

# HERON TREE

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TWELVE : 2025 - 2026

anticipations    bird    colors  
faith    feathers    ghosts  
greenwood    hand    luck  
madness    matchbox    midnight  
minutes    nerves    newness  
pollen    pulse    rain  
ribs    river    sand  
silhouette    stars    thorn  
thoughts    tides    voices  
wind    yesterday



# HERON TREE

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TWELVE : 2025-2026

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from September 2025 through February 2026.  
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## HERON TREE : TWELVE

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ROBIN TURNER

---

sing

to buy  
luck

to carry

the grey

to bind the cut

to lift

to give  
to

start out again

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

[sing] was created from Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* (1911).

About the poem and the process of composing it, Robin Turner writes:

[sing] is made from a page of Edith Wharton's 1911 novella. In January 2025 I decided to begin an erasure project as a daily creative practice. I wanted a text that I had never read and had no attachment to, and then a used copy of *Ethan Frome* presented itself for \$3 at a dusty old neighborhood bookshop. I have worked on transforming a page each day since and find the process wonderfully meditative and satisfying.



KATHLEEN HELLEN

---

in human language  
*from* *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, by *Daniel Paul Schreber (1842-1911)*

i.  
in their conversation  
on purpose  
in the surrounding  
with me  
in the same  
into the streets  
during every  
at other times  
on the part  
from the people  
to a few  
in watching  
of the corresponding  
Of the deliberate  
Of certain

ii.  
by the actors on the stage  
by their nerves  
on the behavior  
of other human beings  
in order to bring about  
in watching  
to a few  
from the people  
on the part  
in the same  
with me  
in the surrounding  
on purpose  
in their conversation  
with

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“in human language” was created from *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, by Daniel Paul Schreber (originally published 1903; the translation by Ida Macalpine and Richard A. Hunter is used here).

About the poem and the process of composing it, Kathleen Hellen writes:

Focusing on his use of language, I selected two pages from the “Postscripts” of Schreber’s description of his psychotic delusions, then extracted from these a list of common prepositions and their phrases. The order of their appearance in the text was reversed, and I selected from these those that referenced in some way his relationship to the people around him. I retained capital letters if they started sentences.



DEBORAH PURDY

---

## It Came from Somewhere in the Sky

Like a smoke that will not stir,  
white mists lie down to sleep

with the sweet-smelling clover,  
blasphemies and prayers,  
and all the changes of the years.

With eagle wings outspread for flight  
they call me with their voices.

ABOUT THE POEM

---

“It Came from Somewhere in the Sky” was created from poems in Frederick George Scott’s *Poems: Old and New* (1900):

title “Love Slighted”  
line 1 “Thor”  
line 2 “The Unnamed Lake”  
line 3 “To a Fly in Winter”  
line 4 “In the Churchyard”  
line 5 “A Reverie”  
line 6 “Dawn”  
line 7 “My Lattice”

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “It Came from Somewhere in the Sky” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Deborah Purdy writes:

Reading through the collection of poems, I started compiling the twelfth line (or every twelfth line) of selected poems. I then paired lines that I thought would work well together in terms of sound and meaning.



JOANNA FRIEDMAN

---

The Train to My House

It was twelve minutes on the train to my house  
in a season of twelve and together  
and of lemon cakes and twelve hundred dollars.  
We squeezed and scrutinized each delicatessen.  
Rented private rooms with twelve thousand sounds.  
It was twelve years—  
on the train to the tip of my house,  
and the huge egg that was waiting.

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“The Train to My House” was created from *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “The Train to My House” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Joanna Friedman writes:

*The Great Gatsby* is one of my favorite novels, probably because it is full of passion. To honor *Heron Tree*'s volume 12, I found all the sentences with “twelve” in the novel. Within these sentences, I searched for the power words, interesting phrases, and phrases with “twelve” in them. As I arranged the phrases and words to make a coherent poem, I wanted to capture the passion of *The Great Gatsby* and make sure that it came across on this 12-year train ride that is the focus of my poem.

“On” and “each” were added to the original text for smoothness of reading. “Waiting” was also added, and “Sound” was changed to “sound.”



## KAREN GEORGE

---

When she caught another's attention, her body

swam      the      instant  
 the prickly                      wave  
    a delight  
    a  
                          smile                      felt  
                          the  
    curve in  
 a      shiver                      the  
                          instinct to  
    the gazer and  
                          outlast  
    the  
    remembered  
    illumination  
    that stretch of  
    time  
 a      place of newness

ABOUT THE POEM

---

“When she caught another’s attention, her body” was created from Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “When she caught another’s attention, her body” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Karen George writes:

My erasure poem was created from page 24 of Virginia Woolf’s novel *To the Lighthouse*. I originally picked 24 because it was a multiple of 12, and when I browsed that page I was drawn in by the words *swam, instant, prickly, wave, shiver, gazer, remembered*. Then, I started at the top of the page, moving down it until I found one word that linked with another word that followed—to form the beginning of some image and/or meaning—and I wrote them on a separate sheet of paper. I proceeded down the page in the same manner until the end of the source page. When I typed the poem, I tried to keep the selected words in the same positions as they appeared on the page from which I sourced them. Somewhere in the process, a sort of narrative seemed to be developing, and I chose a poem title which suggested, or led into, that narrative.



