LEARNING TO WEAVE
(MARCH 2012)
Once upon a time,
We spoke our wishes,
Our dreams,
Our possibilities,
In ways that showed them
As they could be.

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

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

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

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

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

**Convergence**

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

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

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

Do not make poems while drying dishes.

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

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

Perhaps it was the Kahlúa she served us
That sweltering day over ice cream
That latently caused my fingers to slip
And an old hatpin to make its mark.
ANOTHER MISHAP DOING DISHES

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

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

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

No emptiness remained,
Only the sparkle of incipient possibilities.

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

DREAMSCAPE (TO ZHU YUFU)

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

STARTING THE DAY

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

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

We were all…
Drunk

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

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

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

Who would drive us home?
Five

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

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

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

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

With such deep tears of sorrow
Splashing over old days of joy
When the darkest night came
Should I have foreseen
The bright tears of joy
Splashing over new days of sorrow?
**RETURN TO THE SHRINE**

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

**Meditation IV**

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

**ON THE DAY FOR LOVE**

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

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

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

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

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

Sing in counterpoint.

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

Sing out with much joy.

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**The Fabric of Their Lives**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Their aversion shapes their legacies still...
  And also puts them at risk.
I walk through the new snow
With a red and black feather in my hair
To recall the day and night
The light and darkness
The birth and death
Two sides of the circle

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

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

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

**A Warm Blue Blanket**

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

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

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

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

**TEACH ME TO WEAVE**

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

Can you teach me to weave
My own refuge from leaves of grass?