

HERON TREE

TEN : 2023

actions appetite berries
boulder circles comforts depth
extravagance fire future
gate grain griefs
heart heat heaven house
jar lemons margin
metals morning piece place
planet reason remedy roots
scent serpent sights
spirits spoonfuls thorns



HERON TREE

TEN : 2023

EDITED BY

Chris Campolo

Rebecca Resinski

This volume collects poems
published on the HERON TREE website in 2023.
herontree.com / info.herontree@gmail.com

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WILDA MORRIS

The Sun

conspicuous
inexhaustible
the circus-running sun
carries not one grain of soil

a spectacle of singular
aggregation
beheld through bluish haze

It seemed formed
of vapors, rising and falling
hot
infernally

thoughts like these trouble few

But still
under the influence of
light
a delirious throb

not a bit daunted
we gazed
entranced
tormented to madness
flailing and tossing

the margin
vanished

ABOUT “THE SUN”

“The Sun” was created from *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville (1851). About the poem and the process of composing it, Wilda Morris writes:

I selected *Moby-Dick* as my text because I am fascinated by Melville’s novel. I have written a whole book of poems responding to it. I narrowed my source down to Chapter 87, “The Grand Armada,” because that was the chapter I was assigned for a *Moby-Dick* marathon honoring Melville’s 200th birthday. I read through the chapter, marking words and phrases that interested me. When I came to the phrase “the circus-running sun,” I felt intuitively that I had found my focus. All the words in this poem occur in the order they appear in my source text. After I settled on the sun as theme, I reread the words and phrases I had marked before getting to that part of the chapter, and came up with the first two lines. Then I read what followed “the circus-running sun” to find the rest of the poem.

DEBORAH-ZENHA ADAMS

it was the last summer

It was the last day of July. The long hot summer was drawing to a close; and we, the weary pilgrims of the London pavement, were beginning to think of the cloud-shadows on the corn-fields, and the autumn breezes on the sea-shore.

For my own poor part, the fading summer left me out of health, out of spirits, and, if the truth must be told, out of money as well. During the past year I had not managed my professional resources as carefully as usual; and my extravagance now limited me to the prospect of spending the autumn economically between my mother's cottage at Hampstead and my own chambers in town.

The evening, I remember, was still and cloudy; the London air was at its heaviest; the distant hum of the street-traffic was at its faintest; the small pulse of the life within me, and the great heart of the city around me, seemed to be sinking in unison, languidly and more languidly, with the sinking sun. I roused myself from the book which I was dreaming over rather than reading, and left my chambers to meet the cool night air in the suburbs. It was one of the two evenings every week which I was accustomed to spend with my mother and my sister. So I turned my steps northward in the direction of Hampstead.

Events which I have yet to relate make it necessary to mention in this place that my father had been dead some years at the period of which I am now writing; and that my sister Sarah and I were the sole survivors of a family of five children. My father was a drawing-master before me. His exertions had made him highly successful in his profession; and his affectionate anxiety to provide for the future of those who were dependent on his labours had impelled him, from the time of his marriage, to devote to the insuring of his life a much larger portion of his income than most men consider it necessary to set aside for that purpose. Thanks to his admirable prudence and self-denial my mother and sister were left, after his death, as independent of the world as they had been during his lifetime. I succeeded to his connection, and had every reason to feel grateful for the prospect that awaited me at my starting in life.

The quiet twilight was still trembling on the topmost ridges of the heath; and the view of London below me had sunk into a black gulf in the shadow of the cloudy night, when I stood before the gate of my mother's cottage. I had hardly rung the bell before the door was opened violently; my worthy

it was the last summer

and we were out

of truth the extravagance

of autumn roused

to meet the dead

and the gate opened

ABOUT “IT WAS THE LAST SUMMER”

“it was the last summer” was created from *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins (1859-1860). About the poem and the process of composing it, Deborah-Zenha Adams writes:

This particular piece is the result of a practice in which I pull and pair words randomly until some truth emerges. In this case, the end of a season and the opening of a gate led to thoughts of liminality, and isn’t that always lurking in the backs of our minds?