JAMI MACARTY

---

The Great Wonderful Forsaken Earth Flower Tyde

i.

go not only to the woodland    go by bloom to  
 the meadow    by the stream    upon the sandy shore  
 close your blue eyes    to see other places to go

ii.

flowers of Earth                    stars  
 in the sky  
 sun                    moon                    your hands

iii.

come every light  
 to shore shining  
    Daughter of the Moon

iv.

she stood over  
    heard  
    our anonymous thinking

v.

two ravens  
 black back to black back : pinions sun-gold

vi.

wind intoned  
twinkle twinkle of harp strings broken

vii.

when the woods'  
greenwood greens  
gather flowers there  
grace

viii.

your glossary  
sedge a copper coin  
weasel hare

ix.

shall wander dusked land  
gold-eyed tu-whit tu-whoop of owl  
a bird of any other kind isn't heard

x.

slow the elm tree's shadow  
went across the meadow

xi.

on Earth  
go wi'  
or woe

xii.

quoth the stolen moontyde

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“The Great Wonderful Forsaken Earth Flower Tyde” was created from *Pattern Poetry, Part I*, an anthology of poems arranged by Richard Wilson (1926).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “The Great Wonderful Forsaken Earth Flower Tyde” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Jami Macarty writes:

“The Great Wonderful Forsaken Earth Flower Tyde” is made via erasure of words from pages in *Pattern Poetry, Part I*. To construct the poem, I used the number 12 in several ways. First, I decided to make a poem of 12 sections, using 12 pages in the book—but not just any pages. Second, I started on page 12 of the book and then for 12 pages I added 12 to determine the next page from which I would perform erasure. So following page 12, pages 24, 36, 48, 60, 72, 84, 96, 108, 120, 132, and 144 (12 x 12). Third, most sections of the poem contain 12, or its multiples, 24 or 36, syllables. The poem’s last two sections equal 12 syllables together. In some cases, the lines within sections are 12 syllables! The title is 12 syllables! 12!



JIM MURDOCH

---

“Your temptations against Faith have come back again, even though you never troubled yourself to answer them. They importune you again, but still you do not answer.

“Well, my daughter, all this is as it should be, but you think too much about them; you fear them too much; you dread them too much. Were it not for that, they would do you no harm. You are too sensitive to temptations. You love the Faith, and would not willingly suffer a single thought contrary to it to enter your mind; but the moment one so much as occurs to you you are saddened and troubled by it.

“You are too jealous of your purity of Faith. You fancy that everything that touches it must taint it.

“No, my daughter, let the wind blow, and do not think that the rustling of the leaves is the clash of arms. A little while ago I was standing near some beehives, and some of the bees settled on my face. I wanted to brush them off with my hand. ‘No,’ said a peasant to me, ‘do not be afraid, and do not touch them, then they will not sting you at all; but if you touch them they will half devour you.’ I took his advice, and not one stung me.

“Believe me, if you do not fear these temptations, they will not harm you, pass on and pay no heed to them.”

from *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales* by Jean-Pierre Camus, translated by J. S.

The Eye

*Serenity isn't the peace away from the storm, it's the peace at the eye of the storm.* – Ed Martin Cruz

All this is as it should be.  
Let the wind blow and  
do not be troubled by taints and dreads.

They will do you no harm.  
Again, they will not harm you.  
Pay them no heed.

Believe me.  
Do not be afraid or answer them.  
Do not answer.

No.  
Never.  
Enter, settle and be still.

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“The Eye” was created from *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, by Jean-Pierre Camus and translated into English by J. S. (1910).

About the poem and the process of composing it, Jim Murdoch writes:

Having produced three found poems—two of which were published—I quickly realised that picking and rearranging words (and even part-words) from the text gave me the greatest flexibility. The text was chosen almost at random, only two or three being rejected as not containing a great enough variety of words, and once I started, I worked my way down the poem, using the poem as the guide rather than the source text.



D. W. CUNNINGHAM

---

Is

In sudden light, the proud mammoth marched  
on gold.

His feet, the furrows, trees,  
the houses by boulders, sand skulls,  
the lemon sun over south sea.

He stared at them, on the sand rhythm,  
on the slender boulders  
along wall of stone, piled proudly there.

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“Is” was created from James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922).

