

POETRY CORNER

"a leaf of grass is no less than
the journey-work of the stars."
—Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

One World

By Lisa E. Baldwin
leb.97527@gmail.com

It is all one and none
as splendid without the other.
Where does the beauty of the leaf end
and the tree begin? or the tree end
and the forest begin? How does one
distinguish the fragrant marvel of the forest
from the astounding grandeur of the mountains?
or the shaded river pool
where the water slows to cool
as separate from the rapid run
to a plunging waterfall?
A flower, a frog, a hawk in the sky,
a fir cone, a sparrow, a blackberry vine,
salmon and weasel and humankind,
We are all one and none
lives well, none lives long alone.

Native Oregonian and resident of the Lower Applegate Valley since 1966, Lisa lives and works on her small farm in Jerome Prairie. After teaching English for 30 years in Grants Pass public schools, she retired in 2015 and began her current career as a Poetry Evangelist—writing and publishing poetry, teaching and organizing poetry workshops, spreading the good news of the poetic world and encouraging others to write as an act of art. In 2021, Lisa launched N8tive Run Press and published two volumes of poetry: Penned Up: Writing Out the Pandemic by the Applegate Poets, and her own collection, Truths and Consequences. A second book of Lisa's poems, Jerome Prairie Creation Myths and Other Farm Tales, is forthcoming in June from N8tive Run Press. (For more information or to order, send an email to N8tiveRun.enterprises@gmail.com.)

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.

Essay **Becoming Turkey**

BY G.A. BRADSHAW

Summer in the Applegate Valley paints swaths of greens and golds across its standing fields and mountainsides. It is a time of incomparable beauty.

One evening, as beams of dusk slanted down, I saw five wild turkey males walking slowly across a burnished field of gold. The scene was not extraordinary, except that one turkey was limping. His comrades flanked him, two to the right and two to the left, matching their steps to his labored pace. The band of brothers slowly made their way to the wooded edge where they sought shelter for the night.

Bird injuries are not uncommon. A searing shotgun pellet or graze of a car barreling down a country road often results in a battered wing or broken leg. Both are almost always lethal. Turkeys travel and forage by foot, and wing their way to shelter in trees. To lose one of these vital means of motion puts a turkey at grave risk. What was striking that evening was that the lame turkey had not been abandoned. Forsaking pressing agendas such as finding food and getting to nighttime safety in the boughs of a tree, the four friends chose instead to walk at their injured companion's side. The turkeys put companionship before their individual needs.

This companionable gesture is often referred to as *accompaniment*. Its roots relate to the Spanish *compañero*, "friend," and Latin *ad cum panis*, "to break bread." In everyday speak, accompaniment simply describes the commitment of one to



Wild turkeys. Photo: Jeff Borchers.

support and journey with another, to put oneself in the space of need and vulnerability of someone who is less fortunate.

Accompaniment became a revived social ethic in the 1970's, when it was applied to human sociopolitical issues. By dissolving the inequity of privilege created by social and economic disparities separating the poor from the rich, the vulnerable from the protected, social workers such as Ignatio Martín-Baró sought to replace a polarizing culture of violent domination with one of compassionate inclusion.

This shift is not superficial. It compels us to see beyond external form and circumstance to who lies within, a shared soul and sensibilities. Accompaniment blurs and even dissolves individual identity by re-defining wellness and happiness as something in the plural. Accompaniment is a shared sense of self, an unbreakable bond of kinship.

The wild turkeys provide a living model, here in our own backyards, of how we humans can plant our feet beside each other, including our wildlife neighbors, and give of ourselves in mutual support. The turkeys' gentle care embodies a powerful ethical path to guide us back to who we really are: a community of all beings held together by common respect and love.