SUSAN APRIL

Drift

Many of our most valuable of
precious stones are found in drift—
the diamond, the sapphire, the topaz,
as well as bold metals: platinum, gold.

I hold
rubies in no settled order and if we
suppose ourselves in a meadow
under a hill under a rocking stone—
a type of boulder characteristic of drift—
equally poised such that a child
pressing against it or even the wind
could make it fall, words fail,
and (we are) denuded to bone.

ABOUT “DRIFT”

“Drift” was created from *Elementary Geology* by Edward Hitchcock (1854 edition). About the poem and the process of composing it, Susan April writes:

This poem was sourced from the classic science textbook Hitchcock’s *Elementary Geology*, a text used by both Henry David Thoreau and Emily Dickinson. My process involved a close reading of Section I, “A General Account of the Constitution and Structure of the Earth and of the Principles on Which Rocks are Classified,” and Section III, “Lithological Characters of the Stratified Rocks.” I made lists of key phrases and was struck by the sensual language that at times recalled a love letter or a forlorn postcard. “Drift” was created from such lifted phrases with linking words of my own.

ERICA MERAZ

So As To Taste Sleep

Having had, in a dream, a conversation with the poet
 listening to the songs of birds,

Hear what is said by these sacred oracles mingled with mud—

it is not a
 small affair to have to break
 two vessels

we discover a world which even the
 moon does not see
 we can talk with the stars
 presence

which
 makes the sea speak
 makes a straight ray appear broken

a thick veil
 remedies
 the eye
 images of things which are becoming
 burst out

always ready to
 speak, even when they have nothing to say
 a bird a bone an inflamed
 flower

fires which traverse space
 deliver them
 up to the gaze
 gravity does not hinder them

ABOUT “SO AS TO TASTE SLEEP”

“So As To Taste Sleep” was created from *On Dreams* by Synesios of Cyrene (c. 370-413), translated by Isaac Myer in 1888. About the poem and the process of composing it, Erica Meraz writes:

In his essay, which details the mantic quality of dreams and their use as personal oracles, Synesios suggests that the distinct languages of animals can be clearly understood within dreams. This proposal inspired me to harvest words and phrases from his text as if they were messages spoken by birds in my sleep. I was also encouraged by a remark Synesios makes on the relationship between the terms *soul*, *intellect*, *absolute*, and *contingent*: “We will invert the order of the terms. We will join the first to the third, the second to the fourth: the proportions will still remain true, as knowledge demonstrates to us.” I adopted his instruction as an attitude with which to approach the text as a whole, inverting, shuffling, and marrying his words as they spoke to each other. I retained the linear placement of the words as they appear in Myer’s translation with the hope of imbuing the poem with the off-kilter air peculiar to dreams.

LYNN PATTISON

Unfortunate Mottos, an erasure poem
from *Floral Emblems*, Henry Phillips, 1825

I.

But to express ourselves more readily by floral emblems, it is necessary that we should lay down grammatical rules for the government of this silent language before we proceed to the dictionary of emblems.

The first principle is to observe that the pronoun *I*, or *me*, is expressed by inclining the flower to the left, and the pronoun *thou*, or *thee*, by sloping it to the right, but when represented by drawings on paper, these positions should be reversed, as the flower should lean to the heart of the person whom it is to signify. The articles *a*, *an*, and *the*, may be expressed by a tendril, the first by a single line, the second by a double tendril, and the third by one with three branches.