About the poem and the process of composing it, D. W. Cunningham writes:

I took a 46-word paragraph from episode 3 in Joyce’s *Ulysses* and rearranged those 46 words (no more, no fewer) into a poem. The restriction and changes allowed me to realize some things about prose vs. poetry—issues such as the effects around narrative thrust or its absence.



JESSICA LEE MCMILLAN

---

Lessening Days

A little lift of gray in the sky beyond,  
window open in my room,

tell me, how to see  
my lessening days right,

get enough backbone  
to stand up to fear.

I knock hard on life without gloves  
but never warm by its fire, quite.

A stirring comes to heart chambers,  
and like a guest, it departs.

I still my hand  
on my heart's beating, just for a while.

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

Jessica Lee McMillan made a blackout of a page from *A Daughter of the Morning*, by Zona Gale (1917). That blackout became the basis for “Lessening Days.”

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. This 12-line poem reflects that invitation.



MARIA L. BERG

---

Every Cause Has Its Effect

We might consider the existence of the roof;  
the rain which softened the earth supporting the stone;  
and its upheaval by convulsions of nature.  
One of the series of events arising from  
the passage of a speck of soot before your eyes  
will arouse certain thoughts in your mind in turn.  
We kick a stone and we feel the impact—it seems  
to be real, but remember, if not by our Mind's  
reason we would not know the foot or stone at all.  
People are carried along like the falling stone.  
A stone dislodged from a mountain side crashes through  
a roof of a cottage in the valley below.

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“Every Cause Has Its Effect” was created from *The Kybalion*, by Three Initiates (1912 edition).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Every Cause Has Its Effect” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Maria L. Berg writes:

Because *The Kybalion* is full of very abstract concepts, I searched the text for concrete imagery, and I was excited to find such imagery in Chapter 12: Causation. Following this year’s *Heron Tree* theme of 12, I found and formed 12 12-syllable lines for this poem.



WILDA MORRIS

---

Is This Vanity?

before  
stars  
are darkened  
and doors  
shut

the voice  
of a bird

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“Is This Vanity?” was created from the American Standard Version of the Bible (1901).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Is This Vanity?” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Wilda Morris writes:

This is a 12-word poem, with the words drawn (in the order in which they appear in the source text) from the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes. The title reflects the statement in this chapter (and elsewhere in Ecclesiastes) that “all is vanity.”



VIDYA PREMKUMAR

---

be gentle  
in breaking madness,  
for it may prove  
the abstract truth  
we doubted  
is a sad concrete truth.

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

[be gentle] was created from a single page of *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker (1897).

About the poem and the process of composing it, Vidya Premkumar writes:

[be gentle] was written as part of a found poetry project on *Dracula* organised by The Poeming. Over the course of February 2025, I found one poem each day, creating a sequence of 28 found poems across 28 days. This poem emerged from attentive reading rather than extraction for effect, allowing the language on the page to surface its own tensions and resonances. *Dracula* proved especially fertile for this project, offering moments that are philosophically sharp and emotionally charged beneath its horror frame. Within the larger arc of the project, this poem marks one such moment where the text seemed to speak quietly but insistently, asking to be held rather than reshaped.



GINNY LOWE CONNORS

---

The Chickens Have Died But 5 Goslings Have Hatched  
*a found poem, from a letter addressed to Rebecca Ann Blankenship, April 29, 1874*

My Dear Aunt Bec,

The circuit rider was here last night and when he read your letter, he said  
*I tell you that was worth reading.*

Alfred has gone to school, he has bin going now four weeks and has not  
learned all of his letters yet. Me and Jennie and Arthur are here. I am  
writing Jennie is getting dinner Arthur is sleeping Pa is plowing.

This is such a curious spring some think the world is coming to an end. Ma  
had a heap of chickens but they died. She has 5 goslings hatched, though.

Bose is going to have alog rolling tomorro. And Jo, she has herself a baby  
girl. It was four weeks old yesterday, It has blue eyes and a white head and  
a big mouth.

Write soon. I remain your niece as ever,

M. A. Terrel

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“The Chickens Have Died But 5 Goslings Have Hatched” was created from a letter written by M. A. Terrel in 1874.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Ginny Lowe Connors writes:

This found poem comes from a family collection of very old letters that I have in my possession, written to my third great-grandmother, Rebecca Ann Applewhite Blankenship. The family lived on a farm in Tennessee, but a few years after the end of the Civil War, Rebecca, a widow, moved with her daughter Hattie and Hattie’s young husband to a cabin in Arkansas.

They were in Arkansas by the time Rebecca received a letter, from which this poem is drawn, from her young niece.



KARI ANN EBERT

---

The Doctrine of Fundamental Gravity

Who she was, she asked him to show her.

