

COMPOSTING

In the small space
not yet planted
with overwintered garlic,
or onions and lettuce,
leeks and arugula,
radish and herbs,
turnips and chard,
onions and squash,
we pile the early weeds,
pigweed, dandelion,
lambs-quarter, quack grass —
though all but the last
would make a salad
for a forager if we
were pressed — and vine
trimmings from the grapes,
later the aging rhubarb leaves,
the volunteers of chamomile
and calendula, too-eager
armfuls of fennel and dill —
layered with a little dirt,
the coffee grounds
and crumbled eggshells
from breakfast
after garden work —
later, cabbage roots,
carrot tops — the daily round
that asks from memory
the name and shape
of every early leaf —
to add to the heat
and ferment of decay,
the mix that builds a living soil
from what we'd throw away.

by Robin Chapman