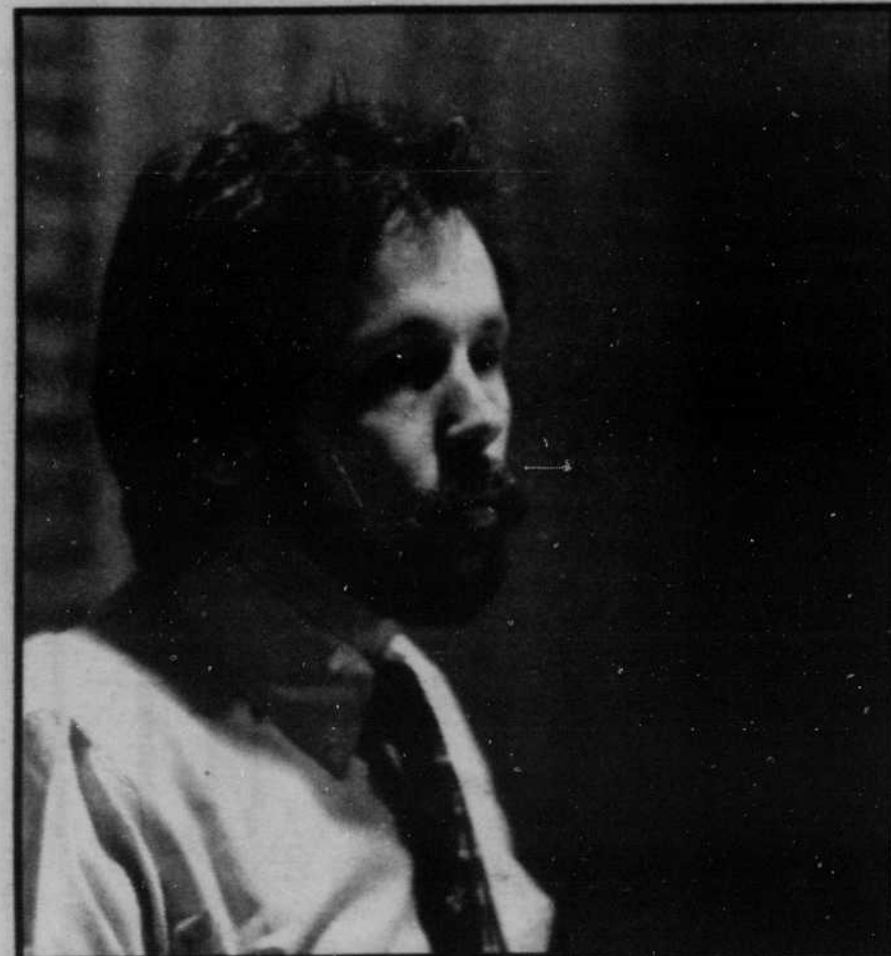
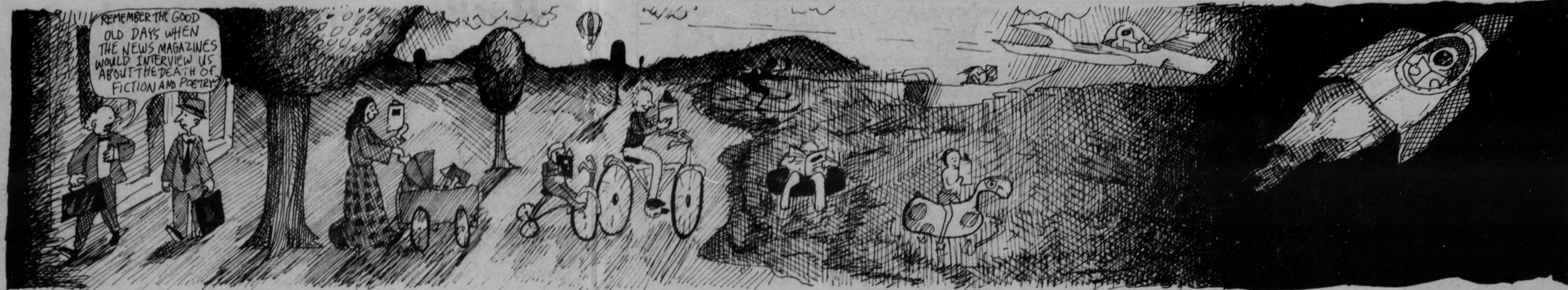


'The health of literature in any country depends on a renewed contact with the earth.'