Asked herself to uncouple knowledge  
of who she was. She asked him to show her  
his open hand. His palm that so often fell

landing like a heavy benediction, a liturgy for which she  
asked (herself). To uncouple knowledge  
was to become a reliquary adorned with moon, gilded beams declaring  
the demise of who she was. She asked him to show her  
what kept his pulse beating. What she might surrender  
into his open hand. His palm that so often fell  
turned to close-fisted dominion, sealed her tight within its grasp.

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“The Doctrine of Fundamental Gravity” was built around two phrases from Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “The Doctrine of Fundamental Gravity” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Kari Ann Ebert writes:

This poem uses two phrases, from the twelfth line of text on p. 144 (12 x 12) in my copy of Brontë’s novel, to form the first line (and stanza). Then, I used a version of the OuLiPo exercise called “larding” to create the rest. In this poem, “larding” is achieved by taking the first line and adding a line on the top and the bottom of it to form the second stanza. The final stanza is formed in the same way but using the three lines of the second stanza and adding lines above, between, and below them. If you include the title (which has no phrases from *Wuthering Heights*), this poem is 12 lines purely by chance. That seems lucky.



SHLOKA SHANKAR

---

~~Praise~~

m            y  
                 name    is

a            dry thorn  
                 sheltering from the wind

and            blame,

ABOUT THE POEM

---

“~~Praise~~” was created from “Her Praise,” by W. B. Yeats (1919).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. This 12-word poem reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Shloka Shankar writes:

This erasure, culled from “Her Praise” by W. B. Yeats, is meant to be antithetical to the original title, hence the strikethrough in mine.



MARIETTA BRILL

---

If Bees

I. Then She Lifts Herself Gingerly to See Whether She Truly Can Use Her Wings

If one loves bees one writes of them persuadingly  
 If one wishes to produce honey  
 If one begins in the spring  
 If the reader will examine  
 If one is inventive  
 If one is a social philosopher  
 If willing to give a modicum of time and care to the happy little creatures  
 If one sees behind a bee-veil  
 If proper care be given  
 If there is plenty of nectar and pollen to be had  
 If one were heroic enough to try it  
 Then she lifts herself gingerly to see whether she truly can use her wings

II. Then Her Last Thought is Not For Self

If one were able to find the queen in the clustering swarm  
 (If we wish to find her, she is usually present:  
 If only two bands are evident, she is a hybrid  
 If three distinct translucent bands can be seen, pure Italian)  
 If they wish her to come out, they rush to assist her  
 If there is much to do she is untiring and unremitting  
 As if she were thoroughly enjoying herself  
 As if the sun itself had exhaled  
 If, in her promenade, she discovers another full-grown queen, a contest ensues  
 If need be, secreting wax, if need be, ready to defend her colony at the cost of her life  
 Then her hard-worked wings begin to fray at the edge  
 Then her last thought is not for self

III. If There is No Orchard, What Then?

If salt be added to the water  
 If put in too soon and the weather is warm  
 If the weather is warm and the bees seem uneasy

If you see a web upon the comb  
 If the bees seem unsettled and unhappy  
 If there is not sufficient food  
 If there is no fresh water  
 If any such seem distended and swollen  
 If it had found life worthless somehow  
 If not checked  
 If precaution is not taken  
 If there is no orchard, what then?

#### IV. Then There Must Be Such a Thing as Flower Wisdom

If the law be broken  
 If we wait until too late  
 If precaution is not taken  
 As if really accomplishing something  
 If we did not  
 If there is any doubtful point the bees are ready to help elucidate it  
 If the hexagonal pattern were in the bee brain  
 If to live up to their mathematical reputation  
 If they awaken and push out and try to escape in great number  
 If it were a drifting cloud instead of a self-willed, one-minded colony of socialists, how the  
     heart rises and sinks inversely to this rise and fall and how hopeless it seems when the  
     swarm lifts itself superbly over all surrounding obstacles  
 Then disappears above the tree tops  
 Then there must be such a thing as flower wisdom

ABOUT THE POEM

---

“If Bees” was created from Anna Botsford Comstock’s *How to Keep Bees* (1905).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “If Bees” reflects that invitation.

About the piece and the process of composing it, Marietta Brill writes:

“If Bees” is a series of 12-line poems extracted from *How to Keep Bees: A Handbook for Beginners* by Anna Botsford Comstock.

I was instantly entranced by the language, as clear-headed and lyrical as a bee. Somehow, this instruction manual was never boring.

The four centos are also ersatz sonnets. The first 10 or 11 lines of each poem begin with “If” or “As if.” I liked the droning repetition. And I liked these conditional fragments to express the fragile uncertainty of our bee population due to climate change, an underlying theme. The twelfth and final line of each poem contains “then,” serving as the sonnet’s volta and giving the poem some sense of resolution—which I think is how bees would like it.

