



ELEMENTAL

Elemental is book five of Decapoiema. Decapoiema is a series of 10 works of poetry, each based on one of the elemental numerals 0-9.

Elements have been great teachers for cultures throughout history. Their number and composition may vary but the fact that reality is made up of building blocks is a common truth. The poems in this book reflect the classic elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water as well as a fifth element I call the Other. Whether it be the Greek Aether or an otherworldly spirit, we feel the Other as a piece of everything.

The Earth is our solid foundation, our mother and our growing medium. Air is the world's breath, Fire is the source of energy and Water is a cool sculptor. The Other teaches with a permeating wisdom, the transcendence of timelessness and marvelous mystery.

Each of the chapters in this book starts with a five part poem about its particular element. Each of the five parts of the poem has five sections and each of the five sections has five lines. After this, there are five other poems about the element. Each of these poems also has five sections of five lines.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Contents

Earth

Earth I-V	3
A Burden Borne	9
From Land	10
Yours with my Blood	11
Hymnal	12
A Rigorous Recreation	13

Air

Air I-V	17
Slight Purpose	23
Clear Night	24
Respiration	25
In Passing	26
Patch of Night	27

Fire

Fire I-V	31
This Dust of Us	37
Knelt Down	38
Burning Bush	39
A Nebula Underfoot	40
Heat Steps	41

Water

Water I-V	45
Water Time	51
Physics of Forgetting	52
Sound to Sand	53
Density	54
Wave Crash Climbing Rocks	55

Other

Other I-V	59
Residual Leavings	65
A Form of Grace	66
What Was Left	67
Scripture	68
A Furrows Depth Apart	69

Elemental

Earth

Earth

I

Earth first took breath,
Labored with molten rock
Amid wild boiling seas
Like a dying humpback
Heaving in long low throes.

Cosmic wombs are patient.
Content to wait,
To grow without desire
Until the instant
When in rushed the wind.

After forever,
Earth learned to breathe
With its mind
As well as its lungs.
Spirits rose from the soil.

With this lesson
Came a new begetting.
Every other balance heard Earth breathing.
They stopped, they tuned
Their own breath to its song.

Sand began to slide.
Monoliths rose on the plains.
Canyons tore their robes.
Wild highlands took flight,
Their soar became a reckoning.

Earth

II

So then among the mossy glaze
Of drip splattered green,
Along the bank and thrown
Wildly up the hillside, we ask
Who is the handmaid and who is the lady?

Is beauty a caregiver
To all that passes this world
Or is she the artist?
The one we came here for,
The one to wait upon.

If there were a door
That led behind such things,
Would we see frame and shadow
And our own hopes
Bracing up facades?

Or would the curtain draw
Show form itself as beauty?
Our delving having
Been the light
That made it known.

A thousand years of marking
As servile transcription
Is as a moment bathed in harmony
When beauty melts into Earth
And choices fall away.

Earth

III

Choices too are no more.
For here, where the stone waits.
Waits for a calling eons afar,
A calling to provide a lee shadow
For someone's strain.

The stone's dreams
Are filled with things
That brought it here.
Magma chambers, glacial collapse
And rivers of ice.

The dreams are all
It lays claim to
When a new species
Stops, kneels, picks it up
And holds it in its hand.

For a few soft seconds
The stone knows curiosity.
The course of blood
Beneath skin, the sound
Of more than cold dreams.

When dropped, the stone
Imagines the next move.
Without plan or order,
Without personality,
The no-self listening.

Earth

IV

Listening at the edge
Where we try to sneak up
And catch the precipice unaware.
A nonchalant curve
Belies the roil below.

Slowed to scarcely a pace
Then dropped to its knees.
Supplicants in shadow,
Wondering how to ask,
Anymore, anyway.

The crawl becomes
A penance for fear.
Remembering our steps
Before we rose
To see how far was the horizon.

Fall now to belly.
Prostrate as if in our own cell.
Such fragile creatures
Tied to the tempter
In form if not faith.

The edge comes slowly thus.
Kept down by cracks
That plumb the rock way too deep.
No further. Just to look over the rim
Shatters.

