THIS WILDEST YEAR

BY
MARK P. WIDRLECHNER
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A COLLECTION OF POEMS AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY MARK P. WIDRLECHNER
To my dear Sherry, with deepest gratitude for every day that Wakonda keeps my fire lit…
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INTRODUCTION

When the longest days of 2011 arrived, I was on a tear. I felt like I was sharing my house with an alpha male wolf and had to keep up with him, from 4 o’clock in the morning till late at night. I was simultaneously figuring out how to bring my 28-year career with the USDA to a close, negotiating with Iowa State University on a new, post-retirement role, and searching for a better house to call my own.

Many of the things I experienced at that time were quite unsettling as I grieved the loss of my dear Sherry. But, fortunately, I learned that I was surrounded by supportive, loving friends and family and found myself walking a path that led to wise counsel.

During that summer, I engaged in two new investigations: the study of Taoist classics and of southern Siouan languages. In different, but complementary ways, these two endeavors opened my eyes to the Mystery and allowed me to forge an unexpected, syncretic spiritual approach that would infuse new life into my personal metaphysics.

On the first day of July, while driving to work, I passed a row of linden trees in full bloom, and recalled seeing a friend transfixed on a sidewalk under linden flowers just a few days before. A brief poem came to mind, fully formed. When I pulled into the parking lot at work, I jotted it down. Little did I know that it would be the start of an internal dialog that would generate more than 250 poems, most quite spontaneously, over the next year. At no other point in my life have I experienced such a flow of thoughts and words. And I still cannot believe where it has taken me, both in real wanderings and those more philosophical.
A wall was coming down, and I was learning to live in a wild world without my soulmate by my side. These poems have helped me revisit the past, grapple with grief and a changed life, and speculate about the future. Their genesis and the enjoyment that I’ve found by bringing them together into small chapbooks to share with loved ones are all part of my healing.

The chapbooks created in the year ending in June 2012 include eleven themed collections and three installments of “In Thirteen Moons,” which didn’t get completed till that fall. “This Wildest Year” brings together the poems of the eleven themed chapbooks, each as a separate chapter. I have e-published this book for three reasons. First, the chapbooks have all been printed in very limited runs, and few copies remain to be shared with friends, old and new. Second, by ordering the chapters more or less chronologically, one can more easily see themes unfold and new connections made. And finally, this e-book is a bit of an experiment, allowing me to develop skills in self-publishing and graphic design. I hope you will find it to be a successful experiment.

To all, I wish you peaceful days…
MOVEMENT OR STILLNESS
(AUGUST 2011)
**Alter Ego**

With falcon’s eyes  
not distractible.  
With owl’s ears  
catching even the most subtle.  
With bear’s strength  
slicing straight to the truth.  
With love’s medicine  
not resistible.

**After the Solstice (to Nick)**

In the time of linden flowers,  
progress is suspended.  
The sweet scent of summer finds us  
and penetrates our souls.
GATHERING

Do not be distracted by the mosquitoes.
The heat of the summer sun will turn the buffalo currants
just the right shade of black.
And, with patient experience,
You will find the ones that fall into your hands
most willingly.

ON THE DARK MARE

I, a man unattached,
Had my feelings reignited
with Vesna’s arrival.
In sacrifices to Ceres,
Rewarded by the fit and shapely forms
of the maids who tend her plots,
and their beguiling smiles.
But what imaginary lover can match the dark mare?
That mare holds the secrets of all lovers:
The source of the gentle, the rough, the patient, the wild.
To her, I must direct my devotion.
How can I resist becoming one with her?
**RUNNING WITH WOLF**

When Wolf enters your world,
You will not be prepared.
Open your eyes;
Clean out your ears;
Flare your nostrils and take deep breaths.
Get ready to run!

On the hunt...
Alliances will shift;
Advisers will be startled;
Friends and loved ones will be baffled.
So keep your eyes on that Wolf,
You will need your wits about you.

Do be prepared for casualties;
That’s Wolf’s way.
As you see anew, you will be seen anew.
If all goes well, weak and infirm affairs will die.
A new pack will form.
And you’ll emerge from the den into a life transformed.

**ON THE HUNT TO FILL THE ARK**

Our quarry is still.
Only the breezes stir it.
My partner and I move quickly,
Eyes open wide as can be.

Learning the right patterns of place
Takes time and thought.
And the miles go by
In unfamiliar territory.

But within the forest,
We do discern the trees --
The mothers of a new generation
That can only be if we can nurture them.
ON THE ROAD TO STANHOPE

The lamb’s tied up in the back of the pick-up, uneasy.
My friend’s up front behind the wheel.
I’m in the back, holding her gently, firmly,
Compelled to sing sweet songs and fragments of lullabies,
Over the gravel noise and dust.
How can you keep from singing on the bumpy road to the locker?

A LESSON FROM COOK TING

The discipline of self-discipline to promote balance, when well aligned,
Becomes the subtle discipline of second nature,
Becomes no discipline but now integral, practiced without thinking.
**Strategic Planning**

So tell me…
To get what I need should I
  Be strong like Bear,
  Be fast and focused like Falcon, or
  Be crafty like Fox?
If I can only be patient,
  Do you think I might learn a little something
  from all three?

**Bequest**

When we write our wills,
We leave something to support our loved ones
And perhaps something to bolster the forces of good.
But do we leave something to the imagination?
Imagination inspired multiplies material generosity.
**FLY AWAY**

What are words
To a prayer?
Could they be the wrapping
That surrounds the heart’s secret?
Perhaps they are
The crackle of the burning cedar
Or lyrics to the bird’s song
Whose feathers take it aloft.

**CATHARINE CREEK MARSH**

There’s dew on the grassy path
Through cottonwoods, massive shining willows,
Ash and box elder with chains of seeds
   hanging like dreams.
Kingfishers scanning the smooth brown pond,
Heron soaring away,
And then the rustle of cottonwood leaves
   on a fickle breeze
Breaks the stillness.
And a yellowthroat sings
“Wichity wichity wichity.”
AN ETERNAL QUEST

Immortal, immaculate Roadrunner
Immortal, battered Coyote
Just for once…
Couldn’t Coyote find his true self
And switch equipment suppliers?

ECSTASY

Ecstasy follows no plan.
There is an ecstasy that comes on a long straight road
in Manitoba,
When a huge blue sky seems larger than ever imagined
and the future is infinite.
Then…
There’s the ecstasy that comes from a night vision of elk,
When it leads to the full measure of devotion
and a hidden geyser of joy and sorrow erupts.
The Object of Desire

My first love invited herself into my bed.
My next dear love charmed me into her own.
After decades passed, the fog lifted at last…
By far –
The sexiest place beneath the whirling stars,
    is to be the object of wanted desire.

The Alchemy of Words

Poetry is verbal alchemy,
Passions and insights distilled,
    yet mysterious.
CorN & BeANS

The patterns of Iowa’s blankets
Have become bigger and bolder,
But it’s gotten harder and harder
To hide the stains.

MOVEMENT OR STILLNESS

My bluestem friends connect to the Sky
through the bobolink’s song.
My oak friends connect to the Earth
through the massive trunks.
My pine friends connect to the Lake
through the needles’ scent.
And my bulrush friends connect to the Marsh
through the croaking bullfrogs.
Taking them all away.
Is it movement…
or stillness?
MEDICINE YOU JUST CAN’T BUY
(SEPTEMBER 2011)
Accumulation of Power

Each potential contribution
Likely deserves a few words on its behalf.

But am I up to the task
Of crafting the most fitting phrases,
Those that illumine
Or, at least, attempt to predict
The powers that might be manifest?

I am skeptical.

A Good Omen

When I asked you if I should begin this quest,
You told me to have confidence,
to be steadfast and upright.
It would be good to have a place to go,
but not too quickly.
By traveling alone, without hurry,
I might find a friend.

You said a mountain above a lake
would be transformed
Into a mountain above fire.
Viewing the adornments of Heaven,
the seasons pass in beauty.
The flames shine at the foot of the mountain
invigorating new pastures.

It will be good to have a place to go.
Seeking the Blessing of Artemis

Each quest has an element of mystery.
An initial offering to Artemis might be in order.
I would consult her oracle,
But couldn’t find the website.

Perhaps the old herbalists and Linnaeus got it right;
She has so many namesakes.
I should seek them out –
But which ones?

Which ones do elk prefer?

Bloodlines

My mother’s line is of huntsmen and farmers
From the Clan of the Little Stag,
My father’s is of tailors and cabinetmakers.
Is that why I now feel compelled to hunt and cultivate,
Not so much for the food,
But for stitching together life’s tapestry
And crafting marquetry made of words and spirits?
TIME FOR A CHANGE

When the last four fortune cookies were good ones,
And they’ve all come true,
It’s time to start looking
For a nice Mexican place.

EVEN-ING OUT

If the greens seem too bitter,
Make a big pot of lentils.
If the beer seems too bitter,
A roast duck will do nicely.
If your life seems too bitter,
Watch calves run on lush meadows.

A NEW LIFE

As the first few bars of Suk’s fanfare ring out,
They seem much too Olympian for me.
At twenty – maybe…
But now,
In this new life,
I would be more than satisfied
To learn the fanfare of the meadowlark.
Autumn in the Clan of the Little Stag

In summer, we tend our plots with care,  
With pride in the beauty and sustenance that result.  
But when the mornings get cool and crisp,  
We run away  
To rediscover which apples in the fencerow  
Hold the brightest stars of flavor 'round their cores  
And which tangles in the woods  
Are home to mushrooms  
That make the most fragrant soup.

Fragrant Temples of the Wasps  
(To Henny & Sherry)

Love the wasp  
Love the mountain mint  

Burn lavender heads  
For the old world  
Burn mountain mint heads  
For the new one  

Pick a frisky mount  
With a mountain mint julep  

The summer wind bears  
The scents  
Of so many strains  
Of mountain mint  

Seek out its sweet nectars  
Taste them all
THE CUT FIELD

Empty-handed, I emerged from the cool, dark store into the glaring sun.
The discounts were deep, but what did I really need?
As I changed my glasses, I paused…
And paused again.
The air was filled with the warm scent of sweetclover coming from just beyond.
Making hay on a hot day may be dirty work,
But it sure does pay.

LOST THE LYRICS

Long ago and far away,
In the Moon of Pawpaw Marmalade,
There was a Sangamon Revival.
That meeting was a fine one –
real inspiring.

