

# Heartwood



Cynthia Anderson

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*Haiku & Senryu*

Cynthia Anderson

## *As always, for Bill*

All of these poems have been previously published. Grateful thanks to the venues where they first appeared: LEAF, Poetry Pea, Blithe Spirit, Haiku Dialogue, Akitsu Quarterly, Autumn Moon Haiku Journal, Bloo Outlier, Password, Presence, MacQueen's Quinterly, Hexapod Haiku Challenge, Shadow Pond, Trash Panda, Folk Ku, tinywords, Failed Haiku, Femku, Frogpond, tsuri-dōrō, Time Haiku, Pan Haiku Journal, Scarlet Dragonfly, Poem in a Bottle Project, Modern Haiku, Cattails, Cholla Needles, California Quarterly, Irish Haiku Society, The Wee Sparrow Poetry Press, seashores, haikuNetra, The Bamboo Hut, Prune Juice, Under the Basho, Sonic Boom, hedgerow, HSA Members Anthology, whiptail, Mariposa, Golden Haiku Competition

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Unfettered

left behind  
the dream raven's  
dropped feather

sanding the rough edges desert fog

\*\*\*

imaginary woodland  
elegant clarkia  
in a five-gallon pot

every day  
a little brighter...  
migrating bluebirds

\*\*\*

spring equinox  
we stop for a ladybug  
crossing the path



garden chores  
the kibitzing  
of house finches

\*\*\*

no older  
than I've ever been...  
snow pea blossom

wrapping her nest  
the Anna's hummingbird  
tugs spider silk

\*\*\*

earth tremor the wobble of active verbs

unfettered  
the desert willow's  
purple prose

\*\*\*

cloudless sky  
the Transverse Ranges  
every shade of blue

sage blossoms  
a black bumblebee's  
bear hugs

\*\*\*

star chart  
the speckled shell  
of a quail's egg

gray and still  
as desert scrub...  
not-a-cottontail

\*\*\*

fallen branches  
the mule deer's  
vanishing act

nesting hollow  
high in the palm  
the barn owl's face

\*\*\*

a jury of blue jays guilty guilty guilty

turning the earth  
a bumper crop  
of anthills

\*\*\*

worm moon revising my life

in each footfall  
an eon—  
desert tortoise

\*\*\*

cell memory  
my mountain  
in the Pliocene



snowmelt  
the mountain lake's  
milky chill

\*\*\*

rock hopping  
over a canyon stream  
helping hands

nowhere sky  
the spiraling circles  
of turkey vultures

\*\*\*

settling  
the dust in me  
desert rain

adding wings  
to a prayer  
snowy egret

\*\*\*

the vows I've made—  
moving the hose  
from tree to tree

long drives...  
our heart-to-hearts  
go deeper

\*\*\*

my final answer Venus at dusk

# Memory Streams

tunnel memory  
a horn honking  
in the dark

where polliwogs used to be the neighborhood

\*\*\*

playing favorites my imaginary friends

first time in church  
a toddler worships  
the pipe organ

\*\*\*

leaf pile  
raking it higher  
after each jump



waiting for  
the light to change  
waffle iron

\*\*\*

piano recital  
racing past the phrase  
I forgot

snow day  
making my fort  
then hiding in it

\*\*\*

Trojan horse  
I wait for the signal  
to spill my secret

August morning  
I bury my nose  
in nana's roses

\*\*\*

ancestors  
the mountain  
on my back

siblings swimming in separate memory streams

\*\*\*

my old ways unraveling dead parents

heirloom teapot pouring my heart out

\*\*\*

rabbit hole a child no more

not my place to s(t)ay

\*\*\*

nomad years  
learning to belong  
everywhere

# Sky Out of Breath

desert sunrise  
the  $S$ -curves  
of a snake track



crack of dawn  
the swoop and holler  
of cactus wrens

\*\*\*

sun-warmed stone  
the lizard turns  
to look at me

chasing the arroyo a cloud's tattered shadow

\*\*\*

ventifact my weaknesses riddled by the wind

lightning strike  
the leap and scatter  
