

POETRY CORNER

The Museum of Happiness

By Lisa E Baldwin
leb.97527@gmail.com

To preserve those delights we all have known, and acknowledging they may not be available nor accessible in the future, The Museum of Happiness gladly presents:

The Oregon Collection

A chorus of birdsong from
an October dawn on Upper Klamath Lake;
the crunch of dry high-elevation snow underfoot
on the annual hunt for a perfect Noble Fir;
the scent of cedar and fir trees
after the first warm rain in March;
the taste of a homegrown strawberry in June,
freshly picked, sun-warmed and sweet;
the rhythmic be-thudding clops of pastured horses
running, frisky in a building thunderstorm;
the warmth of the hand you love
holding your own as you walk the road home;
a big table crowded with family
sharing a meal, old stories, and laughter;
the glassy green of a Pacific wave
just before it breaks;
the joy of a child who has just landed
a rainbow trout for the first time;
the smell of dust and history
in an old library full of old books;
sharing the harvest with friends around a fire,
perfectly high, glad to be alive.
The Beatles' Abbey Road.
Chocolate-chip cookies.

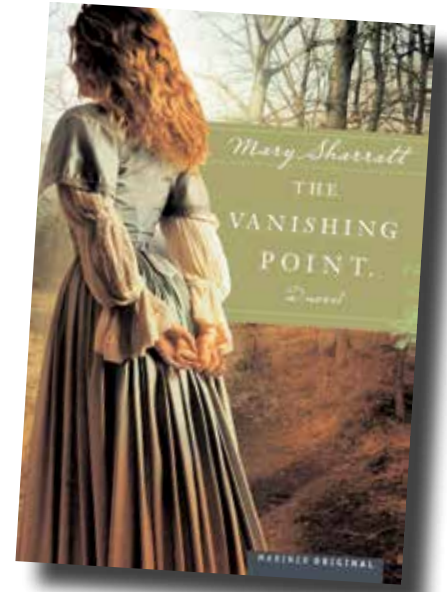
Lisa E Baldwin, a fifth-generation Oregonian, has lived in the Lower Applegate Valley since 1966. Lisa taught English in Grants Pass for 30 years, retiring in 2015. Currently, as owner of N8tive Run Enterprises, she works as a poetry evangelist—writing and publishing poetry, organizing and teaching poetry workshops, spreading the good news of the poetry world, and encouraging others to write as an act of art.

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

Books by Mary Sharratt

BY CHRISTIN LORE WEBER



When author Mary Sharratt was a student at the University of Minnesota, she participated in a seminar, “The Making of the Female Character (1450–1650),” with Dr. Annette Kuhn, which focused on the lives of women in a rapidly changing world. By the time I discovered this information, I had already read four of Sharratt’s novels, all of them historical fiction, all of them featuring women who offered their own vision and genius as a gift to the culture of their times. Such an offering was never easy, whether in medieval Europe or in the Renaissance or in pioneer America. Great women stood forth as their true selves rather than standing back in the shadows, adopting a false but acceptable image, a mask to deface the true self.

Reading Sharratt, my thoughts went not only to the political and religious powers that have determined women’s role through the centuries but also to the books I’ve read through my life in which women’s characters were written according to pattern, often designed by men. This trend began to change in the early 1970s with books like Mary Gordon’s *Final Payments* and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*. Words about myself, my mother, aunts, grandmother hadn’t seemed to exist before, and yet I recognized the stories they told as being intimately my own. I was also a woman willing to delve deeply into my true experiences and stop trying to simply adjust to a pattern I’d been urged to imitate.

In 2012 Mary Sharratt first entered my life with her book *Illuminations: A Novel of Hildegard von Bingen*. She had decided to extend the making of a female character to historical women who had not been recognized outside their small circle of accomplishments. Possibly the most brilliant woman of the 12th century, Hildegard had been imprisoned as a small child in the rock wall of a monastery. An anchorite, she became a woman anchored to the church. Despite this she also became an artist, a visionary, a composer of the most intricate liturgical chants, an herbalist, and a healer. She called church bishops to task and finally left the male monastic enclosure, taking the women who had joined her to establish the first monastery exclusively for women. I was entranced by this book and read it at least four times.

