

POETRY CORNER

In the garden

By Anis Mojgani, Oregon Poet Laureate

Sometimes I would lie in the garden and pretend I was a carrot

Sometimes I would curl under the big leaves
and become a head of lettuce

Sometimes in the softest earth I would bury my softer paws
and I was a rabbit

Sometimes
in the garden I was a rock
was wishing I were two rocks
was sometimes becoming three rocks
was sometimes warmed by the sun or held
cool and smooth in a palm
and brought home to be placed
in the window light beside a person's bed

Sometimes in the garden as a rock
I waited hundreds of years
and it was only the wind that touched me
Sometimes I waited thousands of years!
And not even the wind could move me

Sometimes in the garden
night would arrive
holding cupped in its hands the moon soft cheeked and full
glowing like the face of an orange skinned woman in a more orange dress
and the enormous night would use that moon to say to me
you are like how I am
and see how bright my body sometimes becomes

Sometimes in the garden I would wait for spring
Always I wait for spring
And for my love
to appear like it
returning
out of the cold
and with flowers upon her fingertips

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.

Oregon Poet Laureate in the Applegate Valley

Anis Mojgani will be bringing his "fiercely hopeful word arias" to Plaisance Winery

BY CHRISTINA AMMON

Poetry may not be a shovel, a mower, or a hammer. It may not be directly useful in tending to our rural lands. It won't fix a leak, or clean a chimney; won't thin our woodlands, or prevent a wildfire. It won't make Highway 238 more bicycle-friendly.

But—it can pack a lot of punch and make a difference to your day or your life.

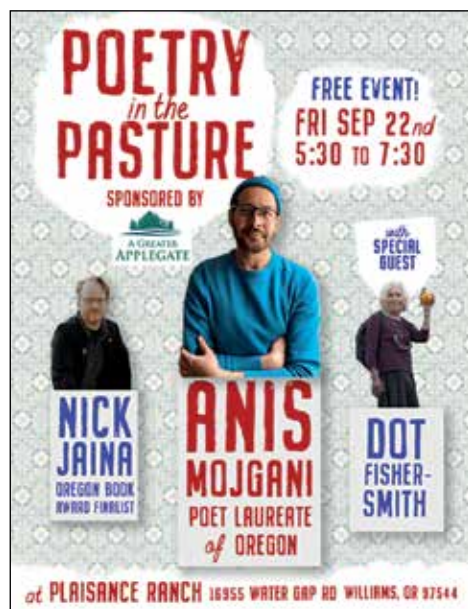
Luckily, because our local community-building organization, A Greater Applegate (AGA), recognizes the cultural value of poetry, they are sponsoring a free-to-the-public poetry performance—"Poetry in the Pasture"—by Oregon Poet Laureate, Anis Mojgani.

This exciting event takes place from 5:30-7:30 pm Friday, September 22, at Plaisance Ranch Winery, 16955 Water Gap Road, Williams.

The author of five books, Mojgani is a two-time National Poetry Slam champion and one-time World Cup winner. He's been called a "geek genius" and his style is lively, heartfelt, thought-provoking, and entertaining.

Anis's performance will be complemented by Nick Jaina, an Oregon Book Award nominee whose spell-binding music-and-prose performance will add texture to the evening and serve as a perfect complement to Anis's lively spoken-word style. The Rogue Valley's own elder and poetry lover, Dot Fisher-Smith, will open the evening with a brief poem.

Bringing Anis's "fiercely hopeful word arias" to the Applegate fulfills one of the goals of AGA's Applegate Valley Vision: to integrate art, music, and theater more



into the community. The Applegate Valley Vision is the result of dozens of listening sessions AGA conducted with residents throughout the Applegate Valley in 2020 and 2021.

UNESCO counts poetry among the world's "intangible treasures." To have this high-profile event in the Applegate Valley—rather than in one of the surrounding cities—is a coup for our valley!

A special thanks to the Applegate Poets for their guidance in planning Poetry in the Pasture. Their book, *Penned Up: Writing out the Pandemic*, will be available for purchase at the event.

For more information, visit plaisanceranch.com/upcoming-events/2023/9/22/poetry-at-plaisance-welcoming-oregons-poet-laureate.

