

# THE INKWELL

By Lynn Berry

Attention! Note the Inkwell's email address has changed for those of you who wish to submit your poetry to be used in an upcoming column. The Inkwell desires some local poetry, so please, I'm looking forward to your submissions. InkwellVernonia@gmail.com

Understanding and compassion. I had the opportunity to learn these principals once more when I found inattentive words spilling out of my mouth. I hadn't paused to reflect on the circumstances of "the other"...whomever "they" may be... We all do it. We are human and imperfect. We make mistakes. It's easy to judge, point out, or blame "the other" for actions we find intolerant or unusual. My wish for myself and for others is that we at least become conscious enough to recognize and to attempt to cease these impulsive and harmful "opinions," if that's what they really are. When we carefully examine our words, they may be instead, just a cloaked excuse to expel our own righteous feelings without the discipline or maturity to stop and attempt to understand why "this person" or "that group" may act in the way they do. In fact, a proper "opinion" occurs only when we have a comprehensive understanding of all of the information, otherwise, what we think to be an "opinion," is just thoughtless blather. When we view "the person" or "group" more mindfully, we may get a glimpse of where they have come from, which may have helped to influence their ideas, beliefs, and behaviors, and in doing that, we begin to understand ourselves more fully in that we get a glimpse of where we have come from, which may have helped to influence our own ideas, beliefs, and behaviors. We don't have to agree with "the other" to have an understanding and compassion for "the other." The paramount element is that when we begin to understand, our personal and worldview expands, releasing innumerable treasures and the realization that we all are one.

Below, the well-known published author and poet, Margaret Atwood, creates a moment in nature to reflect and draw attention to the harsh realities of our own human nature. The poet's understanding of the red fox parallels the understanding of ourselves and others.

**Red Fox**  
The red fox crosses the ice  
intent on none of my business.  
It's winter and slim pickings.

I stand in the bushy cemetery,  
pretending to watch birds,  
but really watching the fox  
who could care less.  
She pauses on the sheer glare  
of the pond. She knows I'm there,  
sniffs me in the wind at her  
shoulder.  
If I had a gun or a dog  
or a raw heart, she'd smell it.  
She didn't get this smart for  
nothing.

She's a lean vixen: I can see  
the ribs, the sly  
trickster's eyes, filled with longing  
and desperation, the skinny  
feet, adept at lies.

Why encourage the notion  
of virtuous poverty?

It's only an excuse  
for zero charity.  
Hunger corrupts, and absolute  
hunger  
corrupts absolutely,  
or almost. Of course there are  
the mothers,  
squeezing their breasts  
dry, pawning their bodies,  
shedding teeth for their children,  
or that's our fond belief.  
But remember --- Hansel  
and Gretel were dumped in the  
forest  
because their parents were  
starving,  
Save qui peut. To survive

we'd all turn thief

and rascal, or so says the fox,  
with her coat of an elegant  
scoundrel,  
her white knife of a smile,  
who knows just where she's  
going:

to steal something  
that doesn't belong to her ---  
some chicken, or one more  
chance,  
or other life.

-----Margaret Atwood

Lowell aptly exemplifies the significant shifts each one of us experiences when we are capable of honest and selfless reflection, especially when the insight proves our character to be disappointing at best. When we invite the artist within us to emerge, we grow and enlarge our minds, and our hearts open; we begin to understand people and situations in ways we were once unable; we begin to respect what we don't understand; we become compassionate rather than judgmental, and we relish in the beauty and in the ache that life brings to each of us.

---**Writer's Idea:** Create a piece of artwork that expresses Plato's idea, "The life which is unexamined is not worth living."

---**Writer's Tip:** Take a walk this week, turn off the incessant chatter in your mind, and instead, take notice of the countless details and miracles of early spring. A simple mindful walk will help to open any creative blocks you may be having and create stimuli for your creative self to emerge.

---Please send your original submissions to, (or if you would like a copy of any of the published poems in their entirety), InkwellVernonia@gmail.com or by mail: PO Box 333 Vernonia, OR 97064. Please include your name and contact information. Write—Express—Expand.

Lynn Berry holds an M.A. in English, specializing in feminist literature and literary criticism. She has spent several years teaching Literature, Composition, Poetry, Creative Writing, and Critical Thinking at various school districts and colleges, and occasionally provides writing workshops.

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Questions?  
Call Maria at (503) 429-1069  
or St. Mary's at (503) 429-8841