



NOVEMENTO

To Sherry

Introduction

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

Novemento traces its origins to the time when we first noticed that our wedding day was 09/18/81. The month is the nine, the day is its double and the year is its square. This was our first indication that we would be followed quite closely by this number. Throughout the years, nines have been a continuing reminder of the things that brought us together in the first place. They have kept us constant and at the same time they have been the source of our reinventions. All the while, we have collected mementos of the novem.

Novemento is a love song and a love story. It is a narrative where the memories of nine chronicle our years and weave themselves in and out of our lives. It is a tale that tells of where imagination can lead and it is a tale of things that go beyond our ability to imagine. It is a story that takes destiny and folds it in upon itself, curves it until it catches its tail, giving our hands and hearts the same weight as the fates. In these nines, we shape our world and by it we are shaped, both with the same measure. From this harmony comes the rain of wonder that falls around us every day. Novemento is a recording of a few moments of that precipitation when we stopped to pay attention.



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1-9

The lines of our lives play out like a verse in a
scripture too sacred for holy script.

A chronicle of dreams dared, a tracking in the
journals of those called to watch.

Called to record the scene when mortals meet, rising
to believe and bending to listen.

They fall like lines of a poem where meter melts and
drips,

In the light that twists its way in, parting the air of
our hold.

They elongate and turn and layer in the diaphragms
of monks.

They rise and crest and rise again in the cries of
babes.

They stretch like a thread of our own becoming.

They coil beneath the pillow prepared for our rest.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A thought formed in the days just prior to our birth.
Rather than being spoken, it came to rest in the
marinade of starlight.
If our coming together was chance, then this
thought was our cards.
Held for the play of the hand that had sat and
waited for our fate's illumination.
If our coming together was simply a matter of time
and truth,
Then this thought was our crisp clarity, distilled by
ten thousand nights.
Either way it was an act of daring that bore the
thought to our listening.
Drove it down to the cistern we kept in store as a
font.
A bracing shower for things that would find their
way in us.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I have been to your places of formation and you
have been to mine.
When I sat on a hay bale out west, beside a square
of irrigated false green amid the dust.
My twelve year old wonder conjured up your image
lying in heartland grass.
You scanned the clouds, four days prior they had
passed me over, hoping for notice.
Scanned them for some sign that someday your
world would catch up to your imagination.
I sat and chewed on a piece of hay, as dry and sweet
as an old tender memory.
In the hay, I tasted the pie you had snuck a bite of
after lunch, flakes and fruit.
I kicked the end of the untwined bale, it fell within
range of a horse's stretching mouth.
I knew then that one day you would be close enough
to reach through the barbed wire.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

A day, a month and a year were our only clue to the
nine gates of heaven.

It fell our way from a stretch of sky unclouded by
our plans and our premonitions.

How else could it come but from above, how else
could it approach but by chance?

When I first caught the double, then the square, I
knew mere calculation would leave me forlorn.

Our nines were of another numbering, one whose
cipher was its own reflection.

When your steps pass beneath the keystone bearing
one of these hidden portals,

I find myself emerging from another gate directly
opposite to yours.

Drawn and leveled by the same hand that trued up
the gates alignment.

A channel carved on high, granting free passage to
celestial light.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

You paused under the eave of the first gate to take
stock of your heart.

The rain had mostly shed, it was not the soaking
kind. You brushed aside one damp strand.

I waited outside the gate on the far frontier, the one
called eight.

Parched in mouth and mind, making my body a thin
leaf.

Your arm pressed the door, it gave way as if gravity
had turned on its side.

I squatted, back pressed to the gate, legs taut with a
cautious strain. I watched the door fall to dust.

From above, the line between us as we entered,
though fine and straight, seemed infinite.

We thought not to scan the horizon, but kept our
eyes fixed on this line.

Eight bells raising one note, the days were in no
rush.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

Later that life, we stood again outside the wall where
vines hid the stone's intentions.

We opted, this time for entry, for completion, as if
such things were our choosing.

You went to the gate etched with two, believing that
in a pair,

A single iron would be forged, fired by lungs
expelling years of holding tight.

This understanding of yourself in another had been
yours from the womb.

My stab at the fullness of number brought me to the
seventh gate.

Trying hard to convince myself that I could make
out the wholeness of civilization,

In the organic runes written by the oak grain of the
decaying frame.

Our choices lay again at opposite poles, but we were
young and took up the trek.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

In our thirty-sixth year, the world of our keeping let
us in on a little secret.

One that we had been acting as if it were so, but had
yet to come to the stream to drink.

Walking streets, looking for shadow lines we may
once have left as a clue for our future selves.

Believing we were not far from the spring of hearts,
the source of all epiphanies.

On the third dawn, the light became our guide, not
to alleys where dreamers had scrawled,

But to the old city wall to show us where we had
entered and would enter again.

The third gate on the east, and its double, the sixth
on the west gave us passage,

But the papers granting entry were of our own
hand, stamped with hope's seal.

On the sixth day we left, the taste on our lips and
the heat in our veins.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

The fourth and fifth gates, who would sit as
companions in a linear world,
Had to stand to full height so their lines of sight
could crest the planet's arc,
Rising in the expanse of wind and dust that tried to
keep them from our recognition.
It may remain even so now, had we not remembered
we had stored at the bottom of our bags,
A scope holding a glass that had been ground with
finest paper in the earliest of hours.
This scope could magnify the truth of a thing, spirit
light refracting through its non-Euclidean prisms.
You and I lifted the lens to an eye at the same
hesitant moment.
When focusing through a new dimension, the period
of adjustment is not timed.
It fades in and out with the frequency and pulse of a
heartened rhythm.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

We came upon the ninth gate a few moments apart,
with steps too light to scuff a sound.
Unaware that where an opposite gate was now
expected, with this one there was nothing.
This was our primer, to learn that it would be the
same with us. We were to be, or not at all.
If we opened that gate at all, it would be flung, there
was no ajar.
We had no gradient in our measure, nothing that
would stand in compare.
Fullness, being a form, does not describe the ninth
step that took us off the edge,
Into the nothing, where we were voided, so that we
could become.
Nine times anything led us from that point on,
separating demons from angels.
Removing stones only to lay them again, turned on
their side.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 **0**
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

10 - 18

My spirit shadowed yours from the dawn that first
spoke your name,
And yours shadowed mine in the reaches that lay
just there.
We bode our time as each was entwined with
millions of life's crossings.
These came and went; we felt a stir every now and
then.
We wondered of a day when this stir would flow
from roil to pool,
Would hold the other and feel its call, would open
an eye to scan the line,
Across the realms we had resisted in our roaming,
across the canyon,
Between the tower and the lake whose water rose in
a wisping arc.
Washing forward and back until skin fell away, until
it was all.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

When were we told by the tides rise, that the place
to wait without cover,
Would not be found in some long forgotten vibrant
journey?
When were we told by the early mist, that the scent
of clarity,
Would be within our grasp, even as we lay soft in
strange arms?
When did the air tell us to wake to perfection, to rise
and roam,
Enswamping us with a longing that hides its truth in
a clot of strain?
When did the earth receive us into her bosom, and
we succumbed,
Like wax giving itself to heat's draw and fall, our
matter and minds changing states.
Before our trust, between our time, is a telling that
does not betray.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Long before judgments and fears and the
accompanying baying.
Clear marks and signs in the recesses that trailed as
we made our way.
There was a notice, a first posting on the message
board of the beyond.
We came there wrapped loosely in garments draped
in earlier days.
I watched you from across a world that filled that
room.
A child in your arms, your shared lights mingled in
cry and soothing.
Light shining over every person sitting between us,
straining against the empty space,
Catching my periphery with a start, a primacy that
gripped my neck.
Locked onto me, left marks on me, lay into me, a
whispered storm warning.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Can the same days that harden, also find the winding
way that leads to softening?