of jackrabbits

\*\*\*

edge of the wild  
another death runs past  
the window

the sky out of breath wildfire smoke

\*\*\*

long parched summer  
Mojave sand stretched  
to oblivion

star bright  
the glint of sun  
on a raven's wing

\*\*\*

other worlds  
the yellow and orange suns  
of marigolds

heat wave  
the lazy circles  
of drain flies

\*\*\*

overgrown weeds  
no one said that change  
would be easy

sticking points  
the cholla drops  
another limb

\*\*\*

clinging to  
my disappointments  
desert dust

taking me in  
the polished agate  
of a bee's eye

\*\*\*

tree-ripened mangoes  
in the produce aisle—  
staycation



thunderheads  
the memories  
piling up

\*\*\*

Teton sunset  
a moose takes over  
the hiking trail

cooling lava  
the blackness broken  
by fresh green ferns

\*\*\*

impermafrost  
an ancient bear  
thaws in the tundra

coastal road trip past perfect tense

\*\*\*

floating world a ripple crosses the clouds

shoreline walk  
my heart leaps with  
the dolphins

\*\*\*

harbor stroll  
the windblown strains  
of fifty ukuleles

seaside cabins  
the shy kids come out  
of their shells

\*\*\*

neap tide wishing on sea stars

my lover at the window night-blooming jasmine

\*\*\*

peace rose  
a scent to end  
all wars

helping me be  
my best self  
praying mantis

\*\*\*

stargazer lilies  
the heady scent  
of second chances

fading sunlight  
the last broccoli blossoms  
in a vase

\*\*\*

supernova  
the light one woman  
can hold



preyless the red-tail treading air

\*\*\*

civil twilight  
roosting quail  
get themselves sorted

summer's end  
a roadrunner begs  
at the empty café

\*\*\*

the opal glow  
of an abalone shell—  
desert twilight

# Star Seeds

solar wind  
my head releases  
its star seeds

head-on collision  
the shockwaves  
between galaxies

\*\*\*

cold winter's night Orion belting it out

spiral galaxy  
the whorl  
of a thumbprint

\*\*\*

bear star the twinkle in my old friend's eye

homesick addicted to the holodeck

\*\*\*

swirling stars  
the death it takes  
to reach them

you again the persistence of black holes

\*\*\*

plutoed a page from an old playbook



Al yi yi yi yi

\*\*\*

fractal more to the pattern than my failures

fast track  
disasters not waiting  
to happen

\*\*\*

wanted: a new planet  
just like the one  
we ruined

low earth orbit  
my walking meditation  
around the house

\*\*\*

holding her own  
against the sun—  
day moon

undocumented  
a man without  
a planet

\*\*\*

phoning home  
a flashlight aimed  
at the stars

# Taking What Comes

heritage oak  
adding rings  
to my fingers

holding tight  
to an upside-down world  
ladderback woodpecker

\*\*\*

ellipses the falcon slows in front of me

pine cones clustered  
on a low branch —  
the weight of autumn

\*\*\*

fall migration  
the neighbor's dead brush  
blows into my yard



rootbound the home I've outgrown

\*\*\*

in the mess of a pack rat's nest one last favor

cold front  
the wrong season  
blusters in

\*\*\*

lame grasshopper  
my failed leap  
of faith

shaman's cave  
the narrow space  
between worlds

\*\*\*

cloud spirit  
a charging dragon  
falls apart

taking what comes  
the great-horned owl  
swivels her head

\*\*\*

not as timid  
as I would prefer  
coyote's stare

string theory  
the mess inside  
a pumpkin

\*\*\*

diving ravens a black line slashed through the rain

spawning salmon  
spent bodies  
at the stream's edge

\*\*\*

leftovers  
not enough of me  
to go around

going where  
the wind takes me—  
rotary clothesline

\*\*\*

sundial  
the shadows  
of passing selves

reading between the spines cactarium

