

Jon Remmerde
Some Poems

After Drought

Amanda and I
drove a thousand miles
to Oregon's Blue Mountains
where our family
gathered
after Mom died.

We scattered Mom's ashes
across her favorite huckleberry patch
on the mountain above Sumpter,
settled all the details,
divided
or sold her few possessions,
almost three hundred dollars
in money,
three hundred and fifty
in possessions,
eighty-one years of memories.

Snow,
deep over sage brush and grass,
melted in spring rain.
Grasses and brush
grow lush
from melted snow,
from spring rain.

Amanda and I drove thirteen miles
over the mountain from Sumpter
for this afternoon of memories.

Amanda reviews her childhood
in Whitney Valley,
tracks down infinite memories.
Old places are smaller now,
full of rich experience.
Amanda walks through
high meadow grass,
flowers tall as her knees.

Our Whitney years
live in my mind.

I irrigated wild meadows,
repaired fences, cut hay.
We played music,
wrote, laughed and loved
in our ramshackle house,
unused now,
like the other old buildings,
the big house across the road from us
fallen down under weight of snow,
weakened by 81 years of scavengers
taking 2x4s, 2x6s for other needs.

I walk toward Amanda
through sage brush.
She stands
by the transporting machine
where she and Juniper rhymed themselves
to Middle Earth
and other centuries.

I decide,
no adult interruptions
as my 16-year-old daughter
sorts through her childhood.
I tell her where I'll be,
lie down on the earth.
Sage brush shades my face
from late afternoon sun,
highway 200 yards beyond my feet,
gravel road 200 feet
beyond my head,
log trucks and tourists
busy with their day.

Two blackbirds on the metal roof
of an abandoned shed to my left
discuss their plan to fly nestward
to feed their young.

I thought I had little grief .
She lived 81 years,
some of them good,
full of rich experience.
She went quickly,
with little pain,
but grief catches me at moments
there in the sage.

Grief sorts existence,
cleanses me of death.

Days last long.
Nights go quickly.
Brothers and sisters gather.
Memories are deep.

I drift into sleep.
Logging truck sounds
car tires on gravel.
Tourists look.
Whitney's remnants
deteriorate,
abandoned for modern ways.
My daughter looks.
Memories form her life.
Blackbirds build
future of blackbirds.

I remember; I dream
of family since Kansas,
since Illinois,
since Freisland,
since chipped stone tools,
since the first contained fires.
Her physical body burned.
Ashes and bone chips
scatter
huckleberry bushes
drop blossom petals
grow tiny green berries.
Oh! Her pies were so good
flaky crust, rich huckleberries.
Dreams of my daughter
delicately forming toward tomorrow
settling, sorting, building
rich memories
of a future carried confidently
against a background of thousands of years.

I wake
The world gives me a gift,
a long moment of quiet.
Memories, thoughts, and dreams
resolve to
blue sky.

Blue sky
enfolds me.

Soft wind rises from sage
stirs loose metal on an unused roof
scrapes the sounds of years we lived here.
Amanda
light in meadow grasses,
slowly returns.
World returns to its busy sounds.
We connect and walk toward each other.

The sun drops toward memories and dreams.
We walk toward the car,
at ease.
We walk into all our next moments.

A Plot for Murder

The street light outside our windows
calls itself the moon.
We call it barking dog.

I plot to murder the intruder.

With a screwdriver, yellow gloves
and insulated wire cutters
I wait for the cover of darkness
and wait
and wait
and wait.

The Beef You Eat Today Was Hydraulic Oil Yesterday

Dead pine tree at the edge of the meadow
light green moss in its northern branches.
red-tailed hawk stands on the sun-bleached top.

We cut wild meadow hay
bale wild meadow hay,
haul bales of wild meadow hay
down the graveled river road.
Forest fire smoke above the ridge
Sun, orange above the smoke.

Sickle-bar, driven by a reciprocating steel arm,
which is
driven by a rod; by a wheel; driven by a chain; by
a shaft;
impellers; shaft; pistons; explosions; diesel fuel;
oxygen, oxygen, oxygen,
and the big wheels turn and turn,
chopping down the meadow.

Cody drove forty-three miles
in ninety-eight degree mid-day smoke
for five gallons of five-dollar-a-gallon
number two hydraulic oil, to replace what sprayed,
in twelve and a half minutes, all over three tons
of our best, neatly windrowed, wild meadow hay
along the east boundary,
below Whitney Spring.

Sage brush rises
on the sharply rising ridge
toward mountain sky.

I shaded up in deep grass
under the edge of the willows
growing densely along Camp Creek
and waited for him to come back
with a new hose
and replacement oil.

Hawks and ravens,
coyotes harvest meaty delicacies
we've mowed with the hay.

Crane walks stately along the edge of mowed
ground.

Motors on the highway.
Machines on the meadow.
Trucks haul hay down the river road.
Chain saws on the ridge fall trees
into summer dust.
Forest fire smoke above the valley.
Hot as smoke in the noonday sun.

Coyote eats mowed voles. He knows where I am.
Raven knows I'm down in deep grass,

man-in-the-grass, unarmed, torpid
as a rattlesnake in the heat.
Coyote and Raven laugh,
the trickster and the thief,
build a complex joke about man,
the engulfer engulfed,
they share with their lunch.
Coyote sings about the hors d'oeuvres of
destruction
and Raven says I cut the lilies from their fields.

Though I laughed minutes ago,
the joke has gone macabre.
I am the fancy dancer, suspended.
The dancer is entranced
by the world of human needs.
The joker.
The thief. The deadly fool.

Cody's back.

With oily tools, oily hands,
I cinch repaired lines tight.
Sweat runs into my eyes.
Hot sunshine.
Sharp, hot smell of newly mown
wild meadow grasses and flowers
thick smell of oil, grease, and diesel fuel.

Then I diesel down hay again,
mow thistles by the pond.
Sun sets behind Greenhorn Mountain.

Coyote's gone over the hill.
Raven flew toward the mountains.
Pine tree at the edge of the meadow
Bright green moss
Smoke
Red-tailed hawk
soars
above the ridge.

Crane walks
stately
at the edge of the meadow.

Marmot Running

Think like a rock chuck
think like a marmot
Run through summer pasture grass

Eagle above
coyote below
man with a rifle
refuge down a dark hole

cradled in soft, cool soil
of the mother of us all
woven round by roots
of this ancient pine
grown 300 generations

Children, mother
led to the garden
a feast given us
by the woman with planting hands
by the man of rocks and soil

Summer is sudden
Earth is deep shelter
all seasons
We are here and gone
immortality
is continuation of species.

Earth Thinks about Spring

Crystals on snow reflect
moonlight
toward cold
lighted
sky.

River currents
run quietly
under thick ice.
Willow catkins
investigate winter air
smell spring.
Memories deep under soil
tell of warmth,

turn slowly toward spring.

Snow thinks,
I enjoy being here.
Time is short
save up cold whiteness.
Think of spring,
of water.

River thinks,
I will sing to be heard again in sunlight
carry fish toward the ocean
dirt and rocks
tumble in rapid currents
seeds sprout
in river banks.

Willows think, *Leaves,*
leaves will be so fine
something to soak up
warmth of sunshine.

Earth thinks, *I will turn*
toward the sun again
I will turn toward the sun
I am turning toward the sun.

Warm.
In winter we remember
warmth
sunshine
we turn
these animals
these plants
every stone
toward spring
toward increasing warmth
in sunshine.

From the Hill behind My House

Crows are gone four days
except for an occasional lone
flyer over this area
a scout, I think,
checking to see
how everything is going.

They flew north to a raucous
crow caucus
What to do,
about the earth
about humankind

As caretaker of the earth
humankind fails terribly
everything goes to hell
in a feather basket

It's time to turn it over to wildlife
Earth, the material earth?
Let humankind have that
It seems beyond saving anyway

What wildlife has always been
and becomes
as species pass from material existence
at the graceless hand
of greedy humankind
is Life
the spiritual expression
of the force of life
without material form
Eternal and Infinite
checking occasionally
to see
how everything is going
back here on earth
but eventually
losing interest
in even that.

The Child is the Poem

My daughter
comes in the front door,
her son in her arms
and her husband behind
I'm upstairs,
write poetry, finish one thought
go down immediately,
greet daughter, son-in-law
grandson.
in arms

Finish one word
the off button
the carpet beneath
I walk
toward
down softly
carpeted stairs

My daughter's golden red hair
golden red in sunshine

Brian bends
takes his boots off
saves our hardwood floor
reflects sunlight.

Kinnikinnick
down to the floor
wraps his arms around Amanda's legs
customary moment of shyness
he looks
has anything changed?

Amanda is the poem
her golden red hair in sunshine
is the poem
Brian is the poem
Laura moves toward them
and greets
is poetry
dance of greeting
song of welcome

The sun in blue sky
above them
lights all poetry
all harmony
all symbolic vision
is poetry
song
vision
The Sun is
a burning symbol
of all existence
drives life

The child
losing shyness
walks forward into
His familiar memory.
dances in poetry.
We turn toward him

He becomes the poem
He becomes the dance
The child is the dance
is the symbol.

The child is the poem.

I Gallop Beside

Spring touches our mountain with promises
above ice and snow and wind

Our daughters have grown and gone
to the world.

They promise to return to visit
when warmer winds of spring
bring pasque flowers to bloom

Time gallops into time.
I gallop beside.
Time grins at me wildly.
I grin back.
Dust from our hoofprints,
promises of dust,
hang warm in spring air.

We laugh and gallop
and gallop toward dusk

Burned-Out Blues

I burned out late this afternoon,
blew up the motor in my pencil,
fried the brain cells of my typewriter.
Everything I'm writing is garbage
garbage garbage garbage.

Walked out the front door,
down two flights of stairs
from the deck,
walked in snow
down the mountain
out of snow into mud,
rocks,
trees,
high cliffs above me.

Streams run clean and cold below me.
An eagle above bluffs
coasts on thermals.

Jet planes shake the world
from above clouds.

Raucous jays in pine trees
celebrate the death of winter.
A coyote on the ridge watches
the man on the road below
try to walk down
disruptive thoughts,
loser's moods,
low money,
scattered-energy blues
blues
blues.

Cold wind increases,
and I turn for home,
kick through mud
to melting snow
and walk into the house again,
take my shining guitar from its black case.

My hands are music.
My fingers are dancers.
Blues, blues, Good morning blues.
"I lay last night, turning from side to side.
I was not sick. I was just dissatisfied.
Woke up this morning, blues walking round my
bed,
had the blues in my breakfast, blues all in my
bread.
Good morning blues."

A man singing blues
sings himself up out of
the low-down blues.

My daughter
rap taps my abandoned typewriter,
writing her own life,
says, "Sing Mule Skinner Blues,"
and I do.

Blues about walking away
and leaving blues behind
don't give a damn for troubles
or money
or the world itself.

Man with a high-stepping walk
and a dancing mind,
"been working on the new road
for a dollar and a dime a day.
Carry the dollar home to Rosie,
and I throw the dime away."

Clouds drift east.
Sun sets into snow on the ridge
throws golden light high into the sky.
Golden tones from my big Gibson
rise into the darkening blue sky.

Damn old blues never end,
but deep blue sky never ends
Sun sends golden light into the sky.
I sing into deep blue sky,
and my daughter, for whom
every song is a happy song,
rap taps on her story.

Water falls
over waterfalls
behind our house,
rumbles through mountain rocks,
mingles with other waters
in a deep song
that carries this day away
and brings us night
with all its glory.

Stars shine brightly
in the vast sky above us.

The Egg

This feather,
grey
black stripes
is in the egg,
sunshine,
this wing,
grey
with
black stripes,
is in the egg.
This bird,
flight,
song,
flight,
sunshine,
sunshine,
Life, flight, sunshine,
water,
fly, swoop.
dive
toward water
dive to water
is in the egg.

This feather, shades of grey
with black stripes
This bird
Earth
The Sun
The Sun
Life.

Muscle Cars

Two muscle cars meet,
V-8 engines,
spoilers like airplane wings,
shiny low-riders,
fat tires, mag wheels,
growl challenges,
circle each other,
stiff, scratch pavement,

sniff each other's tail pipes,
lift back wheels
and squirt gasoline
against lamp posts.

Light turns green.
Yellow car, blue car, growl,
roar through intersection,
lead packs of traffic,
stink up this highway.

Heron in Falling Snow

Snowflakes drift densely
down.

Great blue heron
flies to open water
on strong wings
in cold spring
descends toward water
like falling snow,
a shadow
obscured
by falling snow.
Snow flies
down
toward open water.

I am Wolf, Autumn Moon

Lycanthropy is no damn fun,
I tell you wild and true.
Times,
I hate to see that smog-oranged moon
rise,
pregnant with insanity.

Untethered dogs,
ashamed
to their crippled canine souls
with what they've become
enemies of the wild species,
come to kill the wolf
and its lingering,

impossible smells of humankind.
“Kill the wolf kill the wolf,
kill the wild wild wolf,”
yap hysterically
into shredding teeth to death.

Don't you know
I hate the crazy legends of violence?
All I wanted to do
was run for the wild mountains
cornered, fight to live, a time, a time,
live yet a little time,
my own humankind still calling
live through this night
till moonset.

Dead dogs strewn in streetlight
Moon rides white,
high above electric wires
strung across the sky.
I taste putrid dog blood
flesh and fur
tangled in my teeth
when all I wanted to do was run
run for the wild mountain.

A long way behind me,
a long way behind,
bright city spins and toils
beneath the gravid moon.
I leave burning electric lights
a long way behind me,
step into flowing, moonlit river
wash away dog blood,
dog fur, dog fat, in river's current
Oh, to wash away
impossibly lingering smells,
that the wild species
don't think of me as monster
would not think me monster.

I run beneath the moon
soft, silver, golden moonlight
falls through forest trees
forest soaks up gold and silver moonlight
I run through moonlight
on pine duff and grasses,

soil and mosses,
scatter fallen leaves
for celebration of wild autumn
in my mountains
celebrations scatter around me.
wild dances, running wolf
smell of trees
scattering leaves
wild smell of autumn grasses
fall toward winter sleep
seeds expectant on soil
smell of soil
water and mosses
the earth, the earth,
the pregnant earth.

Voices call me
voices call me
and insist and insist.

“You must think I’m crazy,
return? return?
Not on my wild roving soul.”

But oh my Lord,
the moon sets
the sun rises
once more I’m just a wild poet
on a wild roving mountain
naked as yon steller’s jay
who screams at me,
“Where in the name of anything
blue and holy did YOU come from?”

Me too, me too, my brave,
brilliantly blue friend
I’m gonna keep wondering that
as I walk tender footed
shivering cold,
self consciously naked
back toward
where I don’t even want to go,
Singing, “Lycanthropy is no damn fun,
I tell you wild and true
Times,
I hate to see that smog-oranged moon
rise,

pregnant
with insanity.”

I Load Rocks. Raven Rides the Wind

I blade the dirt road, pull up rocks,
lift them into the tractor's bucket,
tractor them down
and dump them on the rock pile
near the stream,
blade and rake the road smooth through camp
across Lone Pine Creek
and around the loop below the lodge.

Fierce mountain wind
blows down a big pine tree,
blows a picnic table against a tree
shatters the table,
blows the door off the latrine
in tent site two.

Raven watches me every day.
Some days, the wind doesn't blow
so fiercely.
I rake, lift, load rocks,
cut up a blown-down tree,
build a picnic table,
repair the latrine in tent site two,
watch Raven.

A smooth, rockless road is necessary,
Raven,
so I can plow the road clear of snow
in winter.

Raven never loads rocks in cold wind,
never noises up the day with loud tractor,
roaring chain saw,
never makes explanations for existence.

Raven glides above me on lazy wings
quarters away from the wind,
soars black
above silver water
in Pine Creek,
soars black

above
grass of the meadow,
growing green
in the cold wind
of spring.

Growing Organic Vegetables in Santa Fe

Adobe buildings,
soil as habitat,
geraniums in yards and windows,
art galleries,
handcraft shops,
sudden
summer thunderstorms.

Rain falls hard
cleans the city
every afternoon.

We shared a garden with Tom and Deena
at their place,
hauled horse manure and alfalfa hay.
I rototilled it into the soil early spring,
and we grew squash, tomatoes, corn, potatoes
cabbage, kohlrabi, carrots, pumpkins.
Sunflowers grew higher than the house roof.
Broccoli, lettuce, peas, beans, onions, garlic
spinach,
and more.
Tom built a greenhouse
against the south side of their house.

Laura and I carried our daughter downtown.
When it was my turn,
I carried Juniper facing forward
her back against me,
a chair of my arms,
so she could see
where we were singing to.
She walked if we held her hand.
She leaned out the window,
and water from the rain spout
soaked her
and soaked hens and chicks,
succulents multiplying in the soil.