They can learn of different distant places in one's
heart if they first learn to read.

If this be so, if this be more than words passed
down, then this is how I came to us.

Prepped by some mystically calibrated pulse, a
strobe at the spectrum's far edges.

Waved over moorings, startled by the water's taste,
water they had watched over so carefully.

Quite the delicate balance that stepped around and
then settled beside.

Drawn without even a memory, as if a hollow had
been and was no more.

In the days hence, or is it since, the hours take us in
their arms then set us down.

We drift as if this was our own, borrowed breath in
every echo.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

Do I send words your way or do I stand behind the
laurel and wait for more accepted things?

Words that have been waiting, taken out from time
to time, turned over and placed in patterns.

A shell's spiral of rivulets running off a trail as a
downpour limps by exhausted.

Words that have been tried and found wanting, yet
stay their course, their hand to the plow.

They speak with a voice that only in brief, few
moments, doesn't shock me.

They sleep in the bend of my arm as I walk up and
over their rises.

They minister to one another, they keep themselves
with shared anointing.

I go off alone into the darkroom, release the words
to the slot at the post.

Carried to your hand that may so slightly shake as it
breaks them open.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

The capture, when one has crept so carefully, is
always unexpected.

Keeping to the unused, unlit side of the road gets
you along for awhile without notice.

Then, there by the edge of the bed in the hollow of
the night, comes a calling from far afield.

If it was cold, it would break you, if it was deep,
they would call off the search.

At the instant you resign to wait, when you have
nothing prepared but a clean cloth.

It rises up and takes you hold, the motions promise
nothing but a simple introduction,

While the color of the light betrays what lies in store
and the scent of disbelief seeps through the roof.

We hid for awhile in the veins of a cache that we
had laid up with a wary hand.

Your voice was like a branch that had been wedged
into my gate to bypass the lock.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

I fed you with flowers and food and few words that
night we first untucked our arms.

Sat near each other, heard the sound, afraid to touch
lest we ignite,

In a combustion that would drain the air from our
lungs.

It would not be quenched until my very last drop,
and yours,

Were all that remained in the crystal vial of our
desires.

Two drops together the size of a tear that would
never find its way down a cheek.

That would be kept from this by simple waiting, day
upon day stretching on in vain,

For a time to come to pass when we would be less
solid, no more in daylight form.

Honesty hid behind our ear, even lightly crouched in
our trepidation, we knew.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

I walk the trail and my step shuffles with the limp of
your absence.

A lingering dimension of scents that scarcely
mingle, only in shared tithing.

I fall back to an earlier path up a hill where stones in
a creek we traverse,

Have just enough round to lend a sense of
instability, just enough slick to alarm.

A waver invades our feet, their blood already
unsteady by the catches in our heart.

Standing thus, taking in the precarious bridge to
follow, listening for the air to still.

Waiting for a bit of gravity to force my hand, a shine
off the water,

Prompts a reaching back. The offer accepted, your
arm raises on air.

I take as a balm your hand in mine, never before,
ever since.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

Like the dew, but with an iron kettle simmering
down below, freshening passageways,
Keep us locked in on the strobe, synchronized to the
booms waiting for the all clear.

A signal for the fullness of time, each a flare sent up
to see who is on the watch.

When we catch one on the edge of our sight, we
turn to wonder at its color,

How everything we sense, is hued in its coat. Steam
rises and becomes this dew descending our backs.

Heat sheds to collect in pockets just beneath our
skin; we are multiple worlds.

Our turn does not turn back, it pulls us into each
other, as a seed's grasp of ground.

When we can endure no longer the last strain of
space,

We yield and taste that dew, no savor ever prepared
for this.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

19-27

The shoreline came up to the threshold of our own
lives, tide lines of our leavings.

The sand, a drift and slide, foam dissolving into a
pumice trace.

How many dusks would we walk this shore until our
trust in the next waves coming,

Lay us down in a knowing of our own, an assurance
woven into our shadows?

Climbing the tide released rocks round a point
where the light still breathes,

We hold a thought of days down, a meander of
faiths that come and go.

A slip, a catch, an anemone cushions your hand, you
touch the brine to my lips,

So I will remember how your finger tastes when
wiping tears unaware.

We yield to the sylphs of the shore, to all that
washes over us in every trace of time.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 **1** 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

There was a particular dip, then bend in the trail, as I recall, then the climb.

Where you knew you were no longer among the scrub oak and golden grasses.

Even before the first big tree came into view you felt the light and heat shy away.

Nine hundred years of leeching the fog is bound to leave something cool in your alms bowl.

This was no biome shift. It was a crack in the face of eternity, like the moment you first hear autumn.

The moment you believe in a time that was before our touch, and time after.

Believe that these times rush away from each other faster than their channel's slope allows.

Like they had found the same crack and couldn't wait for us to notice.

Walking on, lifting up, we see the first redwood, we know our reach, we near to touch its bark.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Our listening was never completely sincere when the chorus chimed in.

We inclined to be more honest with words that passed above us,

On their way up mountain passes that bore through to the rain shadow where the needy dwell.

Leaving droplets of their bodies for us to absorb through our heart's pores.

A twinge in the cellar of our minds gave pause, and pause was enough.

You see, we sought no less than the very truth of an embrace.

Doubters became a hollow clack of rocks underwater that feared to enter the air.

Soon we left our nods and bows by the side of the road and let the words enter in whole.

Our tempo timed by a chime that kept its distance as it marked our way.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I came naïve to the gift you brought in your arms
through the mists of early hours.
Things I felt had seemed sufficient and indeed were
enough to grant entry.
At times I stirred, and the divine that had knelt
inside from my beginning,
Rose up and my ordinary hand could hold all of you
from then on.
I know of no other explanation for how this table
came to be set.
It may be that experience is just as prone to
crumbling as impulse.
Trust was spoken in the dim halls where we walked
in those days.
If only we had known, we would have leapt sooner
and longer.
As it is, our carry expands, it extends us past the end
of creation.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A turn of your head, your elbows brace the arch of
your arms against the table.
Your hands form a cup that holds close another cup
that warms well your daydreams.
A turn of my head as we pass on the road, my heart
falls faint.
I wonder if you'll stop and kneel and wet your
handkerchief in the one remaining pool.
Illumination surprises us like a banged headlight
come back to life.
Anticipation sustains us like a fleeting rendezvous
on the street.
Life etches us like carved initials up high on the
trunk watching over us.
Just give us a moment to catch our breath before we
go on, before we bend.
To sit and call silence to our side, to feed and water
it for another year's harvest.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

A child rests in my arms as I drift on the couch, one
more door to mystery.

Her breath and beat are the shallow waves forming a
link around and into me.

Beach, trail, mall, park, where we walked made no
matter, made no deep footprints.

When I carried her she carried me to places I'd only
heard in story.

Touch and whispers and rocking at bedside began a
new inheritance.

Never an extra piece of us, only the all ways same as
us.

One day while in the woods with light shyly hiding
behind her hair.

I lifted her onto my shoulders and soon her ear was
against mine.

The quietness that passed between us still keeps us
sure.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

We started along the thinking that the wise were to
be found around us.

In their many years of trading with the grand
barterer, perhaps they had come out ahead.

We were told that truth had grown like moss on
their backs,

And its spores would shake loose and rise as they
spoke, we waited for the dusting.

It soon was clear that most of this was for another
pair on another day.

Once the magic found its soil in the cracks between
our stones.

It became the garden to which we returned with
dandelion puffs in our pockets.

All else took on a cast that at best seemed quaint,
was tinged with sentiment.

