

"Loveroot" offers a bawdy look at feminist author

By Bill Roberts

Erica Jong, the author of the best selling novel *Fear of Flying*, has a new book of poetry, *Loveroot* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975). The poet is likable, the poems are not.

Loveroot leaves the reader with an impression of its witty, honest, feminist writer. Squeamish readers are warned that she can be bawdy. "The crotch will be the trellis for the vine" of her poetry, she declares.

But she has a healthy attitude, and though her celebrity seems based on her dealings with sex, she does not exploit the subject.

I think if I knew her, I would like her. I picture her as a frenzied poet holed up in a cheap apartment, wishing and writing.

Plays role

But although she plays the poet role well, her poems are not well written. Her metaphors only work so far, and then what may have seemed like a fresh idea turns out to be a clumsy, poorly thought out connection.

Jong's lines are unrhymed and their lengths vary, but convenience, not freedom, is her purpose. The lines don't have the rhythms of common speech, merely common rhythms.

Her reliance on earthy terms seems to keep sentimentality out, but there is often sentimental thinking behind the poems.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is "Mash Notes to the Dead & Letters to the Living." "Testament (Or, Homage to Walt Whitman)" is the lead poem in this section, and the best. Her poetry owes Whitman a great deal, both in

style and pose, and I suspect he is Jong's favorite poet.

After Keats

"Dear Keats" is the last poem of the first section and is packed with quotes from his writings. It looks as if Jong read all of Keat's letters and poems in one sitting and then, in a rapture, wrote a poem of her dazzled impressions.

Her appreciation for Keats is conveyed, but only a master like Keats could poetically handle the feelings his temperament aroused. Jong is no such master, and her poem is embarrassing.

The second section of *Loveroot* is "In the Penile Colony." It deals with liberation from the machismo mystique. Male readers should not be put off by this.

For one thing, both sexes would profit by such a liberation. For another, the extent of Jong's threat to male chauvinists

may be seen by this trite metaphor: "In a rotting forest, / we are lumberjacks / raising our double axes..." She has picked a wonderfully promising subject but has let us down.

Hungry

The third section of the book is "Hungering." The frustration of being a poet unable to write poetry is apparent in this section.

It includes poems such as "Insomnia & Poetry," whose title reflects the dullness to follow. "Unblocked," which compares the writer overcoming her inability to produce with constipation followed by diarrhea, is a curiously honest poem.

Loveroot's author is a likable person and the reader can come to know her. This is no small achievement. But good poetry is a larger achievement, and this book just doesn't make it.

short stuff

An organizational meeting for plant and animal ecology, climatology, soil science and physiology undergraduate and graduate students to apply for a National Science Foundation research grant is scheduled for Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in Oldfather Hall, room 413.

The Kernels, Corn Cobs and Tassels will meet Thursday at 6 p.m. in the Nebraska Union Ballroom.

A seminar for students receiving financial aid will be held today and Thursday in the Nebraska Union Small Auditorium from 2:30 to 4 p.m. The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aids is sponsoring the seminar to answer questions and explain instructions.

Accounting Club will meet today at 3:45 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. The meeting will cover curriculum and the interview process.

A Folk 'n Roll concert is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union Thursday.

ASUN standing committees will meet today at 9 p.m. in the Union. Anyone interested is welcome. For information, call 472-2581.

The ASUN Book Exchange will close today at 5 p.m. Students wishing to pick up books may do so Thursday and Friday 12-5 p.m. in the Union North-South Conference Rooms.

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