I harvested lettuce,
radishes, and summer squash,
and I could see possession in her eyes
as Deena worried
that I would take too much.
I said, "While you rode the big airplane
and toured and vacationed,
I tilled and raked
and planted seeds
and watered,
and look around you.
This garden gives us more than all of us,
if we worked at it
all our time,
could eat."

She said,
"You can't see
into the greenhouse,
but it's warm and sunny,
a beautiful pace to lie naked
against the earth."

She wanted something
for 4 zucchini 6 yellow crookneck
two tomatoes
12 squash blossoms to dip and fry,
a variety of greens.

Deena, you're sweet
I won't deplete the bounty
of our garden.
See the femaleness
of these blossoms
accepting pollen
feeding my needs
gently.

I'm not laughing with you
I'm laughing at you,
tempered with love.
We'll share vegetables and work
but not nakedness against the earth.

I walk down the gravel road
fruits of our labors in my arms

I feel you watch me leave.

Look around you
Our garden grows bountifully,
loving your presence,
warming you
feeding you.

Gather the Young At Dusk

The thermometer hits six
on its way to below oh.
I go to gather the younger ones
lest night in full darkness
finds us scattered.

Warm as wild things in winter fur
guests and offspring find their own ways
back to our warm house
but oh, while looking for them,
I saw the stream run black into winter,
giant granite rocks majestic at dusk,
against colors frozen in the western sky.
Winter wind asked secret questions
and the lake now is ice.
Patterns of cracks across the surface
divide the ice into cold seasons
and draw a map of countries
I've never visited
but must, some day soon.

Deeply cold isolation
and silence soaks into me
as I stand braced against abrupt bluff.
Dark descends from the mountain sky.
New wind rises and suggests I move.
I travel the long dirt road from isolation
back to where laughter
and tales of the day's adventures
light our warm house
against winter night.

Desert Lightning

Lightning in my eyes.
Thunder in my head.
Celestial fire.

I climb through clouds
above desert sand.

Lava rock jumbles black
Rabbit brush, sage, desert grass
jackrabbit, rattlesnake
elk majestic above hoof prints
pronghorns silver as volcanic sand
fast as desert wind

odors of dust
stone
desert rain
Brown, blue and grey feathers
of mist
fall from roiling desert sky

Clean as desert air
desert sky

Fire of lightning.
My thoughts
smell like thunder.
Night descends
cold as desert wind,
snow on the desert.

Coyote sings from lava rock
sings
it has always been
sings
it will always be,
desert,
fire of lightning.
thunder.
night.
sings,
sudden as cold wind,
snow in desert wind.

The Alchemist Works at Midnight

Alchemy is not illegal,
though the Bible says
don't mess with magic.
I take my damnation seriously.
Cold winter nights,

I plumb the depths of reality,
charm elements
until they give up their identity
and change
to other elements entirely.

I cried frustration
when every possible market
rejected this short story
and this essay.
I would have wagered
they would publish,
but I put them into the bin
where they accumulated dust
of years passing to years.

I apply fire, boil essences.
Golden moonlight
shines in my window
a willing participant
in a conspiracy through all time.
I sprinkle magic powders
indiscernible
from the dust of passing time,
dust of increased wisdom,
dust of developing perspective,
dust of broadening experience,
until the essential being
of this stillborn prose
sheds pages of irrelevancy,
transmutes
to a few flowing lines of poetry,
changeling of rhythm,
bright nugget from the center.
I am happy as fresh fruit punch,
though not all that glitters is gold.
This poem won't pay my mortgage
nor mow my lawn
nor run necessary errands
in the coming day.

History forgets unkempt lawns
foreclosed dwellings,
petty problems
of individual material survival.

The gibbous moon falls

toward western trees.
Quickly,
before it leaves me this night,
I will weave its soft silver light
to golden lines,
lasting images,
a delicious flavor
lingering in
the beholder's thought.

Singing Autumn in at Sunset

The robin in a juniper tree
outside my study window
sings so enthusiastically
of flying south for winter,
I'm sure he hopes
to talk me into going along.

I haven't told him yet,
he sings to the choir.
I am as ready as snow clouds
stacking up
in the western sky.

Oh! I used to love the snow
and cold weather,
but these last years,
ice and snow is so slick
and colder than my bones remember
from days when I was young
and ranged like cougars, like wild birds
flying up the mountains.

In a shadowed corner
in the closet of my memories,
my wings from childhood
have gathered dust.
I flew so well, over trees,
over mountains,
if adults hadn't caught me
to stay in their world,
I would have flown to other worlds
other kingdoms.

My wings are still sound.

If I lose ten pounds,
I will fly more capably.
Flying is like riding bicycles,
like swimming,
like thinking,
I never forget,
but I know I will be slow.
Robin, will you wait for me
large and lumbering in the sky
as the warm sun draws us south
and south and ever south?

Light Inside My Existence

I woke up this morning
at the end of a rainstorm.
Sun shone most brilliantly,
warmly,
soft as summer.

I ate a light meal
for my breakfast.
I ate a rainbow.
It tasted like sunshine.

I got light inside my existence.
Every color of the rainbow
vibrates like sunshine.

I'm as warm inside as life,
filled
with infinite colors of existence,
as blue as mountain sky;
sky blue; blue as sunshine;
violet as evening;
red as sunshine.

As light as warmth itself,
as warm as light itself
filled with rainbow colors
of brilliant sunshine.

I ate a rainbow.

Butterflies in our Rudbeckia

Black butterflies and brown butterflies
white ones and orange ones and golden,
fly softly in soft breeze
and eat from our rudbeckia.
Tall flowers
of black and slow eyes
turn
look east, then west, then south
in afternoon breeze.
Humming bird zings across Kevin's lawn.
Blurred speed sings
wings from flower to flower.
Can you hold still a second
so I can see what you are?
And gone again, in a half a hum zip,
not stopping for me nor my request.

Slender-waisted
golden-circled wasps
fly more contemplatively
from one brown
and golden flower
and yellow and black and green
to another.
Dragonflies rattle down
transparent breezes
on transparent wings,
red dragonflies, brown ones,
damsel flies.
There is a small blue one,
and rest on flowers.
Oh Susan, brown-eyed Susie
and alfalfa and grass volunteer
to grow, to live
ant lions
damsel flies and flies,
ordinary flies,
ants, aphids and, subsurface,
earthworms and flatworms and bacteria.
I haven't paper enough
enough words
to list all the species
in our untended flower garden.
The earth, the earth.
Untend the earth
leave it to species,

who express gratitude
let it live,
harvest the bounty
of life from it,
zip colorfully,
full of life into each day.

Sun sets
beneath the ridge.
Life lives,
prepares for night
on the earth, the earth,
the living, spinning earth.

Fourth Day of Spring

I went out to the Oregon Desert
and surprised a rainstorm
just finishing her spring ritual
of dance and moisture.
Startled Storm lifted soft skirts
of white mist
and ran away from me
southeast, across lava rock
jumbled above damp soil
growing green grasses and trees.
Spring Storm dropped moisture
on high ground
and into jagged ravines,
as she ran.

I climbed a ridge of black lava rocks,
stood high and watched the desert.
I turned and walked across the stones.

Encumbered by a tentative sense of balance
given to me by a drunk driver
many years ago,
I lost my footing
and fell toward unforgiving black rocks
above soft volcanic ash
of early desert spring.

I stretched out my arms and flew,
graceful as a gliding bird,

gained altitude,
soared over rocks,
close enough to see
damp mosses, lichen
and tiny green spring plants.
I swooped toward blue sky above me,
turned my feet down
and landed,
standing on soft, damp volcanic soil.

Two meadow larks and a bluebird
watched my brief flight,
startled that such a lumbering human
invaded their sky.
They clapped their wings
with delight and encouragement.
“Marvelous,” they sang.
“Now do this.”
They moved their graceful wings
in glorious flight,
circled each other just above
where sky becomes earth
and circled me.

I loved their generous willingness
to share their sky with me.
I said, “I think that brief moment of glory
born of necessity
was it, for me.
The memory of flight fills me with new life.”
They sang and flew toward Spring Storm.
She had stopped
beyond the second ravine to watch.

She listened
and rose,
whitely translucent,
toward blue sky
and gathered warmth
of golden sunlight
into her whiteness
as she rose.

The Garden of My Mind

This first day of summer,

sun shines well.
Breeze
plays complex melodies,
soft harmonies,
dances trees.

I cultivate the garden
of my back yard,
garden of my mind,
water sleeping beds
of carrots, strawberries, peas,
thin out small,
sweet and crunchy crops
for the laborer,
pull weeds along
a small row of poems
grow eagerly toward golden sun.

The weeds, yes, the weeds
are useful too,
mulch edible-pod peas,
fertilize a wide row of mixed
strawberries and peas
with essays about life
topping.

Water-color drawings,
ink lines,
small, sweet green onions
suggest the face of Love,
the force of Life,
grow
toward summer sun.

And I, gardener,
small gardener,
help toothsome crops
grow,
grow,
bear fruit
of a dozen forms,
a hundred, a thousand
uncountable
ineffable
green, growing, golden,
every color, every taste,
every smell,

thought, memory
word
light
golden, summer sun.

The largest Gardener
loves Life,
lives Love,
growth,
light, light, light.

I bathe in love,
in light,
and bend to soil,
find growth, growth, growth.

Plants bathe
in light,
in warmth of love
and my mind
and I
and trees
and life
and my garden, carrots,
lettuce, kohlrabi
poems, essays, songs
my mind, my thoughts
all my visions
dreams
knowledge
Myself, My Self.

Mountains Cool

Mountains cool after hot summer sun.
Night falls.
coyotes sing to gathering clouds.

A great horned owl flies above the meadow
quiet as leaves drifting to the ground at dusk.
Meadow grasses bleach yellow-white
toward winter.

Autumn.

North Fork of the Burnt River

The river is so excited with spring,
she exceeds herself.

Water that lay all winter
as quiet snow on the mountain,
sings down the river,
“I’ll hurry, hurry, hurry home.”

Adventurous riverbank,
enticed by the river’s
enthusiastic singing,
leaps in
off to see the sea,
the beautiful beautiful sea.

The flats of the meadow
are river now.
Grasses in high water
lean into the current
and yearn to journey too.

Brother Beaver
takes to high-ground ditches
just for something to do.

June will calm her.
She’ll go lazy in summer sun
Half a boot deep at crossings
asleep in pools
dreaming fishes and swimmers.

Gardening the Desert

In this time of pain,
the ground is so barren,
dust sticks in my throat.
I labor to breathe,
But I planted the seeds.
I watered my garden
all this windy spring.

Oh yes, pain still knocks me down.
The blind executioner
slashes about

with his God-damned sword.
Doubts and changing times,
friends long gone away,
and restless nights alone.
But look,
the garden is up and growing,
already bearing hot radishes, lettuce,
crisp kohlrabi, summer squash.

Five rows of corn stood the high wind.
Tomatoes begin to set on
and melons,
they will be so sweet in this desert sun.

Pain persists.
Dust blows down the desert.

With everything changing so fast everywhere
I may not be here
to harvest these sweet melons
so long growing,
watchfully tended.

Still, I dug the long ditch
and brought the water down.
I sculpt the topsoil
with shovel and hoe and hands.
I sing to the growing plants.

The mother of us all serenades me
dresses my basic art with a hundred colors,
a thousand insects.
Quail hide behind the cabbages
and pipers in the carrots.

I may not be here for each harvest
of each plant,
but still,
I dug the ditch
that brought the water down.
I eat of the garden each day
and tend the autumn-bearing plants
with faith,
still new to me
that says I needn't eat of the fruit
to put down the seed,
to bring down the water,

to love the growing plants.

I Become Water

Early, beside the stream,
willows grow densely.
Beavers pond water into habitat.
Sun rises through forest.

I lie down on the earth,
soak in sunshine
beside the beaver pond,
lazy in winter's
scant morning warmth,
half-dreaming,
quiet as morning grasses,
morning trees.

I become water.

Life inhabits me,
fish, water snakes, amphibians,
plants and crustaceans.

Shards of winter's ice
dissolve in sunshine.
I journey homeward, seaward,
slowly,
in willow-surrounded ponds,
resting for whitely-wild rush
down mountain,
where gentle mountain meadow
drops to rugged canyon.

I know what Beaver is going to do.
In my slowness of water thought,
I don't brace
for sudden action,
sudden sound.

The biggest beaver floats,
eyes above water,
knows my dreaming presence is foreign,
curves and slaps flat tail against water.

Yiiiiiiii! Thundering heart.

I return to humanness.

Thank you, beaver.

In daily existence
I remember
becoming inhabited water,
warmed by winter sunshine
on soft green bank
of the north fork,
sinking toward the sea.

Fly Through Winter

Night's open sky drives temperatures
below zero.
Dawn's dense clouds
drift down from mountain peaks.

Snow blows against our house
and sticks to our north windows.
Wind sings of winter
and wakes me.

Outside my window,
between densely falling
flakes of snow,
Raven flies
above the wind
on shining black wings
hoarsely croaks my name
and laughs,
"Ride winter wind
feed on snowflakes
breathe frozen air,"
and laughs,
flies from my view
into snow
lost to my vision
in winter clouds.

Butterfly's Name

is "Butterfly"
in some modern English dialects.

Butterfly has more spoken names
than there are human languages.

Butterfly speaks its name.
Sound of wings
colors and odors
one butterfly
flies above colors and odors
flowers grow from earth.

When two or more gather,
their group name
becomes the sound
of many wings.
odors blend,
colors.
sense of life, of joy in life.

adult humans
rarely hear butterfly's names.
Children hear them.
Less in modern times.
adults keep children
occupied
in places of noise
bright and flashing lights
mechanical smells
oil smells
mask subtle odors.

Child of quiet contemplation
hears the single name
then the group name
through double-pane glass
looks in wonder
at the brightly-flying colors
odors
air moving.
Flowers blossom
trees
shrubs
grow
many colors of green
soft wind
in wild garden.

Child becomes aware

of delicate odors
soft sounds
subtle colors,
names before words,
growing consciousness
of life.

Mother of child
concerned
that her child does nothing,
claims this child, this room.
this consciousness,
snaps on light
against soft light of nature,
gathers
trundles her child off
to activity,
loud sounds,
socialization, education.

Child begins to forget
the sound of soft motion
forget bright colors, smells
colors of the garden
flying above the garden
air moving above earth.

By morning
child's thoughts
about butterflies have flown
faded as dreams
in sunlight.

If the growing child could remember
memories would bring balance again
completion.

Few
bring that moment
back to consciousness
few remember
before mechanical noise
obscured quietness
we began to understand
Butterflies' identity.

As If a Noisy Weekend

As if to speed me on my way,
As if to solidify my intuition
that this move
to northeastern Oregon,
(incidentally,
a quieter place to live)
is right.

As if to cast me forward eagerly
into next week,
This becomes
a particularly noisy weekend
Airplanes, lawnmowers
edge trimmers, hedge trimmers.

Someone metallically hammers
heavy, hard pieces of something rejected
into a metal, sheet metal
oh my, booming, metal dumpster
envious drummers
realize what they've striven for
and missed
gather together in admiration
applaud: well-done,
oh done so well
this loud, metal sound shakes
the clouds above
the blue of blue sky.

This much noise once might
have unhinged my hinges,
scattered my carefully gathered
calmness
to drooping tired bits
of frustration
but then,
tempered,
somewhat tempered
by
Parker, 11, and his friend
whose name I don't know
knock on our door
seeking earning for work
would rake leaves from our yard
work together.
dance together

play together while they work
black meets white
joy meets work
in our front yard
rake
twirl the rake
and dance
rake.

I give them five dollars
a high wage for such small work
but a fair price for the show
a low price for the reminder in dance
“find joy.”

The rest of today and
maybe tomorrow
noise is less
affects me less

I move forward
smoothly
make music again
write
move toward move
come out from
suspended motion
waiting
into now

NOW (LOUDly) airplanes. trimmers.
lawn mowers.
My guitar, harmonious music,
I sing My Song
blending with,,
Overpowering???

I sing Voice of Joy.
White Clouds Blow
across Blue Sky.

I Ate Lunch

I

Ate

Lunch,

Slowly.

I held the first almond
that grew slowly on a tree in California,
was picked, hulled, hauled,
cleaned, packaged, shipped,
handled, handled, handled.

Laura roasted almonds last Tuesday
for crisper, easier chewing.

I put it in my mouth and bit.

Almond breaks into many pieces.