Where in the world did that old hymnal go?
Maybe Catbird will know.
The world is ripe for another revival,
And the birds are gettin’ fatter all the time.
**KONZA**

Yesterday, before the thunder,
A gang of bachelors stared at us
From their side of the fence
While calmly chewing their cud.

Our guide then mentioned the herd of elk
That grazes the high ground far to the west.

Turning around...
The view to the west,
With its endless hills
Quilted with prairie meeting a changing sky,
Seemed to go on forever.

**BISON BRAND**

What were the motives that led them to take
a snippet of Grandmother’s hair
From beneath the eyes of the Bison?
Base or noble, it matters not;
They added it to the recipe.
Bison did not object.
And somehow, the profane was changed
into the ethereal.
And Grandmother’s fresh, new spring
can grace our toasts,
Blessing all good things that follow.
**L’elisir d’amore**

Has Kokopelli transcribed Donizetti’s dear love songs for the wooden flute? Help me hunt for those scores. I will need to practice them – Way back in the woods Where only lost wanderers and the chattering squirrels can hear.

**Soulshine (For Burton)**

Drink in the moon shine Let its light fuel your soulshine Just before the dawn.

**Glimpse of Liška**

Vixen – Woman-fox, Your coat is so lustrous. Your tail is so beautiful. You move with such poise and grace. Can’t you wait just a moment? Can’t you take me away from this world for just a little more time?
LIVING IN CHESTNUT’S WORLD

The Chestnut, before the Blight,
Long ignored the Third Treasure.
Now, those that grow the strongest
Are most likely to succumb.

In a balanced world,
Striving is but natural expression.
In a manipulated world,
Striving creates vulnerabilities and trouble.

The troubles of trees are sometimes signaled
By premature brilliance.
Brilliance, too soon,
Should always be a signal for caution.

COULD IT BE? (A HINT FROM WOLF)

As I savor my lamb stew and a cup of mint tea,
I think I’ve finally figured it out.
A colleague of mine who’s been known to teach biology
at a small college on the Plains,
Is not exactly what he seems.
Looking back, I suspect that Coyote was his major prof
Or, at least, found a way to sneak onto his committee.
Coyote’s lessons go well beyond biology.
**REPEITION**

If I repeat myself,  
Let it be from joy.  
Like the brilliant bunting,  
On the highest branch,  
Calling out his paired song all morning long,  
Or the mockingbird,  
Exuberant in his soliloquy long past the sunset.

**A.K.A. DOG POISON**

You hardly notice the Bluevine,  
Till it enshrouds your shrubs  
And wraps itself around your little finger.  

Late in the summertime,  
Its white flower clusters  
Let forth a dark, intoxicating fragrance.  

You should cut them out then,  
Before each cluster makes a pod  
And seeds that fly away to seek more sorrow.
**Hidden Music**

With the finest mist, the box waited.  
It was sitting on the front stoop.  
Too cold for the paper wasp guards,  
That duty was assumed by two downy feathers  
and some redbud seeds.

Inside, opened slowly, deliberately,  
It was packed with great care  
Befitting its contents.  
There were faint smells of leather and sassafras.

And as for the contents,  
Leave the last words to Carl —

“Look at songs  
Hidden in eggs.”

“There is a song deep as the falltime redhaws,  
long as the layer of black loam we go to…”

**Balance of Power**

Sacred balances danger in the sacraments,  
Not so gently teaching countervailing powers.

**In August**

On my walk to the rock that evening  
Two bluebirds called softly  
Nearly drowned out by the cicadas.
CLOSING without Closing

These verses begin with a beginning,
But they do not end with an ending.
The gathering of sweet medicine, once begun,
Only stops when the heart stops.
ODDS, ENDS, & ALIA
(OCTOBER 2011)
A Brief Toast

As we start this modest meal,
Let us begin with a toast.

Raise your glasses high!
To the climbing June rose of the woodland edge
To Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow!
To treasures lost and lessons learned
To all who gather at this table
And to the silent promises
of buds unopened.

Threefold Blessing

The other day, there was a knock at my door,
Just a quiet tap.
Then it opened…
And in walked White Buffalo Woman leading a lamb.
When she saw there was no grass in the dining room,
She led the lamb out back
Where it started to eat all the weeds.
She then came back inside,
This time, slowly followed by her Grandmother,
Who sat down on the floor.
She visited each room and aligned its energy
In a new style of Feng Shui.
Grandmother took a rest.
I offered them water and a smoke,
Soon, they had to be going.
They loaded the lamb in their cart
And took off for the Fair.
THREE SEERS

May those who seek the sacred powers
In the plants, the animals, the insects, and all forms of life,
For love’s sake, be blessed.

All life forms take some path on the Way.
It is always of value to see the world
Through different eyes.

But the ten thousand things,
The multitude of eyes,
Live in places, in times,
Which are sacred, too.

May those who seek the dynamic powers of place,
For love’s sake, be blessed again,
For they are seers
Whose vision goes beyond the eyes.

Their lessons, not surprisingly,
Are often overlooked.

Can we harness the raw oracle
Of Borchert as a young man,
Study the wee books of the Holmes
In our landscape
That was Watts, not Watson,
And learn to foresee the life and death of trees
That was in the gentle, geocentric heart
Of Ware?
**No GPS**

Two summers in the Skokie archives,  
Long ago, was scant preparation  
For recharting the cosmography.

**Evening Stroll**

In the oak grove just before nightfall,  
A doe and four fawns jumped to attention.  
The hundred crickets softly hummed, and they settled,  
And grazed in peace.

**Everybody will be Dancing in the Moonlight**

The Year of the Rabbit finally comes to an end  
And Coyote, Fox, and Owl just can’t wait.  
I hear they’re throwing a party tonight  
Out in the woods west of Luther.

Do you want to go?  
...It might get kind of wild.
Hard at Work

Ten goats cutting brush
Still liking their assignment
Not fire, but lively.

And from the Other Side of the Fence

Did deer make that noise?
Looks like a human to me.
What is it holding?

Sic Transit Alia

In the world we know…
We transact our business.
We transfer the funds to pay the price.
If we’re good, what we buy transforms,
And we transport it back home.

In the world beyond…
Spirits transcend all business.
They are transfigured when we pay the price,
Transmuting what they’ve touched,
Then – transmigrate to new homes.
**Flavors of Attraction**

Eye candy? Let’s get real.
Eye… roasted almonds wrapped in bittersweet chocolate
Eye… rose lokum with pistachios
Eye… rich buttery pecan brittle

Why… limit it to candy?
Eye… ripe red raspberries picked to my mouth
Eye… a warm peach from an Anna orchard
Eye… late-season melon from Beardstown dripping down my chin

And for Wolf…
Eye… succulent lamb chops, rare.

**Late in Summer**

It rained on and off all day,
But that last band of showers was different.
It was driven by a fresh, new wind.
I can almost taste the buckbrush, the rabbitbrush, the buffaloberries,
And see the gentians in blue gaps above.
Summer may not be washed up yet,
But I’m itchin’ for Fall.
CAN YOU TAKE ME?

Only with the true nature of your love,
Can I find my way on this road ahead.
In the kitchen fixing supper watching the news,
I could sense the true nature of your love.
As we danced to Los Lobos into the night,
I could feel the true nature of your love.
On the trail in the morning with the sun breaking through,
I could glimpse the true nature of your love.

Can you take me to the true nature of your love?
How did we manage to dig a well so deep?
Where flies the true nature of your love?
What skies are home to it now?

Only with the true nature of your love,
Can I find my way on this road ahead.
Can you please reveal the true nature of your love?
Yes, just the true nature of your love…

HARVEST SONG

This coolest morning of the season
Is a fitting harvest day.

As this special day begins, I ask…
Ceres, have we chosen good parents for this
next generation?
Have Earth and Sky and the Vital Spark
Aligned to create living beauty?
Was the timing right?
How better can I tend this field?
How better can I serve you?

And could you please bring a little wrath upon those
Who brought the shiny beetles?
How better can I tend this field?
How better can I serve you?

Ceres, your bounty will be shared with all;
May you rest well till Spring.
A Few Leave the Party Too Soon (Two Flowers Lost)

The old tulip tree still recalls the lovely ones
Who bore her fine corsages.
Every year, a few of her leaves
Turn a bright, clear gold
Well before the rest.

Manifold Consciousness

Anytime Wako"da wants to ride the Dark Mare
Sparks will fly.
Each spark can light a new flame
Setting another bright jewel
Into the fabric of consciousness.

From the Blufftop

Down off the bluff, Skunk Creek flows.
Most of the time, it follows the rules.
When it’s feeling really strong, it makes its own.
Then the trees crash and the world shudders.

Up on the bluff, Dream Creek flows.
Sometimes it follows the rules, but you never know…
Hydraulics and gravity be damned.
My thoughts drift ahead and shoot back
all at the same time.
Without making a sound.

Ma Chère

Walk now in beauty
Feathers flowing in your hair
Like an avocet.
**Bringing in the Corn**

Attentively upright -- or heavy,  
Hanging like tears to await the picker’s hands,  
Beautiful packages all.

Red, white, and blue make a glorious purple;  
Throw in some yellow;  
And a rainbow is revealed.

A brief caress of silks reminds me of my lover’s hair,  
Of sparkling strands of copper, gold, and silver,  
Of laughing in the sunny field  
And her Amish boy’s hat.

**Why?**

Nightmares ago,  
Far away and right in our face,  
This very morning, the world was rent.  
Unholy, holy smoke rose, blood flowed.

The boy in Kyiv asked his Daddy  
Halfway ’round the world,  
“You aren’t staying in an apartment building, are you?”  
That evening, Daddy broke bread with a man from Iran,  
Who was preparing for a sleepless night in a strange land.

Nightmares pass.  
The bleeding wound wants revenge (or is it justice?).  
The pained body is left behind.  
More blood, more nightmares…  
Time passes.  
Separate parts heal so much more slowly  
Than the whole.
DEAR GUY

Guy, as I husk these ears,
I think of you…
Of all the ears and lost causes
You wrapped your strong hands around.

Of all the fried chicken I ate that night
At the all-you-could-eat special,
And of your tales from when you were my age.

Of living alone
In a little, frame house
With your penstemons.

Of the ear of spotted corn,
Which I did not get,
And the pipe that we did.

Of the strong, pink rock
That lasts for a billion years,
And its dark vein of blood.

