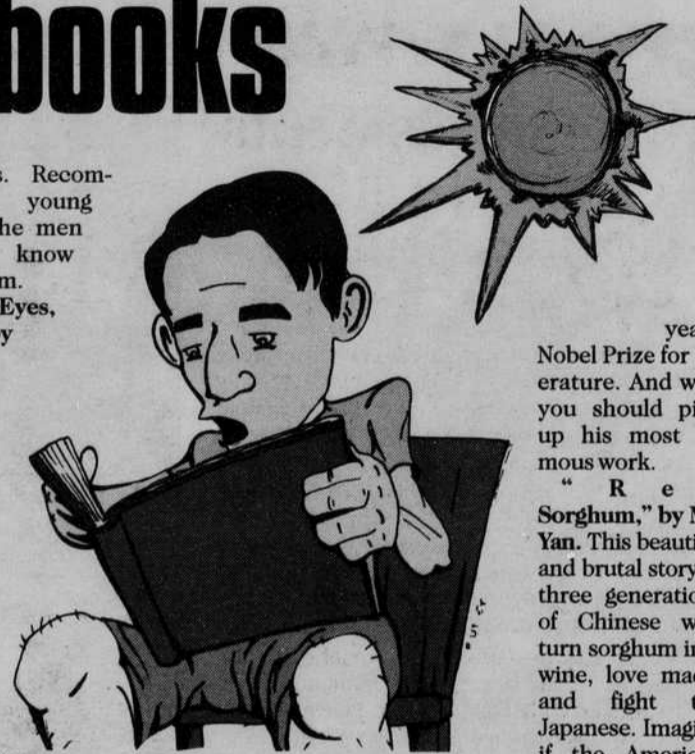
"The Last Samurai," by Helen DeWitt. This book has nothing to do with Tom Cruise's new movie. It's about a precocious young boy and his single mom. It's about Akira Kurosawa's most famous film. It's about the search for a father. It's about the limits of genius in a world made for average people. And it's very funny. Just read it.

"The Unbearable Lightness of Being," by Milan Kundera. I was 19 and hardly literate when I read this novel. Now I'm writing book reviews. Life-changing experience, anyone? Not only did I get the lowdown on Czech life under Soviet rule, the romantic entanglements in the story also helped me understand how love works. That's why Kundera should get next



Philip Huang

A different light



Peter Utsey Emerald

year's Nobel Prize for literature. And why you should pick up his most famous work.

"Red Sorghum," by Mo Yan. This beautiful and brutal story of three generations of Chinese who turn sorghum into wine, love madly and fight the Japanese. Imagine if the American Revolution occurred 90 years ago, and World War II was fought

among our amber waves of grain. If that image moves you, please read this powerful novel.

"The God of Small Things," by Arundhati Roy. "They broke all the rules. They crossed into forbidden territory. They tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much." That sums up this utterly original story, which is full of gems like these, as well as larger insights into caste, family and love in a part of India that is both East and West. If you make it past the first 50 pages, I guarantee that you will enjoy it.

Oops, did I say that?

Contact the columnist at philiphuang@dailymerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Rally's message undercut by splinter group

Guest commentary

I have meant to write to the Emerald for some time now about my strong feelings against war in Iraq. I haven't because there's already a strong sentiment of opposition on campus, and I'd be preaching to the choir. I think it's great that there are so many people against the war, but at the rally on Saturday, I found myself troubled by their reasoning. There are valid reasons to oppose this war, mainly that the deaths of millions of innocent people that will result.

The rally on Saturday was supposed to be a celebration of life, instead of focusing on all the pain and misery this war will cause. I know people who spent their time focusing on ways to foster a positive atmosphere where people could come together and have a good time.

This happened until a small group of extremists realized they could use the protest as an opportunity to recruit people for direct action against "the system." So instead of witnessing beautiful poetry, music and street

theater, I had the misfortune of seeing people take to the streets only to get threatened and harassed by the police. I am not supporting the police for what they did, but I have to question why it had to happen.

What these extremists were trying to achieve was a breakaway march, but the only thing that has broken was the unity among the people of Eugene. I fear that many citizens of Eugene will now be reluctant to come to these rallies for peace because they're afraid that Saturday will be repeated.

Those who organized the breakaway march do have valid reasons for disgust with the government. I just wish they had chosen a different time. The problem is, the rally was the perfect place for them to carry out their mission, which gets me back to the main point of writing this letter.

The breakaway march confirmed my belief that many people in Eugene don't know why they hate Bush, the corporations and the media. They just hear everyone else talking about it, so they think to fit in, they too must be against the government. It isn't the anarchists who I am referring to, but

the people who followed the anarchists because they'd become bored of all the wonderful performances and thought the breakaway was where the action was. If these people really wanted peace, they wouldn't have gone running to provoke unnecessary police intervention that would ultimately lead to the rally's ruin.

So to conclude, I would just like to say "Thank you" to everyone who tried so hard to make the rally a success, and I am sorry that it did not work as planned. I hope that in the future, people will understand the time and effort that it takes to organize such a mass gathering of people, and that they won't lose focus of the objective of the rally: To promote the unification of all people so that peace can be accomplished.

The police didn't ruin this rally — it was the people who decided that one march wasn't enough. If you say you're against the war, I hope you have some good reasons — and not just because it seems to be the "hot" thing to do right now in Eugene.

C.W. George is a sophomore environmental studies major.

Letter to the editor

Oregon Hillel had no part in Commentator theft

Your editorial "MISSING: First Amendment Freedoms" (ODE, March 13) about missing copies of a particularly offensive edition of the Oregon Commentator was right on the mark regarding the impor-

tance of protecting First Amendment freedoms. Together with that, I am very concerned with your inclusion of Oregon Hillel as one of the organizations which "might be considered a suspect in this case" by listing us two sentences later as one of the "plenty of people who could have motive" as an offended party.

You then proceed to state that "the rumors we've heard sound so proud, it's almost as though people want to be associat-

ed with the act." I have no idea what rumors you are hearing, but I can assure you that Oregon Hillel is neither associated with, nor proud of this act — and I am disappointed that your editorial board would presume or imply that we might be, and do so based on speculative rumors without consulting anyone from our organization.

Hal M. Applebaum
 executive director
 Oregon Hillel