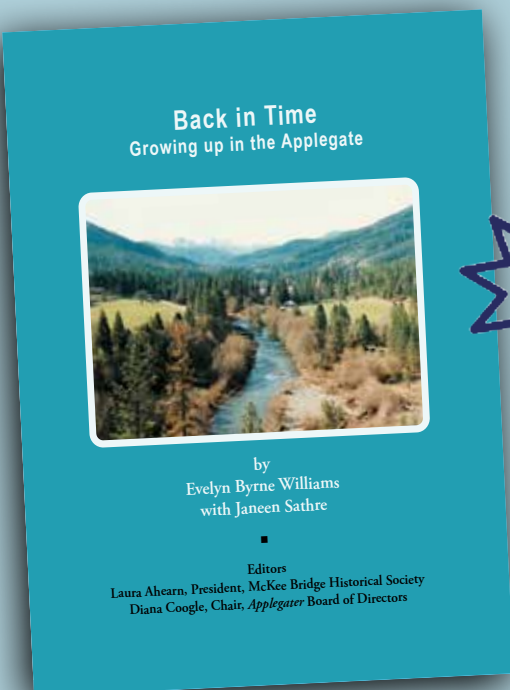
Sharratt’s most recent historical novel is *Revelations*, the story of Margery Kempe, the first woman in England to write the story of her life in the vernacular. It’s a bawdy 14th-century tale of a wife and mother who had the grit, the wildness, the stamina, and the intent to make an impact not only on England, but on most of the European continent and some of the Middle East!

The Vanishing Point, the novel that brought me to the decision to write a review of Sharratt, turned out to be from earlier in her writing career (2006). It takes place in Colonial Maryland and the wilderness of 1600 to 1775. Two sisters, first May and later Hannah Powers, sail from England to the new colony in America where May would marry the son of a tobacco planter. It becomes a story in which women encounter the challenges of nature, the betrayals inherent in lies and promises broken, the hardships and losses of pioneer life. The characters must make life or death choices in which fear, lack of knowledge and experience, keen instinct, broken minds and hearts, lack of trust, lack of skill, and self-reliance feature prominently. The sisters are even lost to one another and spend a lifetime searching for each other. I couldn’t help but wonder while reading this book how much the Applegate Valley must have resembled this story in the days of our own pioneers.

So it has been for me with Sharratt’s other historical novels and the path she clears for the reader into the worlds of men like Shakespeare and Mahler as seen through the eyes of women we might never have discovered except for the research and storytelling genius of Mary Sharratt.

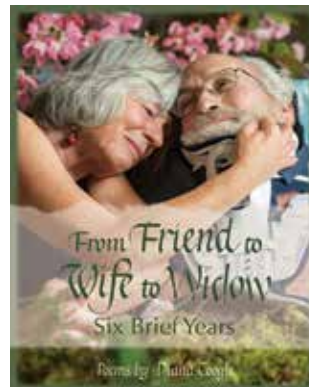
Christin Lore Weber
storyweaver1@gmail.com

JUST PUBLISHED!



A compilation of 50 “Back in Time” articles,
by Evelyn Byrne Williams with Janeen Sathre,
previously published in the *Applegater* newsmagazine.

Available at Rebel Heart Books, applegater.org, or contact Lisa Baldwin at leb.97527@gmail.com.
When shipped, add \$5. All proceeds benefit the *Applegater*.



“Ultimately and inspiringly joyful...
very highly recommended.”

~ Midwest Book Review

A collection of poems by Diana Coogle
about the growth of her and her husband’s love
over a brief but beautiful six years.

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