I chew each piece into pieces,
soak, chew, swallow.
A second almond.
Eventually and eventually
eventually
(Oh my, how we telescope time
and experience
in this modern world),
the end of almonds, for this meal,
then a pecan.

I roasted pecans yesterday,
crisper, easy chewing,
enhanced flavor,
and then, oh my,
yogurt;
think of the billions of organisms
living in what was milk;
do I consider each?
There are billions

My lunch becomes eternal
infinite.
What is more important
than this food in this moment,
What is more eternal
than this half-tick of the clock
in this moment?

Eating
lunch
slowly,
I move forward
a small step
toward
seeing the universe
in every molecule.
Finding eternity
in this moment
infinity
in every almond
in every pecan.

My consciousness
All consciousness
Each moment
every distance
All consciousness
My consciousness
an almond
cultured milk
a pecan

March 6, 2014

Cold wind abates.
Sunshine breaks clouds apart,
penetrates my second-story windows,
casts brilliant warmth,
restless hope.

I place my guitar on its stand,
gather insulated vest,
gloves, wool hat,
Laura,
drive down the hill
to Tumalo Park
to walk up the river again,
like we did day before yesterday
in warm sunshine and gentle wind.
We walk across the grass toward the river,
watch two Canada geese near the river
and, farther upstream, two more.
“Have they started to nest?”
“Probably. I don’t know.”

Ask them. See what they say.”

Clouds close the sky again.
Cold wind increases,
drives small, cold drops of rain
into us.

“If I had long underwear bottoms,
I would be warm enough.”

We walk to the river
but not up it.
“It might rain harder.
We’re not dressed for it.”

We walk back toward the car,
glad to be out here, but cold.

High above us,
against blowing grey clouds,
a red-tailed hawk hunts the wind,
watches park grass, willows along the river,
for movement of small prey,
moves muscles to adjust feathers
moves one wing down a little and then the other
constantly adjusting
floats stationary against shifting wind,
turns, blows downwind a quarter-mile
and turns to hang above brush-covered cliffs,
watching for small animals
running in cold wind and rain
over black rock, out of twisting brush
into enough openness
for sudden, diving capture,
cold wind feasting.

Our car still holds warmth.
I turn on the windshield wipers.
“Being out here briefly
was better than not being out at all.”
“I love rain and wind
but maybe sunshine even better.”

Writing a New Poem

In the course of writing this new poem,
I walk down a flight of stairs

and back to the kitchen
for a drink of water,
and while I'm there,
I change the filter
in the drinking water pitcher,
then climb the stairs,
carrying my water for the night,
write a while,
travel back downstairs
and do 30 pulls on the exercise machine,
then climb back upstairs,
write,
and then downstairs again
for pushups
and crotch-stretching,
leg-stretching exercises
on the rug in the master bedroom
and up again.

I'm not restless
nor a bug for physical condition,
but I prevent sore butt,
stiff legs
and keep my blood circulating.

Writing is always more
than the act of putting words
into order.

If you wish,
picture me
trying to keep
much other stuff,
necessary to live,
moving forward.

My guitar invites me
toward music.
My songs, enstanced,
tell me, sing, whistle,
and my computer says
I should
put a few more works
on my website.
I will. I will. All of that,
but first
some strenuous movement,

first, a poem
about strenuous movement,
about poetic living
about some of what it takes
to write even a simple poem
like this one.

Feedground at Solstice

I shoveled most of the snow away
but left the seed
I scattered there
before five inches of new snow
fell.

After shoveling,
I scattered half a cup
of new cracked corn,
sunflower seeds, and winter wheat.

This morning, clouds blew north.
Sun shines brilliantly,
dazzles my eyes
when I look out my north window
at white snow,
and I can't read the songs
I sing in this darker room.

Brown and grey rocks
soak sunshine;
Many shades of green
grace juniper trees and pine trees,

Two doves peck up seeds.
A black-headed towhee
and five Oregon Juncos
fly down, peck up a few seeds
and fly back up to branches
of juniper trees
that rock in the wind.

These small birds
seem more nervous
than the doves,
or perhaps
they are children
and can't be still at dinnertime

but must jump about, fly,
ride restless branches
and then return
for the next few bites
while the sedate doves eat
until sated
and fly away.

Their wings creak
as they fly.
Is that their movement in the air?
That movement, that sound
caresses my face and hair
through closed double windows
of winter solstice.

Every Politician Cultivates a Garden

We, the people, abjure
contemporary politics
demand, rule, specify, order,
vote VOTE
every politician
must cultivate
a garden,
this wide world over,
has many helpers, yes,
supervises every seed,
every plant,
grows,
shares
all harvest with every
represented
who judges (VOTES)
by quality of food
of flowers
of every fungus growing
every organism of soil
garden soil
this politician / gardener must
serve Life and Love.

Vote for Life and Love
every action
every breath
every prayer

every thought.

Two Crows Call

Rain falls
two crows call
from juniper trees in my
back yard.
builders square
trees

seize wild land

harden surfaces against landing

or nests

concretely

from here to the mountain horizon.
Rain slants down
wind

brings night

streetlamps

silhouette

water fragments

slide down gravity

through mercury vapor light

coalitions of water

particles

puddle

reflect streetlights

Steady rain falls in our muddy pond.

down rain

Mallard ducks slide

skid on pond water.

Mallard ducks

swim in hard-falling rain.

Race with Time

If I race with time,
the clock will win

hands down,
06:30:30
(ain't that modern?),
because I do almost everything
excruciatingly slowly.

By the time you see it
I will have revised this poem
seventeen times
over seventeen days
a little at a time

except some things
BOOM
I start them;
in this moment
of creation
I've finished
forever
no changes.

This poem,
for example,
doesn't say much,
but some things I build quickly
do.

It depends
am I given a gift?
the reflection and expression
of the infinite muse,
Divine Mind,
or do I build from
my own limited,
sequestered
thought?

If I build from my own
human thought,
I might touch and express
the beauty
the depth
of this moment
of material existence.

When I am given a gift
I touch

I realize
I direct you to see
this moment's
spiritual reality,
in each moment,
infinity
of spiritual reality.

One Penguin, Standing in Snow

(From a photograph in *National Geographic*)

45 people stand on packed snow
with 45 cameras
and take 45 pictures of one penguin

staring at them.

How long before we get it right?
44 people look directly at one penguin
and experience the actual experience
of seeing a live and curious penguin
while one human,
selected for altruism, takes one photo.
All can have a copy,
or better yet, 45 people
occasionally
visit one photo of one penguin
standing in snow.

Or a painting,
from memory,
of a penguin standing in snow.

Or people gather together and remember
a penguin standing in snow

Or solitary memories
of a penguin standing in snow,
of 45 people standing in snow,
watching one penguin,
standing in snow.

Or a poem about 45 people
standing in snow
watching one penguin
standing in snow.

Pasque Flowers' Spring Dance

Spring comes late to the Rocky Mountains.
Pasque flowers,
soft purple,
cupped close to the ground
toward the mountain sky,
try to decide the day.
Sunlight shines through the clouds,
and the flowers open.
The clouds close,
and so do the flowers.

Small white flowers with yellow centers,
bloom close to the ground,
and pink mountain ball cactus flowers,
with yellow centers,
and tiny, light pink flowers
tight against granite stone.

I will learn the flowers' names,
not the names of types, pasque, mountain ball cactus,
daisy, given by other lumbering-above-them humans,
but individual names, soft, petally, of delicate smells,
shy as spring sun behind densely blowing grey clouds.

If I watch one flower open and close several days,
sit through unsheltered spring nights with it,
it will tell me its name, in odors, in motions
of opening and closing dance,
in humble attitudes
saying one season's beauty,
even unobserved,
and seed for the future
is enough to live for.

Rice Cakes

Three eggs with bright orange yokes
from chickens who range the ranch.
We cooked too much rice
for last night's stir fry
and cut too many vegetables
stir them in and soy sauce of cauce.

Wind blows
the aspen trees beyond the window
bow and twist their leaves.
A steller's jay lands on the high deck
explores, then flies.
Our cat wishes
rapidly and intensely
for an open door,
open window,
any access.

Stir, drop into a hot frying pan, cover.
National Public Radio gives us guitar picking
better than I can achieve, yet,
though I didn't know how to build good rice cakes
until I was thirty-five.
Brown rice
is as essential as nutritional yeast.

Dark clouds slide from high peaks
and conspire toward the plain,
the wettest year
since we moved into these Rocky Mountains.
The garden waits for hotter weather
to grow,
waits for sunshine that bakes the days
until sunset is a relief,
that first moment of coolness,
eight thousand feet
up the mountain.
Sunset
spreads molten colors
above the earth.

Turn with the spatula
when dark brown bottom
spews steam
through volcanoes of molded egg.
Step over and shut the radio off
before it can give us news.

News of warfare in the world
and hot rice cakes don't mix well.

Wind blows in the windows.
Steam. Smell of soy sauce

and all this food.
The vegetables still crunch.
We eat from the cooling side,
pursuing steam.

Sun breaks through the clouds.
Birds of a dozen kinds
sing a dozen different songs
in early afternoon's mountain wind.

Search for Silence

You've driven paved roads
with thunder of V-8 engines.
Turbo props
and big jets on high
filled your ears.
I stayed here
and walked slowly
in dirt, grass and trees
and tried to find silence.

You've seen the world,
commerce in Asia,
mariachi bands in Mexico,
rock music in the United States,
gunfire and flames in Afghanistan.

I rarely find silence.
Small sounds interfere,
rattle of a dragonfly wing,
a bluebird's song,
the buzz of a tiny green bee,
the whoosh of a raven's wing
against the air,
the sound of the earth turning
in the universe.

Fill your ears
with noise of man's world.

I stay here.
I wonder
what silence sounds like.
Sounds of
a beetle moving across dirt,

a spider spinning its web,
songs of distant blue stars,
songs of the big silver moon
fill my ears.

Look for Spring in Life

As daylight floods the mountain,
Amanda and I walk down the ranch
to feed her black rabbit,
Nildro-hain.

White frost
gathers thick on trees,
thick on catkins on willows
along the creek.

White frost gathers thick
on new leaf buds.

Thick white frost
covers stones
on the granite ridge
rising untamed
from wild, frosted forest.

If I never saw this beauty
without this depth of cold,
then drive frost to my bones.

Centered in winter,
life begins
beneath this crystalline
white frost
on leaf bud, catkin
newest green needles
stone crumbling
to soil to cradle seed.

Sun breaks through grey clouds
above us,
shines the white landscape
golden.

A red-tailed hawk,
gold in gold sunshine,
soars above white frost,
above golden frost
on the meadow.

We stop,

without words,
breathing in
beauty of this living world.

Was the moment of creation
like this,
cold,
cradling the beginning of life,
still with expectation,
then,
suddenly,
warm, golden bright and beautiful,
life blossoming everywhere?

Stellar's Jay

A Stellar's jay lands
on our deck railing
then floats on air
to the deck floor
hops about
investigating
flies up
into the near juniper tree
calls raucous calls
from a branch
active, noisy, never still.

This Stellar's jay
is a symbol of blue
dark blue, black
(green, white, shades of colors)
this bird is itself
impressed with itself
and
is the universe
contained in one jay
metaphor for universe
metaphor for raucous sound
heard throughout the universe

Stellar's jay's sounds
are beautiful
precisely meaningful
to itself, to the flock
wings sound

movement against air
infinitely variable calls
flock is an allegory of flocking
an allegory of mob behavior
ganging against intrusive
offensive, dangerous
rattlesnake, metaphor of evil
for jays
(rattlesnake hates this metaphor
false witness
against one
who tries to make a humble living)

Mountain forest resounds
with raucous screams of Stellar's jays
metaphor of life,
metaphor of color
of exactly this angle
in sunlight
flight
sound
ItSelf itSelf itSelf.

Quickly Now

Quickly now,
where is my pencil ,
a sheet of paper,
my notebook?
I have a poem
a few lines from a poem.
and,
hovering at the edge of that poem
another
just coming into my mind

Has this time
for pencils and notebooks
passed
because the time
for keyboards
has come?

Keyboard or pencil
or pen
I know by now to preserve

an idea, a line,
a pleasing confluence of words,
three lines that build on each other,
maybe even rhyme,
or it will flow away
from consciousness
into
my unconscious memories,
like a dream
fades when I wake,

(the best poems are dreams
forcing their way into consciousness,
trailing mysticism,
mist
cloud wisps
of conscious realization
growing into sunshine
in blue sky)

losing first
its vividness of color
then details of vision,
becoming less visual
then a structure of words
then nothing,
remnants
wisps of fog
no more than stains of coffee
in a cup
tea leaves
drying at the bottom
of a pot

Quickly,
paper
pencil
Quietness of mind
an image
words
wisps of smoke
fire beneath
actions
words
images
a prayer
gratitude

for what stirs
in my mind
my heart
my eyes
conscious memories.

Recipe for Ling Cod

Tommy, Chip and I
drove over mountains
to Mendocino
in my 53
blue and white
Chevy sedan
to Tommy's folk's place,
down to the ocean,
fished from earth's
dark rock
in sunshine and ocean wind.

I caught a real nice ling cod
from where I stood
on black rock
casting into restless sea
and took it back
to Tommy's folks' place,
steamed
a pot of brown rice,
opened up that fish
and put him in the oven
hot.

We walked out in the garden
when the sun
descended toward the sea.
Ocean wind climbed the hill
and brushed us
with wild, salty smells,
sounds, damp air
from the ocean below
smells of living plants
black rock.

We picked ripe tomatoes
young broccoli, crisp, sweet carrots
and bell peppers, red in sunshine,
cut them in all shapes and colors

and laid them by that cooking fish.
What a dish.
Tasted so fine.
I'll remember this one
for a long, long time.

Come on with me to Mendocino.
We'll fish from wet rocks
listen to the ocean
sing eternal songs
feed ourselves fresh fish
and hot sunshine.

Poetry is Seeing

A bluebird is life
life acting,
flight,
life in flight.
eating.
I watch a bluebird eat
fly, walk, see.
Bluebirds are life.

An automobile is destruction.
There is nothing of life about an automobile.
There is nothing brought to life
to living, to seeing, to being.

A seed is life,
food, flower, fruit,
fruit bearing seed of itself
bearing life, feeding life,
carrying life toward future life.

Music is love,
Expresses Love, Life
Bears resonant,
pleasant sound to future life.

Music becomes Love.
Love becomes Life
is Life.
Each thing becomes the thought
of that thing,
becomes the metaphor it is.

A blue bird is life.

Sore Butt Blues

How embarrassing.
(bare assing,
I point to the obvious)
How basic
How mundane
How very very material,
in art forms
I try to make so spiritual,
that my gluteus maximi
my flesh to sit upon,
my butt, in shorter words,
limits my creativity so.
I get tired. I get sore.
So much of my work
takes place while I sit,
and you would say,
you must say,
mustn't you?
then why not stand,
and I would.
I know about
desks for working while standing,
you see,
but my legs tire
even faster than my butt.
Oh this is something
I would rather not talk about at all
but it will be
just between you and me
and then only because
it is a subject for a poem;
is this a poem?
My word,
anything goes these days
doesn't it?

Summer Rain

Dark clouds above our mountain,
brilliant lightning.
Thunder shakes the earth,

reverberates to our marrow.

Warm summer rain

pours down

our morning hours.

Small wildflowers,
pink with black stripes,
expand toward heaven,
renewed in moisture
with new color.

Small hummingbirds,
iridescently wet,
express gratitude
in quick flight.
Their brilliant colors
feed on renewed nectar.

We sing
in summer gratitude.
Our hair streams wet.
We dance on spinning wet earth,
our colors renewed.
We feast our senses
on wet wildlife,
moistly renewed,
wet with gratitude.
We slap dance bare feet
on summer mud.
Our colors wash clean
in summer rain.

Tumalo Creek

Zero degrees.

Dog and I walk down toward open ground.

The fire nine years ago
left the grove of trees we walk through
where two streams run together.
Deepest cold gathers here.
Walk the direction frost hangs heaviest
on the trunks of spruce, fir, ponderosa pine
lodgepole pine, western hemlock,
and we're headed due cold.
Darker here, beneath old-growth timber
even when the sun breaks clear

of the mountain's snowbound eastern bluffs.

I walk in deep shadow while dog,
ahead of me down the trail,
stands shining in golden sunlight.

I emerge from shadow into brilliant sunshine.

We cross our frozen bridge
above running water's
constructions and abstractions,
white ice above clear water above dark rock,
green moss, light sand spread among rocks,
patterns of winter currents.

Sunlight touches this water
rocks, fish, cold moss
shine and marvel
in active depths of winter currents.

Zero degrees. Sunshine.
Running water.
Dog and I walk toward open ground.

