

Interesting characters fill novel set in fictional Michigan town

Q ROAD
by Bonnie Jo Campbell (Scrivener, \$24.00).
BY VICKI DIAZ
CORRESPONDENT

In the fictional Michigan community of Greenland Township, Bonnie Jo Campbell's fascinating carnival of characters sparks her debut novel, sets it aglow, and eventually turns it into a dazzling conflagration. The play is not so much the thing here as the players, all of whom are as colorful and varied as a delightful circus troupe (in actuality, the Kalamazoo writer herself once worked under the Big Top).

The players aren't circus performers, though, but residents of a region that is slowly succumbing to suburban development, just as the Potawatomi Indians of the area once succumbed to another form of "civilization."

The story, set mostly during October 1989, starts off with a singularly compelling image, as "caterpillars hump across Queer Road to get to the fields and windbreaks of George Harland's rich river valley land. With their bellies full of dandelion greens and native plantains, these orange-and-black-banded woolly bears crawl at about four feet per minute, in search of niches where they can spend the win-

ON THE ROAD

Bonnie Jo Campbell will be in Ann Arbor signing books and meeting readers 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15, at the Shaman Drum book shop, 315 South State, Ann Arbor. Campbell, who grew up on a small Michigan farm, started writing fiction after earning a master's degree in mathematics in 1992. Her collection *Women & Other Animals* won the Associated Writing Programs prize for short fiction; her story *The Smallest Man in the World* was awarded a Pushcart Prize. She earned a masters of fine arts degree from Western Michigan University and lives with her husband in Kalamazoo. She created a microbrew to go with her novel, called Q Brew. It's available through Kraftbrau Brewery in Kalamazoo.

Campbell's Web site is at www.bonniejocampbell.com. For information about Shaman Drum, call (734) 612-7407.

ter."

Some of the woolly bears will make it across, of course. Some will not.

The format of the novel may seem a bit choppy and off-putting at first, but it ultimately works just right and hangs together like a well-woven, vivid tapestry. To picture Campbell's construct, imagine a movie in which we first look in on one character, then another and another and another, until we have met them all. Then, over

time, we begin to see just what and how much they mean to each other.

At the heart of the quietly moving tale is George Harland, an aging, unpretentious farmer whose land and livelihood seem to hold little in the way of a future. Then, one day, while he's out plowing his crops, he spots what appears to be a peculiar vision, in the person of a 17-year-old gun-toting girl named Rachel Crane. Eventually, he falls in love with Rachel, and

through this unlikely union—and a sickly boy named David who loves the land as much as Rachel does—George will experience a life-changing event.

In this place of coyotes and concrete, pumpkins and preachers, vultures and vinyl siding, we also meet senior citizen April May Rathburn ("she wouldn't say she'd wasted her life in Greenland...but she had been sinning here on low heat an awfully long time"); born-again baseball pitcher, Milton Taylor, who serves beer alongside his sermonettes; tabloid fan, Elaine Shore, who's convinced that aliens have their eye on Kalamazoo County; pretty Nicole Hoekstra, who spends part of the time planning the murder of her philandering husband and part of the time planning their dream home together; chubby sheriff, Tom Parks, who yearns for vending machine treats almost as much as he yearns for his fanboy kids and someone to love; plus others.

Even characters from the past, such as George's malingering brother, Johnny, and a rural schoolteacher once fired from her job because of a love affair, take on life in the present. The Potawatomi, as they hunt the long-ago forests of this region, and as they set off on their 900-mile trek to an unknown reser-

vation far away from their homeland, are no less indelible for their brief appearance on these pages.

As we watch each character's life intertwine with another, we slowly begin to feel that all seem fated to be connected in some terrible disaster, maybe even something as devastating as the tornado that descended upon the little community in 1934, destroying the newly planted

crops, embedding stones in flesh, even sending the creek off in a different direction.