Then I wonder:
Will I live out my days like you
Taking on lost causes alone?
**Daybreak**

The northeastern sky  
The colors of salmon flesh  
Crow slices it – cawing

**Finding Lost Fruits (to Naa & Harlene)**

My friends, if you go to Saskatoon  
For the saskatoons, eat them there.  
Don’t bring them home.  
They’re rightly proud, but it’s all they can manage  
In that cold, dry land.  
Instead head east.  
If you take the north track,  
Look for small trees bent down by the bears.  
And if you turn south,  
Ask the young raccoon where he lounged last night.

**Break Free**

Racing to beat the sunset,  
I realize I’ve violated one of the first principles.  
The lawn is deeply rutted.  
The shadows show  
That, in my haste, I tied myself to the towpath,  
Ignoring the news that the best way to get a job done  
Is never the same way twice.

… No more?

**Behind the Altar**

Little Whitethroat missed the warning signs  
in the familiar that wasn’t.  
No looking left or right, forward or back,  
In the gray mist, he hit the glass straight on  
And rests in beauty on the sill in the new sun.
Salty and Sweet

The blood on my fingers is of the sweetest sort.
What better way to classify the blackberries
Than to assess, with care, the subtle interplay
Between the depth to which they stab and the pleasures
Of their luscious, ripe fruits?

Blue Kauai

In the winter
If I knew that I would not
Witness Vesna's return to my fields,
Would I fly away from here,
Off to the Garden Isle
To seek solace with the silent deer
That guards Kalaheo?

Would that deer send me
To the perpetual spring at Koke'e
Where I could await the end?

Or might I commit some small kapu
In the name of love,
Then walk down to the tide pools
And stay for the high tide
And the giant wave
That takes me away?

Naming Day

The timing was right.
The little spider jumped off my face
And slowly floated
Down to my brown socks well protected.
QUESTIONS ON THE ROAD TO SILVER CITY
(OCTOBER 2011)
**American Flight**

As the flight to El Paso hurls down the runway,
Under my breath, I say (as so many times before),
“Hoka hey! It’s a good day to die.”

But do I mean it, in the sense of the warriors?
Can I live each day not wanting it to end,
But satisfied if it does?

Can I leave this world without unfinished business,
Those unfulfilled obligations that tug so hard
on the soul?
Am I ready to emulate proud Black Hawk,
Whose desire to leave with a strong, clear song
showed his power?

As I search for the rental counter,
Those questions will have to wait.

**Last Time in New Mexico...**

The hired hands reluctantly turned us loose.
We opened the gate,
Reset the hubs on the rented Ford,
And slowly climbed the rutted track
far as we could.
Jumped out and climbed some more
To the elkweed and sweet strawberries,
To horse heaven – interrupted by thunderbolts.

On making it back to the truck, the rain began.
On making it back to the gate, changing hubs...
The sky opened up in ways unimaginable.

Five on a mountain
A mass baptism
Pure and true.
Geography Lesson

Each place has its own living energy,  
Can't you feel it?  
Why do we take our names  
From other places and times past?  
As Schulz named "Spike" in Needles,  
And Terkel took "Studs" as his own,  
Thereby taking a slice of the life of Chicago streets,  
Shouldn't we consider new names  
Beyond ties to family and history?  

What special name might I call you?

The Wave-Particle Duality

The cycle of yin and yang undulates.  
But the dancing dragon caught its tail,  
And Black Elk saw the one sacred hoop.  
Must we all dance out our visions  
for their powers to be realized?  
Must the true vision itself be danced  
without interpretation?  
Will we analyze or just give thanks?  
Can we witness the unfolding  
Without changing its path?
**Clearing**

Two farmer’s sons who sought greener pastures
Became two guides, dignified,
Steadfast and upright elders,
Quiet men of ethics and loving service…
Accepting of fate.

The guide of my youth
Wholly convinced that religion is tragic distraction;
And later, the other, filled with deep, abiding faith…
Two clear, dear spirits.

Clear spirits transcend.

But what is the foundation of clarity?
What egg white could clear this wine?
Is clarity the essence of the fruits that are pressed,
Or the working of love’s magic?

**Hidden Potential (for Abby)**

Is conventional wisdom an oxymoron?

If we build our low-slung homes on endless, flat plains
Or throw our nets out into shallow seas,
How many of us know the true stars by which to navigate?

If we hide ourselves in cool, deep ravines,
We may escape the rampaging fires above,
But when will we see the sun?

Why not situate on a slope
With an expansive view
Of a wide sculpted valley
Broken by green hills
And many small springs that never die but always refresh?

Why should false dichotomies keep us from finding
The surreal estate of our deepest dreams?
This Last Year

It began with a party marking an end,
A slow walk in a beautiful garden,
And the purchase of some inferior bakery.
With signs of unease and fatigue,
Signs of change.

Changes impending
Serious changes
Sometimes feeling helpless in the face of change.
Feeling suspended, waiting for more signs,
Punctuated by interpreting signs.
Anticipating changes – an inexact art at best.

New people – a whole new team
New places to stay and many dear visitors in body and soul.
Changes in state.

A concert night, more important as a prayer night.
The change is profound.
Sad news to share.

New events to plan with many helping hands.
Changes in status.

The unexpected arrival of Wolf, agent for more change.
Becoming an agent of change myself.

Surrounded by love, attachments transformed.
Special days transformed.
Special places transformed.
New words emerging from nowhere.
My place in this world evolving.

What will this next year bring?
**LETTING GO**

If corn is our mother,
Then I have committed
Incest for oh so many years.

Our children have been
Nurtured with great care
To withstand the storms
And bring beauty to the fall table.

Are they ready now
For the *real* world
Beyond our protective glances?

Are they ready to move elsewhere,
To those big, open fields
That stretch to the sunset?

**WORKING THE EDGE**

As the creek rises and falls
In unseen synchrony
With the rain and the sun,
So too does the boundary shift
Between the knowable and the un-.

Should we live like frogs?

At first, immersed in the knowable,
But, as adults, peering out,
Searching for deep pools in drought
And floating on lotus pads
Once the floods arrive.
**Totemic Exercises**

When you part the horse’s mane  
Are you the groom?  
Another horse?  
Or the wind?

When the crane spreads its wings  
Are they wet?  
Is the sun shining?  
Does the dance begin?

Will you succeed in repulsing the monkey –  
This time?

While trying to catch the sparrow’s tail,  
Might you be a sharp-shinned hawk?  
A mink at night?  
Or just an annoyed sibling?

Is the stallion you’re patting  
Quiet or spirited?

What does the golden rooster do  
With creeping snake’s energy?

Is there a faint scent of lanolin  
On the shuttles?  
Or can you feel  
The magic metamorphosis of mulberry?

Does your tiger  
Want to be raised tonight?
Meditation

Dark Marc,
Am I still enough to see you?
Can you send a vaquera
To rope me
And lead me to a meadow
Graced by prickly poppies and valerian?
Tether me there
Until I understand.

Crow Spirit

Living in the City of Winter Crows,
We witnessed some of your teachings.
We learned some of your secrets,
Your delight for entertainment.

Crow Spirit — You,
Whom we fed and worried about
After your winter’s misfortune.

Yes, you.
Please entertain our prayer
And share with us some of your singular wisdom.
**The Partial Renewal of Heh’aka Tapejuta**

On this open range,
The herd is well hidden;
Even their spirits are quiet.

But then I notice
The round seed heads,
A few late blossoms
Attended by bumblebees,
And some healthy new sprigs
Scattered among the mildewed stalks.

A distant train whistle
Cries repeatedly across the miles,
A signal to ask
If I may take some home.

**Divine Spark**

All life is formed
From the Receptive Mother
And the Divine Spark
Some call that Spark, Wako’nda.

Do Wakonda golfers fell something special
When they hit the ball?
How does it fly? Do they fly with it?
What is the initiation fee for that Club?
Would I need a sponsor?
As I stand on this bridge looking back,
Considering the path I’ve traveled
And all its strange turns,
I now know
I’ve been inadvertently gathering
Elk medicine
For much of my life.

This process involved long journeys,
And I did not really know what I was doing.
I still do not really know I am doing.
But I did know that these plants
Played their magic on bees,
And I became captivated
With their scents and flavors.

Some of those journeys are forever
Etched into my memory.

The day the cold front barreled through Minnesota,
And all I had were summer clothes
   for the rest of the trip,
Lending new meaning to the layered look.

The prairie in North Dakota
That had been too wet to hay
Was a fog of mosquitoes,
Where I got the van very stuck.
Was it really just a coincidence
That, far away, I knew the daughter-in-law
Of the farmer who pulled me out?

The black Kansas sky, in nearly all directions,
That faced my love and me
As we tried to make it to any motel.
But then a wall of water
Made the trip seem like forever,
So when we saw a sign
We did not care if Coyote ran the place.
We would stop
And rest
In each others’ arms
And know that the plants
Might be flooded and battered
But the medicine would survive.

**Tidying up the Divine (the 81% Questions)**

Why do people want to clear away the Divine?
Do they want to keep busy, to be admired?
Do they want control over a world that’s beyond such things?
Are they afraid – deep down afraid – of the dark side
of the Mystery,
Sensed only vaguely, but sufficient to motivate?

Some admire the perfect lawn.
Others (maybe the same) advocate for pasteurized cider.
Let the lawn service do it and the juice maker.
Just make it clean – but “wholesome” isn’t whole.

How would they react if they knew…
90% of the cells in our body aren’t human, and
90% of them are types undescribed by science?

Would they fear antibiotics or want an overdose?
**Meta-analysis**

The world and the metaworld are one.
Scientists apply physics to the world
And philosophers metaphysics to the other.
Poets apply metaphors to both, indiscriminately.

Can metastatic metaphors throw some lines
Between our world and the one beyond our comprehension?
Do we have balance enough to tie those lines
And bridge the chasm?

The proper food and environmental cues
   drive insect metamorphosis.
Can certain, uncertain art and openness to
   environmental clues drive our transformation?

Was Cézanne a prophet or simply dreaming?
Either way…
Will that carrot freshly seen still spark a revolution?
Or has materialism killed our curiosity?

---

**He Called at 6:24 PM**

Find a local guide,
One who loves nature deeply.
Seek out the right habitat.
Walk gently there with care,
Open to the signs.
If the timing’s right,
Paths will converge.

So once he calls…

When the staff shows no shadow,
Reset the clock to noon.
Change the calendar:
Make it for more than twelve moons.
The Year of the Elk has begun.
SECRETS PARTLY REVEALED
(NOVEMBER 2011)
IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT

On the sixth floor, I learned a life lesson:
The public face of a relationship
Does not reveal its depth.
In the still of the night,
Under the covers,
Secret skin gangsters are uncovered.
Private dancers perform.
Ear whisperers take charge.
The deepest passions, fears, desires, joys
All emerge in that stillness
And deftly cast their spells.
There are so many sides to Love.

