

Not Clowning Around

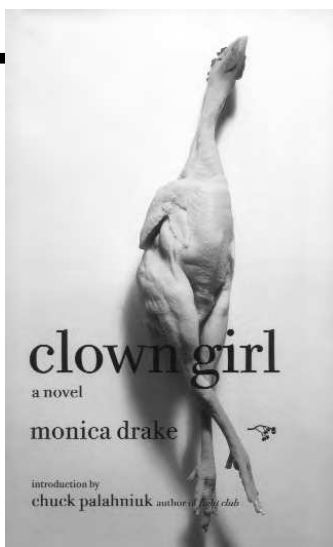
Monica Drake's debut isn't baloney

CLOWN GIRL, fiction by Monica Drake. Hawthorne Books & Literary Arts, 2006. Paperback, \$15.95.

Sniffles lives in Baloneytown, in the sunroom of a house belonging to her ex, Herman. Herman's current ladyfriend of sorts, Nadia-Italia (Sniffles can't keep her name straight), isn't exactly welcoming to Sniffles, who is battling the outside world and her own tangled ideals in search of a life that will let her practice her art — including her clown interpretation of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*.

Clown Girl is Portlander Monica Drake's first novel, and it's easy to imagine something of the City of Roses in Sniffles' world, where Baloneytown residents hide from the cops and men from King's Row pay top dol-

Balloon Tying for Christ when she faints, starting off a chain of unfortunate events. A nice cop who smells of cinnamon helps her up and then keeps reappearing; doctors tell her different things are wrong with her; her friend Crank sets up iffy jobs that bring in money but destroy Sniffles' spirit; she loses her precious rubber chicken and her dog, Chance. Her lover, Rex Galore, is in the Bay Area auditioning for Clown College, and she hasn't yet had the heart to tell him that right after he left, she had



a miscarriage.

And that's not even half of it. Drake's imagination is boundless, her compassion intense. No matter how absurd a situation this antiheroine gets herself into, it's impossible not to will her to get back out. The strange world that Drake creates in *Clown Girl* is peculiarity entrancing and wholly, vividly imagined: You can substitute any put-upon, impoverished, outside-the-mainstream or even simply imperfect sort of individual or group for her clowns, or you can

read *Clown Girl* as a gorgeous mix of character study and unlikely manifesto about the artist's place in the world. Sniffles — Nita, the rare times she uses her real name, or Clown Girl to Nadia-Italia — is lost in a world that doesn't know what to do with her, but she's also lost in her own world, the one where juggling flaming torches in the backyard at 4 am is nothing to bat an eye at. The world won't make room for Sniffles, so she has to make room for the world, even the parts of it that she's always run away from. She is the one who has to open her eyes, put down the valerian and leave the nest — or, in this case, the clown-costume stuffed antique ambulance. **EW**

Monica Drake reads at 7 pm Thursday, March 8 at the UO Bookstore.

Drake's imagination is boundless, her compassion intense.

lar for dates with clowns. There are clown fetishists and clown haters; there are questionable jobs for clowns and places where clown-bashing is a danger. Sniffles, when the book begins, is working from the manual

BOOK NOTES: Jerry Olftion speaks on "Science Fiction Demystified," 6:30 pm 3/1, Baker Downtown Center. \$10; Willamette Writers members free. **Dorianne Laux** reads from *Facts About the Moon* and **Laton Carter** reads from *Leaving*, 7 pm 3/6, Knight Library, UO. **Tad Williams** reads from *Shadowplay*, 7 pm 3/6, Powell's in Beaverton. **Malidoma Some** discusses *Of Water and the Spirit*, 7 pm 3/7, Tsunami Books. **Monica Drake** reads from *Clown Girl*, 7 pm 3/8, UO Bookstore. **Ellen Klages** reads from *The Green Glass Sea*, 2 pm 3/10, Powell's on Burnside, Portland. **Kevin Young** reads, 7:30 pm 3/12, First Congregational Church, Portland. \$18, \$14 stu., sr., \$5 youth. **Jennifer Baumgardner** reads from *Look Both Ways*, 7:30 pm 3/13, Powell's on Burnside, Portland. **Tim Flannery** reads from *The Weather Makers*, 7 pm 3/14, Powell's in Beaverton. **Mary Gaitskill** and **George Saunders** speak at 7:30 pm 3/15, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland. \$26, \$20 stu., sr., \$5 youth. **William Vollman** reads from *Poor People*, 7:30 pm 3/15, Powell's on Burnside, Portland.



Jennifer Baumgardner



Dorianne Laux
Facts About the Moon

Laton Carter
Leaving

Poetry Reading and Booksigning
Tuesday, March 6, 2007 • 7 p.m.
UO Gerlinger Alumni Lounge • FREE EVENT

895 E 13th • 346-4331 • UOBookstore.com

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
BOOKSTORE

HELP SARA SMILE would like to thank the silent auction donors who made the event at La Follette Gallery possible and thank you to all who attended who made the event successful. Please support these great businesses. They give back to the community.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Actors Cabaret of Eugene
Backstage
Baird Safe and Lock Co.
Baja Fresh
Brighter Homes Lighting
Broadway Apothecary
Contours Gym
Dept. of the Interior
Dr. Gray Grieve, Dentist
Emerald City Coffee
Eugene Beauty Supply
Euphoria
Footloose Massage Center
Gold's Gym | Hartwick's Kitchen Dining
and Entertaining
Hideaway Bakery
I Run With Scissors
IMUA, Inc.
Jerry's Home Improvement
Keystone's Cafe
Kohl Kraus, Artist
Lanette Hadley Photo Max
Long's Meat Market
Lucia Skin Care
Marge Templeton @ Juliari Design
McKenzie Honey Farms
Modern | Nichole Cummings LMT
Pacific Land & Sea Food Co.
Passion Parties By Patti
Ring of Fire
Ruby Chasm
Ruthie B's
Splash
Starbucks
The Basket Market
The Pearl Day Spa and
Hydrotherapy Clinic
The Shamrock Flowers & Gifts
Walter Libby LMT
Wolff Sun Center |
|--|---|---|

A very special thanks to **La Follette Gallery** who hosted the event.

MIND • BODY • SPIRIT

Alternative Fitness for Everyone

LifeForce Fit with Jay Mon, Wed 5:45 PM • Fri 9:00 AM • Sat 9:30 AM
Yoga, Weights, Creative Core & More

PowerFit Yoga with Jay Sun 6:00 PM
Upbeat, Continuous Yoga Asana Focusing on Strength and Flexibility

LifeForce Yoga (Iyengar style) with Jocelyn Mon 10:00 AM

Hatha Yoga with Glen Tu, Th 9:00 AM

Prenatal Yoga with Anita Sun 10:00 AM

Mama/Baby Yoga Wed 10:30 AM

LifeForce Moves with Susanna Th 5:45 PM
Global Dance, Bhuto, Feldenkrais & More



1615 Oak Street • 743-0778
www.lifeorcefitnessproject.com

ASK JAY ABOUT 1 ON 1
FITNESS TRAINING SPECIALS