

HERON TREE

SEVEN : 2020

begin cleave connect

dissolve eat fill

find fly hear

hold hum lift

look mourn release

remain rip run

shine snap step

surround trace wait



HERON TREE

SEVEN : 2020

EDITED BY

Chris Campolo

Rebecca Resinski

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herontree.com / info.herontree@gmail.com

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HERON TREE : SEVEN

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DEBORAH FASS

Leap Day

Coming around the bend
up the hill toward the freeway

out of the corner of my eye
purple flowers

forgetting for a moment
the dying, just this burst open

after the miracle
of average rainfall

lupines, I cry out
as if naming them could tie

my soul to them
the most fleeting

among us
in two worlds at once

roots in winter clay
whorls in spring air

the decease of which
will release us.

TAMARA MADISON

Making way

In early spring unseen beyond green-threaded sycamores, geese announce

their flight. It's hard, this getting up and walking out, this making use

of a brilliant morning. But the birds' excited voices full of plans and portent

take me back to autumn, when they flew over the field where we walked

among the blown and withered leaves; they passed low above us and we saw

their downy bellies. Beneath their harsh cries we heard the feathered machinery

of their flight and I forgot for a moment the painful creaking of my knees,

so like the trees' complaints as they move their limbs aside, making way for wind.

JENN MONROE

Left Unchecked They Hold Fast

I was warned they would take over when I first noticed
the flowers. My zeal for harvest stayed my hand. I thought
those tendrils would go the way of all green things in winter,
but when it was time to rake out leaf clutter, daffodils and tulips
were ensnared, bent where they would be resilient, necks slit
nearly clean through. Bare hands unwound reluctant thorns, ripped
out their reach across the front lawn like paper from a notebook. But
it needed to be dug out, sliced through to root. After, I took the wounded
yellow blooms inside, placed them in a glass jar on the kitchen table.

E. J. EVANS

The Runaway Child

He was not brave. He could only run away in his mind.
Long ago looking out from his smallness
toward the farthest hills
he was seeking for a way out
that for him would be a way into his life.
Since then the passage of time has been
a long struggle to cross an expanse in himself,
yet it's still as if he has barely left home.
He is so quiet and small I often forget he is still part of me.
I sense his presence most when I first wake,
a plain man in an old house,
and look through his child-eyes
at the dawn light filling the windows,
the light that speaks to us always of distance,
and it's so quiet I imagine I hear him
whispering from within,
just let me go a little bit farther.

JEANNE WAGNER

Jungfrau

After we climb above those clichéd green valleys
I think of as the kind of places where contentment
tucks itself in and ambiance becomes a daily god,

the tram finally stops, so we can step down, witness
those cold peaks, their sheer penetration of the sky,
feel the tightened air, a clean scent I've always loved,

its coolness filling up my lungs like a second youth.
The guide explains how last year they spread tarps
over some of the glaciers to keep them from melting,

the way Victorian ladies wore hats and veils out of doors
to preserve the untouched-by-light look so fashionable
then, the white petals of their skin shunning the wind.

We're gutschier now, our faces tilting toward the Jungfrau,
our arms lifted above our heads as if we're worshipping,
so I can see the way our fingers form two parallel corners

around our phones and cameras, the square shape we make
when describing the size of something lost but once loved,
something we thought we could hold forever in our hands.

ANGIE MACRI

Witch Hollow Road

Apples

not grown in a cave valley
are blessed:

trees in rows, cut low
in management, like great roses

from which we can eat,
no fallow dream,
but sweet

as if from a witch's hand
(don't you know that story?),
as if from our common mother's hand
(you know that story, too).

She misses us with her kiss
lost in air.

DAVID ANTHONY SAM

Enlargement

The Brownie
had been posed
in the darkness,
set on the brittle grass
wet with dew
upright,
its black circled lens
eyeing upwards,
its gray, ribbed shutter
depressed and locked,
silence unphotographed
around it.

Now, the film removed,
unspooled in light
as red as sunset,
transmuted by baths
of acrid chemistry
into a negative
of things heaven-held,
I aim fresh light
through the enlarger
and watch
the circling streaks of stars
find frozen motion.

