

# *The Weekly Avocet - #517*

## **October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**Hello to our Poets and Nature-lovers of The Avocet community:**

**warm October day**  
**multi-colored leaves abound**  
**fall in its glory**

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - [abbietaylor945@gmail.com](mailto:abbietaylor945@gmail.com)



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

## The Last Pumpkin

Time to go pumpkin hunting!  
The kids pile into the car,  
Let's hope they don't have to go very far.  
Dad drives out of the city into farms  
where white-shingled houses  
are surrounded by fields  
of stubble and corn, while crickets  
chirp and the children squeal  
"Are we there yet?" Sandwiched  
between her big brother, Joe,  
and her twin sisters Susy and Floe,  
squats Emily, who is only nine, but tall  
for her age and of stubborn mind.  
She is the first to see orange globes  
scattered beneath a chestnut tree.  
"STOP, DADEE!" They pile out  
with lots of shouts. Grabbing each  
likely pumpkin they see, Joe and the twins  
soon leave Emily, who makes her selection  
most carefully.  
"Why not this one, Dad?" her family chooses,  
but Emily loses them in her search  
turning over the vines, trying find  
the largest of all. Under the limb  
of a birch, hidden under a vine  
is a monster fruit, a pumpkin so large  
she can't get her arms to circle its size,  
and it's perfectly round to boot!  
"Come quick! See what I've found."  
The family is circling round.  
"We love its size; we love its shape,  
This last pumpkin is truly great!"  
they all agree, "We were looking so hard!  
We were looking around, but we wouldn't  
have found it, except for Emily!"

Margaret Bobalek King

magpies in the road  
love moist October morning  
so oblivious

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**“There is a harmony in autumn, and a luster in its sky, which through the summer is not heard or seen, as if it could not be, as if it had not been!” - Percy Bysshe Shelley**

### **Autumn Comes to Lake Cohichee**

A wind-blown weaver’s hand on Lake Cohichee  
is hard at work; the weft picks out patterns  
on the waves, woof and warp seal the garment  
of the lake in furious rage.

The north wind sweeps the surface  
making knobs like wooly yarn  
on top of this rough, blue-tossed sweater.

Thatched reeds lie in quilted bundles  
along the lakeshore like knitting needles  
spilled from a sack and left carelessly  
for someone to pick up and proceed  
with the indigo lake project and jacquard  
it with a hundred hasty waves.

Frogs in hibernation  
create a dot-design on the slime,  
the knitter’s “Pointilist” design.  
Beneath the bog, the tender tadpoles sleep.  
The lake expands its blue arms  
pressed and blocked by Autumn winds,  
as if it fears becoming “stretched-out”  
by the fierce sun of high noon.

Margaret Bobalek King

bunnies in my yard  
enjoy misty solitude  
one October day

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### **How a Sonnet Tutorial Helped me write Free Verse by Margaret Bobalek King**

Writing poetry in “free verse” was described by Robert Frost as “Playing tennis without a net.” It refers to writing without the restrictions of rhythm, or meter, or rhyme and since Frost was a meticulous writer “in form” as all of these are collectively called, he held “free verse”

scorn, or at least he knew it takes a great deal of skill to write it well. He was a master of the Queen of all verse forms, the sonnet.

Sonnet is Italian for “Little Room,” and in poetry it can be construed as a confined space of 14 lines in which a poet has to make a metrical argument according to a strict rhyme scheme. Why in the world would a free verse writer like me attempt to come to terms with writing sonnets? I asked myself that question halfway through last year when so many of my colleagues were gaining success by writing “in form”. And so, I decided to improve and hone my writing skills by taking a stab at it.

I took a tutorial from Robert W. Crawford, a poet who’d won the Richard Wilbur Award. He started me off by “scanning” a sonnet by Robert Frost and I saw how masterfully Frost used substitutions from the iambic pentameter line. “If you don’t vary your iambic pentameter lines, you will get boring. Now try some yourself,” said Bob. I discovered how difficult it was to be precise about putting my thoughts within the cramped line of five (short-long) beats to a measure and then, of all things, using substitutions like trochees (long-short) to vary the beat!

Later, when I resumed writing “free verse,” I discovered there were multiple words that I could cut, which no longer carried the essential meaning. These words were mere useless baggage: over-description, redundancies, padding. I also found that I fell into a kind of rhythm automatically. It crept into my “free verse” from my practice writing sonnets and gave my poems a pleasing and subtle authority.