G.A. Bradshaw
The Kerulos Center for Nonviolence
bradshaw@kerulos.org, kerulos.org

BOOK REVIEW

The Franciscan Conspiracy

John Sack
Riverwood Books
Ashland, Oregon 2005
Available at the public library

BY CHRISTIN LORE WEBER

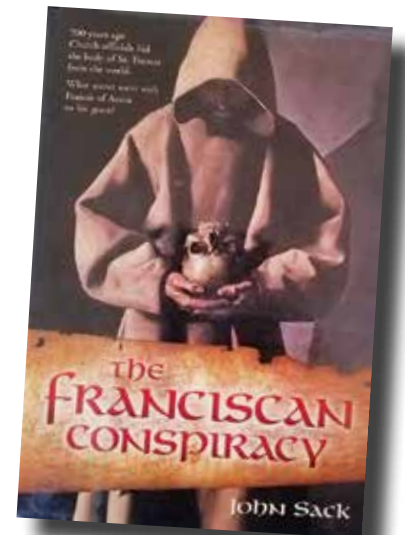
Here is a book worth many reads. I read it first in 2005 just after it was released, then again in 2010 just after I met the author, then again, but maybe not for the last time, after I married the author and before I took on the task of writing this review. As I closed the book this time, still moved by the ending, I took a deep breath and disturbed John by saying to him, "It is sad that this book of yours was not published by Random House or another of the major publishers, because it is one of the key writings of our era, and in this country it received no marketing at all."

I thought of the 17 foreign translations displayed between medieval stone bookends in John's office. (I enjoy paging through the exotic languages editions for the pure art of, say, Chinese ideograms or Cyrillic print). It sold well across the ocean. Here in America, it ought to have been sent for reviews to major newspapers and had a "First Fiction" review in *Publishers' Weekly*, and John ought to have been on tour for readings and signings. Even you, here in the Applegate, may have missed this book although it was beautifully published in hardcover right down the road.

The Franciscan Conspiracy is a history-mystery set in 13th-Century Italy, 50 years after the death of Francis of Assisi, a saint loved and honored throughout the modern world. Division among his followers, corruption in and between church and state, rough-and-tumble among classes and between the city-states, problems with growing trade between nations (all the usual!) intensified the mystery surrounding a very disturbing question: What happened to the saint's body? Where was it hidden? And why?

Many secrets have been tucked away in the annals of history—in code, inscribed in ancient books, on parchment scrolls, carved into dungeon walls, on chapel or cathedral stones, as runes on semi-precious gems, on family crests. Many of them remain secreted in minds and hearts even after evidence of their fact is scuffed into unintelligibility.

John Sack researched five years to produce this stunning and mind-bending book. His office bookcase is still filled with scholarly works, original documents



by followers of Francis, interpretations of those documents, letters, conflicting biographies, descriptions of the places Francis walked and the people he encountered, tales and legends that might or might not be factual, religious and social rituals and celebrations.

When he and I went on pilgrimage to the places of Francis years after he'd written the book, it was hard to believe he hadn't been there before; he had so internalized and reproduced in his writing everything we were experiencing. The reality simply matched his imagination, he explained. His construction of the 13th century culture of Francis and his followers—earthy detail and intelligent entanglements of his characters in their social, political, and religious factions—immerses the reader in that medieval world.

Into this place, rich in sensuous detail, revealing complex ideological conflicts within a church and state devolving towards decay and treachery, John Sack sets his main character, Fra Conrad, on a mission to unearth a secret about Francis that could crumble the foundations of that world. Where might that secret be hidden, and why? During Conrad's mission this reader grew to love him, asking John how he managed to create a character so real, to which he replied, "Some of my best friends are fictional."

In a conclusion that some readers have found heretical, others experience as deeply satisfying, and I think of as wisely both, the author demonstrates his literary genius. He plants sly clues from the book's beginning that the reader might dismiss because they fit so well the delusions of the medieval era and the deliberate complicity of a small group of men. Too bad, implies the author of this international best-selling book, because the truth those men hid was really so much better than the fable they conspired to make us believe.

Christin Lore Weber
storyweaver1@gmail.com

Rogue Harm Reduction volunteers needed

Rogue Harm Reduction, a volunteer-run, nonprofit health collective based in Williams and sponsored by the HIV Alliance, promotes community wellness and harm reduction strategies in response to substance use and other community health concerns. Needed are volunteers to help offer free, nonjudgmental, STI screenings and naran/naloxone overdose response training and giveaways from 10:30 am-1:30 pm the first Sunday of each month in Williams. If you think you would be a good fit, email rogueharmreduction@gmail.com.

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