

OVERLOOKED BOOKS

Neglected but noteworthy fiction of '88

By Bruce Allen
Special for USA TODAY



By Madeline Kraft
ERIC KRAFT: He offers an amusing, affectionate look at plain folks in 'Herb 'n' Lorna.'

Herb 'n' Lorna, by Eric Kraft (Crown, \$17.95). This unusual comic novel by the author of the acclaimed Peter LeRoy novels gets amazing tonal variations from its impudent premise: the narrator's discovery of his grandparents' secret lives in "the animated erotic jewelry industry." There's a little of Booth Tarkington, and a lot of Sinclair Lewis, in Kraft's affectionate picturing of ambitious plain folks living the American Dream. His mutually admiring pair may be purveyors of "coarse goods" — but they're also believable embodiments of the innocent entrepreneurial spirit of a bygone age. A sophisticated entertainment, and one of the year's most delightfully readable books.