Barry Lopez



Barry Lopez

American literature is regaining its health. Finn Rock author Barry Lopez credits Western writers who are dealing with "the interface between humans and the land" in fiction, short stories and poetry with the miracle.

"The health of literature in any country depends on a renewed contact with the earth," he says.

"There is a powerful thing going on between America and the land," Lopez says, pulling books from his pack and the shelves of the Book and Tea shop as he refers to works by Western authors such as Richard Hugo, a poet and teacher of creative writing at the University of Montana.

But Lopez may be his own best example. On a shelf near his chair and wood stove is his newest book, *Of Wolves and Men*.

As well as studying wolves in Alaska for *Wolves*, he has wrangled horses in Montana, spent considerable time with Native Americans to write *Giving Birth to Thunder, Sleeping With His Daughter: Coyote Builds North America* and traveled in the American desert to write *Desert Notes: Reflections in the Eye of a Raven*.

"There are several reasons to pay attention to what Western writers are doing," Lopez says.

The reasons originate in the land. "Allusion to natural elements makes for a sense of integration and comfort.

"If you cut yourself off, I think you become estranged and the estrangement makes you mean-minded," he says, alternately brushing back his hair and the black beard and mustache below his small, dark eyes.

Lopez speaks quietly, with the intensity of one who has listened and watched carefully during the time he has spent in America's Western landscapes. "I think the West has always felt misunderstood because writers in the West have set so much of their work in the land," he says.

The novels of A.B. Guthrie have been largely overlooked, but they are critical in reaching an understanding of how Western man deals with space, Lopez says. Guthrie has written *The Way West and The Big Sky*, among others.

This space has great importance for Lopez, who says he believes the land heals and is of utmost importance to mental health.

The healing qualities of the land should be a viable argument in a court of law, Lopez says, adding that he and poet Gary Snyder have discussed how to testify to what they call the very real connection between landscape and mental health.

"You should be able to fight for wilderness on medical grounds," Lopez says.

The way to do this, says Lopez, is through literature — "with a continued emphasis on language and landscape."

This emphasis means breaking down many of the artificial dichotomies Lopez says we have created. Lopez says that the mind and body aren't really separate and that the humanities and the sciences aren't all that different from one another.

"But what about grizzly bear and garter snake? What about the wind?" he asks. "The philosophy of science recognizes that scientific principles are born of a recognition of how the world is pieced together."

Lopez says people concerned with the arts and

literature should not be upset with the "facts and figures syndrome" of science. "That's its metaphor."

He says even scientific principles apply to how we criticize literature if "you pull back far enough.

"Both science and literature are right in terms of culture. Eskimos' views of the wolf differ from those of scientists, but neither is really wrong."

Literature's ability to be right means a great responsibility for writers. "What the writer really does is translate," he says.

"The skills are what is really important — providing a structure, through reading. Telling a good story is most important."

Entertainment was the context by which essential information was transmitted, historically.

Although Lopez says any writing should tell a good story, there is something much deeper.

"I've thought of books as medicine bundles for a long time," he says, defining medicine bundles as "a set of components from the natural world all tied to a dream — the guiding vision of your life."

Through books you can bring yourself back to a state of health Lopez says, and this means a writer must take great care.

It is an obligation. One must "get past the business of costumes," Lopez says. "Shallow writ-

ing is almost always fascinated with surface things."

The renewed health Lopez sees in American literature may even reach to established literary circles such as the National Book Awards, he says.

Lopez says in the past those awards have focused on New York writers, but in the future they may be based on regional writers.

He also hopes for a split between fiction and the short story in the awards and says he has seen a resurgence of interest in the short story as a genre, with writers such as John Sayles coming out with collections recently.

Lopez says the awards should serve the function of making people aware that there is a vigorous community of writers in this country, a community, at least in the West, that is concerned with the land and the writer's relationship to it.

Story by Glenn Boettcher

Graphic by Tom Etzel

Cover and interview photos by Jimmi Harris

A sampler of literary tastes

The people our candid observers searched for were not hard to find. Anyone with a book would pass. "What kinds of books do you like to read?" was our gambit. The answers that followed were as different as a novel by Mickey Spillane and a handbook of international politics.



