

POETRY CORNER

Viral

by Paul Tipton

When that first YouTube post went viral
it was cool; when the first tweet went viral
it was even better. Even though those nasty
computer viruses were a problem
from time to time, and every year
people got the flu, who knew
King Corona XIX would rule the world
so quick. We're sick! [virus: (L. – poison)].
Humans have obviously poisoned the Earth.
Should we expect any better in return?
Our super-consciousness is thrilling
but is an existence based on killing, reducible
in the end right down to the molecule.
We can only hope that viral doesn't spiral.

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.

■ LOGTOWN

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Washington Dunlap, who was buried here in 1862. This project is a precursor to the launch of an Upper Applegate History Trail that will encourage greater interest in our valley's heritage.

All Applegaters will be invited to participate in the cleanup and learn the skills for maintaining historic gravemarkers. Volunteers will also learn the backgrounds and backstories of the pioneers who rest at Logtown Cemetery, the history of Logtown, and the story of the iconic Logtown Rose. Volunteers will

be inspired by the stories, the legacies, and the names associated with the places we know and still enjoy: Collings Mountain Trail, Buncom, Watkins Campground, Cantrall Buckley Park, and McKee Bridge.

For more information, or if you are interested in volunteering, please watch the MBHS Facebook page at facebook.com/McKeeBridgeHistoricalSociety/ or email mckeebridge1917@gmail.com.

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The main gate to the historic Logtown cemetery. Photo: Cathy Rodgers.

Momentum Grant cycle closes Sept. 14

A Greater Applegate (AGA) is now accepting Momentum Grant requests. The application process is open through September 14, 2020.

AGA has a \$5,000 Momentum Grant budget, with maximum grants of \$2,500. The average grant award is \$500. Momentum Grants are offered annually to local organizations doing work in the Applegate Valley that reflect AGA's mission.

These grants provide support for small organizations to help overcome financial barriers that prevent community-based projects from moving forward.

For additional information or to download the application, send an email to info@agreaterapplegate.org.

BOOK REVIEW

Year of Wonders

Geraldine Brooks

Penguin Books 2001

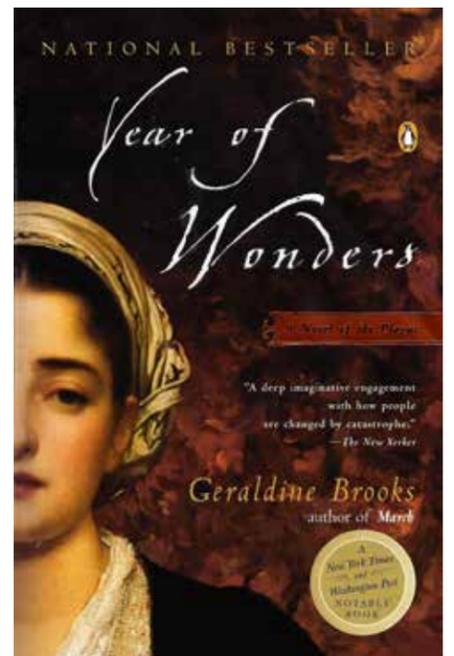
*One thing I believe completely
Is that the human heart remains the
human heart,
No matter how our material
circumstances change
As we move together through time.*
—Geraldine Brooks

If you appreciate historical fiction, Geraldine Brooks is an author you won't want to miss. She began her writing career as a foreign correspondent in the Middle East. During those years she sometimes sought refuge from the turmoil by traveling to the English countryside. Over the years she became intrigued by the history of Eyam, a small mining village where, in 1665, the villagers voted to quarantine their entire town in order to prevent neighboring villages from contracting the bubonic plague, which had afflicted several of Eyam's townsfolk. What happened to the people during quarantine, their beliefs, social connections, family relationships, and their persons—body, mind, and soul—inspired Brooks to create this fictional masterpiece.

Beginning in late February this year I became aware that several friends and acquaintances of mine were reading books about plague and pandemic, both fictional and scientific. Maybe Joan Didion had an explanation for this behavior when she said, "Novels are about things you're afraid you can't deal with." One neighbor had a pile of such books which included Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. Another hoped I would read *Station Eleven* by Mandel. That one haunted me and disappointed in the end.

I first read Brooks's novel of a plague when it was released in paperback in 2002. Brooks's nonfiction, especially *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women*, had considerably widened my perspective and enticed me to snatch up *Year of Wonders*. This summer I read the novel again and was amazed at how catastrophe can affect the character of human beings in ways that seem to have undergone very little change through the centuries. Our own coronavirus pandemic gives rise to the same challenges as did the plague of those former years.

England during the plague years was in chaos on all fronts. The king had been murdered, and restoration of monarchy was in its early stages. In religion the Church of England still fought the Papist Catholics, both of whom fought the Puritans and the Quakers, and all of these ferreted out people who practiced the ancient ways of nature worship and provided herbal remedies for healing the sick. The 17th-century solution to



what was regarded as witchcraft was death by burning or drowning.

All this chaos provides the backdrop for the story of the "Plague Village" as told by Anna Frith, who has seen and been involved in the lives of almost everyone in town. It has changed her: "I confess I have sometimes been reduced to muttering my thoughts aloud like a mad-woman when the need for a human voice becomes too strong. I dislike this, for I fear the line between myself and madness is as fine these days as a cobweb, and I have seen what it means when a soul crosses into that dim and wretched place. But I, who always prided myself on grace, now allow myself a deliberate clumsiness. I let my feet land heavily. I clatter the hearth tools. And when I draw water, I let the bucket chain grind on the stone, just to hear ragged noise instead of the smothering silence."

I read the novel this second time with greater understanding as well as deep appreciation for the skill Brooks demonstrates. She chronicles the facts of history through the lives and choices of believable characters spun from the richness of her own soul and worldwide experience. She is deft with plot construction that will keep you reading too far into the night or past the time you meant to begin fixing supper or watering the garden.

If you feel drawn by her style as much as I do, try her more recent historical novels: *People of the Book*, *Caleb's Crossing*, *The Secret Chord*, and *March*. But do consider reading this one first! It's available in the Jackson County Library System, at Amazon.com, and by order from your favorite bookstore.

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