SURPRISE

A little knife hid
Tucked away deep in my bag
Testing the system

WHAT BANK SELLS TIME?

Don’t be fooled
Time is not money
Money cannot turn back the clock
Money comes and goes
Time takes no bribes
IN MODERN TIMES

Back then, Ed’s café was the place to be
If you were left-handed,
Left leaning,
A leftover hippie,
The Radical Left,
The Intellectual Left,
Or left behind when Hubert took over the show.
A cornucopia of characters,
With so many shades of red.
Maybe that’s why Ed’s chili was legendary.

Meditation II

In the postmodern times
Anything should be possible
With sufficient capital
So tap the source

CROSS COUNTRY CHECKUP

When symbols converge
Across context and culture,
Can junctions in our psyche’s wiring
Be roughly mapped?
**AS IT HAPPENS**

From Toronto to the rest of the world,
The ferrets tracked their prey,
Ones fresh and tasty
Of flavors unknown in these parts.
Once found, the “fun” began,
Persistent questions nipping and tugging,
Not letting go.

This daily event may not have been aptly named,
But “Just After It Happens”
Just doesn’t have the same ring to it.

**SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED**

Which is more engaging:
The low-angle sunlight shining on Ayers Rock,
The beautifully patterned rug in the foreground,
Or the warm-skinned model showing off her suede boots?
Does it matter?
With proper assembly, it’s sure to engage.


**Turn Back the Clock**

What a raw evening.
Time to turn back the clock…
Way back.

Put a pot of milk on the stove.
Find a decent bottle of bourbon
And that pint of sorghum
From the old stand north of Joplin.

We’ll have some milk punch.
That should keep us warm.

Maybe Harry will stop by
To have a drink.
He’ll probably give us hell
For the mess the world’s in.

Or maybe not.
He’ll just be happy
To be in a comfy spot
Close to the stove.

**Pedagogy (for Vida)**

Accretion decorates our trees.
Creativity keeps them fresh,
    As long as we’re awake.
But if we want a cottonwood,
    When we have a pine,
The seeds must be immersed in new waters
    And be ready to absorb them.
**Fort Malden**

On that chilly day  
Hot scones fresh from the fireplace  
Seemed sweeter than tarts

**Near the Grant County Line**

At the dry Mimbres  
A welcoming rainbow called  
Then the lightning bolt

**Before the Fall**

Of the first urban culture along these fertile rivers,  
What can we say?  
What can we make of the oratory and secret vows,  
The ceremonies and street talk of this amazing city?

Did their messages persist —  
Shared from one generation to the next,  
After the fall?

Did they die like ripples —  
Propagated from a mussel shell  
Dropped into an oxbow?

Can they be reconstructed from fragments  
By searching for the common threads?

We are new to this world,  
So were those builders.

What did they notice that we have missed?  
What was worth valuing that’s not in our marketplace?  
What did they cherish?
Those who Take on the World
Learn that the World Fights Back

When I first met him,
The wild fire within still smoldered.
Occasional sparks flared from the past.

But the ire of bees on hot, muggy days
And more than one lightning bolt
Lit backfires to bound his internal flames,
And led this man of fiery heart
To show his ways to a new generation.

Should we give quiet thanks to Saint Ambrose,
Or to the Thunder Beings,
For making him more approachable in those final years?
For making him a teacher…

All for One & One for All

Study your genealogy –
We are all one people.
One people, many clans.

Study your biology –
We live out our days
All carrying secret symbioses.
One house, countless tenants.

Study your evolution –
Life is all one dynamic, connected process,
Growing in an ever-changing world,
Suspended in an ever-changing universe encompassing all.
One universe, infinite possibilities.
Temptations

Ahead of me in the classroom
Was a most delicious distraction.
Flowing serpents of shining liquid chocolate
Spilled down over a vest of coiled spirals.
As I pondered their movements from time to time,
I realized that I should have had more of a snack
before seminar.

My Talisman

The buckeye shines
Like obsidian, gleaming
The color of my sister’s eyes

Beyond (for Barb)

Her layered colors slept beyond our eyes
Resting securely under a carpet of carpets
Patiently awaiting that one day when the world
would change so much
That they would be roused from their rest
And take our eyes beyond
OVER THE BANKS

The kinds of floods you never forget
The slow ones that creep up
   And seem to last forever
The deluges, quick and high,
   Washing away the cars
The filled underpasses
The new sandbars, the mud and boil orders
The uprooted cottonwoods busting out the bridge
There have been so many
And I haven’t even gotten
   To the figurative ones.

1968

Living near Chicago, I learned something of rebellion
And the hammer that slams the nails into the wood
Countersinks them if it can
So they never emerge again
An unfolding was crushed for now
But my young heart had flown to Prague
Where the sweet-scented spring flowers
Had finally shown their glory
Only to be mown down and the gardeners
Hammered like nails
# The Truth Partly Revealed (to Bill)

How a soul can be so piercing  
And so gently considerate  
Can only be explained by the workings of love.  
Your shining light burns through deception,  
In the noble quest of your craft,  
While we reap your gains  
(If we can stay attentive).

# On the Other Side

Turn off your cell phone.  
Take off your shoes.  
Bow down your head to the cedar bough.  
Pass through the smoked hide.  
There, on the other side, you will not be disturbed.  
Any movements will be those you choose to make.  
Confide in the stillness.  
Silently follow the spiral path  
Till you hear the drumbeat ~  
Or is it a heartbeat?
Our totems won’t lead us astray

The silent swans led her to fly with grace.
The bull elk showed him great treasures.
The wolf pack let her run with them, sharing their energy.
Even the coyote comes to some dear souls without deception.
However they find us,
Just remember,
Our totems won’t lead us astray.
A LITTLE MORE WORDPLAY
(JANUARY 2012)
**BLU HWYS ANY1?**

Where the brevity of naming
Consistently wins out over the subtlety,
Clarity becomes illusory
And depth is sacrificed
On the pavement of the faster road,
Dimensions crushed like the unsure squirrel.

Time to turn off onto a blue highway.

**WORDPLAY**

A little swordplay with inks, red and blue…
Roleplay a poet, perhaps Li Bai.
Consider foreplay in all its forms –
No instant replays allowed.
The mind will keep in play the intriguing,
Downplay the forgettable,
Play up what excites,
Play out new roles,
And let the stories play on.
**East of Ogden**

As this crazy year of darkness and light concludes,  
It waits till the last daylight hour  
to make its final mark.  
The low clouds break from the southwest.  
A blue strip emerges, and then the sun settles  
Giving the world an unworldly golden glow  
With colors of a vibrance unreal.

There, alone, driving down a muddy road  
I see him – Kestrel,  
Poised on a wire facing the sun  
Lit as if nothing else mattered.

If this had been the budding Spring,  
I would have given a thousand Suns  
to exchange my life with his.  
But now, on this Winter day,  
I revel in his glory, in the vibrance,  
And await the next year of light and darkness.

**Spreading the News**

When I come to your door, little book in hand,  
I feel like a Wako'na’s Witness,  
Wanting to share the good news of the Te  
And the mysteries of the Tao.

But I haven’t completed a correspondence course,  
Let alone gone to shamanary.

My mission is not the conversion of souls,  
But a gentle reminder of the possibilities…

…from a spontaneous flow of thoughts –  
Nearly effortless, as dreamtime ends  
And a new day begins.
On these cold nights,
My thoughts and stomach go
Back to the hills of Cinci,
Not for the five-way,
But for Lenhardt’s.

Wonder if Cynthia
Will be our server…

If you order the pork,
I’ll split a Christian Moerlein with you.
His sincere spirit
Hovers in those walls.

If we go for the goulash,
We should get a single carafe of Kadarka.

If we finish it off,
It wouldn’t be a sin—
We could always call a taxi.

At the end,
I know you’ll want some strong coffee,
With cream,
And warm strudel,
Fragrant with cinnamon.

In the morning
(Once we’ve recovered),
And had some more strudel,
Let’s go to Spring Grove,
And pay our respects
To the memory of Mr. M.,
By stopping by the greenhouse
And buying him a big pot
Of bright cinerarias.
Can e.e. come out to play?

Can the snow begin to explain
How children are apt to forget to remember
As up they grow?

And does the bird by the snow
Really know
Who laughs his joy and cries his grief?

Might those who sleep their dreams
Still live them out?

Can we have our bells
And ring them, too?

A confidence game

The confidence of youthful energy, enthusiasm
and inexperience can enchant,
light a fire, sweep you off your feet.
But the confidence of someone on the road to mastery
is a different creature entirely.
The careful interviewer will design subtle ways
to discern between the two
without the candidate’s notice.
But the perceptive candidate will realize this
and nimbly maneuver
without the interviewer’s knowing.
The Party’s Over

Those two got up and walked to the door
To say their goodbyes till tomorrow.
That’s when I decided it was time
To call it a night, too.

Tractive Force

I stared down the tracks.
What attractive force pulls me
Longingly away?

Mistaken Paternity

Some have said that Ares fathered Eros;
This is hard to fathom.
Yes, the wild discharges of passion,
In untempered souls, might kindle the fires
of mortal conflict.
But by what strange route
Do the fiery discharges of war kindle
the passions of erotic love?
No, Ares fathers the children of destruction,
And Eros deserves a higher rank in the Pantheon.
As for his paternity, only Gaia knows for sure.
**At Keeneland**

Maybe the sun will break through;  
And the clouds will part;  
The world will shine with brilliance.  
Maybe the horses will run;  
And the clods will fly;  
And hearts will beat in triumph.  
Maybe the crowd will rejoice;  
And records will fall;  
And there will be a champion.

The power of sun,  
The power of horse,  
The power of faith  
Will come together.

And the maybes will part;  
The sun will shine;  
The horses will fly;  
The hearts will rejoice;  
And there will be a champion.

**Towards a Greater Cause**

Lighting the spark in the new generation —  
How will they carry on this legacy?  
Who holds the flints?  
What tricks will kindle lifelong interest?  
What ignites their hearts’ commitment,  
While engaging their minds,  
And sets them onto the fragrant path, enchanted,  
So they never want to stray?

**An Amazing Run**

Eva, please don’t cry,  
His play had an amazing run  
And there’s already talk of a revival.
Only the Names have Changed

The decades pass.
Only the names have changed.

