

The University of San Francisco

USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center

English

College of Arts and Sciences

2018

Elegy Pantoum

Dean Rader

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/engl>



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Elegy Pantoum

By [Dean Rader](#)

I don't want to be the blood on the blade,
but the world is a walking war,
and every inch of air is a wound.
Distant angel, your wings are wide

but the world is a walking war.
Our metaphors of flight are fluxed—
distant. Angel, your wings are wide
enough to spread the skylit stars.

Are metaphors of flight? Our fluxed
lives fall into emptiness, into echo. Cut
enough to spread the skylit stars
of worship (the tender stigmata of

lives). Fall into emptiness, into echo. Cut-
stains on our skin—let this be our form
of worship, the tender stigmata of
regret. The plot of this life leaves its

stains on our skin. Let this be our form
of punishment: not a bomb at a concert.
Regret. The plot of this life leaves its
shrapnel on every page, in every footnote

of punishment—not a bomb at a concert,
not my father on dialysis, not this
shrapnel. On every page, in every footnote,
the citations of our dying. Tell me: who gets to live?

Not my father on dialysis. Not this
man (his suit of tubes and bones),
the citations of our dying). Tell me who gets to live
in the light of their own breaking if not this

man? His suit of tubes and bones,
like bodies inside machines of motion, bright
in the light of their own breaking. *If not this,*
then what, the son asks the father, twinned in

like bodies. Inside machines of motion, bright
blue embers blaze us bowing into the now:
Then what, the son asks. The father, twinned
in this life (and the next), ghosts our presence.

Blue embers blaze us. Bowing into the now
of the riptide, I'm like one treading water, drowning,
in this life and the next. *Ghosts*. Our presence—
as brief, as dangerous, as atrial flutter

of the riptide. I'm like one treading water, drowning
in the spaces between—a new kind of infinity—
as brief, as dangerous, as atrial flutter
in my father's heart. But I am a swung sword

in the spaces between a new kind of infinity.
I don't want to be the blood on the blade
in my father's heart, but I am a swung sword
and every inch of air is a wound.