

The Weekly Avocet - #529

January 22nd, 2023

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

**stars of ice
frozen heaven of stillness
illuminates windows**

Sara McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablonde49purple@gmail.com



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

The Earth Speaks

At the dawn of the ages, on that very first day,
A long time ago, when I was just clay;
I was so round and so perfect, so fresh and so new,
Teeming for life, a primordial stew;

My carpets of wheat and Indian maize,
Basked in the warmth of long summer days;
The clouds in the heavens, like angels would weep,
And fill my lakes with still waters, so blue and so deep;

Then man came along, one grim, woeful day,
And cut down my orchards and ripped up my clay;
He burned all the forests and stripped all the mines,
He raped and he pillaged and left nothing behind;

There were passenger pigeons, once ten billion strong,
But man had his way and now they are gone;
Whales once ruled o'er the great ocean tides,
But man had *his* needs and they also died;

Greedy woodcutters, protected by laws,
Gutted my forests with gas-driven saws;
Man slew his own children with asbestos flakes,
Then shredded the ozone and poisoned my lakes;

Once lush vegetation now grows just in clumps,
And the Redwoods are only a forest of stumps;
Man sucked my ground dry of all of its ore,
Then cried in despair when he wanted more;

Where New England landscapes with wintry delight,
Once wore a mantle of glimmering white;
The trees are now leafless and sit in a row,
Alive with the blaze of a nuclear glow;

Who speaks for the Earth? I offer my plea,
"No one," smirks man, "you're here to serve me"
"It's progress," he boasts, so fierce in his pride,
I ask, "But after I'm gone, where will man hide?"

Bill Tope - Wood River, IL - billtope1954@gmail.com

“Nature inspires me to believe!”

Out And Back

the butterscotch smell of Jeffrey pines
shimmers under a mountain sun
the foam and frenzy of cold water
tumbles over granite boulders
dumpling-clouded autumn sky
ambles across winter's threshold

feet in double-knotted hiking shoes
explore old woods new trails
muscles from knee to heel
strain down rocky slopes
arms pump hips pull in rhythm
climb steep slip-sided hills

the sun hangs in a flamed evening sky
slides toward the rumpled horizon
eyes and ears tune to songs of dayfall
register the walker's waning stride
the fork ahead muted by the day's end
takes a reluctant return into drifted dark

familiar fences foretell homecoming
lock and key slip and click
shoes drop one at a time
damp socks dry on tired feet
footfalls squeak on polished floors
the metronome of routine returns

a hot shower
a cup of sugared tea
before an embered fire
small moments of pleasure
round up to joy

Arlene Downing-Yaconelli - Citrus Heights, CA - syaconelli@yahoo.com

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

spinning patterned webs
quilt of quietness on earth
whirling snowflake fairies

Sara McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablond49purple@gmail.com

Sfumato

Mona Lisa fades from her world into the 'other'
no rigid borders, no defining line, no barrier

at the edge of the painted lady, atoms quiver, electrons flee
and light is loosed to halo her flawless skin, her dark hair

wrapped in my skin I feel the world as other
enraptured by my words I speak the world silent

trapped in language I experience the world as divergent
deafened by my heartbeat, I cannot hear the matrix

shift and adjust, the creak and ring, clear tones
of forward forge and the scuff of withdrawal

new leaves clicking and cooling on an easterly breeze
new roots cleaving soil to reach hidden moisture

yelps and rattles of disturbance and death
whisper sounds of dry wind over a desert becoming

lenticular clouds wrapped and trailing from mountain peaks
like winter scarfs set free in cold winds

surf, rolling into curls, translucent
studded with shapes of sharks and sea weed

otherness shimmers, beckons at the high-tide line
illusory, mind-set sealed, barrier to belonging

for every living thing a beating heart, pulsing
vacuole, rudimentary brain, each organelle

encased in a non-barrier barrier, fragile, permeable
crafted to admit the 'other' to internality

in service of survival

Arlene Downing-Yaconelli - Citrus Heights, CA - syaconelli@yahoo.com

red dog sleeps
circle of fur near fireplace
snores of dachshund suffuse room

Sara McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablond49purple@gmail.com

Treasure

One brisk winter morning, I wanted
To stop but kept going anyway.
Along the muddy path, I frowned
Heading for mountain meadows
Where warblers would already
Sing among the tall grasses.
On my way, I spied a bald eagle
Soaring above towering cliffs
Disappearing as I entered
The silent grove of sequoias.
Starting to hike the steep trail,
I could still feel winter's bite,
My legs leaden on the climb.
Near breathless and slower
Than a sloth, I saw clouds
Melt into each other, blocking
The streams of sun I had seen
In Yosemite Valley. I shivered,
My brain telling me to stop but
Something inside urging me on;
At the time I knew not what.
Hike, hike, hike, I told myself
Until, worn but triumphant, I
Reached the crest, saw a meadow
To my right, flower-full already
And orchestrated by songbirds.