Jesus Saves!
Richard gets the rebound — shoots — and Scores!
Then Hull stepped up,
And Orr, and Gretzky, of course;
The list goes on...

I admire His longevity.
Even Gordie couldn’t match it.
But He really needs some better “D”.

Roadhouse

Why would gentle men
Join a club
To get their hearts broken?

And what could convince
Young sirens
To dispense sweet poison?

Has love run amok
On this road
To cold passions stolen?

Where’s the antidote
For dark calls
To men’s rough emotion?
A Moment Too Soon

If I should happen to arrive a moment too soon,
Please forgive me.
My father’s clock is known to run fast,
And it seems that I may be inheriting a few of his things.

I am Suspicious of Short Poems with Long Titles

But why?
Who knows?

Jigsaw Puzzle on Five South

As Norman’s Iron Goddess, his Rosie,
Slowly emerged, piece by piece,
The power of that puzzle was a lesson in patience
At a time of much impatience
And waning energies.

To know that the daughters of that icon
Took to the streets and did their best
To turn the world rightside up,
When it seemed that all around us
Was upside down,
Was like the rivets that she drove,
Trying to hold us together.

But her full emergence, her full completion,
Was not for us to witness.
It was left to others to complete the task.
**Two Wings (for Marlene)**

As birds and bats have two good wings,
Wings to let them soar,
Soar they will as summer evenings fall quiet,
Quiet in a peaceful land.

You sensed that words in pairs could make them fly,
Fly far in joy and peace,
Peace that comes from devotion,
Devotion to making things whole.

---

**Give & Take**

The value of our things can be felt
In how they generate serenity
And remind us of the diverse blessings
Found just beyond the door

So maybe now it’s time—
To give up on gathering more
And take up a simpler way

To give away the bounty, the excess,
the neglected things
And, by sharing, take away a true lesson

To give in to the distant, persistent call of the nuthatch
Open that door
And take in a special blessing
IN DEFENSE OF SYMBOLS

Pay attention to your symbols
Take them seriously
Defend them, if you must
And re-appropriate them with respect

But don’t get bent out of shape —
Remember that Reality is deeper than any symbol
And Reality doesn’t take itself too seriously

Even the woodchuck will stop to play
With your shoelaces

ONE BLUE GOAT (FOR KORI)

Late in the winter, before the bluebonnets,
The goat was down to mesquite bark.
She jumped the fence and caught the next bus to Austin.
All those nights with Austin music comin’ from the pick-up,
Gave her a mind to give it a try.
What could she lose?

Well, here it's fall --
No gigs, no band,
Only a deal to give her milk to a trendy café
That makes a mean cajeta mocha.
The feed is good, but her dreams are dashed
(At least for now.)
Now --
She schemes how to get out of her contract
And get back home.
UNSOLICITED ADVICE (JANUARY 2012)
Dear Princess,
You are making your home in a new land
Filled with many sorts of Princes and Princesses.
Your compass may need some adjustment.

As a second daughter,
You are filled with strong convictions.
I have more than a little experience
With second daughters
Filled with convictions.

Manage your convictions carefully.
They may limit your line of sight.
For a while, ignore your sight completely.
Ignore your guidebooks,
And step back from your convictions.

Follow your nose.
Let it lead you onto the path of fresh smells,
Of newly turned earth.
Walk it, without opening your eyes.

You may stumble,
But you will not fall.
Once you have practiced this long enough,
You will find good companions on your path,
And you will open your eyes
And see clearly.
**A Bone to Pick with Mr. Bly**

I am reluctant to write these words,
As it seems unfair to criticize a skilled teacher
   Who cannot defend himself.
But the muddy teachings of those with poor reputations
   Are soon overlooked,
While those of a Master are perpetuated.

Science is not the cause of its misdirection.
By itself, it reveals, and blocks no other way.
The trouble is in the motivation of the practitioner.
No…
More often in the motives of those
   Who don’t really understand.

With sufficient humility
And deep feeling for the organism,
Science is subsumed into the Way.

---

**Students of the Fox**

You two have studied the fox
And know its tricks for staying
One jump ahead of trouble,

But more…

You two are willing to share
A few fox secrets with us,
To advise us in verse and design
On how to confuse our troubles away.

Wendell, when you told us
To practice resurrection
Had you seen Eva’s bright kitsune?
Inside the cabin, it was full of hungry hikers.
The smoky smells of the cooking made
my mouth water.
I ordered breaded boar cutlet for wolf,
Some rye bread soaked in a bucket of beer for stag,
And braised rabbit for me,
And with full hands made my way
back to the pines.

Once satisfied, wolf sure was ready
To follow our scent back to the aspens.
Stag and I just wanted to take a nap…

**Following Young Wolf**

Summer at last…
I could have sworn we were somewhere
south of Spearfish.
We emerged from the aspens.
With young wolf in the lead (like usual),
The old stag in the brush to my right,
We followed the ridgeline.
Wolf circled back whenever we got too far behind.
Then he caught a fresh scent
And took off for a grove of small pines,
Strange shrubby ones, branched to the ground.

That's when I noticed a blaze on the trail
And a signpost ahead.
The sign was hard to make out,
The words not quite familiar.
But off in the distance past the pines
stood a large cabin.
My friends, reluctant, wouldn't move
from the grove.
I signaled them to stay put and walked on ahead.
Making Good Time on the Jackrabbit Line

We crossed into Minnesota a while ago.
The bank thermometer read 2 below.
I’m in the back of the bus bouncing along,
Grateful our driver knows the way.

A light snow falls, but we’re making good time.
The hunting was good — this time.
They’re down beneath — frozen stiff
Two rabbits and pelts.

I tell the woman across the aisle
“Be thankful for that driver.
When I get home, I’ll call my friends.
I should throw a party…
…Where are you heading?”

And think to myself,
It’s time to honor my friends
And jackrabbits
Not just the ones I got
But all the others hidden in snow -
So fast, so quiet, or just plain lucky.
The Third Retreat

Tinkering with the balance so,
You’d think my life’s a stereo.

Movement and stillness
Chaos and contemplation
Keeping up and stepping back
And stepping back again
And again,
To readjust the signals
That mysteriously set their own levels.

The first retreat began to warm my chilled soul.
The second helped me set a course.
What about the third – is it too soon to say?

What seems clear now
In brilliant sun
May fade by that same sun.
But what seems rough rock
May become polished
In the tumblings
Of the life ahead.
THE TOOL BOX

We perceive discord
Surrounded by harmonies,
Each one resonating at its own frequency.
Of course…
How else could we perceive discord
Without knowing the nature of harmony?

So is there a mystical tool box
That holds the tuning forks
For each frequency under the Sun?

Can we accumulate them in our memories
And let them ring out
As we go through our days?

FIND YOURSELF A GOOD HORSE (TO ADAM)

In our youth, all things seem possible.
And maybe they are given enough time
   and devotion.
But not all at once.

Conventional wisdom says to keep your two feet
   well planted.

Forget it.

Find yourself a good horse, one with bright eyes
   and a friendly face.
Take the time to learn how to ride.
Learn your horse.
If you wake up early, eager,
Then you’re doin’ alright.

On horseback, you get a mobile vantage point,
   above the confusion.
The world will make new sense.
And you can move faster, but only one way at a time.
Metaphysical Ophthalmology

If seeing is believing,
What should I make
Of the 273 shimmering, jagged glass necklaces,
The 38 chain-saw blades that shine and snake,
But never cut,
The 119 ceiling fans spinning slowly
Somewhere off in the distance?

They all lie just beyond my reach.
My skin is impervious to them,
Shapeshifting foxfires, coming and going
Whenever they please.
And when they go is the hardest part,
For as they depart they close the shades
Maintaining the gray till they are satisfied
(With Heaven knows what).

If believing is seeing,
Perhaps it is only as faith is restored
That my eyesight returns.

Get Your Ticket at the Station

Read the last page of the Official Guide
The one in fugitive ink
Find yourself a spirit line
Get an excursion ticket
Walk down to the platform
The trains are running more often
Than you think

All Aboard!

My favorite line has seven stops
The station at the east end shines
In shades of blue
(She always looks so good in blue)

At the next stop
There’s a shelter
Where the birds sing
All day long
After that
You cross a beautiful river
And a few sparks
Can fly up from the tracks
Stop for a spell if you’d like

Then on through the prairie
The plains of sage and flowers
It’s a great spot for a summer picnic

Soon, more trees appear
A good friend of mine
Lives by that flagstop

At last, the train pulls into the city
The bold city where there’s always music
And someone’s forever dancing

Ring the bell!
The train’s pulling in

On request, the train will run through
Up the winding grade
Up to the seventh stop

Some call it the Eagle’s Nest
Though I’ve never quite seen it
Off through the trees —
From that last stop
I’ve heard it’s a four-day hike
To get there
To an Intense Acquaintance
Grappling with Mortality in Retirement

Look around —
We are not alone:
The redhot Miatas, Corvettes, Audi TTs,
The rumbling black Harleys,
The even noisier powerboats,
The condos in Vail,
Trophy hunting, in all its forms,
Those drug ads and their mounting profits,
Clear signs of mid-life crises,
So many desires to change our places
   In the scheme of things.

But does it really take a prophet mounting a peak
To see the collateral damage?
   (What a glib phrase, two words that reveal
so little of the long litany that’s seen with
compassion)
How can we buy our place
   In the scheme of things?
How long can we forget our place
   In the scheme of things?
What sense do we really need to find our places,
   To find our balance?
And can’t some good come of it?
**To Her Boyfriend**

Your friend just breezed in  
To the restaurant with the lucky name.  
You couldn’t miss her —  
Rusty, long hair that would make Vixen look twice,  
Well-appointed in black and tan leather.

Here it is the middle of January,  
And she orders the spicy eggplant dish to go.  
If I were you, my friend,  
I’d be looking for ways to bring back her summer,  
Or you may be looking for a new spot to eat your meals.

**Meditation III**

Ambiguity defies perfection.  
Defy perfection ambiguously.  
Become whole.

At which moment does your hesitation  
Become your wait?
Scrappyard Dogs

Is it time for a greener heaven?
As our mother recycles our flesh,
Might our souls be reknit the same?
Might they fly to a place
Where the spirits of moles, of worms,
And of all who work the land by hand
Slowly unravel them
And generate the stuff
To make the mysterious seeds
Of all new lives?

For one day,
Its gates should be guarded by the spirits
Of scrapyard dogs,
Who will then assume an honorary role
And open the gates to all.

Travel Advisory

A travel advisory has just been issued
To all mice in Black Earth County
Until further notice.