We had our place, there was no need to open
anything else.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

We approached our time with a wariness born not
of fear, but a bit of doubt.

Across the day, a notice formed where the earth, the
sky and the water saw us hesitate.

They felt a familiar pang of those before, who dared
not and shrank before their edge.

Afraid to fall off the lip that waited to smile as they
lifted a last heel.

Instead, it was back down into the crevasse they slid,
blue allure with icy hands.

Now the earth, the sky and the water agreed on one
more step. They would hope.

We became children of this hope, buoyed, backlit
and bathed in its longing.

It was us behind walls, it was us in the open, it was
right where they had left us.

Each sip, each breath, a taste of their desire, a scent
of their collective hand.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

The first letter told of an admiration not ready to
emerge, content within its spun nest.

A secret that had been entrusted only to the
evening, waiting in repose.

As the air let go of its hold on the sun's gift, the
light cast like seer stones.

The night began its slow pull on the drawstring of
rest around the sky.

Lying there, the words first formed on voiceless lips
stumbling to translate,

A language whose code stone remained hidden from
this present age.

So they turned to the page and let their hand be the
vessel of transfusion.

Scratching out signs that were only guideposts of
what might be or lamps against the fear.

Keeping the obvious a mystery until the day when
one and the other could bear the revealing.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

28-36

A day leaving the valley, the rise so steep we need
every last switchback.

Until we could go no higher on this plane. A spot
where humans dare with glass,

To look into the heavens and where another lens
opened to a first captured kiss.

An evening over the hill to ocean lands and the rite
handed us by the sunset,

Of each child and a sweater and a shirt and the
orange sea behind and before.

A morning at the villa where the noise subsides and
the hills begin in earnest.

A walk on the verge of a child's entry into our
expanse where we left our thanks at the doorstep.

A night where the rarest form of storm in our
valley's lore came our way.

Light struck and thundered, a foretelling of the
energy that would be our family's fullness.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

Readiness was never what we prepared for in the
stretch of arising,
That lay between the time before we touched and
the time of always touching.
How could one ask for ready when the scouts who
had gone before returned with tales.
In a tongue of sounds that oscillated with a wave
that didn't enter mortal ears,
Until they had been dipped in the river where
blessed being first bathed.
So instead we lay in trust, sure in the knowing that
cradled us in a bed of presence,
When the flow inside of me rose on the barely
measured tidal pull of Venus.
Spilling a bit into yours, or yours into mine as the
shades of the streams became as one.
No gain or loss, winding through the same valley to
the same sea.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 **2** 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

The acceptance came on a bench in a simple park
among a glen of willows,
Who once spread for the missionaries and now were
folded into our lore.
The troth was pledged on an evening when we
donned the forms and functions,
That brought those dear to us into our arms while
scarcely containing the well,
That had been tapped by the explorers of old and
far.
Consummation has come day after day, year upon
year in ways that startle.
Glances and passings stitch together ever more
swatches in the tapestry,
That hangs between us as a curtain shield from the
land where many a doubt dwells,
To the land where the pelican rests in the cove of a
mountaineer and faith is fully ripe.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The road is known on the map as “one”, but that
which is first shall be last.

The last strip of man before our expansion paused
to catch its breath.

Conjuring this wild as a primal beginning, a place for
perpetual return.

Following the road, our beginning takes on a wild of
its own.

Unguarded drops soar us out and down ‘til the spray
catches us,

Deposits our silt on the shore bank, sifts us with a
sacred golden mesh,

Eased from a loom formed where the light threads
just above the wave line.

There is no straight in this land, except when the fog
lifts and the ocean’s edge.

Traces the line that eventually touches us all, and
runs into you and out of me.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

It felt like we could live on the crumbs that fell to
the floor at our feet.

Flakes of our hands shed in dew strands barely
touched by gravity,

As our arms caught on each other’s sleeve, reaching
so long, so far.

These grains were our bread. The glisten of breath
on skin was our wine.

We ate and drank the sustaining light of our
crossing, the nourish of our repose.

It came to be that life in its stubbornness, dripped
demands into our cup,

While other lives who were attuned to a more
natural food and drink, sang on.

We joined their chorus with a labor like a recurring
dream.

Leaving folds of cloth for their covering, we dwelt
along the frays.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

All dreams begin with a sound unclear yet patient in
its muffled return.

Seldom do they announce their intent, for if we
knew where the outcome would land.

We would startle in our doze and may reason our
way off the course,

Before the ship takes sail into passages that lay
beyond the edge of our charting.

What we hoped in those days sitting on a dune or
across a table,

Sustained our thirst in arid times but they were a
pale form, a substitute.

In the dusk tinted joy of the sand's curve under your
body,

Or your hand on the cup, connected to mine and
mine to the line.

Beyond the dream to what was unfolding in each
moment's stratum.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

We were placed in a space no larger than the sum of
our needs.

It held a table where rain was written down in a
waiting afternoon.

A place to sit in arms and play the games that
skipped inside us,

While other games played out across the room,
etching our film.

A child first put to bed with stories that echoed off
the years laid out before us.

We found home in a hidden patch lost between the
city core and sprawled out reaches.

A space to park our loads lest we forget our feet and
stumble under our wonder.

The first rooms held many firsts for keeping, a cargo
hold with rusted locks.

Spells to be conjured up at the turn of a head or an
eye cast in a new direction.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

Did we ever completely plan anything or was there
always a place,
Reserved on the map we held, for the words that
translate as “magic happens here”?
When we took hold of what was meant to be we did
not resign,
But invested every color of our will to the song
already playing across the meadow.
Destiny’s gravitational pull can be so tender that it
scarcely needs
A shift in stance or altered lean to keep from falling.
The inner ear is the place of balance for the body,
but also for many other things.
Listening to the notes beneath the theme, we are
given charts for the sea below.
The sky above is left to follow, it trails off in the
distance.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

Who was the evening’s escort on that night when
you rose from the ground?
To take a place among the plants that gave no
thought to hope,
Their future uncovering in a continual peel, releasing
the aroma of silent joy.
Why did time call on me in that room with silken
walls?
To let go the rope and rise the current that led to
warmer seas?
When did it occur to the heavens to incline their
spheres for our providence?
What manner of cosmic dust is this that finds its
way into our inner reaches?
Whose light is this that seeks our night, its final sigh
our moment’s glow?
Where is that void now? Could it bear our touch?
Could its vastness contain us?

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

37-45

Our first, eighteenth and twenty fifth brought us to
the bird's bed of our beginning.
Aromas of fog and bangers, carvings in the bedpost,
in the vale paused in time along our span.
Most years of late we tap into some life lived long
ago, or a similar shore,
Where a land was planted and romanced the work
of every hand that tilled it.
The infill of years sees other bays and forest dining
and always a walk.
When we take again the steps that print around this
now, another arc in a celestial circle.
Like a hand borne carriage circling in endless
devotion to holding us in its care.
And always a word or two transcribed from a
reading first heard on golden hills,
Kept as company through our greening, clearer with
each rendition.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

Each time we looked down into the path, the flecks
of quartz in the gravel,
Glinted at an angle that matched the inclination of
the lean of our stance.
If the light came in low and flat, then its glance shot
it straight up as if a geyser.
Spraying along the line of our stretch as we reached
for the morning star.
If it fell hard and true at midday, then its shatter
against the rocks,
Fanned out along the ground where we lay low,
waiting out the afternoon.
By and by, we grew restless of taking observations
and lay down our instruments.
Less encumbered, we came to walk along the way,
careful to keep the glass,
For those to come who made them mirrors of their
own.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

We awoke once before on a morning like this when
the blue stretched its paws,
Far beyond its normal prostrate pose, elastic as it
reached over the curve,
Formed by the lay of my hand painting the small of
your back.
The dawn at times must think it did something
rather well.
It writes it in a book of remembrance to be called
on for another playing,
Such as the morn when before registry, a scent
sneaks by the guardians.
We are not taken back to the past awakening, but we
who were then,
Are brought to this one, a layer over us to keep us
from maudlin memories.
We rent this youth, we taste and smell with
borrowed senses.