WIM COLEMAN

Tarot Trump XXI: The World
in memory of Farley Wheelwright

Up here so high that you and I
can peer into the secret deep concavity of the earth
and no one can hear us speak

I dare to tell you

that hope is the scar from some unnecessary surgery
that faith is the overabundance of oxygen
that every word is a lie

and that love is here
here tangled amid these raptures of ice
or else it is nowhere

for when we fall from this place
(as we must, we surely must)
our hearts shall be devoured by little stars
shining in the water of the deepest well.

MELISSA FREDERICK

While I Lie with the Beehives

my mind circles the concept of horizontal,
how it transforms bodies to slabs of matter,
how this posture will never qualify me
to be a worker in the human sense,
and only workers are whole.

My eyes follow my highly active neighbors,
their honey-tinged abdomens
tracing flight paths that cling
to hymenopterous memory
until they're performed in front of a crowd.
They get the message. They earn their keep.

I, on the other hand, lie here and expend
resources. I absorb my own memories,
as they are recorded on brain tissue,
like wax cylinders that get scraped
after every revolution.

The bees are unaware.
They spill from their boxes like amber capsules.
They hum question marks into every conversation.
They tickle my skin with their walking and diving,
crisscrossing the air with the strength of their purpose,
weaving infinite patters of three-dimensional traffic.

They make me dizzy.

My head hasn't left the ground for days.
I can't keep my equilibrium.
I don't dare gasp, or I'll have them loose in my lungs.

They could leave the earth behind
and take me with them.
They could seek to form their own
layer of atmosphere,
the force of their resolve lifting me by the ribs.

But they won't. It's our mutual decision.
I have no potential energy to give.
The soil is pulling me under, particle by particle.
In a week, it will have me
buried to the halfway mark.

ANDREA POTOS

The Woman in the Van Gogh Painting

She may be skimming the air
in her pale white gown,
around her the flowers may
or may not have butterflies
as petals, and her hair may
or may not be ochre waves escaped
from a sun-torched ocean somewhere beyond
the distance, and her hands,
oh her hands, where do they
begin, where do they end
though there is no end

JENNIFER POLSON PETERSON

The Pool: Sonnet 2

Let me remember how we came.
There was a time when time was
a river trail worn smooth, where days and weeks
were great stones one could lay a passing hand on.
There is a place along the bank
where women may go down,
stepping free of shoes
and slipping off their blouses.
You know it when you see those silks
hung among the tree branches
and dancing with the wind
until the women come back
which they may
never.

MARK HUMMEL

Last Days

like
hen-pecked shards
uprooted by pigs
scavenging in a bone garden—
these last days of childhood.

we scaled two miles high
and looked a long way down
for what was left behind.

sometimes the mountain
is more
beautiful
from a distance shrouded
in blue
haze, snow and ice less
treacherous, trees a camouflage
jest, not this
sharp knuckle-ridge rock
like the vertebrae of a skeleton,
not this stormy approaching sky
not this cold
longing
for memories.

GWEN HART

Goldfinches

The sunflower,
heavy with seeds,
but still ringed
with yellow,
snaps upright
when the petals
take flight!

M. A. SCOTT

Threnody

From osprey's nest, the young
shriek. The mother

has stopped feeding them
for their own good

(we infer), or she has returned
to her own hunger.

The light—suddenly autumnal—
wants me

to remain present, so I practice
looking strangers

in the eye, but focus just above
their brow

when it's too much. The world
is burning,

I know. Touch (or its lack)
gathers urgency.

Sliced tomatoes demand
to be eaten

with fingers, dipped in olive oil,
salt; jellied seeds

slipped under my tongue
as remedy.

JENNIFER STEWART MILLER

Under the Apple Tree

For E. A. S.

Praise fall and these withering leaves.
Praise grief, for the love it's made of, those bees—

how they hummed, how they brought us fruit.
Praise the last days, the last apples dangling on the tree.

Praise the fallen fruit, and bruise and decay—
for the seeds they nourish, the mouths they feed.

And praise the ants reconnoitering loss—
apples cracked open in the grass.

NELS HANSON

A Book

With your thumb set pages
rippling, so pictures move
as in a movie, no words, no
story, just the sky made of

many skies, diary of your
life. The days are blue or
gray, or dappled, sapphire
and cirrus, cumulus, now

purple thunderhead, tall
funnel cloud dissolving
to that clearest autumn.
Wait for the occasional

hawk, geese in a wide V
aiming north, then south,
jet's contrail blurring as
it drifts. And in between?