Alert level - ORANGE:
The Metropolitan Transit Authority
Has announced new late-night routes.
Be advised that travel on such buses
Is not recommended.
Exercise extreme caution.
Be alert to any suspicious passengers.
In many cities these late-night routes
Are known as Owl Service,
For obvious reasons.
A LITTLE RABBIT MAGIC
(ZAO SHENG HAN, JING SHENG RE)

Walk in the closet
Pull out that rabbit hat
Put in on - tie it tight.
Quick movements in the cold will seem too easy.
Poof! The shivering cold disappears.

Sneak out the back door
Watch the resting rabbits
Find some shade - lie stretched out.
Rabbit serenity is contagious.
Poof! The sweltering heat disappears.

THE RISK OF HIDDEN LOVE

The regret that comes from seeing
Secret loves destroyed
Persists.

Unknowing allies will not assemble
On your beloved's behalf.

But tales of secret love,
Even partly revealed,
Have some enchanting powers.

Before your list of regrets
Grows too long,
Go share some tales -
Take a chance...
School Delay

Startled, I stop chopping the icy snow
And look up at the big orange bus
That says, in no uncertain terms,
There’s a two-hour school delay.

It’s strange how some tasks
Change right into new ones
While others take so long
You hardly notice.

We climbed up Lishan;
Our goal was wild elms.
But most of the wildness was long departed,
Lifeless like the many sad pelts
The hawkers were trying to sell…
Except for the temple
Where some of the wildness remained
And I felt at home, but couldn’t say why.

My schooling was delayed for years.
Only now am I starting to understand.

An Unwelcome Call (...with apologies to Bob)

Hello.
-
Yes, but the name’s “Wee-dur-leck-ner.”
-
Yeah, I know.
And you are?
-
Ms. Badgeir – Hmm…
-
Yes, I got the registered letter.
You must be with Wolfe, Foxx & Badgeir.
Sure we can talk.
-
You did what?
-
Won a settlement from Acme for your client.
That’s great.
-
Yes, I sent him a note last fall.
No, he didn’t ask for my advice.
I thought I was doing him a favor…
Still, I don’t see where you’re going with this.
- What?!!
- He’s where?
- In ICU at the University of Arizona Wildlife Care Clinic?
  What happened?
- After the settlement he did what?
- No, I know you can’t disclose that.
  But why are you after me?
- So he finally got the bird.
  Well, that’s what he wanted.
- He’s in what?
- In anaphylactic shock?
  A severe allergy to Roadrunner?
- (Oh, my…There goes my nest egg.)
LEARNING TO WEAVE
(MARCH 2012)
THE LANGUAGE OF DREAMTIME

Once upon a time,
We spoke our wishes,
Our dreams,
Our possibilities,
In ways that showed them
As they could be.

Those special words
Stood side by side
Along those reserved
For the here and now.

If only it were true today...
But as the years passed,
The language of dreamtime
Was nearly consumed
By the other.

If you desire your wishes,
Treasure your dreams,
Reserve your possibilities,
Do not lose them
In an unconditional world.
**Black Shadows**

Mirage has it all wrong;  
There are no sinful colors.  
They are all split  
From the same clear light.

If there is a sin,  
It must be a black shadow,  
One that excludes the light -  
Not the darkness of nightfall,  
But the shadows cast  
By our own dark intent.

**Convergence**

The lighted sign  
Over the Expressway read:  
“15 Min. to Wolf.”

Ten minutes later,  
The big black limo  
Ahead of me  
Slammed on its brakes  
And pulled over to the shoulder  
Stopping beneath a light pole,  
The same instant  
The Red-tail landed on top.

It is clear that important business  
Will be transacted today.
THE MILLINER AND THE FLYING KNIFE

Do not make poems while drying dishes.

As I wandered back to the summer when I was seventeen and drove my grandmother to see her friend,
I picked up a knife.
Its point slipped into my palm,
Made its mark,
And then flew across the kitchen.

The milliner’s smile was infectious.
Her joy was as beautiful as her old hats held in fancy boxes.
Her garden seemed to me a precious jewel,
a peridot uncut.
But those charms could not protect me
Nor my writing hand from the point.

Perhaps it was the Kahlúa she served us
That sweltering day over ice cream
That latently caused my fingers to slip
And an old hatpin to make its mark.
Another Mishap Doing Dishes

The juice glass escaped the dish drainer last night.
It resisted arrest.

In the ensuing mêlée,
It hit the edge of the countertop.

What happened next,
Could only be described as a smithereenization event,
An instantaneous, transformative disintegration
That left the little glass without its reason for being.

No emptiness remained,
Only the sparkle of incipient possibilities.

How long will it take for those bright shards
To be reconnected with new purpose?

Dreamscape (to Zhu Yufu)

When meeting your adversary
Bring your favorite goldfinch
And a thin black dog
One that will run towards trouble

Starting the Day

When you put your left foot forward
Consider
How many ways
Our lives play out
In imperfect symmetry
A molting hawk
Still soars in the sun
**Pink Necklaces**

It was summer
In the city
Of fountains.
How could it be?
With our decades
Of drinking experience
What had we learned?

We were all…
Drunk

Was it the food,
The attentive waiter,
Or that Pinot Grigio
That knew us by name?

When we shuffled out
Into the heat
We were so drunk
In the city of fountains

That all we wanted to do
Was braid pink and white bindweeds
Into necklaces
Taking in their sweetness

Who would drive us home?
FIVE

One dark night
My young friend was toying with ecstacy
When he tied his tie too tight

Two dark nights
My wise neighbor had had enough
With forty years of her dreams deferred

Three dark nights
The cheerful prof’s rooms alit
In wild flames and smoke

Four dark nights
I left her at the party, only to hear years later
      (east of Youngstown)
That cancer had unwound her spring
RETURN TO THE SHRINE

The wind was flowing strongly
through the pines
When I left the five golden trumpets
to play along,
To strike a tune for Jamison and Ganesh,
When one more note was sounded,
The faint reply of the creeper,
Who then paid us all a visit.

MEDITATION IV

If we think that this world
Is about our kind,
We will be in constant battle
With the offspring of Wilmer’s mink.

ON THE DAY FOR LOVE

Never forget,
We all get caught in the web of love.
Those who fight it
And fall out
Do not feed the spider.
Axel Hanson, Hired Hand

There’s no one ‘round who can attest,
But at fifteen, I took the name and voice
Of Axel Hanson,
Hired hand from Alex,
Who joined the Farmer Labor cause
Early on,
‘Cause, ya know, times were tough,
And friends had to look out for one another.

The year I was out of work,
My wife and I, we dreamed of building a cabin
Deep in the woods
And living off the land.
But things picked up
And that was all forgotten.

Now Floyd died young and Elmer’s gone...
(And so’s my wife)
And I think back to Axel, to things that were,
That could have been,
And the sands that slipped slowly
Through our hands.
Honor Song

Sing for the lacemakers
Rich with pedigrees
Sprung from spiderwebs
Jewelled in dew,
Decaying old linden leaves,
And patterns of frost on a windowpane.

Sing in counterpoint.

Sing for the grandmothers
Rich with patience,
Who pass on their skills
To those more nimble,
To those with little patience,
But much love.

Sing out with much joy.

The Fabric of Their Lives

A camel hair jacket is elegant
And I can hardly keep my fingers
off an angora sweater
But I wish someone would give me
a coyote hair vest
for my rebirthday
One night in the park so clothed
would surely be enough
to know
Men who Love Trees but not Writing
(for George, John & Ralph)

They worked among the trees
in watchful fascination.
For such men, the seasons passed
As marked by the cycle of birth, rest
and rebirth
And the singularities that could only
be detected by watchful eyes.

Hours spent walking slowly down
nursery rows,
Wandering in a park greeting old friends,
Or hiking into the welcoming woods
Would just slip away,
Till darkness masked the scene.

But even night could not still the talk of trees,
A fine dessert to any supper.

Now why those so willing to share
with kindred spirits their wisdom
Left so little of it written down
Had been my puzzle.

But living and growing were what
these souls desired,
And thoughts of committing their news
to paper,
The endproduct of silenced trees,
Was just too much to bear.

Their aversion shapes their legacies still…
And also puts them at risk.
Red & Black

I walk through the new snow
With a red and black feather in my hair
To recall the day and night
The light and darkness
The birth and death
Two sides of the circle

The winds are calm
The sun intense (at least for March)
Then I meet an industrious man
Who needs such a feather
He has two crafts
One that builds anew
The other - running a trap line

Always Turn Right

Move silently through the woods
With the winds at your back
Crushing no oak leaves.
When you meet a deer trail,
Turn right and follow it
Looking all around you.
When you come to the ravine
Turn right and follow down
Till you’re out of the wind.
Stop for a moment; take four deep breaths;
Find the little creek;
And follow it to your right.
If it takes you to the source,
You are blessed.
If it takes you to the river,
You are blessed.
Either way, it’s time to turn right
And tie the knot.
If poets ruled the world...

If poets ruled the world,
Each morning, the sun would slowly break
through the fog,
And ghostly clouds would form anew each night,
suspended over the resting meadows.
Sun split through dewdrops would replace diamonds
in engagement rings,
And failure to stop, failure to look, failure to listen
would all be capital crimes.

A Warm Blue Blanket

Let me take out the warm blue blanket
Made by the ones who knew
more than they wanted
And, in the face of it, chose to share
Something soft and colorful,
A wrap for drab, dull days
That chill uncertain bones.

So let me place it ‘round your shoulders
And make a pot of red tea
Recalling summer’s fruits and baskets
we once filled

We’ll sit together on the couch,
Plan the day ahead, and dream...
P**EORIA**

Management couldn’t have picked a better spot -
The old lodge with its long, dark halls
   and many musty levels,
With smells of cedar and frying onions,
And paintings from another time, another land,
Of black forests and blacker bears,
Where I could just melt into the woodwork
Anytime my mind let go.

**TEACH ME TO WEAVE**

Oriole, Oriole
How do you do it?
Taking those small dry leaves of grass,
Taking them to the end of the branch
   in the swaying cottonwood tree,
And fashioning a refuge there,
Flowing safe in the wind
Forty feet up.

Can you teach me to weave
My own refuge from leaves of grass?
DRIFT AWAY AND...
AN ADVENTURE WITH WOLF
(APRIL 2012)
The Treasure Hunter

I want to walk
With the tall quiet one
Who sees the points
And gathers dropped branches
That are not wood

Sifting them out
From the fallen oak leaves
Even before
Watchful mice are aware

At Dawn

Blackbirds came for her
They took off for Minnesota
On a strong south breeze

Night in Bakersfield

In the day’s last light
The dark river will shimmer
And then it turns black
**Near Encounter**

It was almost lunchtime
When she spied us coming down the dirt road.
She was guarding her cache of magic gourds
Laid out on the coarse sand above an old channel.