The second rule is, that if a flower presented upright expresses a particular sentiment, when reversed it has a contrary meaning. Thus, for example, a rose bud upright with its thorns and its leaves means, "I fear, but I hope;" if the same bud is returned held downwards, it signifies, "you must neither hope nor fear;" but if the thorns be stripped off, it expresses, "there is every thing to hope;" deprived of its leaves, it signifies, "there is every thing to fear." Thus the expression may be varied of almost all the flowers by changing their position. The flower of the marigold, for example, placed on the head, signifies "trouble of spirits;" on the heart, "trouble of love;" on the bosom, "weariness." The pansy held upright denotes "hearts' ease;" reversed it speaks the contrary; when presented upright it is understood to say, "think of me;" but when offered pendant, it means "forget me." And thus the amaryllis, which is the emblem of pride, may be made to express "my pride is humbled," or "your pride is checked," by holding it downwards either to the left or the right, as the sense requires. In the same manner the wallflower, which is made the emblem of fidelity in misfortune, if presented with the stalk upwards, would insinuate that the person was considered no friend to the unfortunate. Thus various sentiments may be expressed by all the flowers noticed in these emblems, but which are principally intended as floral mottos.

II.

lay down
this silent language
observe
the flower
sloping
to the heart
with thorns
neither hope nor fear
changing
trouble
to pride
fidelity
to unfortunate
mottos

ABOUT “UNFORTUNATE MOTTOS”

“Unfortunate Mottos, an erasure poem” was created from *Floral Emblems* by Henry Phillips (1825). About the poem and the process of composing it, Lynn Pattison writes:

The Victorians took flowers seriously. Each flower and herb assigned a meaning, each bouquet read as carefully as the Tarot. Messages of love, dismay, or outright rejection could be conveyed without uttering or writing a word. Intrigued by all that was written about what flowers symbolized, and curious about how the old meanings could be modernized, I wrote my own series of poems, *The Meaning of Flowers*. I browsed old bookstores and collections preserved on the web, fascinated by the importance of flower communications and interpretations. I’m convinced that learning the old flower-language would have been as challenging as achieving fluency in French or German!

I found tomes related to every facet of flower information: how to make wax flowers, preserve natural flowers (embalming!), macerate and prepare skeletal leaves, and much more. I tried my hand at erasure poems with some of the texts, and “Unfortunate Mottos” resulted from those efforts.

SUSAN BARRY-SCHULZ

A Full Accounting of the Fruits of Mrs. Dalloway

*Such are the visions which proffer great cornucopias
full of fruit to the solitary traveller ... —Virginia Woolf*

over the cherry pie
lemon or pale grey
she had gone ... and left them blackberrying in the sun
saucers of red fruit
now the bananas bright yellow
she gave me grapes this morning
he looked at the sideboard; the plate of bananas
the plate of bananas on the sideboard
he was alone with the sideboard and the bananas
Bartlett pears
Bartlett pears
Bartlett pears
lemons
she with an apricot bloom of powder and paint

ABOUT “A FULL ACCOUNTING OF THE FRUITS OF MRS. DALLOWAY”

“A Full Accounting of the Fruits of Mrs. Dalloway” was created from *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf (1925). About the poem and the process of composing it, Susan Barry-Schulz writes:

For this piece I was interested in exploring the author’s choice to include many specific references to fruit throughout the pages of the novel. For this poem, I took the phrases or fragments in the order in which they appeared and was surprised at the result.

MAGGIE ROSEN

Obituary of Harriet Williams,
Consort of Abraham T. Williams, January 12, 1844

Early in the spring, she was attacked by God.

He told her to depart Edisto and rest in Heaven.

She had depth; she was endearing. She left.

She severely sustained her fortitude. Frequently.

She was pious except when she wasn't.

Early in the spring, she manifested. She slept.

ABOUT “OBITUARY OF HARRIET WILLIAMS”

“Obituary of Harriet Williams, Consort of Abraham T. Williams, January 12, 1844” was created from a notice in the *Southern Christian Advocate* (1844). About the poem and the process of composing it, Maggie Rosen writes:

While doing family research, I found this obituary (the original publication was in the *Southern Christian Advocate*, date as given in the poem). Harriet Williams was my great-great-great-grandmother on my mother’s side. The poem’s words come from the obituary and from my imagination. I wanted to convey a bit of a story, using the fascinating original language of the obituary. I wanted to use repetition of sound and phrase as a kind of hymn.