I hiked some more until I reached
The top to gaze at the waterfall,
Pure white in sunlight. Awestruck,
I marveled at a crystal lake below.
I relive this hike when viewing
Dust aglow in the Milky Way;
Then, I remember challenging
Journeys lead to great rewards.

Christine Xu - Cupertino, CA - christinexu933@gmail.com

Eaves of neighbor's roof
roosting spot for slick black crows
winter-feathers shine

Louise Moises - Richmond, CA - bookstallsf@outlook.com

Gems

Once grey from life indoors, my world has transformed
Into a treasure trove of glistening gems:
Hiking at golden sunrise to a hilltop with views a gleam,
Or swimming with turtles over colorful coral reefs,
Or relaxing under night sky sprinkled with stars,
Or gazing from grass near a waterfall plunging from cliff to pool,
Or listening to robins warbling before dawn,
Or geese migrating south in formation to escape the cold winter,
Or sun tinting blue with amber when it sets,
Or fire ants creating complex homes beneath the earth,
Or redwoods stretching towards the clouds,
Or the moon, a silver globe, brightest among stars.
Each unique gem discovered over time
Now lives in memory illumining my once colorless realm.

To me each season begets its very own gems:
Spring awakening ground squirrels and glorious hummingbirds,
Summer spilling sunlight to create warm nights for swimming,
Autumn leaves dancing from red or gold maples,
Winter frosting evergreens with white fleece.

To me the sky is an eternal gem:
Swifts soaring--rainclouds rallying--constellations glowing--rainbows emerging!
Now all of these gems and more to come keep my world bright.

(Walt Whitman's "Miracles" from his epic, Leaves of Grass, and internationally recognized composer, Paul F. Page, in his new piece, "Before the Dawn," inspired this poem.)

Christine Xu - Cupertino, CA - christinexu933@gmail.com

Dear Nature-loving poets and people of The Avocet community:

Hello, I had the pleasure of working with Christine Xu a few years back when I taught a workshop for Judith Sutton's Advanced Poetry class for her amazing **Poetry Power Institute**. Christine was such a serious young poet, who I could see while teaching was taking in everything that she felt she needed to make her a better poet. I have watched her grow as a poet and as a person through her beyond-her-years poetry.

Her collection of poetry, *Pathway to Poetry*, is such a wonderful read, especially for someone her age. She has great insight and the rare talent for picking the right word to drive home her point. I am asking all of you who can to support this young poet, Christine Xu, by buying a copy of her first collection of poetry, but obviously will not be her last! **Just \$5.99**, please support this fine poet. Thank you! - Charles Portolano

"I will purchase this. Christine needs the support of poets." - Sue (an Avocet poet/reader)

In *Pathway to Poetry*, Christine Xu succeeds in taking the reader on a journey to become an internationally recognized poet in six years. Organized in four succinct and compelling chapters, her book not only displays skill with various types of poems but with poignant concrete detail, delightful musicality, and frequently neglected short, catchy, but appropriate titles --(acronym: SCAT). Within aptly named chapters--each conveying a strong motif supporting the primary theme--her maturation as a young poet takes place before the reader's eyes not only with her passion for nature and its preservation but with deep regard for other issues related to our slow progress toward well-being as a society. - *Judith Lyn Sutton*, MA: Founder & Director of *Poetry Power* in Silicon Valley.

Pathway to Poetry includes 36 poems Christine has written throughout her poetry journey and is available on Amazon for \$5.99. Thank you for supporting this young, promising poet.

Muddled Winter

The night air is chilly enough
to sharpen the edges
of houses, give the streetlights
extra glare, but the moon is
a fuzzy smudge of yellow
appearing blearily through the bare
branches. It's as if I'm not
wearing my glasses, but the blur
comes from clouds that
tomorrow will bring a mild
rain, removing whatever pitiful
traces of snow remain.
This time last year-Old Man
Winter did his job, buried us,
confident in his hibernal mission.
Must have had a tough off-season,
for now he doesn't know
what he's about; he moves in
fits and starts of cold
and snow, but then turns away,
can't seem to stick to his purpose.
We stand by and watch, hoping
that by the time he makes up
his mind, fresh young Spring
will bound in to let him know
he has dithered too long.