9 8 7 6 5 4 **3** 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

One broke free from the cradling arm only to learn
how far is the ground,
When you are so young and fragile and life is still
such a tall thing.
The other arrived on a night where sights and
sounds rarely seen in this benign valley,
Burst and cracked, sky perched in anticipation,
clouds tolling some call to prayer.
They both first breathed air in the same room at the
same hour of the day, almost two years apart.
A subtle mélange of same and apart, there currents
pass at times and comes a spray.
It would take many more years for the fullness of
this dialogue to settle into a balance.
To let the apart find a passage beneath the rocks, to
become the aqueduct of the waters of the same.
To be brought to the basin where they both wash
and drink.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

It seems like one could lose the trail in the snow,
every step and rut leveled like a fogged over valley.
Not at all what I had in mind when I cut short the
week and set out,
In haste to follow a drawing to return to your
wilderness.
So, to the point, I stand on this rock, deep in this
canyon and tap into you.
Connect to something of you, through the rock with
its dripping mist.
Then there come faint trails of you adrift just past
my ear.
My arm takes on your bend to cause a net to span
across the valley into your worry.
So with a leaning tug, I bring you in, across all the
dust between us.
I sit to recall this pull that lives and breathes without
thought of distance.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The trail goes down, where I want to be, after too
long high and alone.

The trail ends up at the river, now in sight, a wild
gray hair on the canyon's chin.

These things I know, what I don't know is that I'm
miles early, good intentions with bad timing.

Deep I go, or slide, or fall, an ephemeral ice melt,
hop scotching its descent.

At the end of the drop, when fear has run out, I'm
left to wait where the waters burst.

You too, begin a wait, in another valley with its own
sheer walls and pounding noise.

We use this lull to build our network, wires
stretching across the sky, extending our shield.

Attached to the tips of our fingers, hanging on
ridges sneaking across from another dimension.

We have exceeded every pact and promise made
when we pled for our reunion.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

While traveling along with linear movement, infants
dropped in on us as if from airships.

Babes who splashed time warp ripples across the
surface of our days.

Wailing coming from the unready beds pulls your
mind into wondering.

What conversations will you share across a table in
some cold, distant city?

Softly bouncing in your arms erases today, leaves an
opening in the sky,

Sends the light across from a morning when she
asks the beautiful question.

Asleep at your side, they raise a wall you scale, where
awaits a view,

Of longer nights that break to the sound of your
voice offshore.

Like flickering wisp, they quiver the air of time
before our eyes.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

How does God, if that's what it is, listen to the
chattering sounds of change,
Slipping under our door, willing their large boned
selves into sheets of tissue?
Is it with a hand to the ear and a lean, or is it in the
field where all else has been calmed?
We know we're heard donning new wraps, at times
not even letting ourselves know what we're doing.
I know I'm heard when I find the look in your eye,
half so sure,
When I dare speak the new, fixed on a fear that
you'll be left on your own road.
Then you say, "God must listen". For the same
sound that woke me echoed on your pillow.
Another trace of the homing first spoke to us in the
indigo before the morn.
Another rise of the sun on our horizon through
cracks in the skin of the world.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

It kept its name as the seventh month since the
year's turn toward the thaw,
When arms of light swung across the fulcrum of
equinox to the balance pan leaning toward hope,
Toward a fairer return on the coil carefully planted
in the terraced plot.
Fairer still has been the clime that wed us to its days
where every afternoon hangs on dearly,
To the warmth seeping through parched cracks
around the edges of simmering smiles.
Where every morning braces us with an astringent
reminder to be watchful.
It is the cleanest month, the year now wise enough
to know things.
Still strong enough to shoulder them, compassionate
enough to take your hand as an escort,
Into every land in its domain, each cleansed by its
own polish cloth.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

46-54

Lost on our way up to see the animals on a free
afternoon that didn't reveal its full freedom,
Until it had worked our soil a bit more. The car
searched thru back hill roads with no real plan.
We gave up, not the first or the last time, just one
bend too soon. Then one more turn to leave,
And it lay before us like a lighthouse for the ship of
reckoning against our wandering.
A place summoned from the dreams of our youth,
preserved in the amber of our imagining,
Taking shape as we crossed before, along the
western side to the rear, into the northern sky.
Our breathing slowed after our initial rush, we
peered into rooms that held our healing in reserve.
Guarded by sentinel towers, locking out fear, keyed
to a pattern kept in the soil awaiting our carving.
Do not call, was the request put forth by reason, as
if we thought we could hold back the tide.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

It was the stuff from which spectral images arose,
first as shifting spirits.
Then as the comfort of attraction between their
fragments inhaled.
Outlines emerge in the nebulae like an overlaid
transparent stencil.
Tracing and sculpting torsos and limbs and profiles
where we projecting, dared to stand.
Such was this clay we dug in the night, slopped in
heaps and mounds of dark mud.
Carried up the hill on hods shaped by an unseen
hand. Formed and spaced in the sun,
Drying into bricks we stacked firm as a foothold for
our farfetched notions.
But the thinner air and the fog drip kept the wet soil
draining through our fingers.
A reminder that it had its own ideas, and would not
settle for our crafting.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

The second release at the end of that summer
carried doubt on its fringes,
Found us again at the top on those terraces looking
off into the open eye,
Of a watcher and keeper who had lent us this crest
for a time,
But now came to reclaim its right to do with us as
hope allowed.
We opened our hands and a small flutter seemed to
take flight with a bit of reluctance.
We were at the end of our plan and so bowed and
stepped back to a more reasonable world.
If we had stayed, we might have seen the conclave
of elements assemble at the edge of the trees.
See them send forth an emissary searching for
permission to extend the lease,
From a few weeks to nether years and in this did
they extend our trust.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

Before our faces finished their turn, we were there,
and it had home defined,
With shadings we had never thought to keep for our
own with door shut fast.
Before the first year's end, we would see new places
for ice,
And squared off trenches in the savory ground
lining down the hillside.
And a basement full above the water line of our
own trust's rising hopes,
And storms blown unencumbered and knocks in the
grog of the night.
And once a week, or some other worldly interval, an
application of ourselves,
On a scarred wall or a broken patch of soil brought
on a tray of thanksgiving,
For a healing that kneaded its way into our flesh as
we walked with a lighter gait.

9 8 7 6 5 **4** 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

Once faith brought us to a clearing in the straw on
the ridged back of a coastal hump,
Presiding over the wave-farers below come to offer
their breaking curl,
As portals of light for the alms seekers who paced
their rounds at the water line.
Faith spoke to us, words not of what we would do
or be, that was in other hands.
Telling of a time that would come to pass no matter
what we chose.
She asked if we cared to alter our steps to the
coming direction, cared to yield.
We made no choice, there was no leap, no turn of a
wheel, no drop.
Just the slightest tilt in our centers of gravity, a
correction of balance.
Each day since, we feel a faith-time clearing on our
own ocean headlands.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Content 'til now as a trillium bed, it breathed deeply
the freshness of labor.

These plants too parted, triads of leaves, petals,
stamens and no doubt electrons,

Gave themselves up in glad release to the steps and
skips of three girls.

The trail wormed its way as if on geologic time, a
pause for gravity's rest.

When years were dug, a full half mile of back
switches, hill cuts and resting benches.

An old bookcase and spare shingles rising by its side
as laughter's fort against the clamor.

It held our feet now in its trough, our voices in its
fragile crust.

