

Barbara Corrado Pope launches new career as a novelist

—Center for the Study of Women in Society, University of Oregon from the spring 2008 issue of the CSWS Review-

Barbara Corrado Pope, professor emerita in Women's Studies, has a passion for making history come alive, especially through the study of vibrant and strong women in every historical period. Barbara's devotion to women's studies and history inspired her to play a prominent role as a leader in fostering the integration of race and gender into the UO curriculum.

Now that she has retired from the double duties of directing and teaching in Women's Studies and the Honors College, she is delving into topics that she rarely had the opportunity to address in the classroom—French history and the visual arts. Instead of preparing a lecture however, Barbara is exploring new ways of sharing her knowledge through historical fiction. On the heels of the release of her first full-length novel, *Cézanne's Quarry*, Barbara affirms that retirement has opened the way to fulfilling her creative and literary urges.

“This is something I have always wanted to do,” said Barbara. “Like everyone else I wanted to write the great American novel – who hasn't? But for my first novel it was good to delve into history. It was something I knew, but it was also something that enabled me to develop my craft.”

Cézanne's Quarry is a murder mystery set in 1885 in Aix-en-Provence. The book weaves together many of Barbara's research interests while at the UO: the interconnections among the role of women, religion, and science in the nineteenth century as well as French intellectual and cultural history. The

book will be published in three languages. Pegasus Books will handle the American edition, while German publisher Ullstein List is coming out with an edition under the title, *Im Hellen Licht des Todes*. A Polish translation is expected in the winter of 2009.

The clues to the mystery lie hidden in the famously unexplained violence of Paul Cézanne's early paintings as well as in his relationship to the novelist Emile Zola, then considered France's greatest writer. The catalyst of the plot is a secret, turbulent love affair that Cézanne had with a woman in 1885. Biographers have never discovered her identity. In Barbara's novel she is the enigmatic Solange Vernet, a self-made woman who strives for social advancement by hosting a salon which discusses the artistic and scientific issues of the day. Vernet is murdered in the Bibémus quarry, a remote spot that Cézanne painted several times.

"This is a novel that, because of the way it explores the role of women in nineteenth-century France, will appeal to many women of all ages," said Barbara.

Barbara's presence on the UO has been central to the development of women's studies curriculum. She spearheaded the 1987 curriculum shift that required students to take a course focused on race and gender. Based on her tireless work to win innovative curriculum reform, Barbara was the first woman to win the Charles E. Johnson Memorial Award for "exceptional service to the University and the community" in 1991. She also received a Ford Foundation Grant which helped her establish a two-year seminar with input from eleven faculty members, many public speakers and events,

including a convocation. When the Ford Foundation came out with its publication of syllabi from twenty different universities, titled *Women Of Color and the Multicultural Curriculum*, eleven of the thirty-eight selected publications were from UO faculty members who had worked with Barbara. Her work in the Honors College was recognized by a scholarship established in her name.

Barbara is enjoying pouring her passion for exploring issues of gender, race and history into a literary venue. “To really establish my second career as novelist, I have to work on publicizing the first book while desperately wanting to finish the second!” she exclaims. “This will also be a murder mystery, tentatively called *The Blood of Lorraine*. I think this is where my commitments to the issue of race come into play. The theme of this book is the new anti-Semitism at the end of the nineteenth century in France.”

Barbara is bringing together the very best of her scholarship, pedagogy and personal interests into a new, post-retirement career. CSWS wishes her lots of success, and lots of readers. Her book is already available for pre-orders.

More information about *Cezanne’s Quarry* and Barbara Corrado Pope can be found by visiting www.cezannesquarry.com