Manitoba Dreamin’
(September 2012)
Northwest of Winnipeg

My hopes are dreamed
And tickets bought.
Now I pack my things
Into black bags
To fly away
On falcon’s wings,
Beyond all borders
And across the stars.
Lake of the Woods

The sun was down.
The wind was still.
The ice was thick.

From the rocky shore,
The silent fox noticed two girls in their parkas
Making their way onto the big lake.

He stopped to watch.
They stopped to sit.
He was curious and wanted to approach,
But held back.

The girls lay down on the icy bed
To watch the night sky in all its glory.

The fox knew their mother,
The frail one sitting bundled on the deck.
He sensed their loss
And asked the night sky
That their dreams forever be fulfilled.
To Arcadia

After the ale...

The knight finds a rough mattress
Upstairs at the inn,
Forgets his prayers
And dreams of the white unicorn.
With the rhythm of hoofbeats in his heart,
That one-horned horse with shining eyes
Will lead him to Arcadia.

The interstate driver finds a rough mattress
Off the exit ramp,
Forgets his prayers
And dreams of the leaping black buck.
With the hum of whirling tires in his heart,
That backward-antlered buck will lick his salty hand...
And lead him to Arcadia.
Purple & Pink (at MP 131)

Strange how our minds can wander...

The stiff, bright spikes of hoary vervain,
Bold and purple – oblivious to drought,
Reminded me of blazingstars,
Which reminded me of the Liatris Society
And pink triangles,
Which got me to thinking
About the nature of desire,
And all its puzzles.

Sure is strange how our minds can wander.
The Cabin

The night before the hunt begins
Can be a restless one.
But once the hunt begins,
A satisfying exhaustion rules the night.
Any questions are quickly resolved
Or fade away in the face of darkness;
But for the twice-cursed cabin
Where some strange thing tried to spoil my hunts,
First, by spoiling the dinner,
And, then, by convincing the nightflying leaf
To keep forgetting his song...
In parts, and then...
...Remembering parts
Just beyond the open window
Over and over again.

Now visions of trees laden with ripe fruit,
Of shiny apples, sticky persimmons,
And, especially, those sensuous peaches,
Are luring me back down to that cabin.
Dare I return, clueless?
Meditation VII

Will this be another day
Of endless rumblings
And little to show for it?

Who’s out There?

The heart of the matter is loneliness
The weedy field is better than the clean one
The prairie is better yet

Walk slowly through the beans pulling out the weeds
Pick a path that points towards prairie
If there’s a figure out in the distance
Walk towards it and pick up the pace
My dear friend,
It’s been more than a year now
Since you stopped by to visit.
Words cannot express how much I got from our meeting.
I’m sure you heard the sad news,
So I won’t go into that now.
But so many wondrous things
Have been happening lately
That I thought I should drop you a note.

Last summer, I met an old man next to the wolves’ den,
Who carried your cousin’s sacred staff.
And one fine day,
When the soybeans had emerged,
I witnessed the dancing cranes
And caught Mary’s scent along the flowery path.

In the fall,
A soft bird landed in even softer seeds
In my bedroom,
And then I read all about you at the back
Of my dictionary.
At the hospice — the other day,
I was reading about a grieving girl,
Who lived on a big lake,
And learned why the northern lights
Shimmer so.

Now just last night,
The power of little bits of bark and leaves
In an old plastic bag
Showed me once again
Just how strong your love can be.

Until our next visit,
I send my best regards and much love...
Slow Day

In the narrow, spare room
That sits above the roti stand,
If you open the window to look out,
Not much to catch the eye,
But you might just catch
A little jerk chicken on the breeze.

Head downstairs –
Slip out onto the street.

Do you go to the east,
Down to the curling club
To share a Blue with your buddies?
Or walk to the west,
Down to the subway,
Where all the dark-skinned beauties
In their high heels and black dresses
Are heading home from the office?

No, the subway’s too crowded.

Why don’t you grab a goat roti
And wander down to the tiny park
Behind the old brick church
And feed the doves?
Approaching the Edge of the Dreamscape

After the birdcount,
We hear new calls in the dark.

After a day on the lake,
Our bodies sway with the choppy waves.

And after the ceremony,
The glowing boulder
Is the last thing we see.

Before Daybreak

Fur lining pulled out
Their haven he discovered
Some time after four
To Intensify the Essence of Being Blue

There is a small blue flower
Almost hidden in my new garden.
I do not know its name.
But nameless flowers can have a double power,
As they catch your curious gaze.