Earth

V

Shatters with a sound
Carried on updrafts
From those below
Living regular lives,
Sleeping normal sleep.

Do they even remember
It was from the earth they sprang?
Seeds carried and cared for
By their ancestors
From across the sea.

Do they know the smell
Of ripe loam covering them?
Nursing them in the warm
And moist bed
Of their first awakening.

Rain wets them still.
The mud grasps at their feet,
Pulling them back to root,
Stopping them slowly
As if they had no worry.

Eat the Earth
When you are weary.
It is dust of your dust
When you are done,
When you come to lie down.

A Burden Borne

Walking back from the shed
Full of wood fresh split
On this chilled hour.
The weight that lades me
Is not of the load.

It presses from layers
Encrusted about my neck
And back and shoulders.
It builds a rounded hunch
Like the branch across the stream.

The arch where mist
And spray flare up
To freeze and freeze again.
So the limb, its mantle the ice,
Bows in reverence.

This is the pattern.
Earth's cast up respiration
Clings to my limbs.
A rime of spores and dust
Builds its flesh upon my bone.

It is the vapor on the air.
It is the gasp of a step
Rising from the forest floor.
It is my cloak of veneration
As I pass through holy places.

From Land

Land falls in layers.
This one heavy, another light.
In and out of awareness,
Alert to catch a dying hawk
Yet caught off guard by the dawn.

Startled from its trance in time,
It shields its eyes
With the opaque hand
Of a mount that seems
Risen up just for this.

Awareness of land hears cycles
Born not of Chronos or Chaos.
Sensing, but speaking not
In patterned language.
A receiving never random.

Learn this says land.
Become the watcher,
Listen from inside out,
Leave space unwoven
Among your expectations.

Readiness of land is a fleeting companion
Sitting in still attention.
Thoughts fall, fall again, then gone.
In the empty comes
An unannounced tap.

Yours With My Blood

The rocks, so cold
Their vapors hang them over
Exhaling the night.
Colder still, the black that holds
A thousand words that beg us drink.

Rocks became our first guardians.
Amulets soaking us in.
In them we dare be bold.
In step and rise, to stand and peer
Over the highest ridge.

Now we sit
Safe in the cleft
That dares us fly.
Meditate on lost things
And you may come to them.

So then is known
Our new guardian
Will not be of this cold
But will beat with blood,
Yours with my blood.

In blood, the lover's stream,
We are closely held
By a look that takes all care.
We are so dearly paused
When a found one comes the way.

Hymnal

Rusted spades break and turn the earth
Chanting holy, holy, holy.
Picks and sledges raise
Apparitions in the dust,
Settling like incense vapors.

Beads sweat out and slide,
Healing oil for consecration.
Air spreads like a robe, bringing bread to the table.
Seeds and withered shoots
Lay their bodies for communion.

If there be no place without Presence
Then every act is worship.
Every life becomes a mediator
Ever atom of matter
Becomes the Urim and Thummim.

In losing awe
There comes a weariness,
There comes a branch
In the lingering ache
Of entering cathedrals.

A balm for the taking
Lies all around our isle
Waiting for hands to dip.
Slice open a grain.
The scent will carry back to creation.

A Rigorous Recreation

I go to the sea to partake
Of the myth of eternal return.
Inhale and exhale of water spirit
My inner slumber
Stirs and reincarnates.

The land however,
The rock, the earth, the mountain
Is food of a different harvest.
A different hand on the till
Than the one on the net.

I walk and work
And heave and pant
To drink of its changing.
I am every footfall.
I am every parcel.

I am every cleansing.
Not the ones on the edge
That follow the wave wash
But the scrub that breaks
From the mountain's own skin.

I rub my stains against its pumice.
I lay my aches
On its bed of basalt
I cut deep with obsidian glass.
So dark, so cool, such shine.

Air

Air

I

A stolen scent,
Too late the theft was caught
To keep her from walking in
On the overturned bowl.
Smell is a talisman for memory.

A seed of panic digs its nails beneath her wall.
Fear that the lids on the jars
Of her preserved hours
Would lose their sealing kiss
A breach of air to start the chain.