Year of the Varying Hare

One morning before the moon sets
I see you
long-eared maker of prints
in snow.
I ski down a long hill at speed
with the balance,
oh the balance
to scan the landscape
for white movement on white.

Kiyoti came over the hill,
middle of the snowmobile track,
red on white
blood on snow
snowshoe tracks with nowhere to go.
Grey kiyoti gathered up white hare,
drug ears and feet in white snow
red blood in white snow,
A long way home and a long way to go.

Sun rises
on new-fallen snow.

Gliding down the long hill
Year of the snowshoe hare
Twenty sets of tracks in a mile.

Bite of cold air
The long hill cool-down
and tracks in the snow.
Quiet, quiet, quiet around me
The long hill cool-down
and trees in the snow
Oh, the trees.

Sun shines on new-fallen snow.

Each day
when I see your tracks
in this world
I begin to see You
Maker
of the long-eared
master of snow
Maker of kiyoti
and the tree
and me
and new-fallen snow.

Young Elk on the High Meadow

The unconscious elk heifer failed by one wire
to jump the four-strand barbed-wire fence
The top two strands of fence
wound round her back legs
stripped flesh to bone

She'd been there a long time
when we found her
No way she could live
through that

Jim shot her in the head
with his 357 magnum revolver
and later said
Why'd I do that?

My twenty-two
would have done it
and made a lot less noise

We eviscerated her on the meadow
and put her meat in the keephouse.
My family and Jim ate some of it
but nobody liked it
What she'd been through tenderized
the meat too much
It tasted a little like shrimp
not acceptable
for red meat.

We left the rest of the meat
out on the meadow for coyotes
and ravens
grateful for the bounty

By then, her essence
had flown above the
mountain-blue sky
to a heavenly pasture
where beautiful animals go
when they flee this material world
where there are no fences
no wires
no 357 magnums
no 22 revolvers
no hunters
no eaters of meat.

Warm January Wind

A Chinook blew up at daylight,
melted the bond of snow
with the metal barn roof.
Metallic thunder roared
in sunshine
and was quiet again
before we understood
snow had slipped
from the barn's metal roof
and piled beneath eaves
on snow already there.

In the sun-softened day,
we four, mother, father
and two small daughters
walk down the graveled road,
grateful for January quiet,
for sunshine, for warm wind
blowing from summer
into our winter valley.

We become noisy as birds,
happy as crazy coyotes
greeting the moon,
full above snow,
quiet as ducks who will float
on spring streams
swollen above full
with snow melt from our mountains,
as grateful for all life
as four humans walking
down a graveled road
in warm January sunshine.

What I Remember

I didn't remember for many years;
our merciful minds do that for us,
blot painful memories.

Lately I've begun to remember.

My older brother does that for me,
reminding me by email.
He doesn't tell me specific memories
but his manner (lack of manners)
reminds me why I forgot.

Sixty years of excessive alcohol
does that to him,
erases all sensitivity.
Email
allows him
to write quick messages
in the heat of emotion
and send immediately.

Oh my.

I react strongly
to bullying,
recall childhood
when my family was warfare.
My father bullied my brother
and my brother bullied me,
and everybody beat up everyone else
and so much sarcasm and criticism.

My family
was not absent of love,
empathy, sympathy,
but not first priority
nor point of focus,
maybe a rare event
coincidental to major direction.

My muse claps her hat onto her head
stomps out the front door,
"I've told you innumerable times
you're trying to put too much
into too small a space.
You don't listen to me. I quit."
hovers in the air behind her
after she slams the door.

She has quit before
and then come back,
will she, won't she,
will she, won't she
join in the dance?
This is the dance,
Will you, won't you
Will you, won't you
join in the dance?

When I was nine,
my mother chased me
around the kitchen table
with a stick in her hand
to spank me.
I knew the more I tried to escape,
I piled pain on pain when she caught me,
and she would catch me.
Where can a nine-year-old
go?
It was not like we lived in a city

or even a small town.
“Thank God, I’m a country boy.”
but still,
I ran.

I’d rather not have these memories
at all, I think,
and ask him to quit,
“I would share your pain
if it did either of us any good.”
then eventually blacklist him
so I won’t receive any of his emails.

I’m off track for more than a week.
Forgiveness, I’ve learned,
is not a one-time thing,
I forgive you,
so we’re done with that
and move forward,
but every day, I forgive you.
I forgive me.
I forgive everyone the destruction
we bring to the universe.
I forgive, I forgive, I forgive.
We move forward
a half step, a small step, a step,
into more forgiveness
into healing,
into peace.

Variations on a Theme

Laura stirs with a wooden spoon
in a stainless-steel bowl.
“Clunk” wooden-metallic note rings.
Brown rice, chopped onions, carrots, broccoli,
eggs, soy sauce, nutritional yeast.
She fries it in a cast-iron pan.
Amanda and Juniper,
all of us dig in.
Amanda and Juniper’s history
with rice cakes goes back
delectable decades
into Whitney childhood
when snow piled
four feet deep on the meadow
beyond the kitchen window,

and we ate
without electricity
or running water.

I stir in a glass bowl
with a metal spoon
sharp “clang”
of metal and glass,
almonds and vegetables
I have chopped
and rice that steamed forty minutes
and soy sauce, brewer’s yeast.
I grate cheese,
bake in a glass dish.
We eat in warm sunshine
streaming through the windows.

There are many variations
on our sounds
of good food
prepared with loving care
and eaten together.
We feel
and speak
deep gratitude
for sounds
for food
for love
for this good life.

Green Rail

I saw the rail, less than half as tall
as a great blue heron
and metallic green,
land from flight
and walk into tall grass
by the river,
out of sight,
not identifiable
from any bird book I have.

I’ve seen owls sitting in trees,
flying in the wild,
and I haven’t been able to find
some of them

in any book.

In Whitney valley in the late 70s,
I watched a brilliant green sunset.

Some cold nights,
I saw northern lights
dance on the horizon
though friends later said,
“couldn’t be, that far south.”

What I think everybody means
is they were inside watching tv
while I participated
in the outdoor world.

Listen. Listen to me a moment
while I tell you what I heard
when you had on headphones
listening to music
recorded in indoor studios
while the wild world sang
fascinating
original songs all around you.

I Rarely Listen

I rarely
listen to music

though there is musics and musics
I dearly love
like instrumental guitar
without vocals
nothing against vocals,
but usually I write
words and if
words hammer
inside and outside both
at the same time
aural sense
and word sense
get messed up
for fair.

Sometimes,
even instrumental music,
even so soft,
becomes too much thought,

mixes with the desperate sound
of a fly, trapped behind a screen
trying to escape.

I shut down the music,
go after the fly,
wondering
if I kill this fly,
do I really love
all God's creatures?

I already know
that,
seeking quiet to work,
I will suffer whatever
consequences
if I don't.

I Spoke with Raven and Coyote

early this morning.
They spoke in knowledge,
their mouths and throats
not formed of words,
their minds,
their ways of thinking,
not formed of words.

They explained to me,
when I walked up the hill
while the moon shone.
This hilltop, Raven told me,
there is no other hilltop.
This is all of existence.

Trillions of trillions of hilltops
Coyote and Raven said.
I rejected man-like thoughts
trying to form in my mind
to obscure what I heard

from wild voices.

This planet is all of reality
is all that exists
is a planet of millions of hilltops
in a universe of trillions of planets.

This is what we sing about,
Coyote said,
and Raven said,
I fly about this.
This is why I fly
and sing
this is why

The moon
as slow as ice melting
set behind snow on mountains.
Sun rose
brilliant gold in infinite blue.

Coyote sang and Raven flew and sang.

I will try
to exit humanness on this hilltop,
to form wild sounds.
Moon sets in my throat.
Sun rises from my mouth.
I touch infinite blue sky,
become wild notes of joy
above wild hilltop
then quiet to uncountable
shades of blue.

I Dream Winter

Snow falls from dark sky.
Clouds blow across
winter moon.
Ravens fly in early daylight
and call
raucous cries of winter
echo in my cold house
of dreams.
I wake,
reach into memory for dreams.

Dawn wakes.

There are no ravens here.
Where we live now
is too modern for them.
Houses are close together.
There is nothing here for them.
There is nothing here
for wild creatures.

Snow falls from dark sky
Daylight floods my cold house.
Clouds blow across
winter moon.

In early daylight,
ravens fly across cold moon
through falling snow.
Their raucous cries
echo in my mind.

Bears lope down the street.
Bison graze
across front lawns.
Stag stands up the hill and watches.

I walk from room to quiet room
Snow falls thickly.
Morning sun shines
above dense snow clouds.

I Come Singing

I come singing
singing down the mountain
climb down jagged black boulders
climb up lichen-covered boulders
work my way across black basalt cliffs.

Red and green succulents
grow at my feet,
ask for my care when I walk.
Clumps of grass, flowers, stunted trees
grow from pockets of dirt in rock.

Fir trees grow from open ground, pine trees,
deciduous trees, brush, grasses, flowers
snakes, coyotes, elk, deer
ground squirrels, tree squirrels, mice
hawks, doves, eagles
geese, ducks, insects,
worms,
organisms too small to see.

Small birds sing in flight
from trees.
Hawks stand in trees
and watch.
A black bear follows me
part of the day,
curious to see what I am doing,
what I intend.

I come working
singing to forest
to plants, to animals
to Life, all life, my life.

It has all become the same,
It is the same,
work, song, my life, all life,
Love
Sky, Earth, Animals, Plants, Water
My Work,
My Song,
My Life.

I Will Teach You to Write Poetry

Live an interesting life.
Think interesting thoughts.
Understand colors.
There are 1,614 colors.
I know computers speak about
millions of colors,
but that is computers speaking,
not your eye nor my eye.
Then, understand that colors live
in my thoughts, in your thoughts
in our eyes.

If you would write good poetry,
watching television is a definite no.
Oh, you can watch television
and write poetry
but you will have lost
important nuances
of observation and expression.

Love.
Love well.
Love something
bigger than yourself.
Love what motivates you
through this universe.

Realize
these instructions
are notes along our way,
reminders.
I can't teach you.
You can't learn.

Poems are in your thought,
in the way you perceive the universe.

As you open
to the universe,
you begin to find
your poems
to recognize the perfection
that gives you
your poems.

I'll read this when I have time

I bookmark another page
Best Poetry of the Year
I'll read this when I have time,
a valuable resource,
even though I already know I'll
probably
never read any of it.

I read much less these days
practice my songs
record my songs
proofread and revise my own writing

write poems, write songs.
write a while on a novel.
I might finish this sometime.
The idea pushes me at times.

I wrote a song yesterday,
about the rain against my window
and down to the ground.
I think I owe a line to Taj Mahal,
looked for it on the internet,
didn't find it
but I'm fairly certain he was the one.

I need to define
and write down chords for my new song,
practice, along with all my other songs
and record, along with all my other songs,
and record again and record again
as I learn more about how I want it to sound.

I'm writing seven essays as I have time.

I pull my music stand over in front of me
as I write this poem,
stand and walk into studio A
to exercise,
because my butt is getting too sore,
from sitting.
I need to stretch muscles
while they still will flex,
maybe get something to eat.

I read for enlightenment.
I write for enlightenment.
I didn't know most of this stuff
when I was younger.
It would have been kinder
I would have been kinder
if I had known it.

If I keep writing
and singing
and editing
I think I will learn
some of it.

I Dreamed I Woke

I dreamed I woke
lay under heavy covers
a contemplative moment.
Early morning light started
into my bedroom windows.
I felt the night
and my rest complete.

I threw the covers back
sat up
planted my feet
planted my feet
on the cold winter morning floor
stepped into green long underwear
bottoms and brown trousers,
brown trousers
brown trousers stink need laundry
slithered
into already assembled double t shirts
and heavy wool sweater
wool sweater
opened bedroom door
strode into active center of house
and woke to realize
I staggered wildly
and woke to realize
I only then woke
Catch my balance
against the wall
climb the wall
from deep sleep
stand already dressed
grab everything around me
for balance
spin and grasp the world
for balance
while dreams
carom off undulant walls
seek secret existence
in rapidly darkening depths
of preverbal thought
and the beautiful fragments
I catch
briefly
own the most beautiful fragments.

This one
colors of the rainbow
Ingrid still lives,
defeated slow, painful death
drives a big yellow school bus
up a fast flowing irrigation ditch
Water flows muddy around us

I stand on top of
fast moving big yellow bus
harvest ripe, sweet apricots.
while muddy water
flows rapidly around us
Four of us feast
apricots
in bright sunlight of our journey.

Ingrid insists we stop
meet her grandmother
who owns the apricot tree
flew a twin engine
Scooga Wooga 440A in Alaska
three lean and lovely years
shows us her collection
of books proving
a beautiful world in balance

made it through
all the muddy-water years
of humankind's material dreams
that brought chaos to this world

We ride the big yellow bus
ever more rural
wheel deep in mud
the bottom of the ditch
water runs ever more clear.
I know
we will swim in these currents
Sun shining to water
to us

End of the road
ramshackle buildings
where we all live
and love
progressively

blend to fruit trees
to wildflowers
to the landscape

Lush grass grows
wildly unkempt.
Golden, ripe fruit
fruit of many colors
of every kind
calls from trees
around the low house.

Ingrid shuts the motor off.
The bus has gone.
We have all come home.

I Shoveled

a path through new-fallen snow
to our backyard and cleared the feed ground,
scattered cracked corn, sunflower seeds,
and winter wheat for birds.

Now I sit by my back window and watch
and write as birds peck up seeds,
grateful for sustenance in winter.

Birds fly to the feed ground
God gives me food for thought.
power for my writing.

My thoughts come together.
Poems coalesce.

Birds eat seeds sown for this day
and fly to shelter from falling snow.
I write
overflow with reflected creativity.
Gratitude fills my pages.

I receive for this day
visions of birds flying above snow
eating the food I have given them
I receive
a poem
creativity

Snow begins to fall again
I write another poem
slowly
as soft as falling snow
fills my mind
like seeds
to fill the day with warmth
with growth
with energy to live through
the five degree night
until sun shines again
in early morning.

I shovel new snow aside
put out seeds for the birds
of this new day.

Battle of The Little Bighorn

Sitting Bull was a fighting fool.
Custer couldn't muster.
Crazy Horse?
Glorious.
Victorious.

Coyotes Sang

last night
from this hilltop
after midnight.
They left tracks in dust
and memories of strange,
beautiful songs.
They sang memories
when all this land was theirs
unbounded expanses
desert and forest,
before industrial man brought
lawns, flower gardens
rifles, machines and oil
The top of this hill,
denuded by sewer-system workers
and road builders,
who used it to store pipe,

crushed rock, and machines,
still stinks of oil.
Oil shows in dirt.

Coyotes in moonlight
didn't sing of loss
last night
but of joy
for everything that was
and joy
for everything that is,
Life
Moon
just past full
in cold night sky.

Sun shines today,
warms up the day.
Marmot, fat, runs
across this dusty hilltop
to wild grasses
where it digs into soil
as generations of marmots have.

Raccoon leaves soft tracks
in dust
across the top of this hill.

Life
overflows from coyotes
in joy of song
in joy of all Life
joy of moon, nearly full
Sun, still there,
shines eternally
into Life
joy of song itself,
Joy of singing,
singing together
in eternal harmony,
Coyotes celebrate moon
life, sun, this day.

We Dance.

They Dance.

Everybody Dances.

I intend to record songs,
at least two,
after too long
without recording anything,
arrange table,
so messy.

Is messy table from messy mind?
Computer monitor slides to this end,
facing out so I can see the graph
sound makes as it becomes a file,
when I play my guitar and sing.

Clumsy, I misreach,
knock bamboo pencil-holder
Gregg made for me
to the floor.

Pencils and pens and eraser
scatter and scramble,
alarmed,
high, cylindrical voices
at the lowest edge of hearing,
floor level,
talk to each other,
“Is he mad at us?”

“It’s not our fault if he can’t write right,
right?”

“Most of the time, he uses that effing machine,
now,
anyway. I don’t really give a damn anymore.
My lead is all broken to pieces inside,
shock of hitting the floor so hard.”

“Ineffable.”

“Effing. I say effing, and effing it is.”

“Ineffable. Look it up.”

Big eraser tries to scrub everything, leaves it all
smeared,
so long since she’s been used, hardened, won’t erase
clean.

Marking pens say “We left our mark in this world,

then stood upside down in a damned tube of
bamboo
for months.
maybe years. I quit, dried-out felt.”

I gather every one together.
“When washing machine
under this upstairs room
stops
I’ll record two songs
then use you again
never again leave you like this,
unused,
neglected,
long ignored.”

