

POETRY CORNER

Fending Winter: An Ode

By John Sack
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What better bespeaks
The leap of human evolution
Than heaps of blueberry flapjacks
Stacked buttery warm
And glazed with maple syrup,
Their beauty not blemished
By wedges
Melting in mouth to pleasure
Gullet and gut,
To become one
With the One who masticates,
While outdoors winter wails
To no avail?

John and his wife (*Applegater*
book reviewer Christin Lore
Weber) hermit and write near
Buncom on Sterling Creek Road.

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.

Applegate Poets sponsor a holiday reading in the Applegate Library

BY JOAN PETERSON

The Applegate Poets invite you to join us and special guests Evelyn Byrne Williams and Janeen Sathre at 1 pm Sunday, December 4, for an afternoon of poems by the poets and, from Evelyn, stories of growing up in the Applegate back in the days when the Applegate River froze solid in the winter, women did laundry with a wringer washing machine, and children had to cross the river on swinging bridges to get to school.

Many of the poems read by the Applegate Poets that afternoon will be from their book, *Penned Up: Writing Out the Pandemic* (by Lisa Baldwin, Diana Coogle, Beate Foit, Seth Kaplan, Ní Aódagáin, Joan Peterson, and Christin

Lore Weber), and from more recent writing as well. Janeen Sathre will read from *Back in Time*, the newly published book by her mother, Evelyn, that is a collection of pieces from her column in the *Applegater*.

We'll have cookies and coffee and other yummy refreshments, and you will be able to buy books (and get autographs from the authors!) for yourselves and others on your Christmas lists.

Join us for this special occasion to chat with the authors, enjoy some holiday food, and hear some entertaining poems and stories.

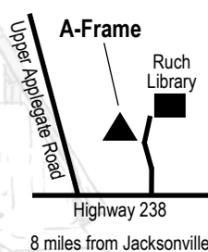
Joan Peterson
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Visit the A-Frame Bookstore @ Ruch Library

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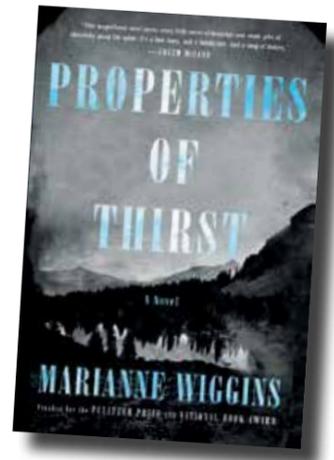


BOOK REVIEW

Properties of Thirst

Marianne Wiggins
Simon & Schuster 2022
New York, New York

BY CHRISTIN LORE WEBER



Possibly my favorite novel of the 21st century was *Evidence of Things Unseen* by Marianne Wiggins, a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award author. So, when I saw that a new book of hers had just been released by Simon & Schuster, I grabbed it up, knowing nothing about it except that Wiggins was the author. It is a masterpiece. Her writing moves in waves, each capping the one before, that power of surf, the flow over the ebb, building in scene after scene, page following page.

Another comparison might be to a Wagnerian opera, *Tristan and Isolde*, for those who feel music in flows of blood and breath. The crescendo of this book! You might be thinking that I'm exaggerating, and I have been known to do that, but this time I am not. She did it. Marianne Wiggins did it. She tucks her own responsibility towards language right into the narrative, into the thoughts of one of her major characters:

He had learned in law school that one day you are going to be called upon to make a speech. One day, too, at the death of a friend or of a parent, at the birth of your child, on first falling in love or defending your life—you are going to need to find the words to describe what you are feeling, to communicate the fullness of what feels like the Indescribable inside of you, a vortex or a fire or a fog, or, quite simply, the shape of your own soul. Stand and deliver. And at these moments, you don't want to get it wrong. You don't want to reach inside yourself and come up: wordless. You want, because you owe it to yourself, to shape something from nothing, to be able to drag meaning from the silence, being from non-being (p. 489).

She did it with a story that is absolutely character-driven. "You can't save what you don't love," she tells us. Right up front. First sentence. It is almost as if she is talking to herself about the story she's creating. She loves everything and everyone in her fictional world, though, to tell the truth, her world doesn't seem fictional at all. This world seems like America of the 20th Century—the exploration, the land, the dam diverting water to Los Angeles, the depression, the families, the peoples,

the war, the camps of Japanese-American citizens, the individuals in the novel who reflect it all, and their thirsts that make the story come about. As a reader I loved them all. I couldn't find a villain. Villains are for plot-driven stories. In a character-driven story, the conflict as well as the growing amazement that results takes place within the individuals you come to love as you understand their perspective, how each character is trying to save what they love. And in this common thirst for love the characters by their lives and choices create a thunderous and stunning drama that transcends its own place and time.

Wiggins presents the basic human properties of thirst right up front, in the Table of Contents: The Element of Surprise. Recognition. Memory. Desire. The Thwarting of Desire. Truth. Spontaneous Combustion. Re-invention. Submersion. The Taste of the Inevitable. Evaporation.

This is the thirst of humankind, of a land, of a nation, of an era and of every era, of every person. In America this thirst is rooted in Thoreau and Emerson, and in Wiggins's book it is played out primarily in the California desert after mountain snows were diverted to Los Angeles—land and people, thirsting for water, for survival of the soul.

This was where they used to come, filling their lungs with the lake vapors, as if the lake were breathing, as if they and it were sharing a single breath. So much history on this water: a liquid page on which their story had been written. You can't save what you don't love, but lakes are born to disappear. You can't save what you don't love, but sometimes—most times—you can't save what you love, regardless (p.511).

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