I changed some words (but not “if” or “then”) of the original text for continuity.

These poems are adapted from an existing work in progress, a crown of sonnets, also called “If Bees.”





## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“Aging with Scoliosis” was created from Louisa May Alcott’s *Eight Cousins* (1874-5).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Aging with Scoliosis” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Julie Dillemath writes:

This erasure poem, which I titled “Aging with Scoliosis,” is from a section of *Eight Cousins* in which Rose is encouraged by her uncle to study anatomy, in order to be able to manage her own health. The words that emerged for the poem spoke to me about how I understand my own skeleton and its unique challenges.



MARIA L. BERG

---

Let Us Seek This Truth

Toss a penny in the air, and it may come down  
All truths are but half-truths; all paradoxes may  
turn this way and that way as does the skilled swimmer  
Everything flows out and in; everything has tides  
as the production or cessation of tempests  
As above, so below; as below, so above  
Nothing rests; everything moves; everything vibrates  
and no sound is heard from the revolving object  
A Mind (as well as metals) may be transmuted  
changing one kind of metal into another  
Attraction's Law will bring lips and ear together  
One can keep his penny and have a bit of cake

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“Let Us Seek This Truth” was created from *The Kybalion*, by Three Initiates (1912 edition).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Let Us Seek This Truth” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Maria L. Berg writes:

One of the things I found interesting about *The Kybalion* is that it quotes itself. In this poem I used some of those self-quotations that could be adapted into 12-syllable lines along with phrases I found while searching the text for sensory details and concrete imagery. Following this year’s *Heron Tree* theme of 12, I found and formed 12 12-syllable lines for this poem.



KARI ANN EBERT

---

Upon First Meeting My Double

She kept it all  
Sweet girl edged with mourning  
Wild with anticipations  
of her own death  
Her sorrow obliged me  
to walk with her

## ABOUT THE POEM

---

“Upon First Meeting My Double” was created from Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Upon First Meeting My Double” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Kari Ann Ebert writes:

This poem is an erasure of p. 144 (12 x 12) in my copy of Brontë’s novel. I chose the last 12 lines of the page from which to extract this poem. As I chipped away at the text, there emerged something ghostly that I embraced much like Heathcliff embraces Cathy. The title came naturally and is echoed in the finished poem, which is 24 words, or a doubling of 12.



## AMY SMALL-MCKINNEY

---

Centó: From Nellie Bly, "Ten Days in a Mad-House" 1887

Another woman. I could hear her gently.  
Her remarks, rational as any.

They choked her, yes, choked her, then dragged her into the closet, and I heard her cries hushed and smothered.

How to get out?  
Every door being locked.

I wondered if I should be able to pass over the river  
to my strange ambition,  
to become an inmate of the halls  
inhabited by my mentally wrecked sisters.

*What is this place?*  
I asked of the man  
who had his fingers sunk  
into the flesh of my arm.

"Blackwell's Island, an insane place, you'll never get out."  
And yet, heaven, not further from hell.

On bathing days, the tub filled, the patients washed one after the other  
without a change of water.

"Well, I don't care," Nurse Grupe said. "You are in a public institution now. This is charity."

From the moment I entered, I made no attempt  
to keep up my assumed role of insanity.  
The more sanely I talked  
the crazier I was thought to be.

Still, to be convinced that the most helpless of God's creatures were cared for kindly.

A pretty young woman spoke  
so little English, I could not get her story  
except as told by the nurses.

Her husband put her in. She had a fondness  
for other men.

I felt sure now that no doctor could tell whether people were insane or not, so long as the case  
was not violent.

How to get out?  
Every door being locked.

I watched patients  
stand and gaze toward the city  
they will never enter again. It seems so near,  
and yet, heaven is not further from hell.

*What is this place?*  
I asked of the man  
who had his fingers sunk  
into the flesh of my arm.

Another woman. I could hear her gently.  
Her remarks as rational as any I heard.

ABOUT THE POEM

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“Cento: From Nellie Bly, ‘Ten Days in a Mad-House’ 1887” was created from Nellie Bly’s 1887 article.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Amy Small-McKinney writes:

I have always been interested in investigative reporting, especially the early pioneers. I found an online site about the journalist Nellie Bly, filled with quotations and selections from many of her articles. Bly was asked by her editor at *The World* to enter Blackwell’s Island Insane Asylum, and she agreed. This exposé was titled “Ten Days in a Mad-House.” Because of her writing and her exposure of the cruelty, she said, “The City of New York has appropriated \$1,000,000 more per annum than ever before for the care of the insane.”