But that remained a dormant dread.
For there were no tears
From her watering can.
It was then they cried,
“She is complicit in her own loss.”

But she was awake at the watch.
Sleeping only when spirits entered
To plant trinkets to distract her
From nurturing those things
She held so dear.

As abettor of her own past's decline
She held a thing or two for its restoration.
Minding no other business
But honoring the memory
Of why she first came to earth.

Air

II

An egret beats its wings
Low across the lake
A rising cream separating
From this morning's bowl,
A chalk run on films of algal dust.

Now we take up that rise
Away and across,
A skimming of the line
That keeps the pact
Between air and water.

This bird now stands
On the far shore.
Making himself into a woven shawl.
A changeling come
To keep us from the cold.

A black hawk now lifts
And dips his head
Then dips one wing.
A bank of longing
Then out to meet the sun.

Our heads are now aloft.
The coming weightlessness
Carries the sky to our room.
Sleep, and the flight that follows
Folds our wings in supplication.

Air

III

Leaves begin their descent with a hesitation
That belies how they come to us.
An ointment dripping down
As a wax of forgetting
On the scars the summer chose to leave.

From the start
Such nursemaids have trailed
Just a few steps off.
Daubing with handfuls of breeze
Like a cool sponge for fever dreams.

Vaccinating against our fate
With a serum drawn
From the dawn's plasma.
A deep watch at bedside
All through the night.

This began with the void
Laying light on our lips
Like manna gathered
Under the dew that forms
When hope passes by.

It is the chilled rim
Of the bowl left out
In the night by the door
To catch those things
We refuse to desire.

Air

IV

Blue awoke today.
Stretched out across the sky,
Wrapped itself
Clear around the back
Then again, over and over.

It grew strong
Breaking the crest.
A startled flock on the lake
Rose to taste it
With every beat and glide.

Their mind drifts
On the rising vapor.
Fleeting thoughts coalesce
Into mounds and wisps
And thunderstorms of faith.

Clouds are bestowed
A blessed taxonomy.
The tongue wraps around
Like the eye tracking
Their shifting morphology.

The ear hears
In the names of the sky
Energy and transience.
A night with the promise
Of a lover's touch.

Air

V

The distance between the in
And the exhale
Is oft forgotten in the careful measures
We carry out
In wandering through the day.

Filamentary slices of going
And coming in directions
Receding and projecting
From our room
In the house of rest.

A line connects
The sub-beat of our heart
To the point where eternity pivots.
It holds us slightly bowed
Before taking up the dance.

Each refracted break in a star quiver,
Each pulse of sound that lays
On the edge of a leaf.
Why do we withhold ourselves
From points so near our presence?

Are they too much
For us to bear?
We are inured to a paler beauty.
Calm when breaking waves are needed.
A nova to shake every cell.

Slight Purpose

Our ascension comes on those days
When the air tastes like mountain water.
When the light comes down
As if poured from the golden basin
Kept on Aphrodite's nightstand.

Days when our breath
Is as real as the sweetness
Of a scent from our youth
And anoints us with the grace
Of the moon's sacred glow.

What is the purpose of things so slight?
If we were in a daydream
They would pass unnoticed
And yet they fall.
They plant themselves in bits of time.

Time when the day has meaning
Only in its dawn
And those who walk therein
Take their cue from the moment
When color returns from some retreat.

Washing us with newfound hues.
Massaging places
Where we store regret.
As we rise, we take our glimpse
Its imprint keeps us.

Clear Night

The moon arcs an arm over the ridge.
There is no bathe or glow this night.
It is too crisp for abstractions.
Only the ricochet of photons
Glancing off trees.

By the time they reach this canyon
Down below the normal limit of such reactions
Their agitation has fed upon itself.
So it takes a moment for our eyes
To adjust to their vibrato.

Now they enter.
Through our pupil's wary lens
Across the retinal plane
To stimulate, each their own
Long waiting impulse.

Perhaps this what the wise ones mean
When they say the world is too beautiful.
How we shy from the light.
How we fail to be coincident with it all
And stay in the shadow lest we drown.

Keep your glance.
Keep it for the instant
Where skin dissolves
And blood and sinew
Take their draw.