They sing, dance in a long,
actively curving
choir line,
“Promises, promises, promises, that’s all we hear
from you.
Quit making all those promises. They never do
come true.”
on table top, ignoring bamboo holder.

I grab my guitar.
“I can get these chords.
Keep dancing.
We got it now.”

“Promises, promises. promises.
That’s all we hear from you.”

I knew there was a good reason
I put this strap on my guitar.
We dance around, do-se-do,
spin in a tight circle,
two circles,
one inside the other,
opposite directions.

At last, we have found our purpose.

Dance faster. Dance faster.

The washing machine
lumbers up the stairs,

joins in the dance.
The drier unplugs itself,
heads for the stairs,
“Wait for me.
Wait for me.”

Sun shines in my windows,
dances with pencils pens, guitars,
me.
Clouds gather together.
“Dance.
Join in the dance.”

Thunder rumbles.
Lightning dances from clouds.
Earth dances with the sun,
the moon.
The universe dances.
We dance.
Dance dance
dance.

Broad-Tailed Hummingbird

I glue wood together,
the shop door,
big enough for a blue
one-ton truck,
open to spring sunshine.
Broad-tailed hummingbird
hums from wild flower
to wild flower,
pays no attention
to human-built structures,
flies into the shop
without remembering
his way out.

He becomes bright,
frightened colors
in sunshine
through the window
he flies against
seeking open air.

I close my hand around him,

light as air,
soft as hummingbird feathers,
carry him to open sunshine,
hold him high,
release him.

Singing wings, bright green,
iridescent red, purple
ascend into mountain blue,
so high I can't see him now.

He is free.

I Walked up the Hill

behind the house
in morning sunshine,
visited with a large black spider
on brown, dusty ground.
She watched me from multiple eyes
but wouldn't tell me her name

There's so much power in names,
some cultures reserve them
for private occasions
of great spiritual weight.

I visited with the burrowing wasp
who finished digging,
has established her family
underground
and keeps her name close, too.

I walked down to where someone had written
on an abandoned concrete driveway,
"Chispa, Andy, Kanna are fags."
Weeks ago, Laura picked up the chalk-rock
and changed "fags" to "fabulous."
I like it better that way,
and it looks like time does too,
because it's lasting.

From up the hill, I heard
the garbage truck
circle the neighborhood
down the hill on flat ground.

I was lost behind trees
and didn't get to watch
the mechanical super-hero
on the side of the truck
grab our plastic garbage can
lift it high
and dump it into the truck.

Sun shines down on juniper trees,
pine trees,
dusty ground,
A brown grasshopper jumps to my shirt,
rides with me a ways
as I turn toward home,
then jumps away into its own day

Wild seed heads stick in my socks.
I sit in shade under the last tree
before home
in sunshine
and slowly
pick them out.

I Woke

I dreamed of war
and woke in a world of peace.

I slept when reports of chaos
rattled human thought.
I slowly woke
to joyful harmony
in God's kingdom.
Principle reigns.
Love wins final victory
over sin, sickness and death.
All is perfected, complete.

I work to relegate
even faint memories
of thoughts of war,
disharmony,
back to nothingness,
work toward awareness
that is the Christ Mind,
divine Mind

perfectly reflected,
complete.

My existence becomes
Mind awake
Love in action.

Legends of Autumn

I walked by the stream
running over stones,
around and under black stones.
I walked over grey stones
and between large stones.

The stream ran low in its banks,
clear,
past two large
live cottonwood trees
whose leaves began to yellow
and past the ancient dead tree
with holes
where flickers nest
in spring.

Above the spring
that feeds Cottonwood Creek,
she waited for me
in the shade of stones,
the shade of a small
ancient juniper tree,
gathered into herself
in contemplation
of the passage
from summer into fall
toward winter
white on the plain.

I showed her the skull.
"Buffalo," I said.
She touched it, held it
then handed it back.
I wore it like a mask
and looked
through bleached eye openings.
Bison everywhere on the plain,

grazing slowly through tall grass
gone sere
toward winter
white on the plain.

The stream below me runs clear
over stones,
between and under black stones.
Buffalo wolves follow the herd.
Wind blows across the plain.
I stand on the high place
above the plain,
watching toward winter,
white on the plain.

Save Me, Save Me

I'm being absorbed
by my computer.

I'm working
to bring all my poems
together into a book
ebook, paper book,
both,
maybe,
It depends on how much
money I feel free to spend,,,,,,
but back to the topic,
my computer absorbs me,
molecule by molecule
atom by atom.

Actually poem by poem.

I need to break away,
to run free
through fall grasses,
under green evergreen trees,
deciduous trees
blowing fall-colored leaves
into rapidly-coldening days
toward snow and ice
of winter.

But, entranced by my own work

of many years,
I keep punching keys,
amazed at the way my poems
gather,
one after another on the screen,
so poetically.

I can't get away from my keyboard
even as I feel myself dissolve,
molecule by molecule
into this lifeless machine.

I try to scream out, "Help me. Help me.
Somebody save me from this machine."

No sound emerges.
My desperate words
show
only on my screen,
in tiny, five-point font.

If You Had

your life to live over,
Gregg said,
of all assembled there,
he was the only
"No"
Because the same person
would make the same mistakes,
and having gone through,
extremely unpleasant,
he said.

It took me the largest part
of a second to see
It didn't matter at all
if I would or wouldn't
because I didn't

and if mistakes once done
could be undone
or if I knew then
oh, how many times,
and still, the sun rises over
this mountain

today
only today
and I'm glad
for the sun
for the sunbeam
for the warmth.

My backyard

is a small hillside
developers landscaped
built houses above,
where the hill leveled
to a plateau
let bulldozed
dirt and rock fall
down the hill
as they would

On the jumbled hillside
weeds grew up
flowers
bushes
between trees
between rocks.
(multifarious
life quickly covers bare dirt.)

My random thoughts,
educated in Math,
English, Mankind's Science,
beliefs, things to know,
fell as they would,
boulders of good thoughts,
desire for meaningful consistency,
partly covered
by dirt of irrelevancy
inaccuracy,
lack of guidance.
Eager life
drove plants from rough dirt
toward the sun.

I landscaped my back yard
sought beauty and order
dug out boulders
built them into walls

planters
shoveled dirt into terraces
behind rock walls
planted flowers in the soil.

Mary Baker Eddy's writing
defines God
as the good, loving force of Life,
began a slow landscaping project
in my thought,
digging out boulders
of misperception,
placing them into order,
arranged beauty
of understanding,
right for her,
right according to The Bible,
which
with guidance
from Mrs. Eddy's writing,
defines reality.
exactly,
fits my sense of truth,
I realized when I read
read again
yet again
taking truth
as it resonated
with recognition
in my existence,
answered moral,
ethical, logical questions
Truth
demonstrated,
that includes all existence
in good.

I don't know
what new inhabitants
do with landscaping.
I started
in our back yard.
We moved on to other places
and I haven't been back.

I continue
landscaping my mind

fit boulders of thought
into a scene of beauty
ever-approaching
this basic Truth:
all is God
God is Love
God teaches me,
us
every
one.

Rain

When we moved into the old house
in Whitney,
rain
came right in
and shook our hands.
We took it outside again
in pans
picked up from where
we put empty pans
to replace.

Days stayed warm
Rainless, weeks at a time
Leaking roofs almost didn't matter,
but we knew
vagaries of mountain weather,
fall and winter changes.

Most of the roof was dry
flammable cedar shingles
concerned me more
than uninvited rain into our house.

I kept after John
my boss, the owner,
thinks a long time before spending money,
good guy though.
He sent Andy up to fix the roof
and I worked with Andy
autumn on us by then,
and we'd cut the hay
the contractors baled it
and hauled it down the river road

to John and Mike's home ranch.

I told Andy, "We got to move on it, now;
If we count on good weather,
it'll snow a bunch and stick."

We laddered up,
stripped off wooden shingles, old paper
laid new tar paper, new metal,
cut and fit,
drilled and hammered,

finished, loaded tools
and leftover materials
it snowed
snow stayed,
but we were warm
in a dry house,
fires hot in stoves we installed,
smoke out through exhaust systems we built
or changed as needed.

Quick-to-burn dry wood
that formed our house,
occupied my mind.
I prowled the house
cold nights
every winter we lived there,
checked every exhaust,
double-checked our safety,
wrote and sang til morning,
slept until noon,
my family active around me
in our warm, small house.

Rain and snow
wind and sub-zero
stayed outside
looked in at us through windows
that were there
and new ones we built
for the back room.

We stayed dry
warm

Cried too

Yes. Does anyone
leave that totally?

but
joyfully
happy
Laughed
Wrote
Drew
Read
Read to each other
Slept
Ate
Lived.

The Plowman's Violin

The plowman bows his violin and
dances with grace of seven decades.
Dust of work falls away.
Resonant tones cascade from his stage.

The plowman plays fields of tones,
musics the floor liquid.
Flowers bloom from fertile earth
as dancers swim to rhythms
the plowman sows like seeds
toward harvest in moonlight.

The plowman stamps dusty rhythms.
Dancing flowers dream
fertile fields to harvest
in harmonic tones
beneath the moon.

Thirteen Raven Poems

(After reading "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," by Wallace
Stevens.)

I. Mountains in snow.
Raven
flies, black above white,
looks down at mountains
in snow.

II. A tree grows
in my thoughts.

Three Ravens rest
on three branches,
thinking of flight.

III. Ravens fly
in cold winter wind.
Ravens become
winter.

IV. I love you,
he says.
They hold each other close
in mountain quiet.
Raven flies above them.

V. Raven's harsh call
becomes pleasant above harmony.
In silence that follows,
I find
intimations of enlightenment.

VI. Frost covers my windows
before daylight
and obscures the flight of black ravens
toward spring.
They speak to me in raucous tones.
I listen
but never understand what
they tell me.

VII. We seek material riches
and spiritual enlightenment.
Ravens watch us toil,
watch us spin,
watch us try to understand,
and laugh in sorrow
at our misdirections.

VIII. Ah yes, we humans
have words
and wisdom,
but Raven sees
the machinations
of humankind
and laughs
for incredulity,
for relief.

IX. Raven flies beyond my senses
and tells me
she and I are one;
life is one
with the creator of life.

X. Ravens fly
toward strange colors of sunset.
Were we not struck dumb by awe,
we would cry out at beauty
as colors reflect from Ravens' wings
in numinous movement
high above earth.

XI. When we fly above
our own existence
and see life,
sudden fear penetrates us.
What seemed necessary
to our living in this world
casts raven and all forms of life
in dark shadows
that might not yield to rising sun.

XII. Life proceeds
harmonious.
Sun rises.
Swallows swoop to catch insects.
Raven flies from her treetop,
pleased to see beginning
in every movement,
every thought.

XIII
Time is a human concept.
Each moment is eternal.
We look toward the future,
try to think of everything that might happen.
Raven, in the top of a juniper tree,
gathers the moments we discard
in our forward haste.

Wildflowers in Spring

We descend the mountain
into

northern Sacramento Valley
afternoon sunshine,
Chip,
tall,
recently of cities
and I.

Where the Sierras
sprout from flat earth,
we walk into a field
of yellow, purple,
red, blue, green,
every color.
Myriad wildflowers
offer gentle odors
to the clear blue sky.

“Most flowers are edible,” I say,
as we wander down the long field
eating flowers.
They all taste so sweet
so good.

Chip says, “If I eat one that’s
poison, and I die, tell everyone
not to eat that one.”

And I say,
“Among all these sweet and fragrant
flowers, how is anyone
going to know which one?”

We continue eating flowers
and laughing
and walking
in the field in sunshine,
in colors,
in countless sweet odors
mixing toward blue sky
and we are alive, so alive
and full of laughter, sunshine,
and flowers, wild flowers.

Walk in the Park

Tuesday, first day of autumn,
I fire up the rusty Buick,

drive to Tumalo State park,
where the wind, high in the trees,
thinks it's wind's day.

Water, old as the earth,
young enough for joy,
travels this wide world over,
flows down Deschutes River,
laughs and sings
on its way to the sea.

Black rocks, grey rocks
stand in the current,
thrust tops up into dry sunlight,
ringed with white and grey
where dirt in the water
inhabited by millions of very small lives
stayed
when moistened rock dried.
Is the life in those rings still alive?

I know something about poems
about writing
about life,
but I can't answer that question
with the assurance understanding brings.

Some black rocks, grey rocks
live their lives entirely underwater.
I would like to ask them what they have seen,
what they have heard from water
flowing over them,
what long, slow contemplation
reveals to them about the universe,
but I know
I won't be here when they begin to answer,
a price I pay for flash existence,
burned like leaves of grass
while the earth abides.

A tribe of water sketers
with their hydrofuge hairpiles,
retractable preapical claws,
and elongated legs and bodies,
skate on the water's surface,
about 40 of them,
hard to count,

because they move with excitement
when the first falling leaf comes to visit,
drifting down to the water's surface
at the center of the tribe
"I can't stay mes amis, amigos,
mah true friends.
I have places to be
and promises to keep.
Adieu. Adieu."
turning and turning in river current,
then coming round right,
sailing toward the ocean.

A golden mantle ground squirrel,
shoulder deep in its hole
watches me.
After a busy summer, only one human?
I would explain, but I have places to be
things to do
walk up
fire up the Buick again
renewed by my brief visit
to the river,
to different lives.

Wistful Joy of a Quiet Neighborhood

I would play my guitar and sing and whistle
this warm, cloudy late-spring morning.
A truck, a truck, what is that truck?
It is not garbage-collection day
and I tripple truckle to more noise
down carpeted stairs
as our landlady motor-rolls
up
the house-shaking garage door,
starts her untuned lawn mower,
attacks growing-green,
chemically-fertilized,
computer-watered grass.

Over my ducking, frightened head,
an unmuffled airplane flies lowly by.

Joy, wistful joy of a quiet neighborhood.

The truck delivers liquid cement,
twenty-thousand el bees (a decibel per pound)
in a turning, turning,
greasy-chain-turned,
white-painted, steel container
to the man who, in appropriate seasons,
mows his lawn, blows dust from his sidewalk,
snow from his sidewalk,
trims the edges of his lawn,
chops weeds,
does everything,
everything with machines
driven by noisy, internal-combustion
engines,
even,
he opens his mail
with a motor-driven mail opener,
noisily
outside.

Beginning this morning,
after obsequious months,
I music anyway, regardless,
nonetheless
even in spite of,
despite.
Joy in the face of chaos,
I have learned,
I preach,
believe,
and now practice.
A chord. C chord. E minor chord.
Words "I ate a rainbow ..."

The cement truck finishes,
drives away.
The landlady finishes,
rolls the noisy garage door closed
and leaves.
The airplane flies beyond hearing.

A bird sings.
I sing.
In twenty-three seconds
another neighbor,
who has carefully waited
for this quiet moment,

starts his lawnmower
and begins to mow his lawn.
He will follow
with motorized trimming
unmuffled chopping of weeds.

Sing, sing, sing.
Even more, today,
strike resonantly beautiful guitar strings,
whistle,
sing,
"I'm filled
with infinite colors of existence.
I ate a rainbow ..."

Joy, wistful joy of a quiet neighborhood.

Winter Notes 1997

I saw my first wife
in my dream last night
hair going grey,
her face showing nearly forty years
since I've seen her,
showing some hard times.

She said, "It's a good thing
for both of us I don't have a gun.
If I did, I would probably shoot you."
Yes. I was young, stupid
without moral or religious training
and I damaged some of the people
around me.
Eventually, I learned to stop
most of the uneducated destruction.
It took time
and my own guidance
toward a gentler existence.

I woke up and saw the forest
white outside my bedroom window.
Cold fog hung densely among trees.
Ten degrees.

I'll never finish
everything

I've made notes on.
I'm free to throw away
partial manuscripts,
pages of notes
about what I'd like to write.

Most of the day, I sort
and dispose of material possessions.

All night, fine, powdery snow falls.
I wake at daylight again
face the covered-with-frozen-fog forest,
that supports powdered snow
on every surface.
Ten below zero.

Winter Arrived

in central Oregon
with an absorbent thud,
from warm, sunny days
to cold and cloudy
with snow in the wind,
to fifteen-degree nights.

Our electric furnace
howls fiercely
through nights,
leads me to ask again
are engineers unusually inept?

If weapons of war were designed
with as little attention to detail
hardly anybody would be dead
by now.

Me?
My friend
owns a red canoe.
If he will loan it to me
I'll fill my water bottle,
pack my backpack,
leave for Guam.

You stay here
tend winter's fire.

You wouldn't like
this ocean voyage, I'm sure.

I launch my red canoe
into the Deschutes river.
Currents and my paddle
drive me down
to the Columbia River
and down the Columbia
to the sea.