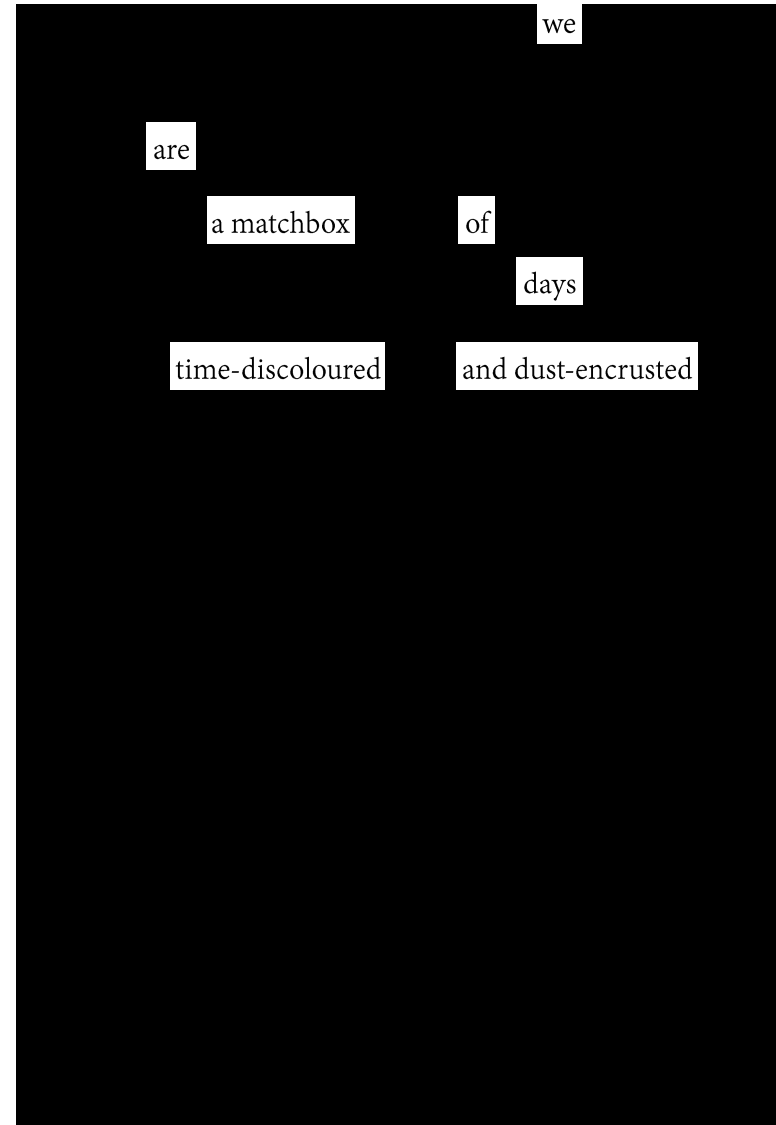
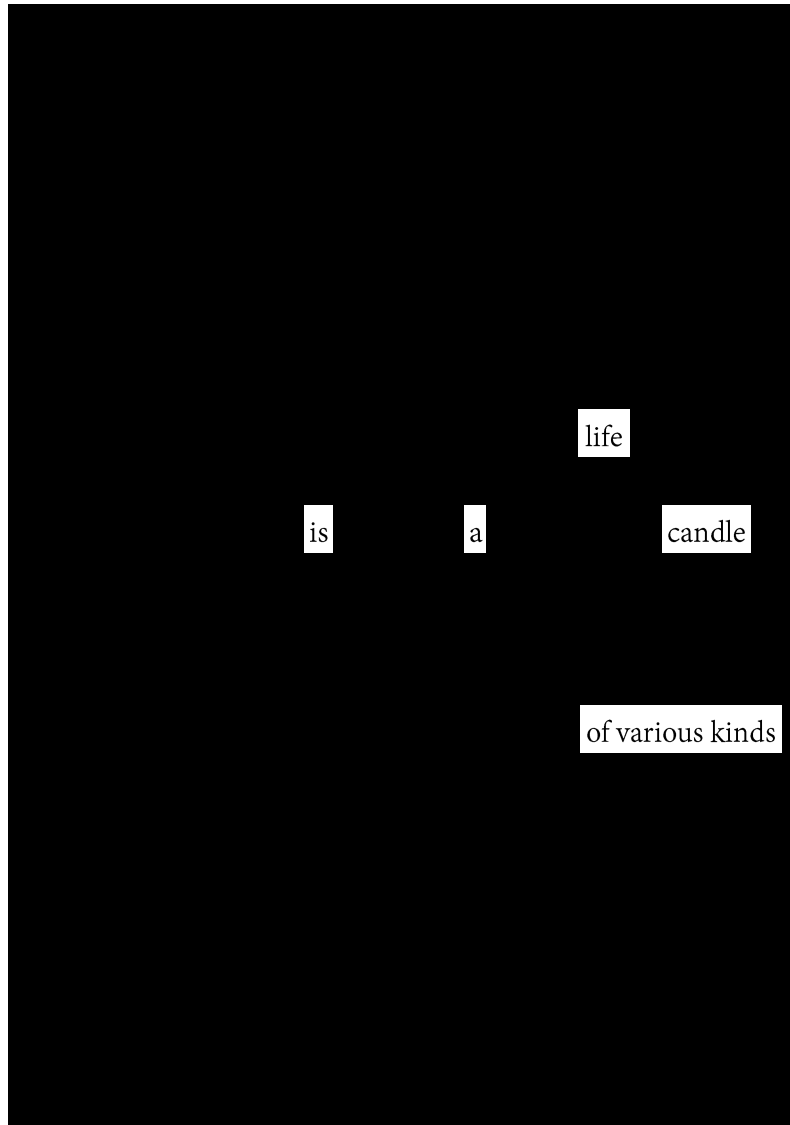
Every line, including the title, comes from Bly’s article. A few times I removed or moved around some of her words and occasionally changed punctuation or grammar for clarity. I wanted Bly to speak, to hear her voice. I am told this is a cento—my first attempt.