These blossoms resemble
The forget-me-nots I once placed on my Grandfather's casket,
And bring to mind the fact
That I carry, within me, his blue-eyed gene, obscured.

And then I think of other dear blue-eyed souls
And how these tiny, fragile stars
Concentrate the sky,
And intensify the essence of being blue.
Picking Wild Strawberries (to Mary R)

Mr Collins set down quite a challenge in class this afternoon,
With his crazy list of a dozen obscurities,
One ten times worse than that “Stump the Chef” challenge
On the radio show when the announcer gives out a strange list
Of ingredients left in the fridge and asks that they all be used in a dish.

So I think back to all the times I hunted for wild strawberries:
To the edges of marshes, the sandy trails, the railroad tracks,
To thinking like a mouse and swatting mosquitoes,
And then to the one warm night when I brought the biggest bowl
Of wild strawberries and a bottle of Asti to her apartment.

And, then, I can see, quite clearly,
That I will hopelessly fail this assignment,
Even if I did notice the kinds of rocks used for the ballast along the tracks
And the heady taste of sweet fruits on her lips.
Trembling Hands

At dusk,
The Queen of the Deer hearing his cries
Stepped out of the dark woods,
Emerging at the pond's edge.

He was a desperate man, at wit's end.
He gave her his devotion for the rest of his days.

And two gifts he received,
His dearest one restored ~
The other, an obligation.
Oklahoma 1920 ≈ Chicago 1955

Oh Uncle,
If there were three men I could bring back
For just one day,
You would be one.

I’d like to spend a few hours with you,
First, as a young man of sixteen,
Walking the post oak woods
On a sunny morn with all the birds a callin’.
What’s your Grandmother taught you
That could prepare you to make such a move?

A land so filled with colliding lives,
Joyful, and deeply tragic, in those years
Before the rains stopped.
Is there no place in it for you?
Do you want to escape,
Like the man from Dog Iron Ranch,
To a world of fame,
To escape the uneasy air (that would explode the next summer)?
Who can take you up to Okmulgee
To catch the train that escapes this world?

But wait, I need a few more minutes –
Let’s get a bite to eat
At that diner over on Clark Street
And sit in the back and talk about your life in this big city.

You’ve been away for so long now.
D’yeever catch the train back home?
Whadda ya think of the Cub’s chances?
And, as a man of fifty,
How are you goin’ about courting her?
A River of Sweet Tears

Color the morning blue and white,
From the sky above and the bluejays in the treetops,
Down to the bright blue gravediggers' tent and its white edging,
And the bandleader in his white shirt and ice blue slacks,
Who led his crew in issuing forth
A blue and white river of sweet tears
That flowed down the hill and through the believers.

That sweet river will flow now,
Wandering eternally,
Never quite finding the sea.
The Birth of Obsession

One day the groundhog,
A creature of habit,
Met the dazzling hummingbird,
A creature of abandon.
They hit it off remarkably well.

She named their love child
(A tiny iridescent ball of fur)
«Obsession».

The father, of course, was long gone.
The Library

The night fell quickly,  
    after the sun slipped behind the high ridge.
The air finally began to cool,  
    and some semblance of peace enveloped the busy town.
The sleep came easy,  
    and any night trains passed unheard.
The mailbox was strangely filled,  
    all names unknown or of the dead.
The kind ladies took  
    all my books and reshelved them in a common library.
The dear souls at first were pleased,  
    and I distraught, fell to the ground crying for all my books  
    and my lost love.
The Muffled Click of His Step

The one who is present  
at all important events  
Stands hidden, unobserved,  
nearly forgotten now.  
Those who knew and could see him  
are mostly gone,  
But shared their secret with one man  
who could understand.  
And their secret vision was saved  
in a new tongue,  
Which may have changed  
how he will be sensed,  
But the muffled click of his step  
can still be heard,  
And he may yet emerge  
from his concealment.
The Cider Song (for Seamus H)

The man, who learned the orioles’ craft
And so deftly wove his dreams and memories,
Was a young man once in love with love
And scrumpy.

Such a bard deserves a raucous song
Done in his honor proudly,
As will be done when the apple sparkle
Inspires the orange and black songsters
In each who knows his ways.
And bubbly strains of tunes and verse
Will resound above the din.
Power & Light

The other day, did you have a small accident?
Did your front, left hoof slip on the slick river rock,
Or was it a crumbling ledge?
Did it pull out your shoulder?

I slept sore last night,
Rebedding three times,
Searching for comfort and willow bark.

Of course, with a sounder sleep,
I never would have seen
That mid night show of power and light
In the distant northeastern sky.
Those flashing clouds put a pocket of my finest opals to shame.