

# The moontrap by don berry



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

It was on the 23rd day of January in the year 1932 at Rosewood Falls, MN when an award - winning author was born. Don Berry (1932 - 2001), the author of the novel entitled Moontrap has been the recipient of the Spur Award, Western Writers of America, 1963 for best historical novel (University of Oregon Libraries, 2008). Berry can be best remembered for the lasting influence as well as the universality of the themes of the stories he wrote. Just before the final days of his life, Berry continued to be a success as an author. This statement holds true as Berry concluded his "spore, Berryworks," - that which was considered to be his masterpiece (Don Berry, 2000).

Berry's Moontrap is a novel about a man caught between his lucid past and his vague future. The Oregon territory serves as the setting of his trilogy following the Trask (Oregon State University Press, 2004). His works, which include novels and sciencefiction short stories, lean towards the western genre. It was the publication of his three novels which has secured him a reputation for having a tight grasp of the American Pacific Northwest history.

The adventure stories he wrote shed light on the damaging effects of impinging white population on the Native American population. Berry's first ever novel, the Trask has been a stunning success of mature writing in the year 1960. Following the Trask was Moontrap, his second novel. Though it has not been equally commended as its predecessor, Moontrap is considered to be exceptional than the Trask (University of Oregon Libraries, 2008).

If there was a population to be considered as the one most devoted reading group it would be none other than the people of the Pacific Northwest. Reasons to support this claim is one too many. For one, there is the long

gray winter in the western part of the Cascades. This weather encourages warm and dry indoor activities. If there is the long gray winter of the west, there's the seclusion of the ranching region at the mountain's east. If these would still not suffice, there is the lavishness and variety of the crops produced by the riches of the regional publishers (Garmen, 2008).

It is our improved connection with these communities essential to our future which causes us a relief in our sense of selfishness and seclusion. Many other unique publishers find an opulent and generous home at the Pacific Northwest. This can be attributed to the region's open spaces of mind and geography (Garmen, 2008).

Oregon owes its publicity to the missionaries and fur traders. They are the ones who made Oregon familiar to the American population. The year was 1840 when a great deal of people broke new ground as they began to come by the Oregon Trail to the Willamette Valley. Most of the pioneers trace their origins from the Middle West farms. Their exodus has been brought by the ruthless weather condition and recurring sickness, national depression which began in the year 1837. There were some who only sought for adventure, though. For the majority, however, it was the search for a better material life than what they have which has driven them out of their homeland to the Willamette Valley.

Young businessmen from the Northeastern cities wanted to engage in the mercantile business as a form of livelihood in the urban areas of Oregon. These people consist the minority of Oregon emigrants during the pre-Civil War period. It was during the 1850s when Chinese immigrants came to the

gold fields at the south of Oregon. Even before the Civil War, African Americans can already be found at Oregon (Garmen, 2008).

The pre - Civil War Oregon's political life was for the most part, was based upon local issues. The majority party consisted of the Democrats. The Republicans as well as the Whigs do have their respective followers. The most important national concern during that time was whether slavery should be extended to the federal territories. Oregonians of the pioneer era busy themselves in farming. It was also during this time when Portland, the major city started to emerge. Other towns sprang up, thereafter.

Oregonians traded lumber, wheat and cattle to California in exchange for gold. With respect to the Oregonian's cultural life, schools, colleges and churches were set out. It was during the 1850s when Indian wars were ignited. This was brought about by the gold miners who broke out the Rogue River War (1855 - 1856) as they find their way to south Oregon. White farmers invaded the Indian lands at other parts of Oregon. This event brought the Indians on reservation. It was at the central Oregon during 1855 when the Warm Spring Reservation was founded for the Wasco, Walla Walla and the Paiutes (Garmen, 2008).

A transitional period in the New Oregon Territory happened during the 1850s. It was during this time when the settlers and lawmakers were working to control the uncivilized region. A white man who goes by the name Johnson " Jaybird" Monday has been living on a bend of the Willamette River near Oregon City. Monday was a former mountain man. He lives with his wife, Mary Deer Walking, who is about to give birth to their first child.

Walking, a common - law, Shoshone Indian has been married to Monday for seven years.

The couple wrestles to find their place in the settled society. Webster "Webb" T. Webster, Monday's old friend, paid a sudden visit one summer morning. Webster is a strident and unremorseful trapper. He has a crude humor and a stubborn obedience to the simple life (Oregon State University Press, 2004). He has no other frills of civilization (Tillabooks, 2006). It was him who led Monday through adventures which leaned dangerously close to lawlessness. It was through their misadventures which led Monday towards a rediscovery of his moral core. Monday's life takes us on a journey through rebelliousness, feat and misfortune (Oregon State University Press, 2004).

Moontrap gives an account of the conflict one man confronts in maintaining his old habits or fashioning a new life. It is a splendidly humorous comic and deeply moving rendition of the life in the Pacific Northwest (Oregon State University Press, 2004). It was a mixture of tough play, wit, lyric romance and the cruel realities of life (cited in Oregon State University Press, 2004). It follows Monday on his quest towards the realization that renouncing the austere honesty of mountain life for the bargain of civilization is a high a price to pay, indeed (Oregon State University Press, 2004).

The idea that a Shoshone Indian who is married to a white man and is about to give birth to their first born does not rest well with the authority that be, the powers of civilization who seemingly have the power over the fate of the region. This stark reality confronted Monday face to face as the judge refuse to record the name of Monday's son otherwise. " The judge insists on writing out the birth certificate as: Father: Johnson Monday, White. Mother: Mary

Deer Walking, Shoshone Indian. Child: Webster, son of Mary Deer Walking, Shoshone Indian, Bastard.” This reminded Monday that as he was once a mountain man, he will remain a mountain man (Tillabooks, 2006).

Moontrap leaves its readers the haunting questions like: What transpires of the mountain man when he arrives at the final verge? When the time comes that the Oregon territory has been established and America meets the Pacific, what remains to be the vestiges of old? (Tillabooks, 2006).

The powerful forces of civilization are left to squeeze out what is left of that freedom. As the account of the conclusion of an epoch, the last of the moral fiber of the mountain man, as civilization sweeps on the Oregon territory. “ Just as you can’t trap the reflection of the moon in a moving pool of water, so you can’t preserve the freedom of the old ways of life” (Tillabooks, 2006).

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