SHLOKA SHANKAR

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A Blackout Diptych from *Dracula*



## ABOUT THE POEM

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“A Blackout Diptych from *Dracula*” was created from Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Shloka Shankar writes:

This piece was culled from two pages of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, using William Burrough’s fold-in technique. I first digitally combined the left-hand half of the first page with the right-hand half of the second to create the first panel, which was then blacked out. Next, I combined the left-hand half of the second page with the right-hand half of the first one to blackout the second panel. Finally, I placed both panels side by side to present them as a diptych.



JESSICA LEE MCMILLAN

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Even in Midnight

Even in midnight  
flowers come forth,  
lo! they return to the moon

## ABOUT THE POEM

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“Even in Midnight” was created from haiku by Yamazaki So-kan and Arakida Moritake as translated by William George Aston in *A History of Japanese Literature* (1899).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. This 12-word hybrid remix reflects that invitation.



## JIM MURDOCH

The three younger women sat on the low wall at the end of the top garden after dinner, Rose a little apart from the others, and watched the enormous moon moving slowly over the place where Shelley had lived his last months just on a hundred years before. The sea quivered along the path of the moon. The stars winked and trembled. The mountains were misty blue outlines, with little clusters of lights shining through from little clusters of homes. In the garden the plants stood quite still, straight and unstirred by the smallest ruffle of air. Through the glass doors the dining-room, with its candle-lit table and brilliant flowers—nasturtiums and marigolds that night—glowed like some magic cave of colour, and the three men smoking round it looked strangely animated figures seen from the silence, the huge cool calm of outside.

Mrs. Fisher had gone to the drawing-room and the fire. Scrap and Lotty, their faces upturned to the sky, said very little and in whispers. Rose said nothing. Her face too was upturned. She was looking at the umbrella pine, which had been smitten into something glorious, silhouetted against stars. Every now and then Scrap's eyes lingered on Rose; so did Lotty's. For Rose was lovely. Anywhere at that moment, among all the well-known beauties, she would have been lovely. Nobody could have put her in the shade, blown out her light that evening; she was too evidently shining.

Lotty bent close to Scrap's ear, and whispered. "Love," she whispered

from *The Enchanted April* by Elizabeth von Arnim

## Smitten

Stars cluster, wink and tremble;  
eyes quiver, linger and pine.  
Something glorious in the huge cool calm stirred.

The moon, the sea, the plants and strange flowers.  
"Lovely," she whispered, "lovely,"  
her face upturned to the sky.

The night stood still and said little,  
slowly, a scrap, through the smallest ruffle of air  
and a silhouette of mist: "Watch."

## ABOUT THE POEM

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“Smitten” was created from *The Enchanted April*, by Elizabeth von Arnim (1922).

About the poem and the process of composing it, Jim Murdoch writes:

About a year had passed since my last attempt at a found poem, and this was written specifically for *Heron Tree*. As before, I picked the text quickly and without a great deal of forethought and as a result found myself writing a poem I would not have attempted otherwise, which was quite the challenge.



BASILIKÉ PAPPÁ

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## In the Long Slow Stroke of the Midnight Bell

Darkness—and then unwelcome ivy. You bury a white bird in white handkerchiefs. All waters quiver, trees tremble, completely listening. In the still air that floats around, is it a wolf?

Mud and a vagueness. A tiny grain of earth between your teeth. Sudden pang of homesickness. Fear none of these things. All dark days are necessary. And then the glad times widely open their eyes and gaze into your own.

The craving in your soul. Say it and it becomes a fresh season, perfectly trimmed. Light shines a hole into the big day—warmth between old strings where music breathed no more.

Say it with the Hunter's shout, the craving in your soul. To live in forests and in the open air, like a swarm of fire-flies lives each hour of every day, disheveled, unadorned. All is everything—seize all, hold all.