She looked us over very carefully.
When she could see we had no interest
In looking like a Santa Monica model
Or even lusting after one,
She knew right then we wouldn’t be easy marks.

And so she turned, a bit disgusted,
Slipped down into the channel
(Looking back a couple times to make sure
    she wasn’t being followed)
And slowly walked the hidden route
Under the barbed wire fence
Towards the dusty little town.

**My Unsent Reply**

If you should ever write those words again,
Please don’t let me see them.
If you have no passion for your craft,
No confidence in your results,
Then why work at all?

What’s to be gained
Just by going through the motions,
Or by turning loose your unsure children
To drift aimlessly among fickle winds?
**Drift Away?**

Master Deng, how long must you sail
Before you realize that your destinations
have become useless
And drifting is the sole reality?

**Overheard in the Park**

He should be happy
But she wasn’t smiling
He made a quick ten thousand on the deal

**Waiting for the Plumber**

Morning began with a warm, damp breeze
37 Canadas moving north, fast
And every close bird in song
The newly cut brush wanted to dance along
These are tumbleweed times
Soon to be rain-in-black-soil times
And black soil in rain
But now, just an awkward dance
To embrace the wayward brush
Before it tumbles away
THE OLD SCHOOLHOUSE

With Gabriel at my side
And the bright sun on my back
I walk up Colorado Boulevard
Seeking out the old school of my mother’s dreams

It seems an unlikely venue for paradise
But there’s a quality in the morning air
That sings of fresh roses and graceful dancers

At last I find the worn sign
Turn to my left and see it
Just down the street
Her starmaking academy
Her Hogwarts of the West

Slowly I approach its black doors
Should I open them and see what lies beyond?

Not today – the courtyard is empty
And the grounds are silent
Except for the fountain’s splash
And the caw of a crow

NOT YET READY

With long-tubed jasmine blossoms
spilling over the wall
And doves settled in the branches above,
It seems impossible to wander off
the fragrant path.
Yet the man behind me avoids the blooms,
Cuts across the street,
And walks the other side.

THE ORANGE GROVE REMAINS

On warm spring days
When the wind’s just right
Visitors to his tomb
Can catch the fragrance
Of the sweet white flowers
And the sharper oils
Of those fallen fruits
At peace beneath the trees
Are There More?

I’m guessing there are three kinds of miracles:
Some are miraculous only in the eyes of the beholder;
(I’m not so interested in these - unless, of course, I happen to be the beholder or the beheld.) Some occur when one is moved by the deepest love to go beyond all expectations;
(Saints still walk among us.) And then there are the mysterious ones.
(When cosmic forces that we cannot truly fathom cause something that we notice, how do we know? And when they cause something that we don’t quite catch, what then?)

Sweet Treasures

The color of his cotton shirt matched the blue of his eyes. The Chenin Blanc was a perfect foil for her Shrimp Rice Quiche. So much sky, so much sweet wine…

A candy pebble was dislodged from a mountain cliff. As it made its way down, More and more treasures stuck to it. It’s falling still.
**WITH NEW HANDS AND EYES**

This bank was once planted with care
   and weeded with sharp eyes.
But diligence dissipated,
   then disappeared.
The tenacity of daffodils is manifold,
As are the colors and forms on this bank.

The gardener is long gone,
   but long live such a garden.
New hands have arrived to take another try
At weeding and planting
   and feeding the neighborhood,
With good cheer,
With nectar and pollen,
And a little something more...

**EVENINGSONG AT THE LODGE**

Sitting on the deck behind the lodge
Finishing the last of my beer,
The vacation’s nearly over.
In front of me, the river rolls on.
And over my shoulder,
Something stirs the spoons,
Animating a sterling chime.
And cool night falls.

**THE ENGLISH SUITE**

Cumulus timelapse
Dreamy Bach will lead the dance
The scent of cloves strays
**RETURNING**

Dry country sits beneath the haze  
Returning home on a tailwind  
In satisfaction tinged with loneliness  
From three days up near wilderness  
That filled my soul with unshared peace  

An apricot and two black figs taste sweet  
While the passenger in 19E sleeps  
And I wonder are dreams aloft  
Yet closer to wilderness  

Above all, be attentive to signs. We may be sophisticated creatures, but we are of the animal realm. And long before we fashioned words, there was an eon of signs, signs of all kinds, which we ignored at our peril. Always be aware that symbols and signs have the power to cut through mere words and reach down into our deeper core.
Wolf & The Wool Growers

I don’t know how he heard about it,
But word gets ‘round.
Wolf told me about this place in the Valley,
And their Saturday Roast Lamb Special,
And he really wanted to go!

I told him, “Are you crazy?
You’ll get us both shot.”
He just stared back intently.

As we were driving through town,
He signaled for me to stop at the Farm & Fleet
To go in and buy him a harness.
Then I knew what he had in mind.

He’d be my Service Wolf in a new way
For an hour or so,
If we could pull it off.

I was getting used to him leading me
Into new places,
But this was more than a little crazy.

So I found a deserted parking lot
Around the corner from the restaurant,
Put on my dark sunglasses,
Placed the harness on Wolf,
And let him lead me slowly down the street.

Did I have the confidence to play this game?
Wolf caught wind of the cooking
And picked up the pace.
I got nervous and said “Sit” with authority.
Wolf sat.
“Good Wolf—You will be on your best behavior.”

We followed a couple guys through the door.
One kindly held it open.
With Wolf on the lead, I waited to be seated.
I think the waitress was on to us.
She seated me in a far, quiet corner.
Wolf rested quietly at my feet.

I did not pick up the menu,
But asked about the specials.
When she got to the roast lamb,
I just smiled and said, “That’s fine.
I’ll take the lamb and a glass of wine.”

I ate my share with relish
And kept the rest on my plate.
I almost asked for a box for Wolf,
But caught myself and wanted a doggie bag.

Then I asked her, “What’s the bill?”
She told me,
And I slowly pulled a fifty from my pocket
And told her to keep the change.

With Wolf showing the way (like usual)
And the bag in my other hand,
We walked back to the car.
I drove us out to a grove by the dry river.
By this time, my friend was as hungry
As a you know what.

He wolfed down his treats
With a gleam in his eyes
Knowing that he,
As a Wolf in dog’s clothing,
Had just taken one of the flock
From the wool growers.
WAÇPE ȚSIZHEBE (TRANQUIL ENTRY)
(MAY 2012)
NOW IS THE MOMENT

Tradition transformed
Ritual renewed
A sacred transition
No turning back
Quietly step
Under the archway
Into the sanctuary
Leaving all cares behind

Escape the chaos
Now is the moment
To arrive safely held
Realizing tomorrow’s a dream and...
Yesterday’s gone

EVENING PRAYER (FOR DAD)

The prophetic match lit the cedar stick.
The glass bell chimed once.
The slow dance began.

Then the patter of raindrops
Tapped on the windowpane.
Could they wash away the wayward blood?

The cedar smoke rose and finally disappeared.
That’s when the thunder
Roared in confirmation.
Events Beyond Your Control

Once the lights are out
If Bat flies into your room
Will you be prepared?

Once the lights are out
If Eel swims into your room
Will you be prepared?

Once the lights are out
If Elk walks into your room
Will you be prepared?

And once the lights have been out a long time…
When Day breaks into your room
Will you be prepared?

Awareness Drill

The bluish phlox are showing early,
And a curious chickadee is checking me out,
As I make the rounds ~
Inspecting the pussy toes,
Assessing trail conditions,
And listening for new arrivals.

As I emerge from the woods,
My rounds complete,
The sirens start wailing,
And their urgent serenade
Accompanies me all the way back to the car.

As I reach for the door handle,
Silence again ~
It is only a test.
The Highway of Souls

If the Milky Way
Is the high way of souls,
On clear, cold nights
When the aurora shimmers
In its changeable hues,
What change in state
Is being celebrated then?

Deep Cleaning

On this trying night,
As I prepare to wash for sleep,
I search out a new bar and unwrap it slowly,
Taking in its sweet scent of summer,
Imbued with the flowers of the tree
That keeps on sprouting from its base.

I look to it to restore my faith in renewal.
But on such a night,
I now doubt that the sweetest spices
Or any Aqua Vitae
Could ever take such fragile things as we
(Ones that do not resprout new limbs when cut),
And cleanse away the pall of char,
Making them glow anew in just one night.

The transformation, if it is to occur at all,
Is not to be watched,
Or timed
Or predicted.
**How You Play the Game**

There were two pair o’ dimes in the kitty.  
The hand had just begun.  
Which side will hold out the longest?  
The one with the deepest pockets, or…  
The one with the soundest premise?

**Eagle’s Cry (Death by Lead Repeats)**

Power of poison  
Aligned with forces of greed  
Now there’s hell to pay  
Can the Eagle’s cry  
Vanquish this silent axis  
And restore the world?

**Detour**

The trail into town  
Was blocked this morning  
By the perfume of plums so thick  
That it even stopped  
The hardened runners.
Walking to Breakfast

A gentle rain at sunrise
In the springtime
Is always welcome
In a dry place

It may not fill the reservoir
But the misty air
Holds promise

Society Meeting

I opened the wooden door
With a strip of green glass
Alit like a narrow tree
And found a seat
In the half-empty hall

Then the session resumed
The speakers shared
Not only design and findings
But joy and hope
And glimpses of paradise
Emerged from the powerpoint
In ways that made
The whole day worthwhile
A Morning like No Other

The bus rushed along
On the drive to the Table (Mesa).
The sky to the east was clear.
To the west, the cotton clouds were piling up.
The cattle rested in their pasture
Warming in the sun...
Then the coyote jumped.

Mother Night

Mother Night,
Who could want more
Than to sleep
On the 20th Century Limited?

My mother and her mother
Have had its comforts,
Its restful berths.
But I have not.

Whisking over the Hoosier plains
Eight feet up,
Gliding through the darkness…
Why can’t I join them,
Mother Night?
ADVICE FOR NEW LOVERS

Walk the prairie in May.
Pretend that you’re meadow voles
And eat all the ripe strawberries
You find.

Walk the prairie in June.
Pretend that you’re bumblebees
And smell all the roses sweetly
In bloom.