DEBORAH PURDY

At the Approach of Winter

a dream
is an imaginary

quick hot scent and taste
of nothing but roots and leaves,

serpents and vipers,
stings of a scorpion—

bitter things
a spoonful at a time

burnt to ashes
in a glass jar.

Your grief
is a sovereign wound.

ABOUT “AT THE APPROACH OF WINTER”

“At the Approach of Winter” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Deborah Purdy writes:

I read through the *Complete Herbal* and compiled a selection of linguistically interesting or potentially useful words and phrases to create a word/phrase bank of possible lines for the poem. Next, I went through the word/phrase bank to find lines and phrases that seemed to work well together and that fit the theme of the poem.

M. E. GOELZER

A Remedy for Heartache
gathered from Culpeper's *Complete Herbal*

I wonder in my heart
how the juice of the seed,
medicinal for grief,
the juice made into a syrup
as gentle as Venus herself, with leaves
put into a cup of wine, comforts

the head and brain, warms and comforts
a weak stomach, and revives the heart.
If you cannot get the leaves,
make use of the bark. You may beat the seed
into powder, it may be kept in a syrup
always by you, for the inward griefs;

and if of the former griefs
parts remain, the berries are good to comfort
the fainting spirits. Make a syrup
in the summer, it makes the heart
merry when the seed
begins to ripen while the leaves

continue green. Leave
off covetousness and those griefs
that proceed of a cold cause. Any good seed
doth bring much ease and comfort
by fortifying the heart;
with seeds made into syrup,

two spoonfuls of the syrup
help much to procure rest. Leave
Dr. Reason awhile, expel melancholy from the heart,
free the heart from the pains and griefs

that take away all the comfort
of the sun. The seed

being ripe, a vital spirit in every seed
will produce you the syrup
you desire to comfort
and strengthen the parts. I leave
to the judicious reader a remedy for griefs,
good against the gnawing of the heart.

Here is enough, only remember, the seed is of more use than the leaves;
a syrup made thereof is very effectual for all inward griefs
and hurts, good for those that are weak in long sickness, and to comfort the heart.

ABOUT “A REMEDY FOR HEARTACHE”

“A Remedy for Heartache” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, M. E. Goelzer writes:

“Regard the heart, keep that upon the wheels, because the sun is the foundation of life,
and therefore those universal remedies ... cure all diseases by fortifying the heart.”

—from Culpeper’s *Complete Herbal*

As I began to read Culpeper’s *Complete Herbal*, I became curious to learn something about Nicholas Culpeper himself. I found that his life was marked by a series of tragedies and hardships, and also that he showed great generosity in the ways he shared and practiced his knowledge of herbal medicine. As I read pieces of the *Complete Herbal*, thinking of how much heartache was inherent in the circumstances that surrounded Nicholas Culpeper, I was repeatedly struck by ways in which he sought to offer comfort. I chose to write this sestina, using sentences and phrases from the text (rearranged, with words sometimes erased, but not added, and with just a few tweaks for subject-verb agreement), as if Nicholas Culpeper had written it—for himself, perhaps, as well as for others—as a way to suggest a general remedy for both universal and personal heartache.

PAMELA HOBART CARTER

Marvel

Grow wild. Delight
in shadowy places.
Flower in May or June.
Seed hopes of a sweet
and warming quality.
Be all manner of comforts
every morning. Let a syrup—
made with juice and sugar—
be kept in every house.
Mind the heart. Help expel
melancholy spirits. Remedy
the stings of a scorpion,
the bitings of mad dogs.
Sit in a surfeit of mushrooms.
Take nourishment
to persons with fevers.
Root in gardens.
Add a word or two to the wind.

Virtues follow—honey to vinegar.

ABOUT “MARVEL”

“Marvel” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Pamela Hobart Carter writes:

I pulled each word, unchanged and in (almost) the same sequence it appears, from the Avens through Beans sections of Culpeper’s *Complete Herbal*. All punctuation, line breaks, and stanza choices are mine. I had fun mixing practical imperatives with oddball ones and selecting for the upbeat.

