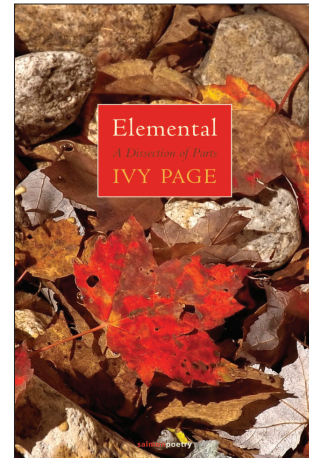


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**Elemental: A Dissection of Parts** by Ivy Page  
**Paperback: 68 pages**  
**Publisher: Salmon Poetry**  
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*Review by Timothy Gager*

While reading through “Elemental: A Dissection of Parts” by Ivy Page, I was struck not only by the metaphor of the building blocks of the human psyche, but the ability of the poet to place me on the outside looking in, and on the inside looking out. The book is divided into four sections: F i r e, Air Child, Dark Water and Earth Eater, all classical elements in popular culture. Within the basic building blocks of these, Page explores growing from child to adult, finding love, having a child but also our fragile existence—our own building blocks of life, growth, losses and death. All of these existing simultaneously at all times for us, leaving it up to the individual to pick through these elements.

Ivy Page defines her poems within our senses, both from the again from the inside and the outside of the narrator. It’s personal, private but also can be distant---as if to say, don’t get too close, be amazing but still stay detached when necessary. We, as humans, have the ability to protect ourselves, process our instincts and create what we can be safe with in our world. Page does this admirably, drawing us in, and pushing us away, when required. We become intimate with the poet, the subject, the time and place---but we are reminded that we also fear this exposure.

In the poem, Just in Case, Page summarizes

*I didn't tell you, when I woke-up this morning  
that your wordless face left me wanting more  
song in the world, and that the way  
you had discarded the sheets and exposed your  
bare body made me linger as I put on my clothes.*

Even the day to day rat race can be solved by words, within art. This is brought out in, On A Dusty Shelf in the Corner

*The working mothers are tired,  
and the working fathers are looking  
for their epic to be written on Wall Street,  
not between the pages of this book*

*Come in and hide with me.*

Then on the very next page, in Spine, Page writes personally, to ease oneself open, “above two half-length pieces” —written about both opening a book, but indeed opening oneself up emotionally and also leaving oneself open by exposing one’s words to the world. Quite complex, this

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trifecta, if the reader, as a reader should, decides to go all the way in. Page does it with words of lips, tongues, taste, touch---all exposed within the pages of "Elemental: A Dissection of Parts".

In the section Air Child, Page again explores the fragility of being, and how much we need words in times like these:

*Nothing seems right  
My fingers feel fat  
my hair greasy.*

*I long to find a way to the place  
where creativity can let the sun set  
in the upper left hand corner of the page  
and magic will happen.*

The fourth section, Dark Water, is the most playful of the four. Again, the reader is dared to go deeper than meets the eye. The musical poem Coal Train, engages the reader with terms from music, but alas, John Coltrain—is the homonym. In Ode to a Vein, Page opens with, "Like a trampoline I bounce fingers across skin to find your rivers laid deep, down below." Here I found, a play on, love in vane (vein), but was there intent? I would like to think so, because what we uncover within ourselves, within this poem, is sheer brilliance. Again, it's the outside looking into the inside looking out.

In 'Ol Woman, Page gives us play with in dialect. In A Ride with Milton and Jonson, you are a passenger being driven by references to and by the playwrights and poets, John and Ben. The section finishes with Call --- I Will Answer, allowing the books familiar themes to explode once more.

*it will get better  
how you used to think I was amazing  
just hand in there,  
I pretend to be a little case on the outside,  
hard*

The book ends with the section, Earth Eater, which doesn't summarize the book but rather takes us to additional places. The poem "Broken" stands out to me, as an affair has occurred, and though it was described as just something which happened with a friend, the broken is not the relationship, but rather the now broken inner safety of the narrator, as the poem concludes:

*Echo of who I used to be resonated  
like an empty drum against your ears---  
I let myself slip  
into loving you and  
hating myself.*

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Thus, "Elemental: A Dissection of Parts," by Ivy Page leaves me blessed with the largeness and the smallness of the world, with all the pieces and the individuality of each and every piece. It is the way life is observed by the observer and by all of us—pulled in and pushed back.