Robert J. Ward - Reading, MA - rjpward@comcast.net

“The gist of it is that no one writes alone: one needs a community.”- Robert Bly

Ice Bear

No trees, no structures
impede powerful, frigid winds
slamming ice bear's back as she sits
upon blue-tinged, salty sea ice.
Gusts part thick, transparent fur,
black skin absorbs
warmth from drowsy sun.

Ice bear turns her head,
pointing sensitive black nose
toward pale azure sky,
analyzing messages
carried aloft.

Sensing nothing of interest,
small dark eyes blink.
Pushing down against thick ice,
massive hind legs slowly
lift her colossal weight.
She stands and shakes.
Loose, dense fur,
muscles, blubber
ripple
as sharp claws puncture ice
anchoring her in place.

With no concerns,
she slowly walks.
Large, thickly furred pads plod
toward a familiar place
where ice meets
choppy, dark blue sea.

Long rays fired
from falling arctic sun
softly pierce liquid brown eyes,
as ice bear scans
the far horizon of her world.

Torie Cooper - Tempe, AZ - Torie.cooper4@gmail.com

Please be kind, write to each other...

Before Morning

Sunup
a vane of brightness
a bleed
a bloom
an aura of white
unsung and unseen
while the North Fork sleeps
a burst of rayed light
above Paradise Point
sky-tinged pink
peach painted clouds
a quiet crescendo
bright brass
big red drum

Peter C. Leverich - Manhasset, NY - peterl@techsoftinc.com

Neon pink roses
on thorny stems brightly bloom
in wintry mist

Louise Moises - Richmond, CA - bookstallsf@outlook.com

Winter's Favor

When the world is a black and white photo,
and all the trees are defined like bare bones,
as the snow-laden pine makes a grotto,
while winter whipping wind whimpers and moans,
then we rest inside near hearths, unencumbered.
We kindle the fire, turn inward desire
to things long forgotten, now remembered.
And if we might ask what this day might require,
the answer may be sublime or serene:
a closet of book, a movie or nook,
a project put off, some silver to clean,
perhaps something quite delicious to cook.
You must find something so good to savor
if you want to stay in winter's favor.

Christine Swanberg - Rockford, IL - chris.swanberg@comcast.net

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

The Moon Was Full

He said, "Look outside!"
This image is what I saw:
Clouds, wires, twigs, full moon!

Emily Schreiber - Belmore, NY - emily.g.schreiber@gmail.com



Photo by Emily Schreiber - Belmore, NY - emily.g.schreiber@gmail.com

Three white crowned sparrows
head stripes reflecting sunlight
chill morning vision

Louise Moises - Richmond, CA - bookstallsf@outlook.com

Icicles

Daggered spikes hang
Like uneven lace valances
Silver spears cling to the eave
Opaque light channels through rainbow-like tears
Shimmering within a murky winter sky

Stormy day's icy slosh
Leaves puddles glazed with crusty frost
Pockets of snow lie deep
Huddled against trees and alcoves

The promise of another wintry mix
Looms overhead gloomy
Covers the sky in leaden drape
Like nature's hoary discontent
Winter's once mild tease
Now locked in a frigid midwinter deep freeze.

Joan Amato

Angels

silver maples ring our yard
white with frost,
one-hundred years standing sentinel,
graceful and forbidding
reminding me of muscular, towering angels

fragile leaves, feathered wings
blue-black bark like armor
nothing human about them at all

but they explode sparks of care
through quiet witness
and their own language,
wooden layers, soils and, depth,
their steadfast roots all intertwined together

give me the courage to rise again at dawn
to know my place in this world too
from which I can enter whatever dark tunnel is given
and discover and speak the just word

Cynthia Chadwick Linkas - Hamilton, MA, - linkas9@gmail.com



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What is the difference between climate and weather?

Weather is the daily or weekly changes that happen in the atmosphere. Climate refers to what the weather is like over a long period of time, sometimes over a few decades. Climate is what you think will happen in the atmosphere, whereas weather is what actually happens, [explains the National Centers for Environmental Information](#).

