

POETRY CORNER

Plasticene Age

by Lisa E. Baldwin
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Floating islands of discarded plastic
in seas that are rising and losing their brine,
colored by algae that bloom in the shallows,
red and bright green like a grandma in Advent,
decked out for Jesus who still hasn't come—

It was an accidental misconception.
Brought into the world in a sloppy chem lab,
suckled on greed and grown fat
on addictions and throw-away ethics,
plastic is everywhere.
On peaks in the Rockies,
and deep ocean trenches,
in winter snowfall and hurricane rains,
in the bellies of pelicans, bony and famished,
plastic abides.

Every micro-nano-tiny-bit adds a little heat
to the greenhouse,
adds a little weight to the burden.
Each single-use toss-out is another abuse
on domestic fowl and wild mammals,
chickens and quail, orcas and blues.
Plastics gas and foul the air, killing
blue skies and starry nights.

Our cities shed plastic like dead hair and skin cells,
into the soil, into the drains,
into our food, and our shrink-wrapped brains.
It sloughs off in our bodies
from hips, knees and tits.
It flows in our arteries and veins.
Plastic: our legacy, shame and demise.
That's it.
Pleistocene is over.
Plastic is King.

Lisa E. Baldwin, a fifth-generation Oregonian, has lived in the Lower Applegate community of Jerome Prairie since 1966. Baldwin is also a past president of the Oregon Poetry Association and is an active member of the southern Oregon poetry community. Have a submission for Poetry Corner, either by an Applegate resident or about the Applegate? Email it to Applegater poetry editor Paul Tipton at ptipton4u2c@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW IN BRIEF

Secret Diary is a fine fictional tale of an Applegate area pioneer

By Margaret Myers

C. Ellen Watts has published the sequel to *The Secret Diary of Emily A: Gold Miner's Daughter*. That story took place mostly in the Squaw Lakes area of Jackson County, east of Applegate Lake. It described pioneer life through the eyes of a child and was both informative and entertaining.

In *The Secret Diary of Emily A: Beyond These Mountains*, "Emily A" chronicles her life from the age of 16, describing the life of a pioneer woman starting in 1909. This novel depicts the perseverance of the pioneers, how rugged, loyal, and committed they were in accepting their way of life.

I highly recommend this book to all people of all ages. It's a great book!

Margaret Myers

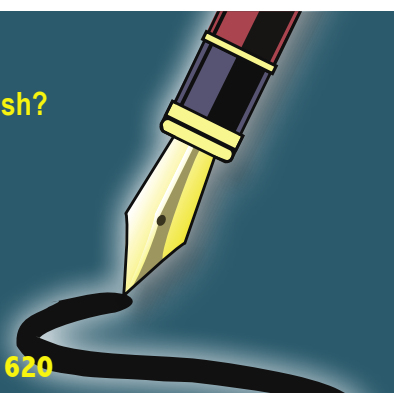
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BOOK REVIEW

HAMNET

A Novel of the Plague

Maggie O'Farrell

Alfred A. Knopf

New York, 2020

BY CHRISTIN LORE WEBER

A stunning skill of the writer Maggie O'Farrell is her ability to describe a scene with such vivid precision that her readers see it too. How does she do that? I wonder as I read the first page and then as I continue, page upon page, all the way to the end. Some reviewers recommend having a tissue available for that moment, but I had a completely different reaction than tears. Awe. Awe is what I was feeling—rendered motionless by pure awe.

The names "Hamnet" and "Hamlet" were interchangeable in the sixteenth century when William Shakespeare wrote his play, and history records that the playwright had three children—Suzanne and the twins, Hamnet and Judith. The boy, Hamnet, died in 1596, age 11. About four years later his father wrote the play, Hamlet. Into this scant data, O'Farrell inserts her imagination for storytelling and characterization, and the result is this book.

Whether or not you are a Shakespeare fan, this book has the power to draw you in and fascinate you. If you know Shakespeare's plays and poetry, you will enjoy searching for connections between this story and what remains of his life's work. But the book is complete without that. O'Farrell catapults us into the final century of the bubonic plague, still cropping up here and there in Europe and England. "The pestilence" they call it when they talk of it at all. They haven't had a case of it in several years. But they keep an eye out. We find ourselves on Henley Street in Stratford at the home of a glove maker.

"A boy is coming down a flight of stairs. The passage is narrow and twists back on itself. He takes each step slowly, sliding himself along the wall, his boots meeting each tread with a thud... It is a close windless day in late summer, and the downstairs room is slashed by long strips of light. The sun glowers at him from outside, the windows latticed slabs of yellow, set into the plaster."

Here is the beginning of a story of a family in the English countryside, a family of complex and intriguing characters with



deep secrets and raw but often hidden emotions. It could be any family, though, and that makes it easy to slip into the house on Henley street and watch the goings on from the shadows. So often I wanted to warn them—"Be careful! That one has it in for you!" Or, "No! Don't leave right now! Something awful is about to happen upstairs. You'll never forgive yourself."

While the title points towards the only son, Hamnet, the conflict we experience is centered in the heart and mind of Agnes (or Anne, as she is better known by history), the playwright's wife. More than anyone else in the novel, Agnes left me breathless. She is magical. She shimmers. She's other-worldly and knows things others don't. Therefore, she is constantly seeking for her place, her role in the family, in the town, in the world at large. She's a forest creature, an herbalist, an empath, a healer, wounded as she is. Maybe she expects too much of herself. I kept wanting to warn her. Even now I can't stop thinking of her, believing that any woman will recognize her, sometimes with awe, other times with foreboding. When we first meet her on page 16 she is with the honey bees:

Agnes is circling the skeps, listening for whatever the bees are telling her; she is eyeing the swarm in the orchard, a blackish stain spread throughout the branches that vibrates and quivers with outrage. Something has upset them.... Later and for the rest of her life, she will think that if she had left there and then, if she had gathered her bags, her plants, her honey, and taken the path home, if she had heeded her abrupt, nameless unease, she might have changed what happened next... she might have headed off what was coming.

Hamnet is a dazzling read!

Christin Lore Weber

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*Voices of the Applegate***Pause continues for
Voices of the Applegate**

We are sorry to say that, due to the pandemic, *Voices of the Applegate* is still on hold.

You can keep in touch with us on Facebook (*Voices of the Applegate*).

If things change during the next few months, we will certainly let you know.

We hope you will all stay healthy and hopefully we'll see you soon.

Joan Peterson • 541-846-6988

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