

POETRY CORNER

Rain Has Fallen

A Prayer Poem

by H. Ní Aódagáin

Oh, blessed sweet manna of the sky, we've waited so long for you.
The hills and valleys sing your praises and all the creatures big and small,
from the furtive black bear to the delicate damselfly, bow to you in thanksgiving.

You've quenched our thirst, brought sustenance to leaf, grass, tree and field.
The birds spread their wings in joyous abandon as your cleansing waters pass
over them, flowers open their petals and the fruits of the garden rejoice in
your coming.

Oh, sacred water of the heavens, hear this prayer of gratitude.
Your coming has brought such joy.
May you be beckoned again and again by our humble appreciation.

■ COVID-19 IMPACT

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and designs provided by a Grants Pass manufacturing business, feeds them into his 3-D printer, and in five hours produces a medically certified shield. He's produced about 50 so far.

Gary volunteered after Brad Converse, owner of the Grants Pass business, rallied engineers from throughout the Rogue Valley to design all kinds of equipment, from ventilator parts to filtration systems, then recruited people to turn these designs into reality. They're then distributed to local clinics and Asante Healthcare.

‘Paying It Forward’

Another Applegate resident, Meloney Quady, has been churning out another kind of face mask. She uses low-tech sewing rather than high-tech printing to create fabric masks.

“In times of stress, I have always turned to creating,” Meloney says. After hearing in mid-March about potential PPE shortages, she first donated all the N95 masks her family business had stored for fire season to the Asante Foundation.

That was no small donation: She and her husband Herb Quady had some 50 masks on hand for use by their Applegate Vineyard Management business during fire season. They doubled that by buying another 50 from a Medford pharmacy and donated them all to Providence. Another Applegate vineyard manager, Jason Cole, of Pacific Crest Vineyard Service, also donated N95s for use by healthcare providers.

Meloney first signed up for the Million Mask Challenge started by Providence Seattle, committing to sew 100 masks from surgical material provided by Providence. She was just getting started.

After joining Crafters Against COVID-19 out of Portland and Relief Crafters of America, she found a local Facebook group with a name that says what they do: Sewing Masks and Protective Gear. As of early May, the Rogue Valley group had nearly 900 members who have made more than 6,000 masks—plus caps, booties, ear savers, head bands, and even a few gowns.

Meloney published a pattern for a mask that fits comfortably over an N95 mask and helps extend the useful life of

the N95. She sewed day and night nearly every day for weeks. She also taught others how to make masks and connected them with other sewers, suppliers, and people in need.

Finally, she started a “Pay It Forward” program through her Etsy shop, sending a free mask to customers who promised to do a significant kindness to another who is not a family member or friend.

She's made more than 500 masks and sent them around the country, but mostly



Gary Conner with his 3-D printer and a brand new medical face shield. Photo: Tom Carstens.



At Applegate River Lodge, Janet Arseo (at right) serves two dinners to Lee, a local caregiver for an elderly, high-risk person sheltering in place. Photo: Cathy Rodgers.

to New York. Meloney said anyone in the Applegate who would like to help by making masks or donating supplies can let her know and she will connect them with people in need. Her email is mquart@mac.com.

“I think I would go insane if I wasn't doing this,” Meloney said. “I hate feeling helpless. This gives me hope, something positive to focus on, and something productive to be part of. It's what I can do to help, so I'm doing it.”

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The Applegater would like to share more stories of the generosity being shown in our valley. Please email your examples to Jeanette and we will post them on the Applegater Facebook page.

BOOK REVIEW

The Magical Language of Others: A Memoir

E.J. Koh

Tin House Books 2020

“Writing a poem, I came out of absolute darkness.”
—E.J. Koh

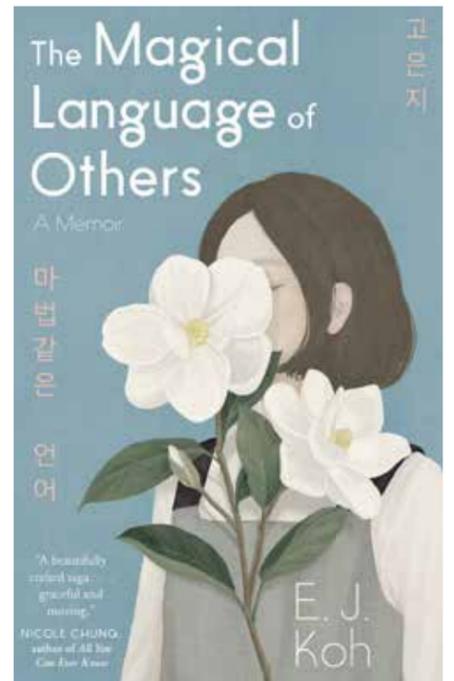
It is the first week of April as I begin to write this review, which will be published in June. With the rest of the world, I am at home. With the rest of the world, I don't know how the month of June will dawn. It comforts me that the whole world is, in one way or another, “at home” during this pandemic that draws all of us close at the same time that it leaves us almost infinitely alone.

Today, though, it comforts me that I am reading E.J. Koh's memoir for the second time and reflecting on this young Korean poet's lifelong search for her own home. A memoir doesn't require the author's long life for its success, but it does require a depth and width of experience in the writer's life so far. In this delicate, aching, articulate, beautiful book, Koh invites us to share her search, which began in adolescence when her parents moved to Korea for a better job, leaving her with her older brother, who was in college at Davis, California. Just like that, home disappeared.

“My first day, at fifteen, I awoke inside my old blanket, fooled into thinking that I was home. The room...[had a] stucco ceiling and a mirrored closet. I looked for [my mother] in every room. When I could not find her, I felt as if I would die” (12-13).

After nineteen months of absence, her mother's letters began to arrive from across the Pacific. Calling her daughter Eun Ji, her mother wrote in Korean, beautifully reproduced in the book, treasured and pondered over by her young daughter. “If her letters could go to sleep, my translations would be their dreams. The letters transport my mother to wherever I reside, so they may, in her place, become a constant dispensation of love” (xi). As with most humans, “Mommy” was Koh's first home and, for all she knew, her only possible dwelling place.

Over and over her memories batter her. Where does she fit? Will she find home, and if so, where? Her mother writes: “Don't be too sad. Mommy is sorry for leaving you so young. Until



the last of my life, Mommy's heart will ache....Eun Ji was crushed. Mommy's committed a grave (*sin*) against Eun Ji!” (139).

To find home, Koh travels sometimes to be with her mother and sometimes to escape her. She receives insight from experiences in Korea and Japan, studying dancing and languages. A teacher in Japan tells her, “Who will talk to you in Japanese again? Won't you feel so alone?...Your fate is to become a hunter—you will look for [the Japanese language] everywhere, anywhere you go. Your hunger will teach you what you've lost” (94).

In Korea Koh learns of that country's past and of her own ancestors. Of her time there she says, “Maybe I thought it was beautiful, the soft earth of that country, the sea breeze like sweet vinegar to soothe bitterness from my life because what harmed me did not appear to endanger the foggy trees, our sesame-oiled tongs, our coolheaded smiles” (138).

In what, then, does home consist? Maybe by June, all of us, sheltering at home, will have experienced home in ways we never before realized. Holding this book in my hands and reading it, I almost felt that by its ending I will have found my own answer through participating in Eun Ji's search.

The Magical Language of Others is available in the Jackson County Libraries, at Rebel Heart Books, on the Internet as an ebook, and at Audible, read by the author. Her own voice is an experience in itself, clear, almost childlike. Its very tone explains everything.

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