This was not all. A sonnet has also been called “a lovely compression.” If a Shakespearean sonnet (as opposed to several other types), is divided into three quatrains and a couplet, it concentrates ideas in the firm use of logic. The first four lines (Quatrain 1) presents the idea. The second four lines (Quatrain 2) complicates, or enlarges, upon the first. The third four lines (Quatrain 3) contradict the first two Quatrains. The remaining two lines which have a rhyme of their own (the couplet) sum up or resolve the entire sonnet. So what you have is an argument, a counter-argument (“the turn” is at the beginning of Quatrain 3) and a resolution in the couplet. A sonnet, as you can see, is much more than a mere 14 lines with a fancy rhyme scheme of ABBACDDCEFFEGG.

How did I carry this with me into “free verse?” By staying up late at night covering papers with scanned lines trying to write the perfect sonnet. “No inversions, inversion are bad! Don’t pad! Don’t put in words just to fill out the metrical line!” My teacher’s words rang in my ears. “Don’t cheat on rhyme. That’s banal. Look out for cliches!” It’s as if he were staring over my shoulder. And when I presented my work before him at the next tutorial, he found the couplet was not summing up the resolution of the poem, or I’d failed to make “the turn” at Quatrain Three, or the counter-argument hadn’t been strong enough.

Imagine my delight when one day he told me I’d finally written an adequate sonnet. “It fulfills all the requirements, even though it’s about the loss of your parakeet. You could have made a stronger resolution in the couplet,” he said.

I learned how this related to my “free verse” writing by Bob Crawford’s final statement: “If you take away the structure of poetry, you make it easier on the surface to write a poem -- in the short term. But the intimate working with close restrictions of the sonnet form forces you to eliminate the padding and the incorrect word and seek what Ezra Pound called “le mot correcte” – the correct word.”

When next I tried my hand at a poem without set form, rhyme, or meter, I was forced to tighten my ideas and condense them to the single image and corresponding emotion, and to go beyond my own private musings into a more universal view of the audience. If my goal is to become a

truer recorder of the world through my poetry, then I desire to achieve the omniscient view. The tension of argument, counterargument and resolution in a sonnet has helped me achieve a stronger tension in my “free verse,” a building to a climax, a release at the end, which tightens the “free verse” poem into a meaningful and unified whole, not just a loose string of unconnected thoughts. Writing sonnets has helped me to become more of wise senior craftsman when it comes to shaping my “free verse” and less of an impatient adolescent, too eager to push through incomplete and over-padded drafts. I learned much from my study of the structured “Little Room” of the Sonnet that has far-reaching effects on all the subsequent poetry I set out to write.

### **Carpe Diem**

I have given up my gemstones  
And relinquished all my dreams:  
Brought down my expectations  
like window shades;  
Boxed up my resentments  
And discarded old regrets;  
Put all my disappointments  
on a bus to Yesterday.

I want to witness an autumn sunrise  
And envy no man, today.  
I want to walk through a yellow wood  
And splash at the leaves at my feet.  
I want to smile at the man in the moon, tonight,  
And pretend that he smiles at me.

*(Previously published in Westward Quarterly)*

Jim Rainey

**“The greatest distance in the existence of Man is not from here to there nor from there to here. Nay, the greatest distance in the existence of Man, is from his mind to his heart. Unless he conquers that distance, he can never learn to soar like an eagle and realize his own immensity within.” - Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq (Theresa A. Cancro - phoenixlady@comcast.net)**

Pileated pair  
This is such a good omen  
My friend’s fall nuptials

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

**In a world where you can be anything, be kind.” - Dr. Seuss**

### **Autumn Orange**

Nourished by golden sun and dark rich soil,  
splashes of gold-orange bounce off  
rounded pumpkin cheeks. Taken from field-green  
farms, they endure in roadside bins, skins hardened  
and ridged, plump gourds dumped together  
in solidarity. Perhaps they grumble among  
themselves as they roll into corners, crack  
from hands that grab and toss.

Some resist the carving knife, tough against  
the blade that cuts and removes life,  
excises the false-toothed smiles.  
Others sustain the *jack-o-lantern phase*,  
remain passive hollows of brief flame--  
warning to witches and goblins,  
welcome to costumed  
Anakins and angels.

Most pumpkins will be brought home for sacred rituals,  
are transformed, transforming:  
breads and pies,  
kitchens scented with honey and orange,  
sensory reminders of earth's abundance, Her goodness,  
aromas triggering memories of childhood wholeness,  
coating time present with time past.

Today, outside my window, the leaves clump against the curb.  
Trees, gnarled and knobbed, stand stark against a hard-edged sky.  
Snow will soon muffle orange stains on barren fields,  
places where sun once splashed.  
Suddenly, the unmistakable sound of geese, vector barely visible.  
Time to get the bowls, assemble the spices,  
bring the pumpkin in from the porch.