Walk the prairie in July.
Pretend that you’re red foxes
And stride silently through cool sedges
At dusk.

Walk the prairie in August.
Pretend that you’re skippers
And taste the nectar of thistles dancing
In wind.

Walk the prairie in September.
Pretend that you’re young meadowlarks
And balance each other on fenceposts
And sing.

Walk the prairie in October.
Pretend that you’re woodpeckers
And seek out the tall stalks
With galls.

When the first snows fly,
If you’re still together,
You’re no longer new lovers.

What were the scents --
What were the colors --
What were the tastes --
What were the feelings
That most captivated your lover?

Does your lover know yours?
Nuts & Berries

Not so long ago
Nor all that far away,
(It was already suburbia by then)
One warm fall day
The rowanberries beckoned,
There in the front yard
So bright, the clusters,
And so bitter.

'Round back,
The french doors to the deck
Were opened wide,
And, just inside,
On the table sat the bowl,
Freshly filled,
New pecans, new walnuts, new hazels.
What a treat!

The gray squirrel
Sensed the treasure
That sat beyond the deck,
And, finding tranquility, entered,
Paying a brief visit
To the promised land,
Before rushing back to reality,
But not before
Taking one hard piece of evidence
From the other side.
Honor the Bison

One snowy day down at the council grove
The son of Alink’awaho
Fashioned a prayer wheel
With twenty-seven spokes

His alpha was the sacred pipe
His omega, the wise old owl

Ninety-three songs to the world
Songs to the bow
Songs to the deer
Songs to the crow

Honor the bison bull
Honor the sun
Honor the moon
Planting season will be coming soon

His wheel turns in harmony
With the smoky prairie fires
And those sparks still make it spin

Marking

The stag finds just the right saplings to thrash.
The wolf marks certain trunks and rocks along his rounds.
And I make my rounds, too,
Marking each bramble patch by name
With small, white slips of recognition.
A Day in the Hills

stiff east wind
horizontal rain
spring turkey season

five bold toms
a secretive hen
darts into the woods

pick through rocks
indigo white sage
to climb to the top

from the point
expansive prairie
spanning a county

no elk seen
hiding in the draw
venture out tonight

Heading West

barbed wire scissor tail
an opalescent sunset
seems redder from each ridgetop
must be on the red road now
**Eleven Songs to Light the Kindling**

"Wake Up and Live"

To sleep well, live well
To live well, be fully awake
Master Marley knows when the cock crows

"Hudecké z Bílovic"

The waxy plums are hanging ripe
The sun is shining brightly
It will soon burn off the dew
Run to the orchard
Fill your basket before the wasps awaken...
I’ll fix dumplings for lunch

"Symphony #50, Mount St. Helens"

That hike to the lake was so refreshing
And gave us just the balance needed
To withstand the immense explosion of magma
And be forged anew

"Es ist ein Ros entsprungen"

Rosa sempervirens
This fragile, fragrant bud
Lies waiting in our hearts
When we truly know it
No frost can stop its bloom

"Cortège from Mlada Suite"

Dress in your most beautiful clothes
Stand tall
Find your place – the lines are forming
The procession will not wait for long

"Svyatyj Bozhe"

Each voice alone sings its part
Yet together they drink from the deepest well
And float above the highest clouds
The prism that splits the sounds into high and low
Also focuses the sunlight to flame
"La Tarara"

Transcendental CPR
The rhythm of Tarara’s walk
Will set a man’s heart apounding

"Ej Hora, Hora"

How can you keep from dancing
Along the path that follows the creek
Up the mountainside?

Faster and faster you go
Jumping boulders and windfalls
Set ablaze by the spirits of outlaws
And billygoats

"South Breeze"

The south breeze is soft
Graceful, flowing through leaves
Slowly warming them

Nearly stopping now
Then gently shaking again
Making two leaves meet

"Já Sei Namorar"

The fusion reactor nearly perfected
Operational now
Bodies can remain at rest no more

"Elk"

His high notes fly through the miles
Like arrows with no gravity
When they find their mark
A blue flame erupts
**Waiting for the Inspector**

The night rains have passed.
New birds are singing.
Painted ladies and red admirals alight on
yellow blossoms
(Never seen in this garden before)
Flitting from one to the next.
Is it time to say goodbye?

Farewell to the kale;
Farewell to the kohlrabi;
They must remain.

The butterflies, like memories,
Can fly away, free.

**Dreamcatcher**

Empty nest…
Time to train for chasing dreams.
She’s taking motorcycle lessons.
With the right bike,
She might just catch some.

**Biofuel Research**

The fire in sage
Is for sanctification
The fire in us
Is for illumination

Should I ask my chemist friends
Which seeds to press
To make the oil
That burns brightest?

And then should I eat those seeds
Or find a press?
**IT WAS A GOOD SIGN**

The dark miles southward sped by,
Unnoticed through the night.
Then the bus pulled off the interstate
And made its way into the still dark town.

I gathered my things
And stepped onto the pavement,
Watching a town slowly awaken with the sunrise.

I surveyed the quiet shops and churches,
As the dawn slowly broke,
And the edge of the sun could be seen
Straight down the street.

I walked west
Through the park where every red bird
Tried to outdo its neighbor.

Little did I know then
That this song-filled sanctuary
Would soon become my home.

---

**HER BIRCHES**

Concept » Narrative » Visualization

Data » Prose » Creative Graph

Intangibles » Poetry » Painting

**Meditation V**

Desirous to remake the World
Into our own image,
Oblivious of the sacred songs
Flowing from each place...
Foolish sins, mostly unremarked

The gray-cheeked thrush
Must know something of this,
As he just landed outside my window.
TWO BLIND DATES

Funny how long it can take
For imperfect symmetries to play out

Two blind dates ~ four decades apart
Friends of friends ~ both from the West

One living by the lake with Saint Mary
The other just up the road

One who loves the snow
The other wanting a warmer land

The darker one from the land of Mescalero
The lighter one from the land of Beehives

A student of confidence, having walked many paths
A student of confidence, starting her first walk alone

A stuffy dinner at "the best place in town"
    spoiled by a sloppy chef
A light supper under the evening sky
No errors there
**Physical Therapy**

You find the right beat  
And have the house to yourself  
Dance the pain away

---

**A Question for the I Ching**

In the time of greed  
The ancient storehouse of sharing is mined  
Proprietary supplants the common good  
Caches plundered, pockets lined  
Where will this dialectic lead next?

---

**A Short Fantasy on the Origins of Bebop**

Back in the city of fountains,  
Alone and sober (this time),  
The air is thick.  

The only lights are streetlamps,  
The glow of apartment windows,  
And a few stars in a cloudless gap.  

On the boulevard parkway,  
The ghosts of rabbits spar  
With the ghosts of goats long passed.  

And behind me,  
A hot trumpet riff echoes up Vine.
**To Make Sense of the Ashes**

Carl told us, in no uncertain terms,
That the past is a bucket of ashes.
Yet from William’s tempest came the news
That the past is prologue.

Must we all become archaeologists
To reconcile these truths
And find our way?

**Whenever We Meet**

My friend, whenever we meet and embrace,
I can’t help but recall
Her autumn cravings for some well-smoked pork,
A lean slice of hickoried brisket,
Or some slivers of swiss touched by the warmth of wood.
How can I ever repay you?

**Cultivate Balance**

Initiative
Without receptivity
Spoils the dance
And what else is there?
**Pickup Trucks & Wild Mares**

Look at all those shiny pickups  
Lined up with their high falootin’ names and numbers.  
Do you want to buy a Titan  
Or mabe a supercharged Ram?  
(Sounds like trouble brewin’ to me...)

I think I’ll take that old, beat-up brown Tarpan  
at the back of the lot.  
Looks like she’s stood the test of time,  
Out in rough brush and dusty grass,  
Runnin’ from one windswept ridge to the next.

With some special attention,  
I’ll bet she’d be a fun ride.

**Pavement Ends**

No welcoming rainbow  
No warning thunderbolt  
Only the passing of disinterested jackrabbits  
With their lean, lanky strides

**The Artist’s Eye**

It caught her eye,  
The smooth, slightly tanned hand  
Set off with a crisp, beige oxford cuff  
And a little gold with lapis.  
She thought to herself ~  
I’d love to draw that hand.
UNFETTERED DREAMS

Dreaming must flow freely
In the terraced garden,
Vortex rising unfettered
In black and white and pink.
No whirlwind preconceived
Ever goes beyond a dust devil.

So set aside those notions –
Place trust in the subconscious.
All that’s needed is already planted.
Real clarity may emerge from that twister,
Keenly aware of the nightdream and its passing.

ONLY AMONG FRIENDS

There we were, the three of us,
Jack, Bill, and me,
Down at Jalisco’s,
Enjoying our drinks last Friday night.
The tacos were soon to come.
Somehow, the conversation turned to wiring,
   motors and the mechanical world,
And (wouldn’t you know?) all three of us were
   pretty well clueless.
Thank God our wives all knew the better of it.
NOT THE BEST ADVICE

The foolish boy was hungry.  
He made his way to town,  
But the main road was all torn up,  
And half the shops were dark.

He saw the barber’s light was on  
And walked inside to find out more.  
He paid no heed to the sign out front,  "Coyote Wore Sideburns."

~ Foolish boy

THE ANALOGY BREAKS DOWN

When we were growing up,  
We all knew that bureaucratic bear,  
Who taught us well how to kill a fire.  
He did not truly trust us.  
Over and over, he told us:  
The fires we set must wholly be extinguished.

Yet there are all sorts of flames.  
The ones we set for daily needs  
Burn beside some others, the holy ones.  
Extinguishing them is dangerous work,  
Not to be done routinely.

Now forget the bear.  
Remember:  
A few sparks from the special flames  
Should always be kept alive.
Ann \textbf{nie Oakley Reincarnate}

She loves to ride  
She loves to shoot  
Rifle, shotgun, loves ’em both  
Ready for a day in the saddle  
Or a long, cold hunt  
At the drop of a hat  

But most of all  
She loves the white smoke  
Of a prairie burn  
And seems driven to find  
The indian grass world  
Now hidden by trees and cornstalks

Yaksh\textbf{i}

Such a strange spring  
Nothing quite in its right time  
This morning the waxwings were whistling  
Asking for you from the tree tops  
Wanting their red berries already  
Can you help them?  

I know it’s a bit presumptious of me  
We haven’t even met  
But I sense you’ve been watching  
From the well-rooted trees down by the creek

If you see a young elk  
Please send him my way  
Once the time is right