MICHELLE LYNCH

Under the Black Alder

THIS heart

flowers in May,

a Venus with an appetite to meat.

the cure

the itch,

the Spring-time you will take

a handful of heat

as a jewel.

ABOUT “UNDER THE BLACK ALDER”

“Under the Black Alder” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Michelle Lynch writes:

This poem was constructed from the Black Alder section of Culpeper’s *Complete Herbal*. My process included copying out that section and then reading slowly for words to keep and words to erase. I kept hearing music and seeing a “merry month of May” scenario in my mind. I instantly vibed to the feminine energy popping from this section, so stayed true to that direction when finding the poem within.

KATE FALVEY

Drinking Daisies

Daisies, well known to almost every child,
are under the dominion of Venus.
A decoction made of them and drank,
helps to cure the wounds made
in the hollowness of the breast.

Wild wounds, long and deep gashed,
melancholy vapours from the spirits and blood,
green wounds, inward wounds, wounds and
hurts in the breast, bleeding wounds, old wounds,
wounds in the head. All manner of wounds.

The juice of the flowers when they weep
is a remedy against the bitings and stings
of venomous creatures and venerous dreams.
The tears, drank two or three spoonfuls at a time,
regulate the Imagination which runs at random

when Judgment is asleep, and forms any thought
according to the nature of the vapour sent up to it.
These vapours may exhale like nature, like the tongue
of an adder serpent and send up hurts to the brain,
causing troublesome sleep, and spoiling the eye-sight,

yet by their flying upward, seem to be
something aerial, more delightful,
or at least, less burdensome,
if the temperature of the air be ordinary.
They can be Fiddle-strings making celestial music.

Yet if you are troubled with strange fancies,
strange sights in the night time, some with voices,
drinking a crush of wild Daisy out of a cup made
of Ivy will help to ease such strange visions.
It is also good against dreams of blood.

ABOUT “DRINKING DAISIES”

“Drinking Daisies” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Kate Falvey writes:

Culling from Culpeper (I had to say this!) was like entering an ancient hothouse or a wildly overgrown enchanted garden. I’d browsed through his famous herbal before, but never before steeped myself (sorry) in his language of remedies and restoratives. My method was simple: don’t use any words not in the text itself, including the title. Keep phrases when possible but break up sentences into single words when transitions are needed. Try to work chronologically but backtrack when needed to fill in those pesky transitional words. I had a good time losing myself and finding my own way within the world of Culpeper’s words.

SUSAN KAY ANDERSON

Bay Tree

The berries heal
more than leaves
from the tree of the sun.

The oil comfortable
in all cold griefs
even in a new bath.

Saturn !
All pain in the ears
is taken away
to a place nobody knows

where there is dancing with sticks
in ribbons of grass. Everyone
dressed in scarlet.

ABOUT “BAY TREE”

“Bay Tree” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Susan Kay Anderson writes:

I looked for a story that I could tell from material found in this herbal encyclopedia of plants and their healing properties. Most of these plants look like weeds, yet they are healing and magnificently drawn and described within the *Complete Herbal*. Reading this made me want to write in a noble way, as well. What I got from combining words my eyes fell upon, much in the vein of teaching that Martha Rhodes practices with her students, is something surreal, almost like a visit to a country or place I have never been before.

JESSICA CORY

Of Flowers

So long I shewed you
near the fire in its prime,
the beauty observed in colour
and smell. Gather the least

wet and dewy, the sun
will dry them well,
the plant and planet,
if either will not keep.

ABOUT “OF FLOWERS”

“Of Flowers” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Jessica Cory writes:

I challenged myself in creating this poem. While all of the words in this poem came from Culpeper’s Chapter 2, “Of Flowers,” I wanted to write a poem that avoided the use of the word “flowers” and instead pushed readers to think about what connections we might make between floral attributes and other aspects of the environment. What else might we gather in our day-to-day lives? What else cannot be kept? While I’m spanning out from Culpeper’s original intent, I can’t help but wonder if he’d appreciate the connections between flowers and countless other potential elements of nature.