I turn left,
paddle south.
Birds fly above me
migrating south.
Ocean currents beneath me
surge south.
Whales
deep in the ocean
below my red canoe
deep in the water
under me
migrate south.
We all sing together
of migrating south
when cold days and nights
descend on the north.

I hope to see you again
some summer day.

If they have paper and pencils
on the equator
I paddle toward,
I'll write you a letter
and tell you where I am
in my eternal journey
toward natural warmth
and light.

Peru

He's dead now,
no doubt about that.
Some would rather say he passed on.
He left this material plane

on his way somewhere.
Friends and family gather round.
Some of them mourn.
He told them not to,
and some don't,
because he told them not to.

Well, he doesn't have to deal
with any of that,
mourning or not,
sadness, sense of endings,
slips out the back door
(because he's in the habit of doors)
while everyone gathers around
his body,
he heads for Peru.
He always wanted to go to Peru.
The last few years, many times,
he said he was leaving for Peru,
too sore to travel much,
way too sore to go that far,
but it's easy now,
catches rides with no trouble.
People pick him up right away,
different kinds of people.
They trust him,
talk to him,
listen,
take him as far as they're going,
and he catches another ride.

He buys 704 acres,
money's no problem here,
10,000 feet elevation,
straight up from the ocean,
hires a young couple
to take care of the place,
to take care of him,
just like he said he would
when he talked about going to Peru.
She's 37. He's 32. Two kids, 10 and 8.
He gives the kids a dollar a day
to help with chores,
Her and him,
he gives them a good wage,
a place to live.
Gardener, maid, cook,

butler, chauffeur, pilot,
kind of,
no car, no plane, no phone,
no television, no electricity,
no place to go,
like the loaves and fishes,
self-renewing,
nobody thinks about it
for the moment,
and that's all there is,
the moment,
this moment.

The mountain is so steep,
he gets up a good running start,
just like he said he would,
dives clear to the ocean,
cheats,
what the heck,
nobody's watching.
What's this pause on the way
for anyway, if not to have fun?
cheats, drifts forward a ways.
No mountain
in this world
is quite that steep,
slows before he hits the water,
splash,
cheats his way back up to home,
ten thousand feet,
sits on the veranda
in mountain sunshine
fresh vegetables, fresh fruit
from the garden.
He doesn't speak their language,
and they don't speak his.
Doesn't matter.
They communicate enough
without spoken language,
trust each other,
don't need to know anything
beyond this moment,
this smile,
this open place
in mountain sunshine.

Sometime he'll have to move on

take the next step.
He doesn't think about it much.
Each moment is sufficient
bites a fresh, ripe strawberry,
watches the sun
as it massively
thinks of setting
beyond the mountains,
beyond the ocean
that breaks on black rocks
below the mountains.

Raven,

flying calligrapher,
writes the meaning
of winter,
black
on white snow.

What We Swim Toward We Who Swim Upstream

What is up there?
Headwaters
where waters pure in beginning
surge up, two feet up into clear mountain air
and roar away down granite streambed.
Of course, we didn't swim
all the way upstream.
In mountainous stream
we portaged our tired bodies
walked barefooted
cold and shivering
Damn near starved at times
since it seemed
most material resources
went to the fat ones
floating easily in broad rivers
warm waters
servile crews
in gold-plated canoes
brought riches
from land-bound workers
who already
traded away all swimming
for promises

unkept promises,
unkeepable promises
to insure the future
insure the land
insure resources
insure dreaming,
endless dreaming.

We would dream
of cold mountain waters
of headwaters
bursting from earth's depths
of living water deep pure cold
cold as that moment
just before creation
empty, pure
deep as the very moment
of creation's beginning
preparation
for the beginning of creation
the formation of the world,
of words
of the beginning,
of all naming.

Let the fat ones float in warm waters
where pollution
of the goods of existence
compounds sharks
of the redounding of all our deeds
circle lazily as yet unhurried.
Their earthly rewards they have
delivered in golden canoes
all earthly profits and news
brought out in servile golden canoes.

But We Who Swim Upstream

Up here, our feet are cold and bleeding
from walking up rough mountain streambeds
cleansed in pure, cold water
water of beginning
My God so cold.
Immersion slams immobility
to the marrow of every bone
erases all thought
until

emerging into sunshine
our vision is new
This moment the world is created
Forest,
High Mountain Meadow
Water erupting toward the Sky
then hurrying earthward
oceanward
carrying promises
carrying dreams
carrying words
of cleanness
of beginning
of creation of dreams.

Rising Storm

Clouds gang up
on corners of the sky
mutter dark threats
flick switchblades
open and closed
play metal boom boxes
too loud

Snow

snow
y'know.

It'll go
as flow
of water
by nine
in sunshine.

I think.

Feathers in Sky

Clouds of rain
feather down.
Fire of lightning
burns to the ground.

Thunder roars,
echoes from
storming mountain.

New Birds of Spring

Robins pecked out of their eggs
in their nest
on a beam
under the roof
on my back porch,
learn to sing,
fly up, fly down,
fly across my back yard,
hop along the wooden fence,
learn to avoid cats, some of them.

Sparrows fledged in their nest
on a beam
under the roof
on my side porch
fly up
fly down
fly across
my back yard
perch in trees
take lessons from their parents,
“Sing like this...
up note
down note
in between
hold, and again...”

Doves, jays, blackbirds, swallows,
pigeons, starlings, juncos
fly down, fly up, fly across,
sing,
stop in trees
stop on my wood fence
stop on grass
fly into morning sun.
new birds of warm spring.

I watch them.

I thrill to their first trill

first flight,
discovery of this world,
new again each spring
in joyful flight
joyous song.

Night Sweepers

(From my song)

People of every color, shape and type
work together
and sweep away the night
Night sweepers
sweep their busy way to the moon
sweep it white with daylight
and work smooth
toward the Pacific Ocean
humming and singing,
something like this:

Sunrise, sunrise
comin up just fine
Sunrise, sunrise
sweep it clean
for the good old sunshine
Come on brother sweeper,
sister sweeper
I'll push your broom
and you push mine
uh huh
Sweep the night away
just ahead of bright sunshine
sweep a raindrop
sweep a snowflake
sweep a cloud top
and sweep it clean
Now I'm gonna sweep
open sky a while
and you sweep
stars out of sight
sweeping away the night
Then you sweep planted fields
and I'll sweep tops of parked cars
sweeping up the night

Ain't it fun sweeping

rugged mountain tops
green forests
wild meadows?

Look at them elk raise their heads
toward the rising sun
Sister sweeper, brother sweeper,
this sure is a bunch of fun
getting ready for bright daylight
I do a little soft-shoe shuffle
get ahead a ways
and a gentle jig with my broom
Hey, hey
look at the motion of my feet
try this a while
cause it sure feels neat
Sister sweeper clamps a harmonica
into a neck brace
She's sweeping
and blowing a soft tune
The sweepers around her
two step, slide,
and push the broom
one step to the side
and a two step slide
and push the broom
They're humming and whistling
the tune she's blowing
mmmmmm hmmmmm.

Way up in the stars
dimming for morning
a night sweeper
sings perfect harmony
with a sweeper sweeping across
an open desert
on the waking face
of morning earth
They're both in harmony
with a sweetly dreaming harmonica
and every singing dancer
Everybody moves
to the same smooth beat
room for everyone
sweeping together,
singing a little song
sounds just about like this:

mmmmm hmmmm
sweeping up the night
sweeping all the stars
out of sight
uh huh sweeping up the sand,
oh yeah
Come on sister sweepers
brother sweepers
sweeping the night off the land
Dancing and sweeping the night
out over the Pacific Ocean.

Bright sunlight shines westward
touches the ocean
The sweepers sweep
down behind the horizon
right on time.

Harmonica tones
and echoes of a high contralto
in perfect harmony
with a deep bass voice
linger on the horizon
in very early morning sunshine.

Late Winter Dance, 1997

In blue mountain sky,
Sun rises.
Evergreen's dark needles
absorb sun's heat,
flex,
release burdens of snow.

Forest dances.
Branches
spring toward
Cold sky.
Snow plummets
to ground below.
Plumes of powder snow
dance in winter wind.

Raven flies
above dancing trees

speaks hoarsely
of winter warming
toward spring.

Sun sets.
Cold winter mountains
dance against
clear blue sky.

The Old West was Gone

C.M. Russell knew
the old west was gone
and regretted
and regretted
and yet painted
sculpted
wrote
told stories to so many
laughed,
loved.

I wouldn't have chosen
here, a neighborhood,
so close
so often
noisy
but would I otherwise
have looked back
written so many songs
essays
books?

Give me a rake
a shovel,
a long-handled hoe,
enough money to pay
a younger man
to start my garden
and fence it against the deer
the squirrels.

I'll sit and watch the sun
fall toward the western mountain
direct the water
pull weeds

harvest the crops
remember the seeds.
Grow more than I can eat
and store for winter,
oh winter
falling slowly
down the mountain
and approaching
white
across the plain.

One Way to Write a Poem

This is a way
to write a poem,
a line at a time,
a word at a time,
a syllable at a time.

This is a way
to think a poem,
a sound at a time,
a word at a time,
a line at a time.

A meaning at a time
is a simple meaning.
More complex meaning
comes
from knitting
two meanings together
and,
even more complex,
two meanings
imply a third meaning
in one line,
one group of sounds,
one beat of my heart,
one understanding in my mind

Outrun 15 Below

I left the gate open
when I plowed snow

at 15 below
zero.

Then I wrote an essay.

After that,
I walked up
the snow-curved hill,
danced to avoid
pine trees'
unloading snow,
shut
the cold, green metal gate.

Cold seeps
through my clothing.
I trot down the new,
squeaking snow,
try to outrun cold
at 15 below,
shut the door
against 15 below,
play winter songs
on a warm guitar,
at 15 below.

Through winter windows,
I watch snow fall.

Cold lingers in my boots
half the musical afternoon.

Stone

One pink and ivory stone
aggressively grows green lichen
grey lichen, black lichen
remembers when all was bedrock

Glacier thundered down from the north
then melted
(sing, "moraine, sweet moraine")

One pink and ivory stone
hurries toward eternity.

End of Fear

Fear vanishes.
This is the first time
I delete
computer folders
of older recordings
of my songs.
Now
I'm sure
I can sing and play
them again
tomorrow,
next week,
better.

And

If this material world ends tomorrow
in forest fires
pollution
wars
depravity of material wealth
and
I have nothing recorded
to greet the occasion
(((Oh well)))
My Identity was Never There
in the song
but in The Spirit
that creates
a thousand songs
practices their performance
records again and again
and discards for better
a thousand poems
ten thousand essays
that sees
beauty of creation
around me
inside me
slowly recognizes immortality
of spirit

I'm sad to see
this material world

inevitably
ends
resist every way I can
but begin to step up
practice
metaphysically
stepping up
into spiritual existence

Right now
I can't linger in contemplation
of the change.

I have songs to sing
to practice
to record
to write,
to build
essays to write
sunshine to soak
flowers to water
watch grow
blossom
unfold into multifarious
colors,
odors
seeds
songs
of flowers
beyond time
beyond human hearing,

Fifteenth Way to Enlightenment

according to the Monk who meditates
on the hill behind my house

in XP, Vista, and Seven,
press control panel,
twice
press folder options
twice
press view
twice
press uncheck

twice
press "hide known file extensions"
twice
to uncheck
Pronounce AUM correctly
and long enough,
while the mother of us all
the father of us all
completes breakfast at sunrise.

Enlightenment.

Garbage Week

I realized today
if Laura went to church
and didn't come back,
I wouldn't know what week
to put the garbage can, bin,
what do you call that plastic thing?
out on the curb
so the garbage-collection truck
can hoist it high against the blue sky
and turn it upside down,
chomp down everything we've refused.

When I told her that,
she said, "The schedule is magneted
to the refrigerator."
Pensive,
she said,
"There are many things
I wouldn't know how to do
if you went to church
and didn't come back."

Last night,
I dreamed I hitch hiked out of here,
I didn't take my car.
All the time figuring out
where can I park the thing?
nor anything else, I think.
My memory of dreams shifts so fast,
if I don't remember a detail,
I might make something up to fill in
without even realizing it,

maybe.

Astonished.

I am astonished

I walk

through the seventies again

but wiser

I hope

lighter tracks,

look behind me.

no tracks at all.

My dream tells me

I walk someplace

even now,

toward someplace

not in material reality,

memory, lightened by

a small measure

of enlightenment.

A better life.

I think so.

I hope,

I pray

toward something,

substance.

I Wake From Dreams

I wake from dreams

of forgotten things

when the rain has ended

and grey clouds

break

from the moon.

Golden moon sets

behind dark mountain.

I don't remember where I am.

I thought

I heard you coming

up that dusty road.

Cold wind

calls my name.
I wake alone
on this mountain
in the dark time
when the moon sets,
a little afraid
of dreams.

Snow melts to spring streams
something in my soul
feels like changing seasons,
like dreams that fade
in the dark time
when the moon sets.

Shadows of trees
the sound of water.
Grey clouds break
from the moon.

Moon sets
behind trees
in forest
on the ridge west of me.

Night is still, quiet
on the mountain.
An owl calls.
From far up the ridge,
another owl answers.
A flying squirrel scrabbles
on tree bark,
launches into the night.

I sleep.
I dream golden moon,
dark clouds,
rain.
Night
enfolds my sleep.

Paradox (ology)

Your intensity
when you throw your arms
wide
and say, Everything

Every Forest
Every City
Every Tree
Every Weed
The Universe
The Universe Itself,
measures
your understanding
of infinity
eternity
God Himself.
HERSELF.

The fear
the awe
in your voice
when you whisper,
Nothing.
No thing at all
No Thing.

Rocky Mountain Spring Morning

Frost whitens the brown curve of the dirt road
where ponderosa pine absorb the morning sun
Dog and I walk through early shade.
Cold penetrates my light jacket
though dog makes no complaint
from his depth of shagginess.

Into warm sunshine above Lone Pine Creek
two mallards jump and fly;
water falls from feathers,
spots the stream's surface with spreading circles.

Across the open meadow, we soak in sunshine
warm as mountain springtime mornings.
At the base of granite boulders jumbled
into Rocky Mountain sky
the blonde marmot sunbathes
almost trusting familiar dog and me.

Shadows of two hawks courting pass us
in still sere grass,
shadows of two ravens.
Two bluebirds fly along the fence.

Aspen and willows open tentative green leaves.
Along the base of the granite ridge
where stone absorbs and reflects heat
green grass begins.

In the Beauty of Earth Itself

I want you to write about me,
she said.
Yes, he said, I will.
He wrote about hummingbirds
wildflowers,
animals who roam the earth
free
The beauty of earth itself
and gave her the poems.
She felt disappointment
that he had left her out of his vision.

She walked the slowly-eroding mountain
and saw a hummingbird in her nest.

Still as the tiny bird's awareness
of the very large human,
for a moment, she became the tiny bird,
sheltered the future of her species,
bore the future
through danger,
as she had borne
and protected her children,
her love
for him, for life.

She became the grey doe,
stepped quietly under trees,
stopped motionless
and blended into background
of pine trees, duff, low brush,
became earth itself, spinning
eternal in an eternal universe.

Poetry recreated itself in her senses.
She understood he had always written about her,
when he wrote about the hummingbird,
when he wrote about the motionless grey doe,
when he wrote about the beauty of the earth

spinning brilliant among brilliant stars.

In A Different Time

In a different time,
in a different place,
men lived long,
without legs,
crawled through low growth,
like snakes.

Women, feathered creatures who flew,
like eagles, owls, hawks
many colors.

She of beautiful feathers,
subtle colors and bright colors
captured he who crawls,
grey and brown.

He squirmed, thrashed, twisted.
She held him firmly,
never
changed expression nor intent.

“If you eat me,” he said,
“I will be honored to become
a small part of your beauty
your strength, your intelligence,
your determination,
your existence,
but yet,
if you don't,
such glory,
such sensory fulfillment.”

She could dash his head against a rock
or bite through his neck,
end this nonsense early,
tell him
he would become
elimination,
refuse, mere draught,
white patterns on a rock,
soon taken up by slow,
dull lichen,
but the warm day early

and the sun
lazy above.
She wasn't dreadfully hungry,
waited,
hadn't realized he could talk,
oh, how he could talk
and did, gaining
and then without end.

She could say, "Shut up."
or shut him up,
but his smooth voice
had something of sunshine,
of the moon,
full in the night sky,
even of soft spring breezes.

He entranced, romanced, transfixed,
convinced, mesmerized, hypnotized her,
revised her idea of what this existence
was for, added himself to her concept
of her purpose.
flatter, flatter, flatter.