Q Road is a novel that will appeal to readers everywhere, but most especially, of course, to those who are well-acquainted (as is Campbell) with the rich charm of rural Michigan.

Vicki Diaz is a Livonia resident who writes about books for the Observer & Eccentric.

Film explores Israel's history

The Jewish Community Center will show a documentary film about the first 20 years of Israel's history as a state at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 30.

The film, *In Search of Peace: Israel From 1948-1968 - Part 1*, is a preview film for the center's Fifth Annual Lenore Marwell Film Festival, which will be held in April and May 2003 throughout metro Detroit.

In Search of Peace will be shown at the Jimmy Prentiss Morris Building, 15110 West 10 Mile, Oak Park.

Michael Douglas, Anne Bancroft and other celebrities narrate the film, which includes archival shots of Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, Moshe Dayan and Yassir Arafat.

Admission is \$8 at the door. (248) 432-5577.

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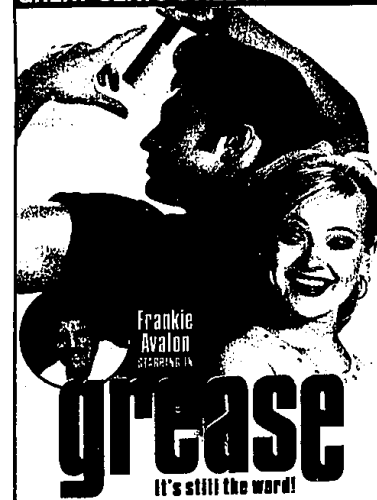
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UPCOMING EVENTS**

Abbey Theatre of Ireland

Euripides' Medea
Featuring Fiona Shaw
Deborah Warner & Peter
TODAY! 2 pm
Power Center - Ann Arbor
"The most essential ticket of this theater season." (The New York Times, Oct 4, 2002)
A classic Greek tragedy fit for the world of today, Euripides' Medea is a gripping tale of a woman scorned and her horrifying revenge.
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Takács Quartet
Garrick Ohlsson
piano

Sun 10/20 7 pm
Rushmore Auditorium - Ann Arbor
"The depth of the Takács interpretations, matched with its superlative virtuosity technique and a consistently warm, velvety tone, made an attractive core to name it preeminent among active string quartets." (Washington Post)
This performance features the ensemble with UMS Distinguished Artist Award recipient Garrick Ohlsson for Ernst Dohnányi's Piano Quintet.
PROGRAM
Beethoven String Quartet in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5
Ravel String Quartet in F Major (1927-28)
Dohnányi Piano Quintet No. 1 in c minor (1895)
Sponsored by Meda Sponsor MICH 91.3 FM

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson
mezzo-soprano

Robert Tweten piano
Wed 10/23 8 pm
Lyda Mendelsohn Theatre - Ann Arbor
"There isn't a more beautiful voice before the public today." (Boston Phoenix) Musical America's 2001 Vocalist of the Year, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson leaves cities at a loss for superlatives as a riveting operatic performer who sings everything from Baroque to contemporary music.
Sponsored by National City

Orquestra de São Paulo

John Neeshling conductor
Sérgio and Odair Assad guitars
Wed 10/30 8 pm
Michigan Theatre - Ann Arbor
The Orquestra de São Paulo brings the pre-eminent classical guitar duo, Sérgio and Odair Assad, to Ann Arbor for an All-Brazilian program. The Los Angeles Times raved "The interaction of the Brazilian siblings...reaches far beyond musical partnership into a kind of creative symbiosis."
ALL-BRAZILIAN PROGRAM
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H. Villa-Lobos Urupuru
C. Guarnieri Symphony No. 2
Wed & Thurs MICH 91.3 FM
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3 Great Reasons to Visit Midland this Fall!

Midland Gardens
Experience the beauty of Midland Gardens, a stunning landscape with a large tree and a building. The gardens are open from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and admission is \$5.00. For more information, call (505) 833-1234.

Nature of Diamonds
July 12 - November 3, 2002
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