

# The art of becoming a poet

BY GABRIELA ENGLÉSOME

We all know that the Applegate Valley is special—the landscape, the hardy and enterprising people, the unspoiled nature. There's poetry here too—and, perhaps, in you as well.

**Being a transplant to the Applegate Valley,** I am on the lookout for community events that bring people together. I go to the Williams Pancake Breakfast, to the weekly market, to open mic night at Cocina 7, and to the town meeting, for example. Last April I decided to go to Ruch Library for a meeting that I had seen advertised with Lawson Inada, the former Poet Laureate of Oregon.

I expected a poetry reading. What I got instead was a new way to connect with my community.

Mr. Inada hardly read any poems. He told us it was the 100th anniversary

of another former Oregon Poet Laureate, William Stafford, who had written simply about his community and nature and who liked being connected to the people around him. Mr. Inada was interested in the Applegate. He asked us about ourselves and about life in the Applegate. He joked that we live on roads, not on avenues or streets like in the city. He asked each of us where we lived and what our road was called. We got to know each other a little.

**Then Mr. Inada passed out some index cards** and asked us to write a few lines about our road, about our valley. He walked behind us and turned on soothing mood music.

Astonishingly, what everyone wrote sounded great. It turns out that by jotting a few inspired words on a three-by-five index card, you can hardly go wrong.

Mr. Inada was excited about our forming an Applegate poets group and encouraged us to meet again. He suggested we do readings, post poems on Grange bulletin boards, or even join him at various library events in southern Oregon.

**He felt sure Applegate people would have something to say** and would say it so that it communicated something to folks living inside and outside of our valley.

Since that April event, many of the things that Lawson Inada suggested have happened. Some people met a few weeks later to discuss what it meant to be an Applegate poet, to practice writing poems, and to discuss where we might present our work. We formed into a group called the Applegate Poets and have met half a dozen times since then and also publicly read our poems on two occasions. (See sidebar for the next event.) New poets from the Applegate keep emerging. The group is open to all who want to join.

We write about our impressions,

## Applegate Poets' Event at Pacifica's Winter Arts Festival

Join the Applegate Poets at Pacifica's Winter Arts Festival on December 6. We'll be in the pond house reading poems between 10 am and 4 pm. We're hoping to add other activities about poetry: maybe a write-your-own spontaneous poetry session, maybe a group-generated poem, maybe some recitations of the Great Poets. Come 'round and see what we're doing!

our love for the valley, or anything that moves us. Another bonus is just to meet interesting people who enjoy sharing their experiences. It is amazing to hear, expressed in words, the things that inspire us and unite us in our community.

Please contact me if you'd like to join our new group.

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## BOOKS & MOVIES

### — Book —

#### D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths

Ingri d'Aulaire and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire

*A suggestion for holiday gift-giving for children, and also excellent for adults who want to relearn the Greek/Roman myths.*

If you read anything at all during the past week—or any week—in a book, a magazine, a newspaper, or on the Internet, you probably saw some reference to Greek mythology. Maybe there was mention of a Trojan horse, Pandora's box, the Fates, or the Furies. Perhaps there was something about narcissism, a Herculean task, or an Oedipus complex. These words have become so common in our culture that most never give a thought to their origin and meaning. The children's book, *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths* (Doubleday), is a wonderful addition to any library, whether there are children in the home or not. The D'Aulaires, husband and wife, have won numerous prizes both for the beautiful color illustrations and for

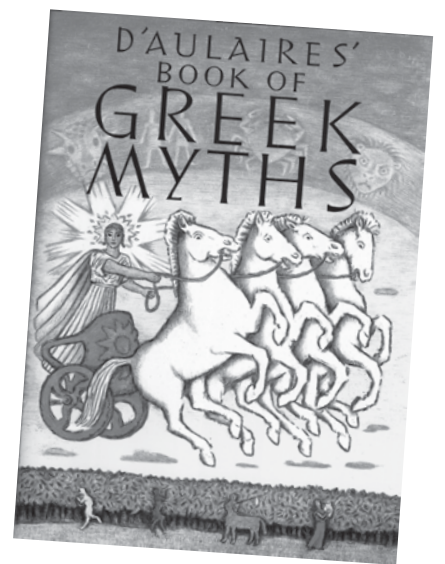
the fine written narrative in their books. The book also includes a section on the transition to the Roman pantheon of gods. It's available on Amazon and other venues.