Each hand of dirt twinned by the same mass lifted
from the back of the trailsman.

Every grade and steep carried the lift and fall of the
wave of his soul.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

An acre square, it showed on the plat, but paper hid
the dips and dives.

Angles that yielded nearly twice as much geometric
dirt but precious little ready to tread.

Brambled and steep, curious to feel the feet that
padded the hilltop, silt still from the great floods.

The acre dropped quickly on three sides, a trail
begging to be cut where the line lifted a forearm,

Through the fir debris where lines in rare
presentations parted for three mountains.

So now to digging, one shovel, then again, one hoe
carving, one hand tugging.

Evening purging of the day's collected grime, rinsing
in the deep moist earth.

Loam so deeply brown it reflected veins of emerald
and amber in the millennial dawn.

The trail's hiding was removed one spade at a time
in the soft at the end of the day.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Come to the side of this hill with me now where
wildflowers reserve us a seat in the bend.
To the east, a careful parting reminds us of rises that
took us into their confidence,
When once before we stood in earshot of their
pleas, but dropped them as companions.
Into that past receding, we taste the silt in our drink,
first eroded in the waters,
Lapping our ankles as we stood downwind from the
embers of fate.
Each act plays like a half remembered song. The
words that sit us up are clear in their benediction.
The melody counts out our steps, dispensing its
favors with nonchalant compassion.
Far off into this east is a slight arch in the soil where
we waited shyly,
For the call to nudge the last crust aside, to see who
waited in the open air.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

Blue, when we strained the first few fathoms
through the sea foam mesh,
Collected in the bottom of our bowl, a slight soothe
when ardor fire threatened us.
A yellow, soft on our wall, burst us blind on an
other hillside.
One day we ventured north and learned the fable
told among the greens.
Red sought us out in brick and stucco, etched in a
sanguine wash of perspiration.
Every bloom that ever snuck into, then flew out of
the garden,
Spun in wild gyrating spikes and swirls, feeding the
setting furnace.
In the blandness of a dry field or a deep gloom
hovering, when you thought you were out of range,
Color finds you. You hold it in loosely cupped
hands and watch it drip.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

55-63

The metro steps were my entrance to the labyrinth
that would keep me captive from then on.

The space-time warping of modern travel had left a
dazed screen,

Between my dull body inside and the bright shine of
sensory flows.

Half of what they said was true and the other half
was too true to be said.

Or maybe even known. Two things were clear.

First, I had to walk, I had to immerse.

Each street runs smaller, crouched under awnings,
spaced with thunder drenches, laced with hail.

'Til lost, down a thin alley to a five franc garden of
erupting passion.

The other, certain, I could no way hold all of mine,
let alone yours.

That I must cross back, find you, and somehow dive
back into this maze.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

The mustard fields fly off to the west and we feel
the need to hurry,
Lest we miss our chance to stand on their edge like
we did a century ago when light was fresher.
How else to explain the irresistible pull away from
convention, how else to describe those hues.
How everything melted and reformed on canvasses
up and down the banks of this barest of valleys.
The garden doesn't try very hard to be found, better
to fall into.
Do you remember the audaciousness of the color?
How it bled from every plant and stone,
In the hovering mist; on a day like this when his
boots crunched the gravel,
Having no signs with regulations to violate. His
milky eyes became wild lenses,
Conjuring visions of new spectra, a feeling with
which we were so familiar.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

If we had landed in boats barely making shore, we
would have ridden the white chalk horse,
Over another time's hills, stone ring corrals leaking
spirits who joined to form strident gales.
We may have bought the bookstore or prayed the
hours in an un-ruined abbey.
St. Briavel's would open for rest when our hunt
trailed to fraying leads.
East Midland winds would keep us migrating from
shop to shop.
Lakes would fill where the hooves carved out bowls
meant for erosion's offerings.
As the steed reared, our line of sight stretched from
the highlands north,
Across the moors and into cities waiting to be built,
stone upon stone, into masters of men,
Masters of words, masters of thought and five
drifters yielding to the land.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

Lend me again the first turn when the start of a
smile rose through the tide pool,
Remaining on your cheek when hope's wave
withdrew,
Leaving drops that rinsed away a hesitancy standing
watch at your door,
Knowing the difference between costly and rare,
knowing when to recall the face of chance,
When to turn and let pass for entry, when to kneel
to be used as a step,
Even when to return keys to their rightful place of
keeping, a knit pouch,
Permitting an impulse unplanned, with a
spontaneous coloring,
That refused to fade, refused to yield to the careful
constructs.
It almost imperceptibly turned your lip's edge and
your eye's lamp.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

The walk has always been the pace that came
without much of a thought or weight.
You walked into me and I into you, with an ease that
sounded like the sky,
When it takes your look long and your sight drives
so deeply into the blue that it whispers your name.
Trails we carved with our own hands held our walk
up on the hill.
Stones chipped by carts carrying one man's leeks to
another man's soup, worn until today,
When they caught our feet as something dearer
caught in our throats.
Grains scattered in the wind like dancing droplets on
a well stoked stove
Gave their way to the press of our heels in the sand
as we timed the tide.
We walk, and our passing takes on each crevice left
for us along the way.

9 8 7 6 **5** 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

Now to the west, our turn once passionate, now is
resolute, tinged with remnants of eastern muses.
One time we held a map in our hands, every road a
way against the cold.
The years have refolded it more than its creases can
hold.
Lines and names rubbed with hopeful tracings,
fraying and blurring left,
Where our journey once reached out like a patient
crack following,
A windows molecular memory of least resistance.
These days we meander more.
Like a fresh creek, born in the shadow of a
retreating glacier.
Fanning over its alluvial bed, each finger bursting
into a thousand rays.
A float on any is destined the same. Soon we forget
how to steer.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

If it can be called anything with consistency, it
would be walking into it all.
Mud gives way to sand leading across fields and
cobblestones into set apart trails.
Had we known there would be so many steps we
would have covered,
Would have taken great pains to prepare and thus
missed the spontaneous healing pains,
That hid in the low grass where a few bits of
missing underbrush marked the path's veer.
A mark so clear to those without maps and shod
with inadequate soles.
Walking has stayed a true comrade, across cities of
men, up scrambled hill,
Through transition's bogs, each step connecting,
each road a deft reminder,
To bare our feet and feel the rocks and leaves take
their course.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

There was one particular day, in the time when days
were being traded for nights,
As though they were carnival scrip and evening was
the line waiting for the ride.
A day no different in the way the light first seeped
through our sheets,
Or in the vanishing coolness that rested in ever
thinning layers on the grass.
I do not remember what we did that day with our
arms and legs, how our bodies fed or rested.
I do not remember where we started or ended or the
in-between of our roaming.
The sun was being pulled in the same arc at the
same speed, with the same halo,
But the harnessed team ahead of us smelled of wild,
as though freshly broken.
I remember my thought as the first star roused, I
had once more fallen into you.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Reincarnation would be a most satisfying and
flavorful explanation for the catches,
That snag our sleeves on afternoons when all
thought has run down our sides,
Onto the pavement and into the stream where
children launch their own mind's craft.
But how could that be? It seems too convenient.
Our past lives leaving clues and broken branches,
Reserving all they have learned so that our later
selves could feel wise before their time.
Just as likely, this is the first of our incarnations, our
first feeble fall to this world.
Fresh souls are more apt to notice things without
the grime smeared on the glass.
Less likely to be filled with things when they are just
beginning to learn their openings.
We stop seeking a reason why the world is so
stunning.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

64-72

When time no longer fights alongside, an ally on
vision's front line.

But waits in a quiet room, places its hand on your
wrist, a companion for night sitting.

Things to do then write themselves on the palms,
kept until the washing,

Under the stream running off the eave of a cloud
wall.