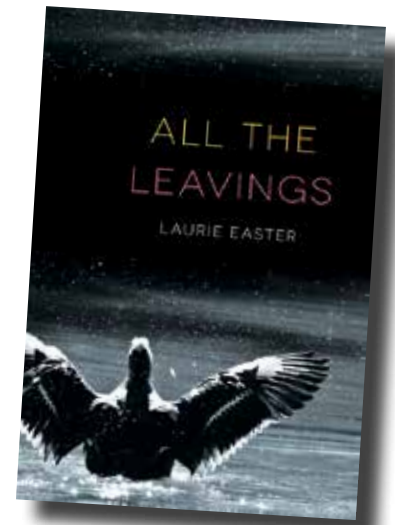
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BOOK REVIEW

All the Leavings

Laurie Easter
Oregon State University Press, Corvallis
Finalist, Oregon's Book of the Year

BY CHRISTIN LORE WEBER



My husband, John, and I didn't want to miss the Voices of the Applegate in concert this spring and drove to Lindsay Lodge not just to hear the music, but to reconnect with friends. There's always a bit of hubbub as people arrive and greet each other. Three women, one who looked familiar, settled at the opposite end of the row from us. A bit more commotion, a rearrangement of chairs, and suddenly one of them asked if the chair next to me was taken.

"It isn't," said I.

"Maya told me you are a writer, and I should talk with you."

Oh. Maya's must be the face I'd recognized. I smiled and said yes. Then Diana Coog, seated in front of us, turned around and congratulated the woman for being a finalist for an Oregon Book Award. Some delighted laughter, some thanks, and the woman sat down next to me.

"My name is Laurie Easter," she said, and the two of us talked about writing until the music began. I told her of this column in the *Applegater*, and she promised to have her publisher send me a review copy of her book, *All the Leavings*. Once I started reading, I could not put the book down, though I often paused to take it all in. Here is a life lived at its depth, its most raw, with generosity of spirit and the courage of unwavering commitment.

Laurie Easter, of Williams, here in the Applegate Valley, has written a series of essays that becomes a captivating memoir of life off the grid. She delves into the wildness and beauty of nature surrounding her and her family. This is not a romance of idealism, though. Laurie Easter pulls no punches. She tells it like it is, assessing situations hard to imagine and finding herself called upon to make choices that require such bravery and loyalty as to feel impossible for any human person to confront. Unendurable, I often thought while reading. And yet, she endures. She tells the truth without wavering. She does it humbly and with love.

Add to all that Laurie Easter's gift for writing. It isn't easy to put years' worth of essays together into a long work, a book that pulls the reader forward by a living thread of meaning. Each essay (chapter)

connects seamlessly to the next. The thread weaves, not chronologically but obviously—through the children, the neighbors, the land, the wilderness, the distance to hospitals, and also the cardinal rule around Williams: "Live and let live."

Laurie Easter can surprise her readers with creative structures I've not seen anywhere else. For example, the essay titled "Searching for Gwen" involves the reader in a game of "hide and seek." But the content of the chapter is heartrending. So, while reading and at the same time solving a word puzzle one is always searching for Gwen. I felt so tangled in a paradox, so captured by the way I was being led both intellectually and emotionally, I had to bow to her genius as a writer.

Clearly, I admire her skill. I am amazed by her life. I am entranced by her wisdom. She emerges through this book as a woman who endures through vulnerability, succeeds with humility, and finds clarity in difficult times by keeping her own counsel, thinking the problem through, and trusting her heart. She has given us a darn good story.

I'll just open the book and copy a sample. It won't matter from where. It's all so good! There. Page 150. "Of all the leavings, which is worst? Is it the unexpected? The raw, stabbing, and visceral? Is it the inevitable yet sorrowful? The one so unfair as to be damnable of the universe? Or is it the one that requires—no, demands—getting used to? The common, the expected, the prepared for, the repetitive...the worst leaving...steals from your subconscious as you sleep, waking you in an eruption of deep, guttural moaning so loud and animal-like you don't recognize your own voice as human."

Christin Lore Weber
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On motherhood

By Mary Lorelli
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The light in your eyes reflects the love I give to you
The strength of your pulse reflects the life I gave to you
But what you've given me is more than can ever be measured
I'm so rich, so full with my Motherhood
Such a gift, sometimes I don't feel large enough to contain it

I watch you grow away from me, so you can be who you want to be
Though I knew it had to happen, my heart is unprepared
It's yet another lesson, from this I won't be spared but I know
I'll find a way of letting you go
It's another way of watching you grow

Mary was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but has lived in the Applegate on Slagle Creek Road for 49 years. She's seen a lot of changes—some good, some bad—but says she'll always call the Applegate home.