\*\*\*

withering buds the words that won't come



high plains drifter glacial erratic

\*\*\*

looking back  
the mountain I climbed  
higher than I thought

hidden cave  
the Neanderthal  
in my DNA

\*\*\*

old lava  
the origin stories  
of my faults

thinning sun  
the faded  
painted ladies

\*\*\*

sleepless night reassembling my reasons

Mojave saloon  
last refuge  
of the flabbergasted

\*\*\*

where the ghost town was—  
nothing left  
but the graveyard

distant thunder  
running out  
of things to say

\*\*\*

memory lapse  
the pothole  
at the turnoff

# Relief Map

snow white the underside of my hair

retirement the sound of dust settling

\*\*\*

between one chapter  
and the next  
afternoon nap



patchwork quilt  
piecing the memories  
of our life together

\*\*\*

bedtime my feet have another idea

class reunion  
the white-crowned sparrows  
all talking at once

\*\*\*

storm tides  
changing my mind  
about you

diving deep  
a chronic case  
of shipwreck fever

\*\*\*

shrink wrap  
my big mistake  
never far

long desert highway  
my father confesses  
he never wanted kids

\*\*\*

after mom's death sitting up straighter

whiteout  
an old friend  
crosses over

\*\*\*

aging process  
an address book  
of dead names

losing my bearings  
the labyrinth  
of hospital corridors

\*\*\*

life expectancy  
more or less  
what I expected

relief map  
the peaks and valleys  
of my face

\*\*\*

spirit world becoming self-possessed

# Heartwood



winter solstice  
the last gold clings  
to the cottonwood

dawn walk  
my daily shiver  
at the dip in the road

\*\*\*

empty burrow  
an old friend  
who can't be found

snowbird season  
Canadian geese  
at the golf course pond

\*\*\*

arctic blast the last garbage can standing

facing into  
the cold north wind  
my aching teeth

\*\*\*

the kindness of boulders their reliable silence

recycling  
the recycling—  
rogue wind

\*\*\*

desert footpath  
freeing the catclaw  
from a plastic bag

winter unleashed a sun dog at my heels

\*\*\*

cold sunset a chaos of coyotes

for unknown reasons leaning pine

\*\*\*

aging in place the beds we've made

midafternoon  
the sudden chill  
of a mountain's shadow

\*\*\*

purgatory my heart in the right place



driving snow  
a mother spread-eagled  
over her hatchlings

\*\*\*

last rite  
the white butterfly  
folds its wings

needing the same  
advice I'm giving  
desert winter

\*\*\*

red-letter birthday  
the weathered sandstone's  
piece of blue sky

unchained melody  
the daughter I never had  
still mine

\*\*\*

gliding raven  
lifting my arms  
in reply

turning heads  
the mountain chickadee's  
teacher voice

\*\*\*

treadmill  
moving mountains  
step by step

status quo not long for this world

\*\*\*

boneyard the dry rattle of hail

ponderosa forest  
my daily hike  
to the oracle tree

\*\*\*

in memoriam  
I listen to music  
the cat would have liked

changing memory lanes the past of least resistance

\*\*\*

arriving  
without fireworks  
my kind of year

heartwood  
the old friends  
holding me up

\*\*\*

transmigration  
my breath light  
as a feather



# About the Author

This is Cynthia Anderson's 14<sup>th</sup> poetry collection. Other recent books include *The Far Mountain* (Wise Owl Publications, 2024), *Arrival* (Sheila-Na-Gig Editions, 2023), and *Full Circle* (Cholla Needles Press, 2022). Her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Cynthia is co-editor of *A Bird Black As the Sun: California Poets on Crows & Ravens*. She has lived in California for over 40 years.

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