Shaping the world brings a thought, quaintly futile,
ideals often underestimate.

The image in the sky's mirror reflected on our life,
outlines a greater border.

A clearer intensity bores through the fog of longing,
to warm a point,

Where acceptance settled once like a spore hidden in
a drift of interstellar dust.

It comes down for a landing and waits for our
compliance.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

The distances we have crossed, oceans in a grand vaulting, a continent, one wheel at a time.
The distances have yet to take our sounding, have yet to rein us in.
Those things of least assuming size, usually off the side of the road,
Always in plain sight, always more willing to be left alone.
These slight pieces have entered us, have broken us down,
Like we were cupped in the bowl of a mortar of sand,
The pestle resting against the rim, its shadow tracing a sundial path,
Across our bodies, this being the only weight pressing down,
Wearing us into a powder whose aroma we carry in our pockets.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

Of treasure, long ago lore spoke, wandering through the barrens of time,
Like a prophet, dogged by a relentless, cleverly masked inspiration.
We sat at its feet on occasion, heard the word's chime become tin, arose and left.
From the dust caked feet that had walked that old desert, there fell a sifted shade,
An inclination to understanding, rocking on the fulcrum formed by our crossing axis lines.
At first light, we crouched at the edge of the wash to pan the tailings.
The unease of our motion was not the smooth swirl the sand and flakes expected.
Gravity and fluidity deposited a gold that only fools would find
To drop in a purse for a day downwind when all else was spent.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

The way of the spirit leapt off the parchment we
carried, a map of unseen worlds.
Into our house it came to settle upon our daily
breaths, entering our lungs and thus our sleep.
If it had turned in you a moment before or after, a
moment above or below,
We might not have recognized what our faces were
showing or sending.
Tapping over the wire a code that came without
deciphering.
It would lift its hand while we slept, a sign of an
expanse,
That at times covered us and at times we broke like
bread.
It lit a candle on the table when we woke, it bade us
good night with a kiss.
It stood to the side, as much a watcher as a guide.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

Listen. A faint recording remains where the imprint
found refuge from the work,
Of a hundred hands offering restoration and from
the brittle hand of complacency.
Women's voices rise from a canyon into a bookstore
where giving first opened its pages.
Curious chatter in a tabac and gutters swept as you
wander in and out of your past.
An air hole punctures the everyday ice, then gasps to
bring us back.
Lapping water just below a porthole or on a stretch
of sand or a tilted cup.
Songs of little ones, over and over in a cellar echoing
the magic of youth.
A horn to mark the fog wandering inland to collect
at our window.
An improvised riff breaking through the noise,
gliding to rest on our laps.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

Our arm's extent was subject to a centrifugal pull
from ones so small,
Spinning their bodies around us to draw an
inclination into an embrace.
This curve has been our center and our carry from
silhouetted lakeshore to tented beds.
From like clothed sunsets across a continent so
close that each took on a piece of the other.
It became our portrait, hanging as a reminder of
nights out to hold.
Of coming in to be folded in stories and antics
leaning carefree as a stream.
It was our recipe, our food in the wild and around
the nightly table.
Our line of sight, warping the world with the same
bend that our gravities,
Gave to the bodies of light of every season as it
found its way into our spaces.

9 8 7 **6** 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

As with all children, it was her gate to gardens far
beyond her window.
With her aging though, it did not diminish as so
much else becomes lost with our maturing.
She kept it at the ready in her pocket as a guardian
of fragile possibilities.
I have seen it work in the dawn, the cloth of the day
spread out before her.
It brought us to each abode, on a hill, o'er a bluff,
beside a bay, along a quay.
From streets lined hard, to a crooked stream, from a
cupola tower, to gardens just outside her window.
It took a hole in the ground and made it an old
world gathering place.
It took things cast off, arranged them anew in rooms
of life and wonder.
It took two tremblers, it was their soft push, even
now it is their chariot.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

In the dirt we find our common seed, our lost shard
of glass.

Transplanting holds a mirror to our restlessness or
maybe just our hope.

Our knees moist and brown where we atone for the
soil's neglect.

Hands gloved in rich cake reach deep beyond the
ground, skin on the verge of oxidation.

Into a subterranean prayer where echoes rise
through root and stem,

To the end of the branch where the vibration's last
gasp,

Cracks like a word caught in a eulogist's voice when
the beauty overcomes the sadness.

We have held mud from the start, a digger and a
dreamer.

A deep canvas, broadly bladed from the brink of
our solitude to the edge of our wild.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Your light first laid eyes on mine in a house made
for worship.

Years later, when life had laid us each a bit lower,
this time for real, we met in another spirit house.

Then again, and again, through our evolution,
through our doubts and exaltations,

These rooms and walls were far too much a part of
our definitions.

We suspected as much, when we stood in a grove, or
tilted our heads back at midnight.

But being human, our hearts had many chambers,
not all holding gifts.

We came to a land where seeking answers was not
primary, surety was the recessive trait.

The closer we sunk our teeth into this land, the
more we emptied,

The more we tasted wonder, a whetting for our
souls' coming banquet.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

73-81

The first time we shared the day of your birth, a
secret was revealed, though parts are secret still.
Then an answer rose out of the grass into the night
to pluck a string that was tied,
One end at the arm of our sitting bench; then
stretched to that same day in the year to follow.
We crossed and arrived at this time, when the note
played and held itself the whole day.
Then re-tuning, it leapt on to the next year, neither
higher nor lower on our scale,
Only a sensing sound, a truer harmony with our
frames and our frets.
Each year we feel the strum, as we brush against all
the past connections.
In still rooms and shrouded hillsides and wise
gardens and even a wafting barge.
This answer note has melted every question along
the way.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

A five by fifteen patch of lonely valley clay was our
first testing,
Of the fracture of the crust and dust so carefully
laid down for our breaking.
One day we moved three spindly trees, sad in their
manufactured yard,
To a slice of golden refuge just over-hill. I think
they're still confused.
Machines were tried, we soon grew weary of their
infernal efficiency.
Soon we were back to our hands and a few elegant
extensions.
Trenching a hillside, overturning a plateau, further
deepening a below ground room.
Brief bulb holes and foundation excavations, garden
sweeps and gravel mounds.
The earth has dug and turned and barrowed us, and
always it lends us its flesh.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

Walking around to the back side of the masses'
clamoring din,
Shelters us from much of the bluster, releases us to
a listening,
For uncommon sounds, slight utterances falling as a
constant yet barely felt rain.
One day we wake to find our ears have learned to
dip behind the noise.
To lay these notes at our feet and pay them sweet
attention.
Since then, what we plan scarcely matters. Falling
comes to replace the climb.
We fall into the next or it falls on us, and so we learn
to notice varieties in the pitch of gravity.
Grasps are eased, striving is slackened, seeking finds
its way abandoned.
Listen again and again, until we fill, until we have no
more to offer.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

It was a home that held against the storms and had a
talent for tricks.

Levitating our loads one by one, depositing them
among the underbrush down the canyon.

It was truth that came to us in threes, breaking our
sleep while mending our dreams.

It had a hold on us when we were most alone, just
before the next advent.

We still are babes when it comes to knowing its
mysteries, still the nervous apprentice.

We hold out for a hope that its place in us will
complete some unspoken oration,

While finding a surer longing that we will always be
near a soothing water.

Each turn leaves a choice, to pick at old wounds or
to lay our hands in a simpler way.

Healing seldom runs to its appointed hours, its
cargo is too precious to chance another risk.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

Morning came to us not far from the start, but near
enough to our beginning

To reside beneath our skin in waiting, not like the
mid-day, content with only everything.