Respiration

The stitch in my side comes when I first notice
I haven't breathed like this in years.
Day upon day of listening
And getting in line for things
But not a point where self was sapped of strength.

I lay where armies once assembled.
Carts had once been summoned
For transport away and back
But now just a short run
Singes my lungs.

I lead to a place on the webbed map of falling fibers.
From the shedding coat of Ursa Major.
Awakening extends hands to hold suffering.
To turn it over and fold it as a gather
Pulled close lest it drag the ground.

Discontent is familiar with normal routine.
A companion in and out of poorly lit doorways.
The sun's dive into its solstice well is nearly complete.
Breathing comes. First labor, then laving
Then startled by ego's own weight.

How light it is to dissolve
And let saturation's current carry.
Even the heavens stand aside.
Even the sages sound trite
When sweet air breaks our fast.

In Passing

I walk into air
That lifts and toys
With pulsating pollen.
Air that I once
Thought was empty and clear.

Air that now beats
In an ever shifting chamber.
I pass through and
Feel like I'm parting
A sea of life blood.

I walk into your air.
It mingles with mine
In twists and darts.
I try to pass through
To more demanding things.

But I can't go on.
A strand of your air
Has snagged a piece of me
And though it has no weight
It will not be broken.

Still I can't go on.
I feel my own weight
Carried on your wake
And my own blood
Coursing into yours.

Patch of Night

Your star,
The one whose light
Snuck up behind me
One warm evening
Years ago.

This star of yours
Lies in an obscure corner
Of the sky that often
Is overlooked by the lenses
Scanning night after night for some sign.

But those who gaze heavenward
With mouths slightly open
And blood heated by desire,
They are the ones
Drawn to this patch of night.

They enter a bit wary.
They may float for awhile
Or sit and stare
As they take their leave
Of the day gone before.

They talk of things
That now may be.
They call to one another
With a whispered voice
Like that of a chanting hum.

Fire

Fire

I

How hot must they have burned,
Those who cared not for time.
Only the flame of this,
This here, which held no promise.
Only the same grave as their oppressors.

Yet still they burned against the dark.
Against the stone wall.
That wall of other
Frozen in time and air.
So cold they had to stoke themselves.

How could they measure
Love of one against the other?
How could they know such a thing?
They could only hold the question
Of every generation.

They watched their skin
Fall off in ashes.
Drifting in and out,
Planting the ground where they walked
With seeds of their burning.

Silt washes year over year.
Moss stakes its claim.
Foundations crumble to farce.
Do we remember how to burn?
Do we even know the reason for fire?

Fire

II

A tribe of migrant sparks
Were carried to this place
From north of the river
Many years ago
When a burned out fir gasped and fell.

The tree's weight was no longer balanced
Over the char's fiery digestion.
Scarred from a flame
That traced its roots
To the strike of a static charge.

A strike when the ions
Of ancient chants
Filled the air.
A cloud passed through.
A modern cloud with a cynical lining.

Sparks now camp for the night
At the edge of a field
Where grasses wait.
Their seeds a single
Destructive purge away.

Away from carrying on the race.
One spark rises before light,
Moves like a dragonfly.
Dancing on the razor edge
Of a brittle blade.

Fire

III

Soon, cold storms will return
And this dead layer
Of sad air will be shed.
Not with a conjured whirlwind
But a still, sure scouring.

Do not wish for the heat to end
When you feel it hang on
With a last breath
In this latent spell
When the autumn fruit is finishing.

For you already know
It will come to an end.
To know a thing
And wish for it too
Is not very sporting.

So sweat while you can.
Fullness brings its basket,
Careful to spill
A handful here and there
For your gleaning.

In this feeling, be immersed.
Hold this heat
To the very last.
Hold your breath
As close as you can.

Fire

IV

Startled in the stagnant air
Of a late afternoon
By a hound at the heels
Of a carefully crafted walk
In search of a phrase.

The pursuit is surely on.
A rounding up
Of a scattered herd
With an almost begging pant
For someone to write its word.

Those lines act as if
They wrote themselves.
Dripping down smooth
Like rescued honey
From a dissolving comb.

