

The Quickening

The touch is delicate,
like a petal brushing against the wrist,
but not accidental. Deliberate—
a message that initiates you to a mystery,
and you know, beyond book-learning,
beyond the sonogram's blurred proof,
that the message comes from another being,
inside yourself, a new life asserting itself
with a power like sunrise brightening the morning sky,
a rivulet cascading over rocks,
a green shoot shattering its hard, black seed.

Amethyst Geode

This half-round weight in my hand, crumb-coated with rough gray lava, shows me no reason for glistening pyramids the color of violets. There was no light in the rock womb of their growing.

I reach down to the core of this mystery, the place where transformation happens, where what we think we know becomes not so, where what I am becomes some other thing—my breath misting this purple surface part of the same breath that began it.

My substance is that of earth and air and water, all interchangeable forms of the same elements. Fire is the constant, transforming reality. In molten lava that churned and boiled from earth's fiery core, this geode began as a bubble of air. Water explored the rock's substance, made alliance with atoms of silicon, led them to the small round cave where they arranged themselves slowly, according to a pattern they know, the way our bodies know to make hands and eyes.

This is not random stuff. Nor is the arrangement of a violet's five petals more random than the five sides of these amethyst crystals. And no more fixed. Nor are my hands that hold this former bubble, translucent as water but now more solid than the lava that once enclosed it. I am connected to the flower and to the rock, our forms ephemeral, our common substances continuing.

Composting

I love the miracle of weeds and leaf fall
slowly transforming into dark rich soil:
the circularity of it.

Foot after foot,
I tramp the top layer down
in my chicken-wire bin.
Smells rise from under my feet:
fungus whitening dampened twigs,
excrement of sowbugs and millipedes,
appetite of microorganisms,
the sponginess of wet leaves
sinking slowly towards rebirth.

A memory comes, clear as a photograph:
through a green dapple of peach leaves,
my father atop his compost heap,
silent, absorbed in his task,
tramping the top layer down
slowly, foot after heavy foot.