It carried first scents to our bed, it bade us rise lest
we miss a crevice in the day,

Where its angle, just above nothing, was the
decryption permitting passage.

Once it crested our window o'er the bay of angels
into an attic hold,

Then we saw it through freshly washed streets in a
city where passion became the only commerce.

Through tent fabric meshing mystery or a
seductively cracked balcony door.

Our morning companion crawls under the covers,
both stirring and settling.

Light, a ray to pry our lids, a bath of smooth cream.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

Your voice rose carefully up my stairwell, pausing at
each landing to catch the sound of its own steps.
To keep them from reaching me before it had its
chance, before it alone arrived at my door.
Releasing all heavy sounds as it rose, left at the last
with only water.
Pitched at the place where every note fell softly like
down upon my neck.
Language for us has been a gentle gathering of what
remains.
Finding essential words in the debris driven up in
the storms.
An ignorance of noise as we bend with the wind,
leaning lips to ear.
A creation, parts of speech parsed deeply with the
clean edge of new chalk.
A sure silence when every word knows its place lies
not in the air between us.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

We once heard it as a resting place, stacked stone
walls perching in wait for muffled Siren calls.
Was it ever to be, or did we just forget? Was it sent
just as a bridge to better things?
The sea first came to us on a rim where we went to
wash our dreams.
With regular scrubbing in the rocks and waves until
the fabric was bare,
A shroud for our night visions, filter enough for the
most hidden deceptions.
Waves have roused us from wild raging bluffs
where the air came from another age,
To a sand where the lapping still held arcs from the
first Phoenician oars,
But mostly a stretch where nerve endings were
carried off by the current.
A rip tide pulling us like taffy, sweet spun threads
rising on the wind.

9 8 **7** 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9**

Slumber comes with night promises, and as it
happens, all our dreams are of another sleep.
One more feast, we take our leave, and as it happens,
all our bowls are of another table.
Waking where careful waters lap, for as it happens,
all our lodging is of another innkeeper.
Glancing uncovered skin on the way out, so as it
happens, all our touch is of another flesh.
Walking in sorrow, sitting at joy, and as it happens,
all our ascent is of other begetting.
A pause where the rise waits, so as it happens, all our
breath is of another storm.
Words scratch in throats and sand, and as it
happens, all our telling is of another lore.
Spirits ebb and flow beneath our feet, then as it
happens, all our God is of another hue of light.
We harvest from land never planted, for as it
happens, all our memory is of another chance.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

When the world becomes too much, it pulls on the
hem of heaven,
Stretching the stitch, leaving a pinhole where the
fabric sighs before returning.
The light, being infinite, takes no time to melt us,
carefully welding the edge of our souls.
This light caught us early, taught us that we could
listen to light, could hear the phonetics of photons.
A redwood cathedral, its shadows translucent and
shaking in the evening afterglow.
Drips of sea spray evaporate in the flash, condense
on the ledge, an awning for our afternoon.
Once it was seen far ahead when we were sure we
were leading the way.
Another hour it caught us from underneath when
we could fall no further.
It is our vein of molten gold, it is our bright sheet
of sacred.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

82-90

A drop of wine on your lips, the last linger of the
voyage when we broke taste on a new plate,
One that had been set and left under linen, waiting
for the procession to pass.

We lifted the cloth and sat, bringing a hunger that
rested a hand on our sides,

And pressed gently until we felt a twinge just behind
a rib, and so we called for food.

Bread came, dense to our tearing, solid like
assurance in our mouth.

Then everything that had fed us up 'til then was
spread, only now the aromas were our own.

Flavor had turned in on itself, simmering in the care
of its creation.

Every fruit tasted forbidden, warming our bodies as
we consumed.

Every crumb fell from a table on high, manna dust
on our heads.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

She who watches has been the sprint unlatching the
gate to gardens and groves,
Where patriarchs dared not go, their shoes reflecting
their downcast eyes.
She is a hue that rests on every scene played out
when our curtain rose in the night.
She carried three of her children to our door,
leaving only her trust.
She woke us with a gentle hand when it looked as if
we would sleep the day away.
She left pots and baskets, knowing our hunger
would remind us how to cook.
She is a spinner of moss, a weaver of the straw we
thought had turned to ash.
In our sleep, she is planting and harvesting one row
at a time, she stores in the hold of our hearts.
On the morrow, she takes our cups and ladles out a
benediction.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 8 9

Darkness dreaming, shadowed entities are prone to
places with rumors of visions.
In the while, the miracle unrolls a scroll down the
hall, unfurling a legend.
Not in long ago time or greatly borne deeds or
demons slain.
A tale bound with tendons of archaic limbs, buried
in the cloud beneath the north star,
Left as a cache for the weary, a song to rouse, a cup
to quench.
If you wait, you miss the beginning, the part where
the author sets the story.
A gathering, where all to follow, on earth or heaven,
becomes as nonsense.
The night reserves our seats. If we can drink our
fear, even claim it,
The stars will open our flimsy pages, we will be read.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9

The mornings stretch in an elastic linger, taut until
their shiver snaps,
Catapulting them straight into evening, landing in an
acrobat's net of stellar thread.
These are the days we store away when we come
again to our shelter place.
We recall no daytime or night, only mornings and
evenings elongated into each other.
In granting release from binding time, there comes
no bill for compensation.
Light becomes our co-conspirator, a lookout and
abettor of our escape.
To the watchers on the side, time becomes folds and
creases, as they try to take its measure.
To the riders in the current, it is like catching an
eddy where two rocks part,
Spinning our heads and slinging our bodies across
the dawn air.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9

Presiding over a bluff to the west of the plot in our
heads,
Collecting the residue chaffed off when dream
wheat tosses high.
Stone walls rise, as of now weightless, unmatched,
unmortared, trading cause for effect.
Every corner of the world where we have trod, has
left a pebble in our shoe.
We shake them loose in our backyard on the mound
kept for someday.
Is it so obvious, this untrue ridge where the stacked
stone meets the thatch?
If we but use the level marked against the line
through each day,
Then our longing house makes its point without a
single beam rising.
The end of a pendulum, arcing an ellipse inscribing
today's table, this chair, our bed.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9

Some souls, when the waves subside, settle easily
into the indentation left on every head,
When the palm of god rested for a moment on our
crown when we came forth.
Compassion comes without a knock, the drapery
always hanging in the window,
Always gauzing the sun and shifting shape in the
warm air rising.
For others, expectation outlasts understanding in the
natural selection battle waging on their frontiers.
The flak of friendly fire may catch you in the side as
you turn to offer a hand.
The searing shrapnel tearing, then cauterizing as it
passes every organ.
The jerk of pain snaps the gaze inward, where lies a
new grace.
Nature or nurture, this misses the question, in the
land where bowing down is more becoming.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9

The cut and heft of a thing endures in space, gives
us a comfort of a sort even after we set it down.
Cast shadows, remaining as a reminder of its place,
so long as light does not burn away.
In the furthest fields of sleep, however, a thing
becomes only an ornament unto itself.
We cannot caress it when passion rims out, or lean
against it when legs flail inward.
It becomes a type, signifying the static drowning out
the conversation between cost and beauty.
We seek a quiet room, one that will be our muse, will
take our payment with integral gratitude.
We buy the days, they take nothing to carry, or store,
or move, they are more perfectly alive in us,
Than all the accumulation that weighs where it sits
and alters our steps.
What we are willing to give in exchange for one,
astounds us still.