They cut and stitch the flesh
Where ache rends this earthen cloth.
Drying the small pools
Under the kneelers.
Those who have spilled themselves.

As they band to pray,
They till the ground outside the door.
Too shaken to grip the pen.
They dream of seed
And black ink wept onto an open hand.

Fire

V

A brokenness winds its way
Along the silent valley
Tracing remnants of trails
Hewn by the restless ones
Cast out by our ancestors.

I know they saw something
On the edge of their lives
That felt like fire,
That felt like God.
I know they could not contain it ever.

A brokenness opens the door.
Listening for a breath
In every room.
A breath that burns
With the scent of yearning.

Brokenness wants us to know
How misunderstood we are
When we look out
Through its cracks
To the first sign of fire light.

None of us are ready
When such a light arrives.
None have skin so hard
It does not burn
In the flaming day.

This Dust of Us

Our image is tracked
By the silver lens
Of the moons flame.
Its eye sends our way
A fiery beam.

So clear is the shadow
We leave on the hillside.
It has no dark,
Only an ashen glow.
As if our souls had been singed.

We do not block
The moonlight.
We absorb it,
We pass it through,
We leave our trace.

When we leave this vale
We stir up
With our steps
A bit of this
White dust of us.

It is our incense
For the grasses.
Bowing and rising in prayer.
Incense for the moon,
For the fire light, for the shadow.

Knelt Down

Walking beneath a coal and ash clouded sky,
Thankfulness forms a manifesto
In the damp and the chill
That had kept to itself
In a place that rejected such cries.

Breath gives thanks
To the lungs careful warmth.
A brush of alive therein.
Leaving thanks in death's rale.
Gold and crimson have not gone in vain.

Light gives a simple bow
To refraction, splitting it asunder.
Casting color over my eye's fertile soil.
Water finds grace the only thing
At the bedside near the edge.

Flame lays gifts of thanks
Just above the candle
Lit for one more day,
One more way to see
What we bring.

Barter with the cosmos is a fool's game.
No deal struck ever as planned.
Gratitude is the tender of honor
In the marketplace of mystery
Where buyer, by seller redeems.

Burning Bush

Grey road, gilded halo
On a maple crown.
The sun embers the leaves
So that a draft in passing
Could ignite them.

Flashed and fallen,
Seared with a scar
Running clean down its back.
The fire rescues you
Though it burns only your eyes.

Rescues you from the bridge
That is your life from before
On the grey road.
Rescues you from the canyon
Where birds no longer fly.

Take a smoldering coal home with you.
Keep it in a pot in your room.
Break it like loaves and fish.
Scatter it from your door into the street.
Rain it from your roof into the gutter.

It rescues you still.
Bring it to those who hide.
Stir its ash into the river where they wash.
Plant it under every tree, every foot.
It is your lamp come at last.

A Nebula Underfoot

I quake with the ribbons
Of a brush with fire
Where numberless cilia stirred.
A vapor trail
In our shared ether.

Each strand is joined
To a sister star consuming itself.
Its life an eternal death pyre
Offered in unwavering sacrifice
On a long forgotten altar.

Ash drifts with a purpose
That lovers may recognize.
A long slow arc
Carried on the tailwind
Of the stream of the cosmos.

Threads of energy
Are thus transported
Among fellow travelers.
A centering is found at the base
Of a rock that reminds us of our illusions.

Far more fermented fruit lies
In the barrel nearest home.
Far more mysterious climes
On the windward slope
Where solar gales make land.

Heat Steps

Dry heat comes as
An unexpected turn,
But there it is.
Wondering where it had
Misread the map.

Are forty days and nights
Of drenching down
Enough to keep
Our skin, our hearts
From cracking?

Are forty years
Of storing love
Enough to hold back
The scalding heat
Of this night.

Soon the heat tires
Of this foreign place
Moves on to familiar ground.
Every skin relaxes
Releasing its held breath.

In it all the heart watches
Remembering past flames,
Remembering long droughts,
Remembering that hoarding
Is not its nature.

Water

Water

I

Follow the crack, it was written
And you may find God.
For the crack remains true
Without thought of straight.
No care for plumb or level.

