

Heartwood



Cynthia Anderson

Heartwood

Haiku & Senryu

Cynthia Anderson

As always, for Bill

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Unfettered

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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

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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
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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 to 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 14th 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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