"I read politically oriented books," says Nigel Griffith from Guyana, an International Studies major at the University. "In a country like Guyana, faced with overwhelming social problems, fiction is a luxury. There's a lot of problems in this world that you have to know something about before knowing what to think about them. I used to read fiction, mostly science fiction and fantasy, but I just don't have time for it anymore."

"I really don't read very much recent fiction. I read books like *Vanity Fair*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, but still I'd have to say I would rather read recent fiction."

Near the law school, we noticed a woman reading the translator's introduction to *The Brothers Karamazov*. Undaunted by the immensity of such a proposition, Sona Joiner, a graduate student, was looking for a new author in whose work to immerse herself.

"I find one writer and then read everything he has written to learn all about his life and mind. Usually, I try to find a Russian author," says Joiner.

"I like historical novels. I liked Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* but to tell you the truth I'll read anything. I'm not discriminatory. Other books I've read are a collection of short stories by Sinclair Lewis and the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* by Gertrude Stein."



"Catch me, kill me," we thought we heard someone scream. Alas, it was merely a book's title. "This book is part of my vacation reading list," said Jenny Johnstone, in Eugene from Washington, D.C., where she works as an urban planner. "I like fiction because I get enough non-fiction at work. I usually read much deeper and thoughtful books than this. Some books I've really liked are *I Hear That Lonesome Whistle Blow* by Dee Brown (who also wrote *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*) and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Usually I check books out from the library but if I really like a book I'll buy it so I can read it again and again. That's what I did with Hunter Thompson's book.

"But just the same," confesses Johnstone, "Deep in my heart, I'm still a mystery freak."

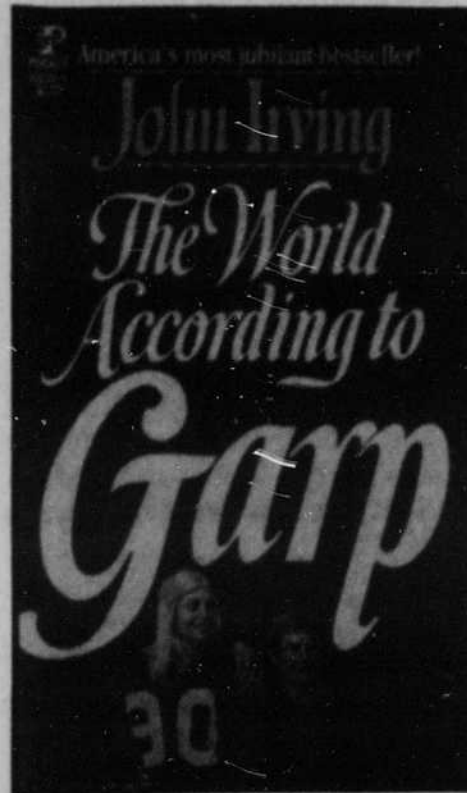


Venturing farther from our campus confines, we made it to the second floor of the University Bookstore where Tetsuo Horiuchi, a recent emigrant from Japan, was perusing *More Joy: A Lovemaking Companion to The Joy of Sex*.

"I read detective stories," said Horiuchi with conviction. "But I must tell you I still read books written in Japanese. Sometimes I read an English version of Mickey Spillane. In Japan there are many American authors we like. Richard Brautigan, J.D. Salinger, John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway are all popular."

And we left our last mental traveler for the day to enjoy that other world called the book, a world sometimes more fantastic and violent than the real one but nonetheless a much more serene place to be. By Dave Steinman

Books



The World According to Garp
By John Irving
©1976 Pocketbooks
\$2.75, paperback

or suffers an ignominious natural death.

Before Garp is assassinated, he becomes responsible for the death of one of his children and for another child losing half his sight.

Garp's mother, a famous feminist author, is also assassinated. Her friends include the members of an all-woman protest group known as the Ellen Jamesians. They have cut out their tongues to protest the rape of an 11-year-old girl.

Then there is Garp's best friend (after his wife), Roberta Muldoon, a transsexual and ex-tight end for a professional football team.

If this freakishness seems too much, I won't mention that Garp's mother is killed by an out-of-season deer hunter at a New Hampshire political rally or that Garp, dressed in drag, is beaten by feminists at his mother's funeral.