Nights of stars and moon
or snow, lightning etching
veins across the darkness,
flicker, dim as sun returns.

Sky watched each moment
and spoke little, with wind,
a stain of smoke, shooting
meteor, the famous comet

we saw one December. All
is saved in the sky's strange
legend, the weather's slow
years that were your own.

BONNIE WEHLE

The Cherry Pit

It must have been in November when she swallowed it,
opting for the cherry pie as a respite
from the pumpkin on every dessert tray of the season.

That winter she sensed tendrils
beginning to connect her to life again,
felt more rooted than she had for she didn't know how long.

By spring her curls grew, vaguely at first,
to resemble a crown of pink blossoms.
She allowed their fragrance to breach her bitter edge.

In summer came growth she couldn't account for,
a fullness, a leafing out, her head inhabited by nests,
egg-filled.

With fall, her heart swelled like ripe fruit,
and the fledglings returned to feast
on bright crimson berries.

WENDY TAYLOR CARLISLE

Spell: an Ozark Sonnet

The coyotes cry on the hillside, / their yip, eerie as the world
before the first word, a river / of noise, a babble that seems to boil
from inside my ear, so deep / in my skull that it becomes a voice
chiding or reading a beloved / book aloud, wrapping itself in
the surrounding darkness / that has fallen abruptly,
outside and in, until that oracle / cry resolves into instructions,
joins my woods chanting, / becomes another living spell

ROBIN TURNER

The Hawk

in her dream keeps appearing. Stays
near to her as breath. Will
she see how it fills,
how it veils
her sight.

MOLLY LYNDE

The Completeness of Lemons

When colors begin to fade,
I will bring you lemons:
bright bumpy skins,
not exactly circular or even oval,
yellow tinged with green
as in a regret,
and an imperfection or two
just to make them all the more real.
We will hold them up to our faces,
close our eyes,
and feel their zing
graze our closed eyelids.
We will flutter our eyelashes
against their ticklish coolness,
appreciate with a whiff
their tart reluctance to be consumed,
and laugh for no reason.

KIRSTEN SHU-YING CHEN

This too shall pass

As if time alone could cleave us from the storm.
As if we were not part of it, too.

The cold front, the advancing surge, the body
a vessel for the electrical current of everything around it:

Traffic, sickness, the music of
fireflies. Humans, too,

give off a visible light—science proves this.
But I'm surprised we don't walk around on fire,

what, with the collective lint of our past.
Are we always excavating?

And is there always something to find?
I think of *relative* I think of *instinct* I think

of that dark, damp corner where
beautiful things sometimes grow.

I know that place.
You've been there.

And we recognize the artifacts bone-clean:
How the face glows brightest.

M. A. SCOTT

Oppy's Last Words

in memoriam, Mars Rover Opportunity, 2004-2018

My battery is low, it's getting dark.
Grim & wrecked my scattered body. Storms
sand me blank. Try one last start
but my battery is low. It's getting dark
in this slow orbit. Ignition: flares arc, a scarred
transmission. I grow weaker, mourn
my battery. Below, it's getting dark,
grim & wrecked. My scattered body storms.

LOUIE LAND

Ars Poetica

I have to wait
for murky river water lingering
a week after a rainstorm
that lasted
only a few spare hours,
for the crack of acorns
assaulting a tin roof,
for the long yawn
of I80 slanting left,
brake lights in the dark,
a crimson crescent
taillight to taillight
like a flame across a line
of wooden matches.

POLLY BROWN

Old Vole

Our birds stayed hidden all afternoon,
somewhere deep in the woods.

Now, above fog, above clouds
still heavy with more,

that same moon we saw last night
sails on, risen unseen,

shining there unseen. And maybe,
in this year's white and silent

tunnels under the snow,
an old vole samples again her stash

of crabapples fermenting.

