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In my opinion

Fiction TRUMPS reality

"Perhaps when you submit an article that isn't written in crayon, someone will take your liberal rantings seriously. Until then, drink a glass of milk before bedtime and don't forget to snuggle-wuggle with your teddy bear." — Reader mail.

Well, it's been a hectic year. I've been Drudge'd, Commentator'ed and interviewed for national radio, and all I can say is that being a political columnist is both more difficult and more rewarding than I imagined, though I do have a permanent concussion from banging my head on the desk when brilliant satire metamorphoses into toe-stubbing stupidity as soon as it hits the page. If you want to endure more of it, interested parties can peruse my blog (basilthekillershieep.blogspot.com) in which you can learn about the nation of Togo, read about the Department of Education's proposed database and sign a petition urging Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to charge Michael Moore with treason.

Because this is my last column for the Emerald for a while, I'd like to say thanks for all the reader mail. I didn't usually have time to respond, but I enjoyed the plethora of compliments and death threats. I'd also like to thank my brave editors and copy editors who waded through labyrinthine phrases, enduring my fetish for alliteration with admirable stoicism. Without them, my readers would think that "justicescalia" was a skin disease.

That said, I offer my last ODE rant



JENNIFER MCBRIDE
QUASHING DISSENT

of the year:

The proliferation of reality television is the Eighth Deadly Plague. I'm not quite sure what audience to which "Kept" (a British woman's attempts to domesticate American males) and male "Strip Search" (fairly self-explanatory) are supposed to appeal, but I have the feeling that nobody would be crass enough to produce these programs if the participants' sexes were reversed. Equality of gender was never about reducing men to objects. The tasteless "Playing It Straight" was canceled due to lack of ratings, proving once again that the remote is power. Hopefully, these shows will make even VH1's audience vomit, and the series will die unlamented.

Another interesting aspect of gender and "reality" shows is the recent spate of nerd-dating. "Average Joe" and "Beauty and the Geek" are both attempts to shatter the myth that dorks don't date models. These shows supposedly prove to men that they do have a shot with the women of their wet dreams, but where's the equity? Where are the shows promising nerdy women their fantasy hunk? My theory

is that, subliminally, society can accept attractive women falling for smart men, but an attractive man falling for a woman with coke-bottle glasses? That's absurd!

Since the summer TV lineup seems less than appetizing, I suggest that all people of intellectual caliber do the unthinkable and read a book. Being a proud gamer girl of geeky proportions, I have a preference for science fiction and fantasy. Recent spines I've cracked include:

"Snow Crash," Neal Stephenson: Who couldn't love a book starring someone named "Hiro Protagonist"? Tracing a deadly computer virus isn't all fun and games for this Web samurai. My favorite character is a skateboarding pizza delivery girl with a mechanism that, if ever invented, will put an end to rape.

"Tigana," Guy Gavriel Kay: One of my favorite books, "Tigana" mixes the best of sword and sorcery and political thrillers with the subtlety of vodka and cran. Kay follows a band of guerilla warriors attempting to overthrow tyrants in a land rife with poisonous nationalism.

That said, I think the best thing we can take away from modern media is that it's too easy to dive into the superficial. With critical hearts and open minds, we can all build reach above and beyond flashy stupidity.

See you online, unless, of course, the Secret Service gets me...

jennifermcbride@dailyemerald.com

Letters to and about the late Joel Meyer

Joel, I'll never forget the constant wrestling matches against Taylor, the late-night games of "Halo," the precise and ever-changing placement of our living room furniture, and I'll never forget the positive presence you brought to our house. It's not goodbye; it's I'll see you later. — Your friend and roommate, Sean B.

When I think of Joel I feel so safe. I knew he would take care of anything for me whenever I needed it. He would drop anything, at any second, and be there — armed and ready. He always noticed the little things that no one else would mention and knew how to make me feel so special. I was so proud to know Joel and be his good friend. He knew so many people and always made them feel individually special. I was proud to walk into a room with Joel and see everyone look at him with excitement in their eyes. He had this charisma about him that no one could match; I knew he would be somebody someday. I always pictured him on SportsCenter as a broadcaster. — With love, Megan Gilgen

Joel, your beautiful smile will stay in my heart forever. Your spirit, charisma and charm have touched my life, and everyone else who has had the pleasure of knowing you. I admire you in so many ways and want to thank you for inspiring me and teaching me so much about myself. I feel incredibly blessed that you were in my life. Joel ... who's going to flirt with me and tell me I'm special now? Your eyes, your walk, your laugh,

everything about you will be with me always. I miss you and will love you forever. — Yuki Tanaka