Actually, between all the bad breaks that come Garp's way, there is a great deal of laughter and, unless one wants to be weighed down by all the realistic tragedies befalling Garp and his family, it would be best to take this novel as a satire.

Fortunately, when Garp enters middle age and the book's humor is supplanted by the mockery of growing old, the story is brought to a swift ending.

So, indeed, let's laugh. In *The World According to Garp*, it is wise to fantasize and laugh at all of life's indecencies.

Practically everyone in the novel is the victim of homicide Oregon Daily Emerald

Because the book is already in paperback it's worth buying. If it was still hardback, I would advise waiting until the library got its copies.

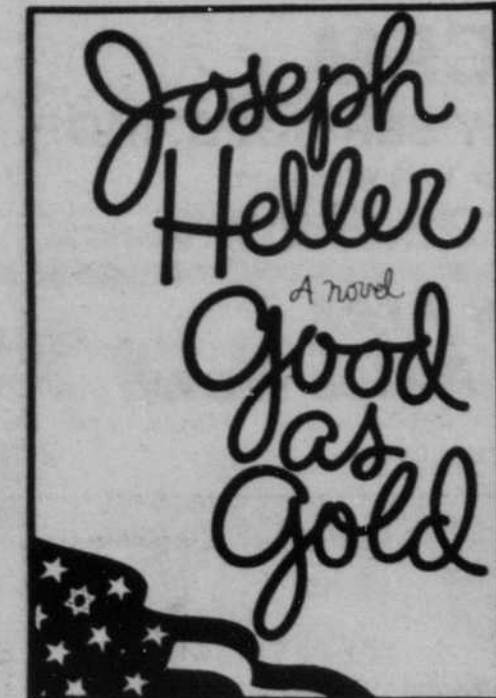
It shouldn't take more than four nights of intense reading to devour the novel, a masterful story in the tradition of English satirist Henry Fielding. Fielding, of course, managed to infuse his heroes with a manly, almost stoical, laughter and calmness to get them through the bad times. But for the overly sincere and sensitive Garp, his own death is almost a blessing. Perhaps this is demonstrative of the one philosophical quail I have with *The World According to Garp*. For all the humor Irving tries to put in his work, there still isn't enough for Garp to overcome life's tragedies with anything more than a grim endurance. By Dave Steinman

Good as Gold
By Joseph Heller
©1979 Simon and Schuster
\$12.95, hardcover

Good as Gold, Joseph Heller's latest novel, lives up to standards set by *Catch 22*. Though *Good as Gold* lacks the quotability of his earlier book, Heller deserves credit for this critique of American lifestyle, education, government and other hypocrisies.

The book follows the meteoric rise of Dr. Bruce Gold to medium importance. This hack author achieves fame by giving the President's book *My First*

Year in Office a favorable review. The President spent his first year in office writing *My First Year in Office* and the book lacked substance. But this doesn't bother Gold. The review gets him a shot at every position in Washington, from Secretary of State to the top — unnamed source.



Before he gets the job he must trade in his dumpy Jewish wife for something tall and blonde and gain the approval of a President who spends his time asleep.

Gold becomes a part of Washington life — a world of spies, politics and girls named "Sweets." He makes a name for himself by originating the phrases "I don't know" and "That's mind boggling." Officially, though, he has no position. "I can just about guaran-

tee you'll get an appointment," says a presidential adviser, "though I can't promise anything."

In the meantime Gold tries to write a book on the Jewish experience. *Good as Gold*, it turns out, is that book. First Gold believes he has never had a Jewish experience. He has never met an anti-Semite, and has spent most of his time around colleges. By the middle of the book his political career rests in the hands of a man who called him a "Kike filly fucker." Gold has escaped his wife, renounced his daughter, is trying to ship his Jewish father off to Florida and is courting a young blonde.

The message, it seems, is that the Jewish experience is a prolonged attempt to look Protestant.

Gold, in the end, gives up his struggle for fame and returns to an honest life and his dumpy Jewish wife. Probably Heller has seen an analyst since his heavy and laboring book, *Something Happened*, and is working on his attitude. Even so, Heller should be able to work around happy endings.

Elsewhere, Heller's cheerfulness does not get in the salad. The novel takes place in short comic bursts; each chapter stands apart from the rest and can be read separately or together, like an American Heritage Great Chiefs collection. All are more enjoyable and perceptive than any Art Buchwald column. By Jock Hatfield