The crack listens to its own gravity,
Feeling the pressure
Of a thousand regrets.
Falling ever so slowly
Along the path of least remembrance.

Who among us first thought
To build with straight lines?
Did we so soon forget
Where we lived?
Did we think so low?

The river reminds
It takes only, and all
That is given.
A well sprung crack
That we sit beside.

Watch the whole, yes,
But watch too every instant.
Every malleable moment,
Every crack in the lens
Of mist and spray.

Water

II

Wrap your arms around
The thoughts of yesterday
And see if you can
Pull them completely
Into who you are today.

The stream looks the same
Yesterday, today and tomorrow.
The flow remains
A steadfast companion
But the water does not.

Stand on a rock
In the midst of your mind's river.
The water approaches,
The water remains,
The water passes by.

Sit on that rock
Where you want to be,
Your feet in the flow.
The icy pull
Of a primal thought.

Can you dissolve into the water
And remain carried outside of time?
Which is your truth?
The world watching water
Or water passing through the world.

Water

III

Runoff from the storm
Flashes the arroyo inside.
Plowing canyons of collected days.
Silt of forgetting, layer upon layer
Rides the earth tide, sure demarcations of loss.

The churn subsides, fossilized thoughts
Are trapped by an afternoon's neglect.
If only the dust
Had been brushed aside each day.
But each deposit has been ignored.

Down the road, an expedition camps.
An archeology of remembrance
Digging shards to be kept under glass,
Studied for signs,
Watched for any movement.

A lone shovel breaks from the group
On hands and knees.
It moves over the rocks
Crawling from mound to mound
Like a wanderer scouting for truth.

No longer does it seek
Only shards and scraps.
It relishes the cool of the soil
Clawing with fingers happy to embed
It beneath their nails.

Water

IV

Caught, not trapped,
I dip my hand
Into the sea that
One day will receive
Each of us as drops.

Moist with the lives
Of those gone before
I watch the water's film
Dart and dash, then crawl
Down my fingers.

A quicksilver of spirit
Becomes a glass.
In its eye,
A form of myself reflects
Like the sun on a wave.

I am inversed
In this concave recess.
A bowl that begs me
Draw nearer still
And right myself.

It can do naught
But show us
Itself already in us.
It is companion
When all have flown.

Water

V

Spring rain scatters
Like a dusting of seeds.
They sprouted above
They fall now
To give themselves up.

Strewn far and wide
Their cast has a
Randomness that could
Only come to pass
If they had sown themselves.

We toss ourselves
From our dawn
Across each day
Hoping to land
On one another's soil.

If a seed of me
Comes to rest
On your acre
Or one of yours
Be found on mine

We shall embed
And take up the watch.
We shall root
Letting nothing
Deny our generation.

Water Time

If we were to walk
Along the stream
In time with its flow.
If our cadence
Could mirror its cascade.

Would we feel what it feels?
Would the stones
Beneath our feet
Press hard, becoming
Full indentations in our skin?

Would the sun
Pierce us completely?
Refracting in ever quickening waves
Until its light
Becomes our own.

Would trout and ouzel
And daring fir roots
Feed on us?
Drawing us down
Into their tomorrows?

Would the water remember
Its eternal imprint on us?
Or splash in such a way
That catches our self
And fades it away.

Physics of Forgetting

There is a corner of the world
Where ice is no longer cold
And vapors no longer wet
And snow has forgotten how to melt
And dew has lost its kiss.

Here the ice gives itself up
To the touch and feel
Of whatever rests upon it
It even once became
The warmth of the south wind.

Though now a chameleon,
Its cracks and crystals
Still may bring a chill
When your eye catches them
In the dawn light.

The wind that blows
Across this changeling ice
May even reach this place
And stop to cool your brow
If you remember hard enough.

Everyone has such a place.
A corner of their world
Where nature ceases to be
And everyone has a believer
Who can't bear to let that happen.

Sound to Sand

A sound so soft and low
Hovers before my ear,
Waits, then darts,
Then waits again
As if it knows the answer.

