

Poets Bea Garth and Joan Dobbie discuss their work, upcoming reading

Interview by Joe Ragsdale

On Sunday, January 18, at 7 pm, *Poetic Space* will present an evening of poetry with Bea Garth and Joan Dobbie. The event will take place at the Maude Kerns Art Center, which is located at 1910 E. 15th St in Eugene. Donations of \$2.50 will be accepted to benefit *Poetic Space*, Eugene's poetry and fiction magazine. Following the scheduled reading there will be an open reading.

Bea Garth was one of the founders and co-editors of *Poetic Space* in its earlier years, and she was also art editor for *Denali* in 1980-81. Her work has been published in *Coyote's Dance*, *Before the Sun*, *Poetic Space*, *Denali*, *Elegant Stew* and several other publications. She also creates visual art, and has exhibited her sculpture in California and Oregon. She now teaches ceramic sculpture and hand-building at Maude Kerns.

Joan Dobbie also helped found and co-edited *Poetic Space* for three years. Her poems have appeared in many local publications, including *Coyote's Dance*, *Women's Press*, *Nuclear News Bureau*, and *Poetic Space*, and in many more distant small presses. Her poems also appear in *Elegant Stew* (published cooperatively in Eugene in 1983) and in her own small book, *A Trip Through Mama Kali's Zoological Garden*.

Poetic Space has existed for more than three years, and it is an independent, not-for-profit, cooperatively run poetry and fiction magazine. *Poetic Space* regularly features work by local writers, and as editor Don Hildenbrand says, its "basic purpose is to promote poetry and provide an outlet for new writers."

Joe: Can you tell me something about your poetry?

Bea: My poems tend to be very visual and there's a lot of imagery. I used to write short poems that were very visual, and also at the same time I was trying to keep it very clean, and trying to reduce it down to the smallest parts and that took a lot of the emotion out of it . . . so now I write these long narrative poems. They're a really good vehicle for exploring imagery and feelings, and they are also more transformative that way . . . I go beyond what I originally thought I was going to write.

Joan: I write a lot. I distinctly remember working at one time in my life for a publishing company, and I used to stay after work and play with their typewriter and type poems, but I didn't even know they were poems until much later. I just thought I was typing. So . . . I use words to make subconscious things come onto paper. Sometimes I think of it as emotional photography. It's reaching into astral planes and taking out little pieces and making them alive in this world.

Joe: What would you say are the main influences on your writing?

Bea: When I was a little girl, I read a lot of myths and fairy tales from all over the world, and a lot of that kind of stuff I think has influenced my work, because I tend to go into the mythical a lot of times. And also Diane Wakoski was a big influence in a sense . . . when I read her stuff I said, "Oh wow! Here's someone who thinks a lot like I do."

Joan: I love children's poetry. I have two kids, that are now growing up, and I think I spent probably ten or more years of my life completely immersed in children's poetry and if my poetry sometimes has a child-like ring to it that may be part of the reason. I am also very involved in Hatha Yoga, which is probably the biggest influence on my life. What that means

is that I keep myself as open as I can all the time, which means a pretty wide open channel between my unconscious self and my conscious self . . . so that's where all my creative stuff comes from.

Joe: What is your main motivation for writing? What is it that you hope to communicate to people?

Bea: I write because I've always liked words and I've always liked stories. I've always had a sense of lots of different realities, partly because my parents were anthropologists for awhile. I've lived in poor, middle class and wealthy neighborhoods, with people from all different cultures. I think I have a cross-cultural vision. I see the world in terms of psychological as well as physical reality. I guess what I hope to communicate is my own peculiar vision of the world—both the interior and exterior reality.

Joan: I know very little about Jungian things, but my guess is that there is something somewhat Jungian in my poetry. My poetry is very personal . . . I guess a lot of it is what you would call confessional poetry, but my feeling is that if you watch yourself closely enough, if you reach far enough inside of yourself, you'll find that you meet everyone else there too. Maybe that's what I want people to get out of my poetry . . . I want to

find connection with people.

Joe: For people who may be familiar with your work already, is there anything you would like to say about your current work?

Bea: I seem to be writing poems more and more based upon my experience growing up. I had started doing some of that a couple of years ago, but I've gotten more into it, and I've gotten to the point where I really don't care any more about the length. I think in a way my poems are moving more into that nether region of storytelling.

Joan: I'm in graduate school now for creative writing, and I'm hoping my poetry is getting sharper. I'm hoping it's getting better. But I still like a lot of my older stuff, and I'll be reading some of that too. I think maybe I'm going in the direction of being a little bit less sentimental, more polished.

Joe: Is there anything else you would like to say?

Joan: Yes. Another new thing that I am going to be doing is teaching a poetry class at Westmoreland Community Center beginning this term. It'll be mostly a workshop . . . that's going to be Wednesday evenings from 5-6:30, and its \$19 for eight weeks.

Bea: I'm looking forward to doing this reading with Joan . . . and for *Poetic Space*.

