

## Weaving

for Carol on her 70th birthday

She is sitting in the sun,  
in the sunny corner of a house,  
where the windows invite her to turn  
to watch the finches glinting between light and shade,  
to note the sunlight shifting in the recesses of the spruce,  
from noon to mid- and late-afternoon.

Her watching is between times;  
she turns to watch for life beyond the window,  
but inside, in the quiet house, she is working;  
like a heart resting and returning to its work,  
she follows the rhythm of the diastole:  
the hard focussed time and then the quiet  
emptying out while life fills in again.

What is the work to which she turns,  
coming back from the window?

She is weaving.  
Time and again, she parts the threads,  
finding an open path through what seemed impassible:  
the warp, once flat, rises,  
becomes a tunnel of open V's,  
a Red-Sea passage.  
She lifts the threads and passes the shuttle through,  
running threads through empty space,  
seizing the opening for its new, its forming thread.  
Weaving, she works the threads,  
lifting, opening, nudging the new weft into place,  
watching the work  
almost without knowing that it grows.

Even while she is intent upon her work,  
she knows more than her work,  
she knows the flash of gold in finches' wings,  
the cardinal's arresting red,

the azure of the corner of the sky.  
Her fingers carry in them, as they lift and smooth the threads,  
the history of how for 70 years her fingers moved,  
how they learned  
the feel of clay when she threw it on the wheel  
and coaxed it to the shapes she had imagined;  
the feel of soil when she pulled the weeds,  
crumbling the lifted clods and scattering the warm loam;  
the feel, long ago, of her children's hands  
and that emptiness  
when the hands are no longer there.

Turning to the window,  
she rubs her hands a moment  
in the sun, feeling what they know;  
they ache a little from all that history.  
Then she turns back. She is weaving.

Her hands move threads, shuttle, harnesses,  
they comb the tight warp  
sometimes lovingly, sometimes absently—  
they bring her 70 years to this work,  
no two moments the same, interwoven in time:  
full and empty,  
sorrowful and laughing, loving  
and not loving, knowing the truth and  
doubting if any truth ever could be known.  
They bring to this work the history of who she is,  
and in this, in this sunny corner of a house,  
in this quiet work, in this weaving,  
these fingers build a history  
of what she may be in years to come,  
of what unknown work she's yet to do,  
in what unknown places,  
by what rhythms she has yet to learn.