Joel, I am having trouble finding the right words to tell you what an impact you have had on my life. Had I not met you, my life would never have been filled with as much laughter and as many smiles as it has been. I don't know if I told you that enough. Your personality was so infectious, everyone who knew you loved you. I am one of them. I know that heaven is a brighter place because you are there. Not a day will go by when I will not think of you. I will miss you forever. I love you, more than you ever knew, and I will never stop. — Shannon Ross

Joel, you are one of the brightest, most charming, inspirational people I ever knew. You always knew how to put a smile on my face even when I was at my lowest. Now that you are not here, I know that you are still shining on all of us, helping us get through this. I still remember the last moments of your life, genuine and caring as ever. I love you and will miss you until we meet again... — Love you J, Megan Turnell

Joel, you were a great friend and one that can never be equaled. I will never meet someone like you again; you are a one-of-a-kind man. You just always put a smile on everyone's face, and were always so positive. I just wish you could know that some of the best times I will remember were times

spent with you from our days in Tingle Hall up through the last two years. There are so many good times we had, and I will never forget any of it; I'm really going to miss you. I wish everyone could have a chance to meet someone like Joel Meyer because I feel privileged that I was able to know you and be your friend. I love you, man, and I'll always be thinking of you. — Chris Soles

My Jolly Joel, you were truly one of a kind, always smiling and compassionate and ready to have a good time. You knew how to sweet talk our mothers, and you were such a good role model for your younger brother. Your carefree demeanor will be missed, but know that it will never be forgotten. — Love you, Krysta Marie

Joel had a gift for creating a special connection with everyone in his life. He was a person of a million characters, a million stories to share, jokes to tell and could always come up with a facial expression or shoulder shrug to make you laugh. I can never thank him enough for the confidence and insight he exuded. I was always proud to introduce Joel to people. I knew they would like him and I felt honored to bring such a wonderful person into someone else's life. I'm sure Joel knows 10 times as many people as I do on this campus and didn't need to know anyone else, but I didn't care; I knew he had a big enough heart to fit them into. I'm sure he made each of them feel just as special as he made me feel. — Haley Harris

Out loud

"Do you pay incidental fees at the Univ. of Oregon? If so, your money just paid for six people to sleep here for two nights. We got drunk, played taboo, and learned about the finance system, all on your dime. We are some cocky, smooth, motherfuckers."

— A note written in the guest book of one of the houses rented by ASUO members on an Oct. 8-10 finance retreat to Sunriver.

"She was just a part of our lives every day. It was great that people just let her be there and just sort of accepted her."

— University student and bookstore employee Emily Rogers remembering community member Victoria "Hatoon" Adkins, who lived on the corner of East 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street and was killed in an accident in February.

"A black student was telling a story and the professor said, 'That's not the perspective we're looking for right now. It doesn't have any bearing to what we're talking about.'"

— A College of Education graduate student, who asked not to be identified, during a May rally, which sought to shed light on allegations of discrimination within the COE.

"It really shuts down that idea of diversity because it's not letting a group of people have a voice in a classroom setting just because of their skin color."

— University senior Melissa Hanks, who filed a complaint in May with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights against the University Office of Multicultural Academic Support's policy that reserves registration for several classes for minority students.

"This is the biggest crisis Lane Transit has been in, ever."

— Carol Allred, executive board officer for the Amalgamated Transit Union Division 757 and LTD driver on Feb. 25 in reference to the impending drivers' strike.

"He was like a person in everyone's family ... to see a family member pass is about what it's like to see the pope die."

— Justin Schneider, senior, mourning the death of Pope John Paul II.

"We, the students, faculty and administrators of the University of Oregon, believe that the Programs Finance Committee's recent decision to reject The Commentator's mission statement, and thus deny their eligibility for student fee funding is wrong ... it implicates the free speech rights of all students."

— A February statement issued by student leaders and faculty members, condemning the PFC's decision to stop funding the Oregon Commentator.

"I don't support this part of the branch of student government anymore ... I think it's obvious that our money is going to hateful speech ... You guys are sleeping with the devil."

— Former PFC Senator Mason Quiroz. Then-ASUO senator Toby Hill-Meyer approached Quiroz about statements published in the Commentator that made Hill-Meyer feel unsafe, on account of the senator's transgender identity.

"That is a fucking landslide."

— ASUO President Adam Walsh, after learning that his ticket won by 317 votes.

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.