"You would be flatter
if I dropped you from high
to rocks, sharp and unyielding."

And yet,
convinced, entranced
it would be
it might be
it could be
interesting, somehow crisper,
sweeter than an apple
after autumn frost,
of more lasting substance,
and she.....
acquiesced,.....
submitted.....
consented.....
agreed,
though she didn't fully understand
where it might lead,
led
into humanness
she, woman

he, man.

Oh my! Mythological
story lines condense
so extremely,
four pages (or less)
adequately cover eternity
even with 91% white space
(Where imagination, totally unseen,
without material form,
exists and works full time
in dreams and waking dreams.)

And she became woman
and he
man
That's how it all began
in a different time.

Sometimes since, she has wondered
would it have all gone this way
power and wealth worshiped,
destruction of the earth
if she had simply bit through,
consigned him to memory
digestive fluids
white matter sliced to a rock
taken up by fungi and plants,
bacteria.

Yet, to miss this,
bearer of the species,
she who carries children,
faith in future.
It is so easy to say
it was the best way.
Even in mythological structures,
going back
becomes
impossible.

Inhabitants of the Wind

Above stone,
above meadow,
juncos, bluebirds,
red-winged blackbirds

fly close to the earth.

Black raven rides
transparent wind
above grey granite ridge,
powers shining black wings down
through golden mountain sunshine.
Rough-legged hawk rides updrafts
high above raven,
soars above the meadow,
and searches sere grasses.

Above raven and hawk,
black vulture soars against the sun.
Eagle soars dark against the blue sky.

Stone mountain extends earth
into blue sky.
Small white clouds
soften the heavens above.

I Write New Poems

Early
before day shone in my windows,
while I was still sleeping,
I planned my day,
play my guitar, sing
try to finish an essay
I've worked on, short times,
more than a year. And exercise,
exercise, exercise.
Stay limber. Stay supple.
Get In Shape. No poems.
No poetry. Such a waste
Of time.
Of energy. Of my limited Creative Power.
(Grateful though I am for limited creative power
Power) because poems bring me nothing
No dollars. No fame. No glory. Nothing.
No washed dishes. No vacuumed carpets.
Nothing, nothing, no thing.
DINGIES!!! DANGIES!!! DAMN. DAMN.
DAMN!! I've done it again. It's 10:30. Three (3)
New
Poems. Nothing else. No thing. Nothin.

Oh flooggie on planning while I yet dream.
Oh flooggie on planning.
Oh flooggie.
And this makes four.
I don't know.

Maybe I understand alcoholics, abusers,
extensive users.

Oh. Sun shines in my morning windows,
touches my cactus growing in a pot
and the cactus feels sunshine
rejoices.

Paper, pencil.
A poem
of cacti, sunshine, sensate being.
Clear a spot on table, in schedule
to write a poem, a soft poem, a quick poem
Flooggie schedules.
Flooggie things.

Oh a poem, a poem.
I am grateful for this brief poem
given to me freely in morning sunshine.
I write and write and write
sun shines
cactus grows
The clock goes quiet and still
this moment of gratitude
happy HAPPY

I Write New Poems 2

I read internet news this morning
I couldn't help myself
I wanted to check email
I just went on from there
I usually stop with headlines
enough to show me
the shape of the world
The war in Afghanistan
The war in Iraq
Israelis have forgotten
what it is to be genocided against

Josef Fritzl admits his guilt

School shootings keep happening
The world economy is a mess
though we who are poor
try hard to take care
of the helpless, arrogant rich

just outside the window
above my writing desk
branches of wild juniper trees
dance in spring wind
Two steller's jays
in brilliant blue that shades
to cocky black crests
ride the dancing branches
Thirty-four quail
beautiful shades of blue and grey
and brown and black and white
run from tall grass
still white from winter
but beginning to think
of new green growth
feed on open ground
birds have scratched clear of growth
eat bird feed
I put out for them
and sing of morning

Peaceful quietness settles deeply
into me

Try Gold

I don't object to gold coming into my life
if its appearance doesn't interfere
with the way I intentionally, slowly walk.
I know the beginning
of how to try material to see if it is gold.
Gold is malleable, ductile
heavy
the color of gold.
I can easily find
other definitions of its qualities
melting temperature, for example,
or I can take material to an assayer,
ask, is it definitely gold?
though by then I will be nearly sure
it is or isn't.

I haven't fully understood our metaphor.

Am I gold? malleable to God's intentions for me,
ductile enough to be drawn into fine wire
that sounds a pure tone when singing "Hallelujah?"
valuable enough to achieve God's kingdom, now,
to effectively pray for this world,
for Love, for Life, for Principle and intelligence?

Or is our metaphor "try"?
test everything that comes to me
to see if it has the purity of God's Love
the purity of Life, the harmonic balance of
Principle,
the intelligence of Divine mind, the perfect balance
that always is God in action?

I test my thoughts in this material world
to move them constantly closer to that shiningness
that gold becomes when melting from its material
existence,
to translate into a metaphor of unfettered spiritual
value.

Dance of Light

I been up to death's door so many times
and then away at the last second,
now I carry a few boxes of soap.
If I knock and then decide
again that I'm not staying,
I'll have something
the angel of death'll think I came to sell,
knocked on his door
just to sell,
won't feel too left out.

He don't dance worth
cow poop anyway
I guess.
Every time we dance,
I'm so wore out,
I can't stand up a day or more.

This last time, I don't know
what hit me,

death or depression,
hard to sort one from the other,
until I saw the smiling face of Life,
Light of Life.

I come up,
jumping up
from a long way down
met halfway in warm embrace.

So I hope you don't mind,
Light and Life,
if I make up reasons
to come to your door,
if I knock on your door.

I'm looking for a chance to ask you,
dance with me?
Will you dance with me?
Dance in light
lifts us both
to the clean blue sky,
to Life.

Feb 25, 2011

It didn't get as cold
as forecasters said it would.
They talked about 0 degrees,
but when I went to the shed
this morning
to get our ladder
so we could move our bookcase,
I didn't feel the shock to my face
that comes with 0 degrees,
and thin gloves were enough
even against an aluminum ladder.

I don't put out a thermometer much anymore.
Numbers don't mean much to me.

Laura put one out about 3:00.
The sun had been shining,
and the mercury registered 38 degrees
when she went back to pick it up.

Outside the back window
birds fed on seeds we scattered.

Clouds move in and cover the sun.
Snow starts falling, lazily, softly.
By dark, the ground reflects
white back to us.

Feb 26, 2011

Full moon, golden in night sky.
I see your face in night sky,
golden in my memories,
hold your hand when we walk
beside the river
running golden in moonlight
singing soft songs
of memory
of currents running golden
in soft silver currents
stop to kiss your forehead
golden in golden moonlight
kiss your lips soft
as silver moonlight
hold you close as moonlight
my hands on your back
your buttocks
your breasts
hold you close.

You move your hands
and touch me softly
as silver
as gold
as diamonds in moonlight.

Memory becomes dreams
Dreams become memory

Moon is full outside my windows.
I wake often through the night,
dream
remember,
look at the moon.
The full golden, silver moon
journies through my dreams.

Winter of Our Dreams

Light projects images
through curtains.
patterns of flowers
touch your shoulder
I touch your face.
You open your eyes,
reach and touch my face.
Silence opens our vision,
portrays flesh, life,
smooth skin over bone.
Rain rattles against the house
Wind in the night
blows us close
against each other

Morning fog
scattered through mountains
In the Cascades,
I brought the sliding truck straight
on our frozen road
Your head slipped from my shoulder
and you woke, surprised that you slept,
and saw frosted trees
white peaks of Three Sisters

At the summit
wild tracks cast out across lava beds.
We stood in mountain sunshine
and looked across mountains,
then drove east to winter on Oregon desert

two

California's winter turned yellow and grey
I walked alone
Nights past wove themselves
into dreams
Time closed in my thoughts
imprisoned emotion
The river sang a siren's song
I could fly down black cliffs
into canyon bottoms
exit from all dreams

I walked down sandy river bank
early, beneath oak trees
Yellow leaves rotted to grey soil under my feet

Wind soughed through barren winter branches
Across cold water,
infinity to winter trees
against grey sky
in cold, deep currents,
life, motion of eternal life

three

December 29, it rained all night
in the Sacramento Valley
Depth of winter, I found isolation in my soul
Diesel engines hammer the night
Rain in wind rattles the house
Dreams rattle me up from sleep
Passing cars invade the night
I walk in a dark house
cold patterns of night penetrate my skin
Sounds drift like fog
words fade to grey
their meanings
grow like colors in my mind.
Past fuses to the texture of rain
In a time beyond pattern or sound
I still touch you when you turn and face me

Wind begins again in rain
Darkness closes on light
Dreams bring your presence
close, even in cold darkness
Silence
smothers
memories
change to dreams.

Art? as Life

Funny honey
how you walk away
in summer sunshine
of this day.

Rock and roll music
blasts from landscape
around us.
Drums roll,
Guitars riff.

Music matches rhythm
of your butt muscles
leg muscles
drive your legs
walking away from me.

Now for a country and western song:

I will be a better man than I am
(More understanding, sing better,
Richer, steadier, a better actor
a better poet).

Stay with me.
Honey, why don't you stay?
Don't walk away

across the landscape
of all your performances

My life becomes
forms of art
songs, poems, short stories,
Paintings on my wall,
photographs,
a long, never-revised essay,
(fixed in form)
a movie, (all the movies
I've ever seen,
thought I saw,
invented)
even a television program (a series)
God forbid.

Life becomes performance.
Performance becomes life.
We perform our lives,

learn from art.
Be careful
what art surrounds living.
Choose well.

Art is life
is love is truth
is soul
is eternity.

What of bad art?
What of the life that is not well-lived?

Funny honey
how you walk away.

I would have said stay
but the image of your back
your legs walking away
has become your best performance.
Play it for me, honey,
heinie in perpetual indignation
I remember you
walking away.
Will I always remember you?
just your heinie
tiny
just before blotted out
like two well-traveled railroad tracks
merge to one
then nothing
in memory
at infinity
at eternity.

Old Man Goes to Battle Winter

Aggressive geese
bark predatory excitement.
Heavy wings
hector the sun
down to southern skies
it fades to cold yellow.
Winter comes early
stays on the land,
among the people.
Snow falls silently
white owl flies to hunt.
Earth white and cold.
Winter stays beyond its time.
The people are cold and hungry.

An old man picks up
spear and knife,
speaks to the people.
“Death from winter

fertilizes soil of the earth
for spring
feeds cold-killed carrion
to survivors.

Now,
winter will not yield,
dying from deep cold.
Life force of the people
smolders weakly
unrelenting cold,
cold, cold.
Our food dwindles.
Hunters cannot feed the people.
The oldest and youngest
flee to the spirit world.
I go to battle winter,
to drive winter from the land
walk into battle
Ask Spirit, ask the force of life
why earth, sun, summer moon
haven't strength
to reclaim the seasons
to drive winter back
into cold depth of the universe,
black sky above the earth.

We have lost the rituals
that show the earth,
the seasons, the elements,
that show life our reverence,
our gratitude for life
that gives us life,
that shares this universe with us.

We give the earth no rest,
no reverence.
We carry fire
into every part of existence
deny night.
We dig
wound the earth.
We cut down trees
do not care for their lives,
for the life force they show us.

We have lost
our clear way of walking in spirit

and winter claims our souls.
I walk away now to battle winter.”
He walked away.
Falling snow
swallowed him.

Old man
ancient spear and sharp knife
claims victory
in fierce battle with death of cold
falling snow, frozen life.

The old woman healer speaks,
“Water ran beneath snow all night.
I listened to the song of running water
through the long night.”

Buds grow on the willows
along the stream.
Leaves open to returning sun
and deer, elk, coyotes run freely
where snow melts away
grass begins to green.
Birds sing
fly through sunshine.

Some of us speak.
“Remember the old man
who drove winter from the land.
He will not be here to battle again.
He fought and died to give us
a cycle of seasons
to remember reverence,
to remember the earth,
the seasons, the elements,
to show the force of life
our gratitude for everything of life
that gives us life,
that shares this universe with us.”

We who speak
wonder,
Did they hear the old man
do they listen to us now?

They seek more for themselves.
They wound the earth.

They carry fire into every night,
They seek more.

Winter returns
black cold sky
above the earth.
We are Cold,
Hungry.

Beam Me Up, Jesus, I Want to Leave This Vale of Tears

Please come in,
wearing your three-hundred-dollar suit
just arrived in your sixty-six thousand dollar
automobile.

Let me take off
your expensive shoes
and wash your proselytizing feet.

Oh, excuse me, I've shocked
your cultural sensibilities
by threatening to touch you.
Perhaps I should not speak
of love passionate between us,
since you are male
as am I.

When you are female,
would you call your big brother or the
police?

"We give a yearly check
to the Salvation Army and let them
care for the myriad poor,
specialists
that we have all become."

Tell me again
about accepting Jesus
into my heart
and the glorious world
that follows this one
if we are saved once,
regardless
of our daily sins
called destruction of
the physical world
disregard of our

fellow inhabitants
of this spinning
vale of tears
killing life
that can only
be restored in heaven
where non-Christians need not
apply.

All other religious beliefs
to the back of the bus
and disembark
before the gates,
the pearly pearly gates.

God, I know,
of love, demanding
love
Christ,
enlightenment,
light of the world
asks daily
work of love,
to expand our minds,
our understanding,
our dominion
of material existence.

Lately, I fail.
I dream material dreams
of money and material success.
I dream of power.

Next time I'm insulted
in public,
some fool honks at me,
impatient, pushes me aside
in herhis
rush toward material
fulfillment
responds with pointed verbal
insult when I try to be friendly,
God give me cape
and phone booth.

I spring out
rub faces in dust.

God give me millions
from a lottery I never entered.
I dream machines
as big as city office buildings
level mountain ranges
for housing developments.
We all know people
need places to live.

Quiet moments, I see I failed.
That brief moment
I was almost enlightened
nearly steady
in spiritual existence
passed as the silicon carbide
of exigency
abraded away
calmness and spiritual gain.

Oh lord, oh lord,
beam me up
I am lost,
consumed in the frantic noise
of all
whose unbelief
destroys this vale of tears.

Email

I cut my hair quite short
today

I thought
you weren't going to write me
anymore
again

A long time ago
you told me
you like my hair long

It's cold here
Fierce wind blows snow
against my south windows
The outdoor thermometer
says such lows,
you wouldn't want to hear.

I never know
where former friends
have gone
died, dementia,
(can't manage
this nutsy machine
anymore)
(or, "who are you?")
Or just not caring
anymore

Please write me
once more
so I can be the one
who doesn't respond
this last time,
with my short hair,
new shirt,
self-confident smile
in my cracked and
deteriorating
mirror

Love (xoxoxoxo)

One Small Drop

of water
clings to a leaf
imprisms the moon
casts soft colors of moonlight
into the night
gathers molecules
of water from damp air

Fat with intention
it contemplates
the ground below
this last adventure
in this form
end
of individual identity

Ready?
Gathers two more molecules

releases the leaf
leaps toward the earth
toward
Pooled water
reflects
Moon
Sky

Summer Storm

Needles of lightning
embroider the mountain
with a thousand colors
of wildflowers.

Thunder
rumbles the mountain.
Hail mixes with rain,
rat-a-tats
against windows,
bounces from the deck.

Birds dive
sing in wind and rain.

Cloudlings
play riotous hide and seek,
scatter among boulders
on rock ridges,
call me out to play.

Sunshine, Sunshine

(From my song)

Heavy rain cleaned the air
watered the earth
and growing plants.
Morning sun shines
and I'm feelin fine

I gotta go ride my bicycle

Sunshine sunshine
what did you bring me?
Brought you little song to sing
now let it ring;

Birds sing
from the fields by my side
I was headed downtown,
but I think I'll just ride
Ride ride
in the greening countryside.

Sunshine sunshine
what did you bring me?
Brought you a meadow lark
singing on a fence post
while you ride
Brought you a bluebird
flying in sunshine
while you ride

Ride on home
turn the earth
build the soil
sing about the birth
of springtime

Sunshine sunshine
what did you bring me?
Brought you the colors in clouds
in the western sky
Brought you to the end of the day
feeling fine

Sunshine sunshine
now I'm feeling fine
feeling fine
sunshine sunshine
now I'm feeling fine.

Gift

I am given a gift,
late afternoon
and this next morning.

Mornings
I go to the living room,
sit in my corner recliner,
read the news,
comic strips,

weather
forecasts,
analyses,
opinions
on my tablet
electric tablet.
My contact with the world.
The internet breaks
late afternoon.
No contact
with the internet
continues this morning
No news, no opinion,
no forecasts
I am alone,
touched only lightly
by sounds of the world,
whose meanings
I stop trying to understand.