Light and dark

There is inside me a country
where words bless
heal
smash
hold.

It's the light and dark story of me,
shadows, terror, sunrays, and bliss.

There are no guarantees.
So, I walk every day on our trail,
sprinkled with frosting over fir branch,
crunchy white paths, twice frozen,
paws of coyote, hooves of deer,

And celebrate the giant fir, the oaks, the maples,
a reassuring life force,
roots that I crave, comfort that keeps me on my path,
and their steadfast reach for the stars.

Cynthia Chadwick Linkas

new moon
snow covers
old dirt

Karen O'Leary - West Fargo, ND - karenoleary1956@gmail.com

Snowy Walk

Walking along a sugar-coated stone wall,
limbs loosening,
dots of orange berries interspersed among pale leaves,

I climb up over a rise,
to my left, the angry green sea, frosty sprinkling of whitecap
to the right, in a neat valley,
something brown, someone's lost jacket in the snow

but, wait, no, a buck, belly down,
spindly legs folded under, nose in his chest,

Oh, he's dead
frozen there.

wind whips my hair as I mourn.

Then he leaps up
and flies over the snow mounds,
white tail flickering with the glints of light off-white whorls,

waking up my ruins
my small words, up and over the snow swept scrubs of pine,
red berries and evergreen

Waking my words and plans,

puckish with cold new life

Cynthia Chadwick Linkas - Hamilton, MA, - linkas9@gmail.com

winter seclusion
at the base of the hill
a lone cross

Karen O'Leary - West Fargo, ND - karenoleary1956@gmail.com

a life in limbo
bear deep into winter sleep
oblivious

Judy Wucherer

Coming home to the body

I ignored you a lot when we were young
exploding with health.
I understand now
that you were never in the way.
I struggled with you, was taught to struggle,
like Saint Francis who called his body his mule.

Now, I sweep my hands over lined feet, sore knees
and remember in the boarding school bathtub
my ode to legs,
“all mine, all free, strong to carry me”.
And, you did.

But you betrayed me too.

Now that my time is fleeting in you
forgive me.
There was pain, yes,
but those years you were lusty and alive
there was laughter too, dance, word, and song,
Walks and love-making, profound thanks
for your wonder, vigor.

In awe of your fragility,
as shy as when we were new,
full of tenderness for our journey,

I will miss that wild and speaking you.

Cynthia Chadwick Linkas - Hamilton, MA, - linkas9@gmail.com

Winter wrens twitter
peck for bugs on bare branches
signs of the season

Louise Moises - Richmond, CA - bookstallsf@outlook.com

Please be kind, write to each other...

How to Revise Poetry: One Simple Rule

By Robert Lee Brewer, Senior Editor of Writer's Digest

When it comes to your revision, there's one simple way how to revise poetry without the pressure or responsibility of making your poem "better." Instead, you can actually have fun continuing with the process of poetic creation.

How to Revise Poetry

Most poets know the joy of writing poetic first drafts. There's nothing like putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and crafting one line after another down the page (or screen) until you hit the end. Maybe with a little fist pump for finishing a new poem. It's a liberating, purposeful feeling.

However, many poets view revision as the antithesis of crafting poems. I've heard poets refer to the revision process as work. Or they claim it strips the energy out of the first draft. Or that it's some mysterious act that they just don't understand how to perform.

I'm here to tell you that the revision process does not need to be mysterious, laborious, or trying. In fact, it should be just as fun and liberating as that first draft. Since there are so many mixed views on poetry revision, I like to refer to my process as recreating poems. After all, revision is just a continuation of the creation process.

And my one simple rule is to play with your poetry, whether you're working on your first draft or 21st draft.

Revision doesn't have to be a chore—something that has to be done after the joy of the first draft. In fact, revision should be viewed as an enjoyable extension of the creation process—something that you want to experience after the joy of the first draft.

Some Ways to Play With Your Poetry

Believe me, I used to stress out about the revision process myself. For one, I just didn't know what to do. For another, revision felt like work, akin to folding laundry or cleaning my room—both of which are worthwhile pursuits, but they're not exactly fun. Once I realized that revision isn't something to be tolerated but actually enjoyed, it unlocked my entire poetic process.

So here are a few ways I like to play with my poetry:

Play with form. This may mean seeing if your first draft could be turned into a traditional poetic form, but it could also mean that your sonnet or villanelle would work better as free verse or a nonce form.