**When our children were quite small,** preschool age, we lived in Izmir, Turkey. I bought this book because everywhere we went in western Turkey there were ancient Greek (and Roman) ruins. We had no television so our kids were entertained by the adventures of Zeus and Artemis and Poseidon and the scary path of Theseus into the Labyrinth years before they knew about Lassie, Mickey Mouse, or the Road Runner. Once when we visited Greece with our kids and stepped into the vaulted entrance to the Athens Museum, our four-year-old daughter, small and blonde in her little pink dress, went running toward the huge marble statues yelling "Mommy, there's Zeus! And there's

Aries, the God of War!" Groups of tourists stared at her incredulously. (Our under-two son was more interested in what I was next going to dole out from the bag of little toys I had brought to keep him occupied.)

**Years later, when our son and daughter were in high school in Hawaii,** an English teacher told our daughter's class that Troy abducted Helen and took her to Paris. Angie put up her hand and commented that it was somewhat different from that. Hawaii is very distant, both in miles and in culture, from ancient Greece, and it has its own myths and fables.

**It's holiday time.** I won't say you should purchase *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths* for the reasons that I did, but if you want a charming, beautiful, and highly informative book about a foundation of our Western culture, a book that can be enjoyed by *all* ages, the D'Aulaire book is the best out there. High school students preparing for the SATs will have a more solid memory of Greek-derived words and phrases by reading this book than they ever



will from memorizing word lists. And we adults, who may have forgotten much of what we learned in school, will be thrilled and charmed all over again.

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*Julia Helm Hoskins is the author of She Caves to Conquer, a novel set in the American Midwest and in southern Turkey.*

### — Movie —

#### The Drop

Reviewer rating: 4.5 Apples

Genre: Crime/Drama

R (Restricted. Children Under

17 Require Accompanying Parent or Adult Guardian.)

Opened: September 2014

Cast: Tom Hardy, Noomi Rapace,

James Gandolfini

Director: Michaël R. Roskam

**The Drop is a typical crime drama.** What makes this movie rise heads above the pack of other movies of this genre is an intelligent script. That's right—actual dialogue. No loud, boorish, over-the-top, computer-simulated special effects.

Dennis Lehane adapted the screenplay from his short story "Animal Rescue." He's written screenplays for numerous movie-friendly books like *Gone Baby Gone* and *Mystic River*.

Director Michaël R. Roskam (nominated for an Oscar for *Bullhead*) makes his English movie debut. If *The Drop* is any inkling of his talent, he should have a long, distinguished career, and we'll have many wonderful films.

Tom Hardy (*Black Hawk Down*,

*Band of Brothers*) plays Bob Saginowski, a bartender at a tavern in Brooklyn, New York, called Marv's. Cousin Marv, played by James Gandolfini (*True Romance*, *Get Shorty*, not to mention *The Sopranos*), once owned the tavern that still bears his name. Due to outstanding debt, Marv

lost his low-life tavern to the Chechen mobster Chovka (Michael Aronov). Eastern Europeans seem to have replaced Italians in gangster roles in more and more movies. Aronov looks and plays the part in cold style.

These days Marv just manages this tavern, which is used as a rotating drop for ill-gotten money that Chovka collects. Marv drifts through life in slow motion as a beaten man. He lives in a crappy, depressing bungalow with his sister.

Bob, the ever I-want-to-be-a-nice-guy bartender, does most of the work. He attends early morning mass daily at the neighborhood Catholic Church that is slated to be closed (downsizing is happening everywhere), sold and probably made into condos.

**The tavern gets robbed by two thieves** (thieves robbing thieves), who make off with five grand of Chovka's money. (Viewers will figure out who has to pay the five grand back to Chovka.) The investigating cop, Detective Torres, played by John Ortiz (*Fast and Furious*, *American Gangster*), recognizes Bob from morning mass. Torres has always wondered why Bob never takes Communion.

The theft leads the slimy Chovka to decide that Marv and Bob will be responsible for the drop on the biggest gambling day

of the year—the multimillion-dollar Super Bowl Sunday.

While walking home after closing the tavern for the night, Bob hears a whimpering sound coming from inside a trash can, where he finds a battered pit bull puppy. He's then confronted by Nadia, played by Noomi Rapace (*Dead Man Down*, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*), owner of the trash cans. While the two of them decide on a kind of mutual adoption of the puppy, Bob wonders how Nadia got those scars on her neck.

Do we have two stories going now?

They become one when Eric, played by Matthias Schoen (*Bullhead*, *Rust and Bones*) shows up. Eric is a scary, incredibly convincing bully who was once Nadia's boyfriend. I was hoping that the puppy would chew off Eric's private parts—that's how well Schoen played his role.

**The final twist in this excellent film** caught me totally off guard. What a surprise—even for a seasoned crime drama devotee like me.

Tom Hardy gave his best performance to date, and James Gandolfini, in his last role, was superb. It's hard to believe that Gandolfini died at age 51, but what a great movie to exit on. Be sure to add *The Drop* to your must-watch list.

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