Inside,
I have hungered
for solitude.

I write a poem,
sing a song
I haven't heard.

Quieter time
asserted itself
softer
than news and analyses,
background sounds

The World
retreats
from consciousness

I like it.
I remember
quieter places
I've lived,
quieter times,
and now, I read much
of what I wrote
in those quieter times.

And when it
(too often nefarious
internet)
comes back
I have learned,
hang onto
the internal quietness
remembered
during this quiet time,
have turned again
away from the world
face quietness,
contemplation
solitude.

In Front of the Ice Cream Parlor

12 miles per hour
96 degrees
Black steering wheel
hot as direct sunshine.

The Rockies rise
above
the end of Mountain Avenue.

You eat peach ice cream
at a white metal table
on grey concrete.
We see each other
across black asphalt
and wave.
I circle two blocks,
park.

You throw your pack in back
and climb into the pickup cab.

I ask, "How was the opera?"
"Really good. Really funny.
The nazis tried to ban it
when it first came out,
but they couldn't stop it."

2,700 feet higher, at dusk,
you open the metal gate
under ponderosas.

Cooler air flows across the mountain.
Grey concrete, black asphalt,
peach ice cream
far below us on the plain
opera finished for today.

We find quiet
in the mountain forest
at dusk.
I'm glad
you've come home again.

January 11, 1981

At forty below zero
in our ramshackle house
I stay up
most of the night
feeding wood
to flaming fires
in our three stoves,
checking
every small corner
of our house
for safety
against
uncontained fire.

Two hours
before the sun comes up,
I go down,
crash into my bed
and sleep
like a hibernating bear
like a beaver
like a turtle
like a man
who has stayed up
all night
while Laura gets up
and takes over feeding wood
to our hotly-burning stoves.

This forty below zero morning
coaxes the sun up
over frozen

eastern mountains
deep in snow.

Juniper and Amanda
play beside my bed
so quietly
I, a light sleeper.
Find peace in their
very soft sounds,
sleep deeply
and dream
of life
on meadows,
on mountains,
in our quiet
warm house.

Like Tears Falling on Pavement

Excuse me,
please.
Tears flow down my face,
splash on concrete and asphalt.
I have just come from wild mountains
to living flat
in flat town.

In Wild Mountains
in wild granite stone,
life,
green-leaved bush,
living grass, growing tree.
Succulents grow
from every crack,
from every small pocket
of stone eroded to soil.
Lichen lives
on every surface.

People replaced living stone
with concrete buildings
scrubbed clean of all life.

Bears, elk, deer, mountain lions
coyotes, birds, move with seasons
celebrate Life, celebrate eternity

the force of Life.

Replaced by metal
and plastic
machines
suck life-feeding oxygen
spit waste on stone pavement
spit waste into air
that nourishes the earth
into water
that feeds life.

Excuse me please.
Tears flow from my eyes
splash on asphalt,
on concrete,
tears
as useless
as water
in a world
without life.

Woke Up At Three

Woke up at three,
dark as night,
prayed a while,
thought a while
directed my thought
toward
more understanding
of reality
of God's presence
always with me
and everywhere,

tried to eclipse
errant thoughts
of a strange dream
I just emerged from,
still dripping
cold ocean water,
about a stolen,
very strange race car
driven by my recently-passed
sometimes reckless

friend,
and I,
reluctant passenger,
behind frosted windshield
150 miles an hour
over rough roads
and snow,
errant thoughts
about shiny guitars,
songs they play,
men with blue guitars,
attractive women who fly
through my memories
and thoughts,
green goats.

Listen to me,
rebellious thoughts
I'm trying to work
on salvation.

Maybe
thirty percent of my time
I hold my thought
to spiritual matters
until seven,
when the sun
comes up like thunder
out of a neighbor's roof
across the way
wind in juniper trees.
A far-away train horn
at a crossing
closest sound
we have to temple bells
in this secular,
commercial city.

I go about my day.
Material thoughts
Spiritual thoughts,
blending,
blank
Ah yes,
that's where
I want to go,
blank, blank, blank

and then sensation,
Light, and mountains
and above the mountains,
Light and light
Start here,
With Light
and then
if a goat
a small goat
walks willingly
into light
and water
flowing to light
and my friend,
did he drive to light
Is he walking in light
and light and light.

Woman of Mountain Flowers

Wind blows down from the west
and smells like rain
in rugged mountains.
Canada geese strong on the wing
call in the wind.

Northering snow geese
high against storm clouds
sing wild melodies to dark sky.

Man of mountains walks
beside woman of mountain flowers.

Sagebrush and mountain streams
on steep mountain slope
ponderosa pine trees, juniper trees
lodgepole pines and beetle-killed
lodgepole pines.
Falling ridge
levels to grasses and flowers
on mountain meadow.

Woman and man
smell like clouds, like thunder,
like sage
like mountain flowers in wind

She sings in mountain wind,
"Rain falls down the mountain
and touches a thousand colors of flowers,
odors of flowers, of washed mountains,
of brush, of animals startled by newness.
Wind sings to its mother.
Wind sings to its father."

Wind rattles the shutters and shakes their house.
Rain rattles against their windows.

Woman of mountain flowers,
man of mountains
face each other
under mountain wind.

Touch me.
Hold me close
in mountain storm.

Third Day of Spring

I went out to the Oregon desert.
Sky drifts east.
Soft grey cumulus clouds
big as Oregon towns,
populated by storms of rain
separated by clear blue
rivers of sunshine.

I walked across soft volcanic soil
damp as springtime.
Last year's bleached grasses
pale.
New green grass
busies itself with living
grows
from the base of every clump.
Tiny dicotyledons of green optimism
sprout in open soil
and green moss,
spring upward.

Northwest,
on Shoot Butte,

a twenty-two pistol,
a three-fifty-seven magnum,
and a sixteen-gauge shotgun
pop, roar, and hammer insistently
against late afternoon.

Thirty thousand feet above,
impatient jet transports
noisily suck oxygen to carbon dioxide
every nine minutes
as inadequately-civilized humans
rush toward oblivion.

I carry this advantage of advancing age;
I walked the Oregon Desert
when weeks passed without shooting,
airplanes were rare occurrences,
and sounds of wild animals
were the only sounds I heard
above
the soft passage of my own feet.

Shooters pack their weapons away
in large pickups
and drive down from Shoot Butte
toward an evening in town.
We have a long moment
when only wild animals, new green plants,
blue sky, silently traveling white clouds,
and I own the Oregon Desert.

Meadow larks sing around me.
Quail call softly from hidden gatherings.
A bluebird flies past and stops to sing.
A flicker calls somewhere far off.
Coyotes yip, yip, yip,
break to springtime song.
A rabbit startles away
through green-growing grasses.
Two ravens circle each other
in aerobatic celebration of spring,
high up
in the drifting blue and white sky.
a red-tailed hawk soars
like a small, fast cloud.

Life's eternal power.
fills spring of the year.

Wild animals,
spring plants
and I
build future
summers,
autumns,
winters,
springs.

Two A.M.

The moon drives ragged clouds
west across the valley.
Smoke,
rising from our chimney,
casts a shadow
dancing on snow.

Bears and badgers
salamanders and bats
sleep.
Their dreams echo through the valley.
Freezing mists conspire
where meadow rises to timber.

Voles, deep beneath snow,
listen to moonlight's bright rhythm
on frozen crust above them.

In the timber,
dark moonlit shadow
above white meadow,
coyotes erupt
into cacophonous song,
blend into harmony,
then drop
to brilliant white silence.
Two a.m.

Understand an Edible-Pod Pea

1) I write with a pencil on a yellow pad.
There is no other way
to write a poem about organic gardening.

2) My daughter and her husband grow organic
foods
and flowers in a garden and a greenhouse.
This is their way.

3) Look at seeds.
Can you tell
what the mature plants will look like?
Each plant of each kind
looks like all the other plants
of that kind.
Each plant of each kind differs
from every other plant of that kind.
Their seeds contain their differences
Do the seeds look different from each other?

Hold thirteen seeds in your hand.
See the differences between them.
Identify each.
Plant thirteen seeds.
Watch the plants grow.
Eat the plants.
Take thirteen seeds
from mature plants.
Plant them.
Watch them grow.

4) Brian and Amanda
gave me enough edible-pod peas
to feed an army.
Watch me, everybody
as I become an army.

5) I eat an organic cabbage, raw,
a little each day.
How long does it take me
to eat the entire cabbage?

6) How old is the universe?

A cabbage plant
grows a central stalk for seed
that will fall to soil and begin again.

The universe exists in consciousness.
Each moment, the universe begins.
Each moment,
consciousness seeds itself,
begins again
and encompasses the universe.

7) I can't tell you flavors,
meanings.
Words can't touch a carrot,
a cabbage.
Eyes are necessary,
hands, tongue, nose.
Listen carefully.
Ask it to name itself.

8) After my senses absorb
and my body digests,
I begin to understand
an edible-pod pea

Understanding is seed
for a carrot, a cabbage
an edible-pod pea,
the universe.
From seed, a plant grows.
We eat the plant
and ingest understanding.
It matures, makes seed
to continue each moment,
lettuce, parsley,
the universe.

Unicorn on a Unicycle

I stand at my window
and watch rain.

We've had smoke-laden air for weeks

heavy enough that I haven't gone out
encumbered now by a cold,
watching falling rain.

A unicorn,
Arabian horse size,
but a little bigger,
with longer legs,
rides a unicycle
up the street,
a three-wheeled unicycle,
one wheel atop another wheel
atop another wheel
the top wheel turns the second wheel backward,
which turns the wheel against the pavement
forward,
amazing machine.
I've never seen one like that before,
nor even thought it possible,
red and green
machine
black and white,
orange,
yellow highlights.

The unicorn is white,
with red stripes
where a zebra would show black,
with a silver and gold horn,
shining black hooves,
pedaling rapidly,
greeted the massive garbage truck
whose driver must be looking in the mirror
to be sure he clears the emptied bins,
surges rapidly forward,
and the unicorn pedals up the front of the truck
along the top
and down the back
and away,
and I think the driver never saw it
in the rain, in the greyness of the day,
in the routines of bins of garbage
emptied into his truck

and then placed again down
against wet pavement
by the mechanical,
metal arm

And a hippogriff,
whose size,
with no reference I can cast it against,
I can't estimate,
flies just below clouds,
nearly obscured by shifting mist
of drops of rain gathered fiercely
toward earth,
from that place where atmosphere
above the earth shifts to sky.

Turn day's greyness
to brilliant colors
of legend and myth
of knowledge.

Work, belief, faith

Sun shines above clouds.
In every pattern of wings
angels fly
and every thought
becomes glory
above a woeful moment
of cold, clouds and smoke
garbage.

Unicorn
wings
sunshine
glory of thought
glory
glory

When My Daughter Was Very Young

I said, "Throw me a kiss."
She kissed the palm of her hand,

reared back, wound up,
and let it fly,
hit me high on the cheekbone
and knocked me back on my heels
so hard I almost fell over
stumbled to catch my balance,
and she laughed
bright as summer sunshine.

Whoeee. This day
just cranked up 10 more degrees
brilliance.

These smiles of love for life
might never leave our faces.

White Dog

Neighboring white dog
stands on his brown porch,
backgrounded by a black chair
and some large, yellow, unidentifiable device
his people stored there,
secure in his identity
quiet.

But it snowed last night.
White dog walks down into his yard
and becomes invisible
white against white,
slowly becomes insecure.

If he can't be seen
does he exist?
Barks. Again. Rising into panic,
scrambles back to the porch
climbs up
lies down in the black chair
quiet
waiting for golden sunshine
to melt white snow.

His reality will be evident again
white against green grass
white against brown soil
white against tan fence
quietly confident of existence.

Write, Write, Write

Write, write, write.
Jump up, dance across the rug,
legs wild, arms akimbo,
try to stay nimble.
125 pulls on the rowing machine,
takes too long, but I got to stay strong,
park my glutei maximi,
flexed and exercised,
back in my writing chair,
write, write, write,
jump up and dance wild,
fall down for ten fast pushups,
back to the writing chair.
Serious work calls me there.

Write, write, write.
One essay. 21 pushups,
three minutes dancing,
one short poem, finish this fiction.
One two, bend to my foot.
Three four, out the door
dance on the deck
five six, neighbors might think I'm crazy,
but what the heck
I need this sunshine
like drinking water,
powers my brain, but what the heck
I need this dance, this brief chance
to keep my blood moving
in creative motion of my mind
Creation in my blood,
in rhythmic motion
beating heart, pick up my guitar

I know my songs are different
jar your ear and what you hear
is new to you and new to me.
What does different mean?
Write write write
jump up and dance.
Last chance, sun sinks west,
flaming stone falling home,
sinks,
a turning wheel
beneath this spinning earth
dancing earth
creative earth
last chance for the wild dance
Create epiphany for me, for you.

Dusk.

Dark.

Silence.

Two Great Blue Herons

flew up from Lone Pine creek
and landed in the tops
of pine trees
as I walked along the bank
their heads and long necks
became question marks
silhouetted against raining sky
just above the dark granite ridge.

I thought,
they aren't working
on my enlightenment
and I became absorbed
in the beauty of the birds
in the honor of being allowed
this closely to observe
their blue grey majesty,
highlighted with white
and their wildness
and yet,
hovered mankind's question

asked by all wild species
What are you doing in this world?
for us?
What are you doing for Life?

Winter of Dancing

Mountain wind
blew cold rain
through conifer trees.
Big sedan, rusty and dented,
waddled up my muddy driveway.
Diana called to me
between east wind and west wind,
black hair blown wild in cold wind,
pale, high cheekbones, hawk eyes.
Words rose to the storming sky
close against my mountain.
“Let’s go dancing.”

I said
“Are you outa your mind?
I almost can’t walk
and you want to go dancing?”

She yelled into rain
furiously washing
her words,
“You told me one time
death would be the only thing
could stop you from dancing.”
Fierce wind
bent pine trees away from dark sky.
“You don’t look dead to me.”

She warmed by my stove
while I got ready.
I had said more than that.
I knew she remembered.

As long as I didn’t
come down hard

on my injured leg,
I danced wild,
lost my balance sometimes,
but Diana caught me,
laughed,
“You’re starting a whole new style.
By this time next week,
‘Catch me honey,
I’m headed for the floor again’
will be the rage
of the ridge.”

Very late
I drove to her place
from the bar
in town
where we danced together
helped her to bed
took her babysitter home,
slept on the floor
by her son’s crib.

She was still a little drunk,
in the early morning
She said
“I’ll take you home.
Rain’s turned to snow.
Look. Windy and cold out there.”
Trees bent in snow-laden wind.
“You’re still too drunk to drive,”
I said
I hiked up my mountain alone,
saluted the cold sky
with my thumb.
caught a ride,
built a new fire in my stove,
assessed the damage
I’d done
stomping a wooden floor.

I walked a lonely mountain
that week,
through new

powdery snow,
built muscle and stamina.

I was ready to go
when she came
to get me again,
end of the week.

We weren't lovers anymore.
me busted up
and poverty
helped keep that from starting again.

This love meant more to me.
Through cold
mountain winter,
when I walked
deepening snow,
lonely weeks of pain,
uncertain balance.
She drove up the mountain,
weekends.
Twenty miles up winding road
in falling snow.

We danced wild together
fed each other
love of life
more than
enough to live
and find our futures.

Airplanes Above

Airplane oh airplane, so noisy above,
Gold or silver in color
or vanilla mud,
Who give you permission
to be in my sky?
your noise disturbs
200,000 people at once
and all other life

an elk hears, a bear, a tree,
chrysanthemum.
Robin, worm, osprey.
We tolerate,
knowing no other way
but pilot, but passenger,
owner,
who gave you permission
in your tininess,
to use such a huge part
of sky, of today, of this moment
when continuing normal conversation
becomes impossible
until you completely pass
on your noisy,
stinking
and defiantly self-important way

(and car and train and lawnmower
leaf-blower and fffing and fffing
and ineffable mechanical transportation
or jobs
or games
to us
lives
living quietly
praying for harmony)

Bird of Fire, Bird of Snow

One white winter night,
snowy owl flew mature
from the full moon,
silent as snow,
hunts close above
the western meadow,
white above white snow.

Sun rises from eastern mountains.
Red-tailed hawk,
bird of fire,
born from the sun,
cools its wings
in mountain blue,
screams of fire
high above
the eastern meadow.

White moon sets behind the mountain.
Winter clouds wrap the sun.
Snow on the meadow
is white as winter.