9 **8** 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9

Less noble in stature was the race that once used
these rivers for their wireless access.
They were nobler though, in their reluctance to
number everything, such as the things they felt.
They knew that the range of their immersion was
infinite, to box it in seemed unholy.
We all reject so much inheritance, but you and I have
not refused this unnumbered spectrum of senses.
There is no smell or touch or sound or sight or taste
around this campfire.
Only wisps off the nape of your neck, the rich
depth of flavor on your tongue,
A port of entry through your iris, a pant of air
across the rear arc of your leg,
A warm rising and falling behind your ear, all the
way down to the bowl of your back.
The body paints its own community, it transmits the
world to the soul in a sensual continuity.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

We began on a twisted path that took us to length,
then rafted a broadening river.
The darkness in the northern sky was reading for
the role of the messenger of the universe.
Tying knots and beads on the ropes linking us, ropes
we held as we crossed daily between each other.
Our hands passed a thousand times over the cords,
our fingers carefully ran the lines,
Across the bumps and ridges before we noticed a
pattern, still more before we first heard words.
The river became ocean and we found depth, dried
and we found drift, rained and we found flight.
Beyond fundamental dimensions, beneath quanta
and further than the outer reaches,
Lie the mysteries that care not to be resolved, but
were born for our embrace.
The more we shed, the easier the sacred silk gathers
as a robe all around.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

91-99

As the hand of labor holds many a tool, so the face
of recompense strikes many a stance.

Our work has been for bread and bed when times
demand and deem this be our load.

We swap and barter toil for joy, when life allows us
breaks to bring our offerings.

When transition snaps us out of our inertia, we
stretch to take a hand across the deep.

We fold our form and function into each other, each
as much a gift, as much a blessing.

In times of want and times of plenty, abundance
never wavered, never stale, never trite.

Ours was the pay of providence, a dividend of
gratitude, a long term yield of common vestments.

We think, we strain, we sweat, we build. A pile of
rocks, a room full of need, each is moved,

And moves us closer to the communal basin where
all brought for one to wash, the other dries.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

If there had been no hill to slide down, there still
would be three in line for bent leg slides.
If there had been no basements, there still would be
wild abandon, leaps and darts and squeals.
If we had not circled one country on the left hand
side of the road, and another on the right,
We still would have sights stored up in scattered
caches, some marked plain, others to stumble on.
If no attic room, passed on to be stamped with the
fears and wonders of a most delicate transition,
We would still pass on ourselves, our mortared
cracks testify, some foundations are for preserving.
If there were not a table, to celebrate mass in every
meal, we still would listen with authentic ears.
If we could not flow in and out, we still would turn
to they who once were babes, to wipe our tears,
And leave us packages tied up with words formed in
the stillness of the lake of our collective healing.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Along the quay, just upriver from Bir Hakim, there
grows in the cracks of the crusted stone,
The same delicately bloomed clover that has
followed us from our hill house,
Through gorges and grottos and into a crevice in
this city where cracks hold the smoke,
Of countless flames feeding the light that writes its
name for mortal eyes.
We cross a plank that spans one magic to another,
steps still wobbly from the pavement of dreams,
We hardly notice the sway as we float in a current
that has carried many a heart in its swirl.
We are in and of the river, water that reflects every
truth that ever leaned into it.
At the tower's feet, our peniche lays its gift with a
nervous hand,
It holds us softly in a shy palm like a pair of fragile
sparrows.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The bird flew our way, riding the thousand drafts as
we walked life across the sea.

It flew from the edge of the sand of North Africa,
carrying a grain, ready to drop at the first sign.

Such are gifts when doors and windows are
carelessly left open for extended times.

This bit of desert dust first lodged in our shoe,
nagging us pay it notice.

Then worked its way up, clinging on each hair as our
breath passed to and fro.

While we slept, it rose to our mouth, we woke with
its grit beneath our tongue.

When the days were full, it came to rest on our
brow, just above our line of sight.

Its fragile crust veined with a slight crack of crystal,
catching the sun.

Throwing tiny flashes, maybe once a day, that made
us blink and then to wonder.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

When the light had done its part, we agreed and
followed back across the sea,

To the land of light, where color sweats from the
pores of those compelled to truth.

Plastered stone passages took us back to the days
before wealth and frivolity.

An antipolis against those cities of bluster rising to
try beauty's patience.

A settlement cupped in a cove holding the shadows
of ancient songs.

We walked and rode, tunneling in and out of the
rocks of other kingdoms.

Up stone clay tracks to dine in a notch in the hill
with she who knew things from long ago.

Hiking the spiked cape rising from sapphire waters,
was this but a sojourn?

We come to home and the speck of sand dissolves,
our following answers every cry.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A full score years in the green, at last leads us to a
dip of cool, a pause to gauge.
Were we really withering and parched in the down-
sweeps of those golden hills?
Perhaps not, but when youth and certainty collide,
there's not much left to say.
Yet with trust and a sense of following, a miracle
may still be found if we bend low enough.
A recline into the thought that we are not green or
gold alone, or that they are the same.
Where is the blue land or the gray, where neither
dust nor rust prevails?
What ship will sail us there? Are there places of
undiscovered color?
When we remove our shoes at the end of the day,
every imprint remains.
Flecks fall from the tread to the floor, shimmering
tea leaves lined up for a reading.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A younger man walks from the campfire, pauses
beside a pine, and engages it in quiet conversation.
He stands before a waterfall, lost in what he could
not name or had never been taught.
An older man woke at a cabin. It had come into his
life at the least and most opportune time.
Foolishness and dark, wisdom and light, exertion
and chance, catch and release, a hearty stew.
The younger man once had a dream, a stretch of
stream can be both your constant and your fleeting.
He placed it in a pouch to keep for a painted time to
come, when he would recognize its finish.
The older man awoke from the same dream, but
now the wild brushstrokes of life's abstractions,
Hid the pouch until his focus receded into the
bosom of being, and he remembered, he vowed.
He notices his old and new footprints in the needle
duff beside the cedars and the damp by the falls.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A point of land thrusts into the sea, just far out
enough to touch the unsuspecting waves,
An instant before they realize what's happening,
realize that the change they sense,
Is the rising shoulders of the continental shelf
bidding them come to shore.
Just before they know that their purpose is not to
roam but to break, just before they know.
They are caught unaware by the rocks, the waves
never knowing what hit them.
The flailing and thrashing looks familiar as we stand
on the edge of the cape.
Words that form what's to come, our plans dripping
down, melting into the pool of illusion.
Holding the runoff drained by the watershed
flowing from our future.
Like the waves below, we are never prepared, we
dash ourselves completely.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The last stanza is every stanza, though not with the
numbering of culmination or fulfillment.
Each line losing its naiveté as it connects with sparks
jumping across every gap in the verse.
The last sleep is every sleep, our return to empty,
wandering in the open, where we remember,
The storm's flight, the retreat of the oar, the bliss of
floating, I on your current, you in my well.
The last memory is every memory, if the spirit's
press is long and strong enough,
To leave imprint on our heart folds, a raised emboss
left to be read by a caress.
The last kiss is every kiss, none more or less perfect
than another.
Silken grains descending through our waters,
deposited for needs still awaiting discovery.
The last is every, true scribing marks of love.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Nine notes on Novemento

Novemento celebrates the day of our wedding, 09/18/81. It was written for, and presented on, the 27th anniversary of this day.

Novemento is a poem of 99 stanzas.

Each stanza of Novemento contains 9 lines.

Novemento is divided into cantos containing 9 stanzas.

Novemento contains 891 total lines. This represents 9 surrounded by 81 and/or 9 surrounded by 18.

Every line of Novemento is greater than 9 words except the last line, which is 9 words in length.

The last word of Novemento, the 9th word in the 9th line in the 99th stanza, is the only appearance of the word love.

When our anniversary date is multiplied, $9 * 18 * 81$, the result is 13,122. There are exactly 13,122 words in Novemento.

As is their nature, nines return to their source. The numbers on this page, when added together, eventually returns the sum back to nine. So too with us. All of our summations return us to our source.