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BOOKS BY LOIS WADSWORTH

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A fateful meeting

TRASK by Don Berry, 1960. OSU Press, 2004.
Paperback, \$18.95.

Published in 1960 by Viking Press, the late Don Berry's novel, *Trask*, takes me back to my first literary love, the Western. Set in Oregon in the 1840s, the book is loosely based on real-life trapper and mountain man, Elbridge Trask. Berry's novel follows Trask as he makes an exploratory trip from the Clatsop Plains to Tillamook Bay, accompanied by Wakila, a young Clatsop man in need of mentorship, and Charley Kehwa, a spiritual leader of the Clatsop tribe who sees something special in the white man.

Trask is a thoroughly unsentimental and restless man. When he itches to travel, his good humored wife, Hannah, prepares the necessary packsacks, supplies and clothing for the trip into rugged, hostile country where white men have not traveled before.

Berry wasn't content to write the travel adventures of three men in the wilderness, although he writes about them and their trip with great dramatic sensibility. Berry was interested in the psychological and spiritual differences between Trask and his Indian guides and friends. Later in the story, Berry mines the interactions between Trask and Kilchis, the leader of the Killamooks, for these distinctions and finds the two men notably honest in their discussion.

In its larger context, Berry's story explores the possibilities of a more reasoned path the two nations faced at that moment of history. When American settlers reached the Pacific Ocean, they found a people who had always lived there, and they destroyed the people and the balanced way of life they had perfected. But between Trask and Kilchis, a middle way opened. To solidify their contract, Trask elected to go on a Searching, a spiritual wilderness experience from which the participant returns with a vision that changes his life, or he dies.

In 2004, the future of two great civilizations is at stake. Set in an ancient culture where we are the invaders, the drama between warriors plays out with no participant in touch with a way to lift the struggle above the armed conflict from which little good will come. Yet nothing is more desperately needed than a middle path.

Trask satisfies on many levels, especially as a novel of place. Despite its Northwest regional setting, it is an ageless story with particular relevance to our time. Highest recommendations. **ew**

BOOK NOTES (June 24 - July 29): Silverfish Review Press presents a poetry reading at 5 pm on June 25 at Tsunami Books with **Clem Starck, Charles Goodrich, Paul Hunter and Rodger Moody**. ... "The Role of Festivals in Musical Life" is the subject of *The New York Times* classical music critic, chief rock critic now senior cultural correspondent, **John Rockwell's** speech at noon on June 26 in the Soreng Theater, Hult Center. ... *Register-Guard* columnist **Bob Welch** (*American Nightingale*) signs books 2-4 pm on June 26 at B Daltons in Gateway Mall. ... **William Sullivan** (*Cabin Fever*) shows slides and talks about his new book at 6:30 pm on July 2 at the Eugene Public Library, downtown. ... Art and the Vineyard's (July 2, 3 and 4) Oregon Authors Table features **Mabel Armstrong, Carol Ann Basset, Joe Blakely, Jo Brew, Tom Cantwell, Lynette Chiang, Judy Dippel, Bob Doppelt, Carola Dunn, Barbara Edmonds, Jan Eliot, Barbara and Daniel Gleason, Sylvia Hart Wright, Scott and Tiffany Haugen, Ann Herrick, Nancy Hopps, David Imus, Leigh Ann Jasheway, Cub Kahn, Lauren Kessler, Robert Kono, Larry McKaughan, Jim Meacham, Don Morehouse, Bruce Holland Rogers, Ed Rondo, Colleen Sell, Alan Siporin, Jesse Springer, Nedra Sterry, William L. Sullivan, Bernie Taylor, Steven Ungerleider, Dean Van Leuven and Bob Welch**. ... Saudi poet **Nimah Nawwab** (*The Unfurling*) reads at 5 pm on July 8 at Tsunami Books. ... The Pacific Northwest Writers Association's 49th annual summer conference welcomes true crime writer **Ann Rule** as keynote speaker at 7 pm on July 17, Hilton Seattle Airport and Conference Center. Dinner tickets, \$60. See www.pnwa.org. ... Oregon Literary Arts presents *Raymond Carver: Carver Country* on July 6-25 and *Ursula K. LeGuin: Earth Stories* on July 29-Aug. 15. Theatrical performances at 8 pm on Thurs. - Sat., and at 7 pm on Sun., at 3430 S.E. Belmont, Portland. (503) 227-2583 for tickets.