Like a wary hummingbird
Assessing its next move
In the improvisational stutter steps
Played out in the thrust and list
Of its pulsating wings.

Enter then, I seem to ask
And see if I can detect in you
A washing or a piece of me
From a year when listening
To such as you came naturally.

I enter then, it seems to say
And from within
I now can see
The angle of the light
That colors your blood.

Now, I don't hear it so much
As it lays its body on mine
Like a piece of arctic ice
Flown across the world
To melt into a desert dune.

What we see and hear
Eludes us most times
As though it senses
We're best left with
Some things in the dark.

Beneath the ocean
Lie trenches deep.
More mysteries per fathom,
More concentrate of waiting things
Than all so far revealed.

Sea canyons are lines of a different kind
Warping the world in jagged latitude.
Earth's flesh fissured by magma capillaries.
Warped isobar grids, the sky's topology.
Rivulets tracing ancient contours.

Perhaps the universe
Is indeed made of string.
Quantum quivers and cosmic rays.
Threads that dart,
Their wake lapping our hair.

On random days,
One such string
May veer in sync with your turn.
It may pierce you with a thread
That braids you to its garland.

A spray shoots out
A few feet from below the lip.
Its only ambition
Is to caress the face
Of the rock that ejects it.

As it drips the rock,
It settles back
In a bowed devotion
To the call, to the ebb,
To the downward draw of the sea.

The sea that was born
To prepare and accept
The mist's aspirations.
A pure clean bowl
Absolving it of all obligations.

In our quest to see
We call our own selves.
We reach ever upward.
We climb the wall
That throws the spray.

Our yearning keeps us thirsty.
We grab the ledge.
We save our letting go
For a day when readiness
Drapes like a cloak of comfort.

Other

Other

I

To live, stretch the fabric
Of morning to the point
Where the only options are
To snap, then free fall
Or be completely consumed.

An elastic film
Lies like a canopy skin
Over the intersection
Of this day and every eternity.
Hear the sound of echoed calls.

A scripture told by water.
Sacrament of scraps and crumbs
Arranged on a plate in the same way
You saw as a child,
That day you first saw ache holding beauty.

Some look for none-ness
Alighting on a shallow patch of empty
Where lovely ones once rested,
A wayside for travelers.
You are all my kin.

Many paths to one moment.
Clothes worn to meet the day.
We dare, we pray, we toss aside.
We seek no meaning
But stop to gather on the way.

Other

II

They held on in the old ways.
Ways that dug into
Every bare piece of skin.
Wedged not in empty space
But in the tightest crevice.

The one found between the heart bone
And the ligament that stretches
As far as the mind's eye
Can see through the scope
Made of freshly ground glass.

They calcified there for years.
If I were to pry them off,
So much mass would be cast
That the earth may no longer
Be pressed to my feet.

My rising is not smooth
When at last I'm released.
I never had a birthright
To anything more
Than the rise itself.

It seemed but a moment
Thought it stretched itself
In every dimension until
It could hold every last one
Lying in its own fold of time.

Other

III

If it had a beginning
It could no longer speak it.
When origins arise
They send it to rocking
Like a wounded child.

Lost in a trance
Of birth upon birth.
All that is said for sure
Is that it won't go
With them to that place.

Instead, it sees the ghost
Of things to come.
Oh, these fit more easily
In its palm,
Are softer on the skin.

Through these waters
Into the lower decks
Of the draft that sails today.
A bed awaits,
The rest before the storm.

An endless spirit then
Is what it comes upon
When light completes its rounds.
Diving, it swims the current
Gliding on the wake of time.

Other

IV

Intersecting arcs cross hatch,
Warped by moist morns.
They weave the before and behind.
Each embrace segmenting
The world to their sight.

Kaleidoscoped fragments
Are pieces for picking.
Puzzles of perception,
Shards scraping ash clad flesh,
Missing tiles in walls of light.

From within, the view tells nothing.
It breaks where a line
Of sight with least desired angles
Hewn from the bark of the sky
Waiting for the light to turn.

A drop waits on the end of a leaf
On the end of a runner.
It knows that if it falls
The splash would break
Into the next dimension.

