

FSH DECISION LETTER 2014 23

I agree with Reviewer 1 that the words schreeping and screechity, aside from not being real words, and despite the onomatopoeia you are going for, are distracting (Urban Dictionary defines schreeping as taking an afternoon nap to recover from a hangover so you can continue nocturnal revelries [with implications of not really sleeping but facebooking!], which adds a whole new and presumably unwanted distraction to this word). I also found “screechity-sweet” to be a contradictory combination, which is perhaps your intention, but I think it pulls too much energy from the main focus of your poem.

I recommend reworking the first stanza to focus more on the sound rather than the visual of these “crucifix peepers.” Combing a line about them with the second stanza, as Reviewer 1 suggests, might be a good way to go.

I also agree with Reviewer 1’s recommendation for reworking the 1st line of stanza 3. As it reads, it is unnecessarily jarring. Going on from that line, consider: “A musician no longer privy.../trying to forget.../all strike his ears...” The problem as written is that it is grammatically not just incorrect (which I wouldn’t mind) but creates a stumbling block for the reader, who flails about trying to find a subject for “no longer privy.”

I am not a big fan of punctuation in poetry. You might consider omitting all of the semi-colons (really a grammatical nicety that usually has no place in a poem); getting rid of that colon; and perhaps even leaving off periods as well except where needed to avoid confusion.

Reviewer 3 makes an interesting suggest to “quiet” the language toward the end of the poem, but I’m not sure how you would implement this. Paradoxically, in my read, the poem now ends with a very “loud” sound, and I think this loudness is appropriate, in that it marks the significance of sound to the narrator. The whole last stanza I find very elegant, well-crafted, and moving.

DECISION LETTER

This is a beautiful revision of the poem! The combining of the first and second stanzas, and the focusing on sound rather than visuals, is very effective and lyrical. The stanza about the father is eloquent and touching. The simplification of punctuation allows the reader to attend to the richness of the imagery and the elegiac quality of the language. Overall, the language is more subtle (“writhing” softened to “unwanted companions”; elimination of the “porch glider”) and to my ear, more evocative. Ending the second stanza with the line “...less to miss. Less to grieve” is powerful.

However, I would recommend only two further small changes. 1) The repetition of “peeping” and “peepers” seems to lack a certain creativity. What about “singing” or “song”? I looked up crucifixion peepers, and their sound is described as “jingling” or “tinkling.” Please think about a substitution. 2) It is a very traditional poetic convention to start each line with a capital letter. Many poems now only capitalize for meaning, as in the start of a new sentence, or for emphasis. I think the poem would read more smoothly by using the latter approach, but the final decision is yours.

DECISION LETTER III: I am pleased to inform you that your work has now been accepted for publication in *Families, Systems, and Health*. This has evolved into a poignant, beautiful poem that resonates with both issues around hearing loss and around family. It is a perfect fit for our journal.