Of Medicines appropriated to the heart

Borage, Bugloss, Rosemary, Citron

By a sympathy between medicine and the heart

By an antipathy between medicine and poison

by astral influence

by stinking vapours

Cherish the vital spirits when they languish

comfort the fearful

cool the fevers

drive melancholy

either by anger, love, fear, hatred, sadness &c.

Excessive heat

For as the heart is variously disturbed

fortify

keep back

lead is colder than gold

motions of the mind

natural affections of man

not everything cooleth

not the body

placed between brain and liver

please the hateful

Poison

Refresh the spirits being decayed

Remedies which succor the afflicted heart

Resist

resist

Rue, Angelica, &c.

So such things as flatter lovers or appease

some cheer the mind
some strengthen the heart
strengthen
strengthen the heart

such affections may be wrought in the body
that mirth, love, &c. are actions
the animal spirits be refreshed by fragrant smells
the fountain of life
the heart is chiefly afflicted by too much heat
the heart is the seat of the vital spirit
the original of infused heat

Those which cheer the mind, are not one and the same
To add vigour to the affections
to cherish life throughout the body

vital spirits refreshed
wrought upon by reason, as well as by digestion
yet many have been induced to think

ABOUT “OF MEDICINES APPROPRIATED TO THE HEART”

“Of Medicines appropriated to the heart” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Jennifer Hernandez writes:

I chose to focus on Chapter 3, “Of Medicines appropriated to the heart.” It seemed a suitable topic for poetry! First, I copied and pasted the chapter into a Word document to begin my initial process of skimming and circling words and phrases that caught my attention. As it turned out, nearly the entire text was circled. So I shifted gears and took out a pair of scissors. I cut out the words and phrases that I had circled and discarded the rest (largely connective words and phrases). After cutting the text apart, I gathered the strips of paper and placed them in an envelope to sit overnight and cleanse my mind of the original text. The next day I emptied the strips onto the table and put them in alphabetical order by the first word on each strip. Once arranged, I copied out the text in order, eliminating unnecessary words and phrases, but maintaining the order. Finally, I typed up my handwritten notes, again pruning what I had written. The end result is the poem that you see before you. I was quite pleased with the experiment and it was fun to make poetry in such a kinesthetic way.

MICHELLE LYNCH

Angelica

when men had gods; and infidels
were idolatrous
the Sun gathered the Moon in Angelica-
water. roots distilled in wine,

body not bound; a remedy
for the hollow therein, to heal
flesh as garden.

ABOUT “ANGELICA”

“Angelica” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Michelle Lynch writes:

This poem was constructed from the Angelica section of Culpeper’s *Complete Herbal*. My process included copying out that section and then reading slowly for words to keep and words to erase. Culpeper’s language within this section was already so tantalizing that all I felt I needed to do was listen to the musicality for direction, then form stanzas. As I went along, I wanted to keep focusing on how the botanical was used in ancient times, so let that instruct me in finding my next words within the text until a full poem revealed itself to me.

PAMELA HOBART CARTER

Green Time

It is early, before ripe September,
before heating and drying in the second degree.

Hot bodies abound—two dry walnuts,
as many good figs, twenty juniper berries.

Day is green. A piece of the green
wonderfully helps the rising mother.

The young green cools the place every morning.
Kind green grows every where by the way sides.

Green dissolves the hurt. Almost all people eat
the green, many to be cured.

It is good the green heals, perfectly heals.
Good, the hardness ruptures. It is very good.

ABOUT “GREEN TIME”

“Green Time” was created from the *Complete Herbal* by Nicholas Culpeper (1653). About the poem and the process of composing it, Pamela Hobart Carter writes:

I pulled each word, unchanged and in the same sequence as it appears, from the Walnut Tree through Willow Tree sections of Culpeper’s *Complete Herbal*. All punctuation, line breaks, and stanza choices are mine. I often figure out a narrative as I erase, and titles last of all. For “Green Time” I chose to highlight the hue after coming upon and selecting its first two appearances, and to look for other instances of long E and hard G sounds.