Mary Jo Balistreri - Genesee Depot, WI - joeybfl@gmail.com

**The purpose of poetry is to provoke thought...**

## **At Last the Rains Came**

The tin roof talks  
in the rain, shames  
the drip and drizzle  
echoing onto the lake.  
Boats moored  
at the docks knock,  
duckweed squashed.  
Sweltering  
before the storm,  
a bridge buckles  
in soaring heat.  
But now cool air sways  
under bruised clouds.  
Through windows, lightning  
chisels the lake's surface,  
electricity humming.  
In a porch corner  
an orb-weaver, home  
scorched then swamped,  
waits, eager to create  
a newer, better place.

KB Ballentine

## **How Is It, the Light**

Even the leaves sing here--  
sprinkled with gold, russet, ruby.  
A belt of spruce scrapes the blue,  
tips twitching a harmony  
to elm, beech, black gum.  
Mornings licking blueberry syrup,  
battered rum evenings  
in Maine, cranberries kissing our lips.  
Signs propped in shop doors:  
SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!  
The force of winter waits  
like a vast dragon ready to pounce,  
blistering with tongues of ice.  
Gold flawed in the waiting.  
For now, we'll collect the sun  
as it grazes the shore,  
bear witness to ebbing green,  
hope lingering in our hands.

KB Ballentine

Umber buckeye nuts  
Pluck up polished timber balls  
Such schoolyard riches

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

### Leaving Song

Even the leaves slip into similar shades  
of thick-skinned pumpkins lining the porches, the steps.

Gusts burst from the north, apple trees bare-fisting,  
their fruit decaying in gold and brown decadence.

What happened to honeysuckle vining  
the oaks, trumpeting summer's glory?

Nothing protects them now,  
blackberries and lavender withered to knobs.

The silver promise of moonlight's sonata  
sings through the shroud enclosing us,  
veiling the remains of hope.

Soon the Hunter's Moon will lead the winged  
horse across a darkening sky, arrows of light  
pointing the way through this long, now longer night.

Watch how the leaves, when they let go,  
dance with the wind.

KB Ballentine - Chattanooga, TN - kb@kballentine.com

**“As mother we have an obligation to remind everyone that it is imperative that we have this closeness relationship with nature, not allowing ourselves to go a moment without realizing that we are part of the sacred elements.” - Grandmother Flordemayo (Theresa A. Cancro - phoenixlady@comcast.net)**

Autumn aspen quakes  
Foliage shakes like gold change  
Most priceless payment

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

## **After A Night of Travail**

Birther wings--  
those leaves fallen to earth.  
As the season closes,  
a cold front keeps my heart  
from splintering.

Yes, it is Autumn now.  
I betray myself as only  
aloneness would allow.  
How do my soft steps approach this destiny  
as I daydream of the coming winter?

O leaves, gracefully falling  
into earth's soft lap!  
Now, Summer closes her eyes  
as the wind tosses her hair lightly.  
I look for daybreak out my window.

Dustin Pickering - Houston, TX - desireofdogs@gmail.com

**“Nothing is more beautiful than the loveliness of the woods before sunrise.” -  
George Washington Carver**

## **Autumn in Sicily**

A tormented season:  
hot cold rain humid a wind cycling the corners,  
sun glaring at mortals changing F stops, layering shirts  
in bold salmon colored air.  
Lemon geraniums hover in  
bygone shadows of 5,000 priestesses,  
Reap: olives pears melons.  
Listen: clacking of green shutter windows,  
Feel: mists sweep a veil over Venus' charms.  
Notice: sun elaborates her nipples dome.  
Ancient stones cloak more than reveal.  
a tormented season:  
Two hundred live in the solitude  
and will stumble on iced cobble stones.

Mary Pauer

## Ode to Autumn

Leaves drift gently to the ground  
In colors of crimson, gold and chautreuse  
From oak, maple, and elm trees  
Oh, how I love it so  
This magical season called Autumn

David Fox - Islandia, NY- ipoetdavid@gmail.com

## Leav(f)ing

Dawn stretches, yawns awake  
Cedar shadows arrive elongate  
Day`s light crouches intuitively shortening its profile  
A befriending cooler breeze unwraps about my face foretelling change  
Playfilled and sunglassed Summer  
Migrates reluctantly to the beckoning arm of Autumn  
Reaching like a relay racer eager for the passage of the seasonal baton  
And while charcoal-laden clouds think to multiply  
Emerging from a canopy of transitioning greenery  
I sleeve-up and button my cardigan  
As Winter`s preface advances.