On Being An Aunt (Or "The Reunion")

by Bea Garth

Mist so thick
it felt like we were swimming
throwing rocks in the grey bodied water
trying to skip, trying to skip
that veiled eagle eye
never missing a step, a step
as if we were the rocks thrown,
slapping
never penetrating
surface tension.

Beet Queen

Review by Lois Wadsworth

Written by Louise Erdrich. Published by Henry Holt & Co., 1986.

Erdrich, the author of 1985's acclaimed *Love Medicine*, again shows her gift for low-key comedy in this loving tale of family and friends in a close-knit North Dakota town.

Karl is 14 and Mary 11 when their beautiful but unstable mother dramatically abandons them one day in 1932. The kids huddle together in a freezing boxcar all the way to Argus, the small North Dakota town where their mother's sister lives. Astonishingly, Karl leaves Mary when they get there and gets back on the freight train to face an unknown future alone. Thus begins the story of Mary's life in Argus.

Celestine James, a large Chippewa girl, is Mary's lifelong rival and friend. Brother Karl enigmatically returns after many years, and his and Celestine's brief union produces an amazing child. Aunt Mary quickly dubs the girl Dot, although Celestine formally names her Wallace Darlene in honor of Wallace Pfeiffer, on whose living room couch the baby was born during a raging blizzard. Dot becomes the focus of the interwoven lives of Mary, Celestine, Karl and Wallace. As a teenager, she becomes the town's Beet Queen. Aunt Mary describes Dot's first few years:

Day by day, Dot grew stronger. In her shopping-cart stroller she exercised to exhaustion, bouncing for hours to develop her leg muscles. She hated lying on her back and when put that way immediately flipped over to assume a wrestler's crouch. Sleep, which she resisted, did not come upon her gently but felled her in odd positions. Draped over the side of the cart or packed in its corner, she seemed to have fallen in battle. . . . She was greedy, grew fat, because we sympathized too much. We had gone hungry as children and could not deny her a morsel. Celestine tried to discipline her, teach her the word please. But she couldn't teach Dot the right way to say it. Dot growled,

"PLEEZ MORE," her eyes hard as buttons.

As befits a child raised by a strong-willed mother, a doting aunt, and a bachelor "uncle," Dot turns out to be a handful at every stage. In one of the funniest scenes, Dot tells Mary over milk and cookies that she's spent the whole day at school in the naughty box. Upset by the idea, Mary asks her niece if the naughty box is real.

"It's a red box in the back of the room, underneath the clock. Mrs. Shumway can fit lots of children inside of it. She pushes you in and slams down the lid. It's big. It's made of wood. It has splinters." Dot stopped in horror, remembering all too well, or so I thought at the time. "And inside the air is very, very black," she whispered. Her gaze was bleak and distant. She put a whole cookie in her mouth for comfort, and while she chewed it she reached for another. . . . I let her cram another cookie in her mouth. I thought of Shumway. The teacher's methods gave me a thrill down my neck, as if I was reading a storybook. . . . I rose unsteadily to my feet. "She won't get away with this!" I looked down at Dot, and she looked up at me. In her eyes I thought I saw adoration, innocent trust. I was her godmother of the fairy tales, her protector. "Just finish your snack," I said, patting her shoulder with adult authority. "I'll take care of Shumway."

Louise Erdrich's characters in *The Beet Queen* possess a wonderful sense of humor, a blunt, direct manner of speaking, and a great love for family gossip, like the characters in her earlier *Love Medicine*. Of German-American and Chippewa descent, she grew up in North Dakota. Her sense of people and place is very strong, and her light, comic touch is undeniably loving. Louise Erdrich writes in a precise, elegant style that makes reading this novel a delight.

RELAXATION • PERSONAL GROWTH • HEALING • CARDIAC ASTROLOGY • LOVING • SPIRITUALITY • PROSPERITY • LCRYSTAL • DREAMS • TAROT • PHILOSOPHY • SEXUALITY • FEMINISM • MEDITATION • SCIENCE • NLP • MYTHOLOGY • VISUALIZATION • PSYCHOLOGY • INSPIRATION • TAPES • LOVING • HEALING • MEDITATION

Peralandra

BOOKS AND RECORDS

Monday-Saturday 10-6
790 E. 11th (at Alder) 485-4848

Comfort with
food and
thought.



BOOK & TEA

Start the New Year out right
with breakfast at Book & Tea

NOTE OUR NEW HOURS:

Tues. thru Sat. Sun: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
7:00 am to 10:00 pm Closed Monday

1646 East 19th, Eugene • 344-3422

DO YOU KNOW

What extra weight and overeating are really about? Find out by attending a FREE Informational Presentation by

Lighten Up!

Tues., Jan. 20, 7:00 p.m., The Atrium, rm. 337D

You can move beyond diets to achieve lasting slenderness.

For more information, call Judy Boyd-Miller

— 345-6543 —