QUESTIONS ON THE ROAD TO SILVER CITY
(OCTOBER 2011)
**American Flight**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What special name might I call you?

**The Wave-Particle Duality**

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

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

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

Clear spirits transcend.

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

HIDDEN POTENTIAL (FOR ABBY)

Is conventional wisdom an oxymoron?

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

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

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

Why should false dichotomies keep us from finding
The surreal estate of our deepest dreams?
THIS LAST YEAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What will this next year bring?
LETTING GO

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

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

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

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

WORKING THE EDGE

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

Should we live like frogs?

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

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

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

Will you succeed in repulsing the monkey –
This time?

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

Is the stallion you’re patting
Quiet or spirited?

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

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

Does your tiger
Want to be raised tonight?
**Meditation**

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

**Crow Spirit**

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

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

Yes, you.
Please entertain our prayer
And share with us some of your singular wisdom.
THE PARTIAL RENEWAL OF HEH'AKA TAPEJUTA

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

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

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

DIVINE SPARK

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

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

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

Some of those journeys are forever
Etched into my memory.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He Called at 6:24 PM

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

So once he calls…

When the staff shows no shadow, Reset the clock to noon. Change the calendar: Make it for more than twelve moons. The Year of the Elk has begun.