The sun`s spotlight visits a moss sprinkled pond  
Girded by circumjacent dignified Scarlet Oak and White Pine  
Attended to by the lark`s long distance signal  
Fall`s snowflakes` lifecycle proceeds  
A green-crimson-ocherous rustic mosaic  
Amber tri-colored jewelry on wooden sticks  
Jostled by nature`s billowing breaths  
Now away, highwire daredevils performing without a net  
Float glide pirouette plie`  
As they parachute unevenly toward earth  
A mocha flooring with twigs sticks pebbles acorns and bark bits.

Soon tomorrows will embrace childhood`s temporary return  
With the raking of a pillow playground leaf bed for my cannonballs and swan dives  
While others fragile j-stemmed and veined are time capsule tucked in my scrapbook.

John Lysaght - East Meadow, NY - jjrynn2447@yahoo.com

**We feel blessed to publish the best Nature poets in America**

## Changing Patterns

This October the river parkway is  
take-your-breath-away gorgeous.  
Leaves catch the sunlight  
as if lit from within.

Day after day  
deep scarlet and gold explode  
against a palette of rich green.  
Science says this happens  
when the elements of moisture,  
sun and temperature are in tune.

This October the river parkway is  
devoid of robins that once gathered  
there in pre-migration clusters.  
The birds left this year in September.

Science says earlier snow melt  
because of climate change  
triggers robin migration five days sooner  
in each ten-year period.

Changes in the patterns of Mother Earth  
can show clearly in one season.  
Other times they take decades to notice.

Patricia Foldvary - Wauwatosa, WI - pfoldvary@att.net

**Please write to each other...**

**Time to share up to four of your Fall  
themed poems for The Weekly Avocet,**

**Photos (4), haiku (up to 10), Saving Mother Earth  
Challenge poems (as many as you can write)**

**Please read the guidelines before submitting**

# Now you can send up to FOUR (4) Fall poems for us to pick from.

Please send your submission to [angeldec24@hotmail.com](mailto:angeldec24@hotmail.com)

**Please put (early or late) Fall/your last name in the subject line.**

Please be kind and address your submission to me, Charles. Thank you.

*(Just so you know: I do not read work from a poet who doesn't take the time to address their submission to the editor, who they want to read their work.)*

Please do not just send a poem, please write a few lines of hello.

Please do not have all caps in the title of your poem.

There is no line limit per poem.

Please no religious references.

Please use single spaced lines.

Please remember, we welcome previously published poems.

Please put your name, City/State, and email address under your poem. No Zip codes.

Please send your poem in both the body of an email and an attachment, **no pdf file.**

**We look forward to reading your Fall submissions...**

## **The Burning Question for our generation is:**

**What are we going to do to stop or even just slow down Climate Change?**  
**Do you feel like there is nothing you can do about climate change?** Well, there is, even if we all do small things it will make a great difference. Alice C. Hill (**the David M. Rubenstein senior fellow for energy and the environment at the Council on Foreign Relations.**) states the first thing we all need to do is not shy away from the subject. Talk about, write about, climate change to everyone you know and meet. Write your congressperson and Senators. Let them know what you think and fear!

**I want to do another Saving Mother Earth Weekly Avocet issue, so I am looking for poems that address the most important issues of today, so please write about what you think and fear of the coming end of our world as we know it. But if we join together, work together, we can make a difference to Save Mother Earth, the only home we have.**

**Show you care. There are so many topics to write about when it comes to Climate Change. Please find one you are passionate about and write about it!**

### **The American Avocet**

I watch unseen this large,  
long-legged shorebird,  
with its pied plumage  
and a dash of red  
around its head and neck,  
scampering along  
the coastline  
searching to snatch-up  
some aquatic insect  
or a small invertebrate  
hidden beneath  
the brackish waters  
of this saltmarsh.

I watch unseen  
it swing its odd,  
long, up-curved bill  
through the shallow,  
still waters, catching  
a tiny creature,  
trapping it in its bill,  
racing off to its nest to  
feed her four hatchings  
with this feast she found.

I watch in awe  
as the male  
grows protective,  
fearlessly fending off  
an encroaching  
common black raven,  
attacking this intruder,  
striking at it with its bill.

I watch in wonder  
as they swim as a family  
just days after  
the young ones are born,  
then back to the nest to  
rest where its kind flocks  
together in a community.

Charles Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - [cportolano@hotmail.com](mailto:cportolano@hotmail.com)

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We hope we provoked you; that you leave having experienced a complete emotional response to the poetry. I want to thank our Poets for sharing their work with us this week. **And “Thank you for reading, dear reader!”**

Be well, see you next weekend,

Charles Portolano, Editor/Publisher and Vivian and Valerie Portolano, Co-Editors  
of The Avocet, a Journal of Nature Poetry and The Weekly Avocet, every weekend.

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