Play with sounds. I love the music of poetry, those sounds that lead me from one word and line to the next. Sure, end rhymes are great (I love them anyway), but poets can also play with internal rhymes, alliteration, consonance, and slant rhymes too. Look at what you've already naturally done in your first draft and see if there are ways to amplify the sound.

Play with scale. Not musical scale, but the scale of your poem. For instance, if you've written a very personal poem, play around with ways to expand the focus into a broader conversation on the topic (without being didactic, of course). Or take a very expansive first draft and play around with ways to personalize it.

Play with metaphors. If your poem already has similes, then yes, try metaphors! It's the difference between being like something and actually being something. But even if you don't have similes, play around with metaphors to breathe new life into your poems. This is a fun (and effective) way to deal with difficult or overdone topics, in particular.

There are more ways to revise or recreate your poetry, but the most important thing to remember is that first simple rule: That you're playing with your poetry. And playing is meant to be fun.

If you find that an earlier draft works better, that's great. Revert back to the earlier draft. But once you start playing with your poems you may find that it's even more exciting than the fire of crafting first drafts.

And 5 More Ways to Revise Poems

These aren't the only ways to revise poetry. Rather, they're a starting place.

Search for form. One of the first things I like to do after "finishing" a first draft is to count syllables to see if I've written a poem in a certain form. Sometimes, I'll even do this mid-draft if I get the feeling that a form is establishing itself. By form, I don't mean traditional forms, though sometimes that can happen. A form could be as simple as 8-syllable lines or a pattern of 7-, 9-, and 5-syllable lines (which happened to me over the weekend). The nice thing about form is that it acts as the skeleton for the poem—the structure that gives shape to the body of the poem.

Look for ways to cut. One quality I love about poetry versus other forms of writing is the genre's concision. The best way to make a poem concise is to cut out all the extra fat of a poem. This might include prepositions, adjectives, and adverbs. It might also include cutting lines that "explain" what a poem means or is getting at.

Pay attention to line breaks. While every word in your poem should have a purpose, readers place more emphasis on the ends and beginnings of lines—the places where the lines break. For me, I try to find ways to surprise readers here. Of course, every line doesn't have the potential for enjambment or clever turns of phrase, but every poem I write gets a thorough line break inspection.

Listen for sounds. I mentioned concision as a quality I love about poetry, but the chief quality I love about poetry (and this is showing my own bias) is the musical nature of poetry. When done well, I think poetry—including poetry that doesn't rhyme—reads (and can be read) as music. As such, I already try to write first drafts with sound in mind, but then I go through the drafts looking for potential end rhymes, internal rhymes, and consonance. For this step, I do read the poem aloud at different times of the day and in different moods (and even voices).

Make things concrete. This step does not involve "spelling out" the meaning of the poem. Instead, I look for any abstract words that made it into the poem (words like "love," "hate," and "fear") and try replacing them with concrete words and images. At times, I even replace concrete words with more specific (or unusual) concrete words.

These ways to revise poems are in a numbered list, but that doesn't mean I follow this order when revising poetry. Poems evolve and making language concrete may throw off the syllable pattern or create a new pattern. Breaking lines in specific places can affect form as well.

So, I often go through these steps several times for each poem I want to submit. After leaving the poem alone for a while, I'll go through them again—even with poems that have been published. Poets tinker.

By Robert Lee Brewer, Senior Editor of Writer's Digest

Time to share up to four of your Winter 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

Please send your submission to angeldec24@hotmail.com

Please put (early or late) Winter/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 - 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 Winter submissions...

The Burning Question for us Earthlings is:

What are you/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 have, at least, one Saving Mother Earth poem in each issue of The Weekly Avocet, so I am always looking for poems that address our 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. A world our great grandkids will never know. A Mother Nature who is no longer kind.

But if we join together, maybe, just maybe, working 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!

Write a Tell-off poem letting the world know what you are feeling about what is being done right before our eyes by those who claim to want what best for all of us.

Think it out in your head, then put it down on the page, then fight with it, get your rage out, then send it to us to share, so you can see your voice, your words, being read, being heard...

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

If you would like to become a supporting member of The Avocet community, The Avocet is only \$28.00 for 4 perfectly bounded issues and 52 weeks of The Weekly Avocet, every weekend, plus other poetry surprises, with the best Nature poetry by the best Nature poets in America, a steal of a deal.

Please make your check out to The Avocet and send to:

**The Avocet
P.O. Box 19186
Fountain Hills, AZ 85269**

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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