 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

POLLY BROWN is the author of *Each Thing Torn from Any of Us* (Finishing Line Press 2008) and *Pebble Leaf Feather Knife* (Cherry Grove Collections 2019) and the editor of *Evolution: Poems Across Seven Decades* by Jeanne L. Sawyer (Heron Pond Press 2017). Her work has appeared in *Appalachia*, *The Worcester Review*, *Terrain.org*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. She is a member of Every Other Thursday Poetry, a Boston poets' collective. She lives in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, and can be found online at pollybrownpoet.blogspot.com.

WENDY TAYLOR CARLISLE is the author of *Reading Berryman to the Dog* (Jacaranda Press 2000), *Discount Fireworks* (Jacaranda Press 2008), *The Mercy of Traffic* (Unlikely Books 2019), and *On the Way to the Promised Land Zoo* (Cyberwit 2019). Her work has appeared in *Star 82 Review Pocket Poems* (2019) and *Fiolet and Wing* (Liminal Books 2019), as well as *Rattle*, *pacificREVIEW*, *Barzakh*, and elsewhere. She lives in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, and can be found online at wendytaylorcarlisle.com.

KIRSTEN SHU-YING CHEN's work has appeared in *Bodega*, *[PANK]*, *Hanging Loose*, *Best American Poetry*, *Aquifer: The Florida Review Online*, and elsewhere. She lives in New York City, New York.

WIM COLEMAN is the author, with Pat Perrin, of *The Jamais Vu Papers* (Harmony Books 1991, Plays on Ideas 2013), *Mayan Interface* (Madeira Press 2012), and *Anna's World* (Chiron Books 2013). His work has appeared in *SOL: English Writing in Mexico*, *The Esthetic Apostle*, *Dream Noir*, *Visitant*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, and elsewhere. He lives in Carrboro, North Carolina, and can be found online at playsonideas.wordpress.com.

E. J. EVANS is the author of *First Snow Coming* (Kattywompus Press 2015) and *Conversations with the Horizon* (Box Turtle Press 2019). His work has appeared in *Mudfish*, *miller's pond*, *Main Street Rag*, *The Woven Tale Press*, *The Hamilton Stone Review*, and elsewhere. He is a member of the board of directors of the Syracuse Downtown Writers Center and serves on the planning committee for Cazenovia Counterpoint, an annual literature and music festival. He lives in Cazenovia, New York, and can be found online at ejevans.wordpress.com.

DEBORAH FASS is the author of *Where the Current Catches* (Island Verse Editions 2017). Her work has appeared in *Coal Hill Review*, *Terrain.org*, *Kudzu House Quarterly*, *The Fourth River: Tributaries*, *Fire and Rain: Eco-poetry of California*, and elsewhere. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and can be found online at deborahfass.com.

MELISSA FREDERICK is the author of *She* (Finishing Line Press 2008). Her work has appeared in *DIAGRAM*, *Muse/A*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Oxford Poetry*, *Mid-American Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in suburban Philadelphia and can be found online at missficklereader.wordpress.com.

NELS HANSON is the author of *The Blue Flower Case* (2016), *The Toy and Other Stories* (2016), and *Angels Awake* (2017). His work has appeared in *Rumble Fish Quarterly*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *The Ibis Head Review*, *Easy Street*, *Volney Road Review*, and elsewhere. He lives in San Luis Obispo, California.

GWEN HART is the author of *Dating the Invisible Man* (The Ledge Press 2006), *Lost and Found* (David Robert Books 2006), and *The Empress of Kisses* (Texas Review Press 2016). Her work has appeared in *Speckled Trout Review*, *Snapdragon*, *Tiny Seed Literary Journal*, *Otis Nebula*, *Midwestern Gothic*, and elsewhere. She is the faculty sponsor of *Hot Dish Magazine*, a national journal of poetry and fiction for grades 9-12. She lives in Storm Lake, Iowa.

MARK HUMMEL is the author of *In the Chameleon's Shadow* (fluidstone press 2014) and *Lost And Found: Stories* (Elk Bay Books 2014). His work has appeared in *Dogwood*, *Zone 3*, *Talking River*, *Fugue*, *Per Contra*, and elsewhere. He also serves as the editor of *bioStories*. He lives in Montana and can be found online at markhummelwriter.com.

LOUIE LAND's work has appeared in *Poetica Review*, *FRiGG*, *The Cabin*, *Santa Clara Review*, *The Idle Class*, and elsewhere. He lives in Moscow, Idaho, and can be found online at louieland.bandcamp.com.