Waves would blur the frame.
Winds would stir the scene,
Would shake its grains
And this, nature's mandala
Would be swept away.

Other

V

A color not seen before
Runs along the ridge
Darting side to side
Like a phantom
Who tries to hide in the trees.

A warmth that once
Kept its place, now seeps
Through pores and dissipates.
It wills itself an offering
To the least of the children.

Thoughts put to bed years ago
Stir beneath the debris
Like a sentient fungus
Breaking the soil
Of our minds forest floor.

Mystics walk among us,
Their monastery walls crumbled
By incantations fed to them.
They intone their hope
All through the night air.

It runs down walls.
It soaks the floors.
A sound not heard before
Carries everything it touches
A raft to bear the world.

Residual Leavings

Dawn recedes again
Into its well-kept armoire.
A sheltering place
From the restless rumblings
Of waking hands.

Those who chance allows
To witness this retreat,
Small, slow, watchful backsteps,
Feel the scales of self
Shedding at their feet.

The cold, the hard,
The encrusted ones
Can only accept their change
When they lay exposed
To the air of descent.

Time may bring enough dawns
Or some other gentle prying
To litter our floor with a bed of flakes.
Slowly they harden,
Each one hued like a snow crystal.

They layer themselves like
Otherworldly nacre.
One day we kneel and it holds us.
What we once were
Becomes our prayer bench.

A Form of Grace

There is a form of grace
That is neither sought nor granted,
But exists in the ether
That emanates from the collective of souls
Downriver from this earthen encampment.

It rises like a morning vapor.
It was breathed in by our mothers.
It passed umbilically
Just behind our imagination.
It is ours and reminds us some days.

A slight subsiding in a despair.
An infinite lowering of our horizon.
A point that flies off before us,
Carrying a line of regret to a far star.
A touch that awakens us on our way home.

It walks us to our station
And when all is quiet, it sighs.
Its sound a reminder that fear and wrong
Were buried deep beneath this riverbank
The day we first took breath.

It brings us branches and leaves,
A hovering offering over our altar of grass.
It has a sound like the purr of the moon
Come through our dawn window
To rest at the foot of our bed.

What Was Left

If a blade of grass
Was the only window left for us
When the children of Zeus ran across this land
Throwing off all they had created
And all that was created for them.

Leaving on the other side
With only their bodies
And a desire to stay.
Would this blade be dear to us?
Washed with a tender hand each day.

Let me lie down in this grass.
Let it be my wallow
Let its fracture
Run all the way up my spine
Thinner with every branch.

The membrane between this world
And the place we call the other,
Like our lives, stretches thin.
It gives itself to translucence
If our look falls a little less sharp.

A dervish leaf caught on a spider's web
Twirls in ecstatic prayer.
A trance of release hides the attachment.
Once we pilgrimed to sacred places.
Now we just raise our eyes.

Scripture

The time it takes to write one word,
If it be the word that scratches the door
'Til tomorrow lays ajar
And an amber shaft refracts
To and fro in the melting dawn.

Heaven turns on its axis once more
Hosts of angels see
The universe rise and set.
Each point of cosmic dust aglow
With the recital of its liturgy.

The word takes the dust as communion,
The consummation of form.
It shifts on the line
Where it was written,
A fault crack in conviction's crust.

There is a place where words fall
From their sheer weight
Or from arthritic joints.
Those who bend low to help them up
Are bearers of all to come.

They lift the word.
They write it once again.
An ode held in a single stroke,
A catch of a call,
Black marks that etch the sky.

A Furrow's Depth Apart

The quests that once
Brought low our heritage
Have settled into excursions for supplies
That if we revered the road
Would sustain us.

Would take us off
The life support of seeking
Receding to a less arduous route.
Returning to the place where
We have gifts held for us.

Faces have trouble turning
Away from our reaching
But once it was not so.
Again it may not be
If they believe prophetic bones.

Sitting at the foot of the stairs
On a rug braided
With golden strands
Retrieved from wings
That flew too high, too far.

Warm air collects from the vent behind
Gathered in jars from
Yesterday's panting runners.
Opening beneath us, they rise
Like invocations for our bidding.