MOLLY LYNDE is the editor-in-chief of *Transference*, an annual literary journal featuring poetry in translation. Her work has appeared in *Rue Scribe* and *The Font*. She lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

ANGIE MACRI is the author of *Fear Nothing of the Future or the Past* (Finishing Line Press 2014) and *Underwater Panther* (Southeast Missouri State University Press 2015). Her work has appeared in *Jet Fuel Review*, *Lullwater Review*, *American Literary Review*, *The Common*, *Bear Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and can be found online at angiemacri.wordpress.com.

TAMARA MADISON is the author of *The Belly Remembers*, *Wild Domestic*, and *Moraine* (Pearl Editions 2004, 2011, and 2017 respectively). Her work has appeared in *Chiron Review*, *Your Daily Poem*, *A Year of Being Here*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, and elsewhere. She lives in Los Alamitos, California, and can be found online at tamaramadisonpoetry.com.

JENNIFER STEWART MILLER is the author of *A Fox Appears: a biography of a boy in haiku* (2015) and *The Strangers Burial Ground* (Seven Kitchens Press 20020). Her work has appeared in *Crab Creek Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Harpur Palate*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Sugar House Review*, and elsewhere. She serves as a board member for the Hudson Valley Writers Center. She lives in Bronxville, New York, and can be found online at jenniferstewartmiller.com.

JENN MONROE is the author of *Something More Like Love* (Finishing Line Press 2012) and *In Anticipation of Grief* (Red Bird Chapbooks 2015). Her work has appeared in *Ethel*, *Killjoy*, *Literary Mama*, and elsewhere. She lives in New Hampshire and can be found online at thepoetgirl.com.

JENNIFER POLSON PETERSON's poetry has appeared in *Pembroke Magazine*, *Cumberland River Review*, *Diaphanous*, *Rockvale Review*, *Image Journal*, and elsewhere. She lives in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

ANDREA POTOS is the author of *Arrows of Light* (Iris Press 2017), *A Stone to Carry Home* (Salmon Poetry 2018), and *Mothershell* (Kelsay Books 2019). Her work has appeared in *Poetry East*, *The Sun*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Loch Raven Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, and can be found online at facebook.com/AndreaPotosPoet.

DAVID ANTHONY SAM is the author of *Finite to Fail: Poems after Dickinson* (GFT Press 2017), *Final Inventory* (Prolific Press 2018), and *Dark Fathers & Other Poems* (Kelsay Books 2019). His work has appeared in *Crosswinds Poetry Journal*, *december*, *Gravel*, *The Wayne Literary Review*, *The MacGuffin*, and elsewhere. He serves as a vice president for the Poetry Society of Virginia. He lives in Locust Grove, Virginia, and can be found online at davidanthonysam.com.

M. A. SCOTT's work has appeared in *Pretty Owl Poetry*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Barrelhouse Online*, *Crab Fat Magazine*, *Mid-American Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Hudson Valley, New York, and facilitates a monthly publication coaching roundtable at the Hudson Valley Writers Center.

ROBIN TURNER is the author of *bindweed & crow poison* (Porkbelly Press 2016). Her work has appeared in *Literary Mama*, *One, deLuge*, *Sweet Tree Review*, *Unlost Journal*, and elsewhere. She lives in Dallas, Texas.

JEANNE WAGNER is the author of *The Zen-Piano Mover* (NFSPS 2004), *In the Body of Our Lives* (Sixteen Rivers Press 2011), and *Everything Turns Into Something Else* (Grayson Press 2020). Her work has appeared in *The Southern Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *North American Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Nimrod International Journal of Prose and Poetry*, and elsewhere. She serves on the boards for the Marin Poetry Center and the Sixteen Rivers collective press. She lives in Kensington, California, and can be found online at sixteenrivers.org/authors/jeanne-wagner.

BONNIE WEHLE's work has appeared in *Valley Voices*, *The Avocet*, *Sandcutters*, *Red Rock Review*, *Metaforología Gaceta Literaria*, and elsewhere. She is a docent at the University of Arizona Poetry Center, and she conducts a monthly poetry discussion circle for the Pima County Public Library system. She lives in Tucson, Arizona.