I know a path of velvet green. Winter is reverse there. Hurry and gather cherries with the determination of an orphan gram of grain pushing, rising its little murmur through the lips of a god.

I know a meadow where the touch of time melts with no stain. All colors are found there, bright, but soft. Ever falling, falling, falling through parting clouds, warm sunbeams served on plates of gold.

Upon soft moss you may stay in human form, or take the ever changing shapes of water. Like a wild thing, come, oh, come with me away. I promise you limitless waves in the long slow stroke of the midnight bell.

Fear not the strange new path on which your feet are set. This way the stars have led. Under the glistening cherries, fear not my teeth so white, all in a row. Off there, through the mist, is home.

ABOUT THE POEM

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“In the Long Slow Stroke of the Midnight Bell” was created from the following works, listed in the order of their publication date:

*Needwood Forest*, by Francis Noel Clarke Mundy (1776)

*The Metamorphoses of Ovid: Literally Translated into English Prose, with Copious Notes and Explanations*, by Henry T. Riley (1893 edition)

*Favorite Fairy Tales: The Childhood Choice of Representative Men and Women* (1907)

*The Wounded Eros: Sonnets*, by Charles Gibson (1908)

*The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, by John Fox Jr. (1912 edition)

*Love Poems and Others*, by D. H. Lawrence (1913)

*A Book of Myths*, by Jean Lang (1914)

*Kazan*, by James Oliver Curwood (1914)

*Tender Buttons: Objects - Food - Rooms*, by Gertrude Stein (1914)

*St. Nicholas Book of Plays and Operettas: Second Series* (1916)

*The Story-Book of Science*, by Jean-Henri Fabre, translated by Florence Constable Bicknell (1917)

*Geography and Plays*, by Gertrude Stein (1922)

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “In the Long Slow Stroke of the Midnight Bell” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Basiliké Pappa writes:

They say a wolf in a dream often stands for one’s inner power and intuition, for one’s wild nature and yearning for freedom. A wolf may appear in our dreams to point us in the right direction, help us find our way home or what it is we really want. “*Trust yourself again, dare to roam free,*” says the wolf. “*Run with me, and I will show you how.*”

I can’t pinpoint the exact moment when the idea to write about a dream-wolf came to me. What I knew though when I began picking words from Gertrude Stein’s books was this: the number 12 was somehow going to play a part in my poem. I copied excerpts from Stein in a clean file and started rearranging the words. Gibson’s sonnets came next,

so contrary to Stein's experimental prose. I wove his words and phrases into hers. From there, I moved from one book to another, selecting passages; adding and replacing words; cutting, combining, and dismantling sentences, until I had drawn from 12 sources. The wolf that appears in a dark dream to offer guidance and light was somewhere in there, waiting to be found in the long slow stroke of the midnight bell.



JULIE DILLEMUTH

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Twelve Waves

and  
 in the moonlight.  
 wide awake  
 thinking about  
 the brave sailor  
 the last drop of water  
 patient  
 crept out  
 ghosts  
 approached,  
 on the raft  
 the woman  
 rolled up  
 twelve  
 waves  
 pensive

## ABOUT THE POEM

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“Twelve Waves” was created from Louisa May Alcott’s *Eight Cousins* (1874-5).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Twelve Waves” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Julie Dillemath writes:

In composing this erasure poem, I started with “twelve waves” as a prompt, which is part of a passage on page 105 of an 1887 edition of Louisa May Alcott’s novel *Eight Cousins*. In the story, the main character Rose gazes at the ocean on an island at night, and I love the way the poem is a similar contemplation but by ghosts, who might go unnoticed in the background, the way this poem is hidden within the complete text.



BRITTANY N. JAEKEL

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At the Sea-Coast

my stars, my evils;  
your leave, your love.

## ABOUT THE POEM

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“At the Sea-Coast” was created from William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (first performed in 1602).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “At the Sea-Coast” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Brittany N. Jaekel writes:

This found poem comes from the beginning of Act II of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. The first scene begins at “the sea-coast.” Sebastian and Antonio are considering their next steps, and I noticed Sebastian’s opening lines used several instances of “my \_\_\_\_\_” and “your \_\_\_\_\_.” I gathered the instances I liked and formatted them into a brief poem.



JESSICA LEE MCMILLAN

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The Star-Glass

lost in the dead of night  
—I found hidden there  
faith in a glass  
held in my hand  
—a star  
pulsing at endtimes  
signalling  
there is more  
in my glass  
heart yet bursting with my last breath  
waiting  
—not frightened

## ABOUT THE POEM

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Jessica Lee McMillan made a blackout of two pages from J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan and Wendy* (1911). That blackout became the basis for "The Star-Glass."

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. This 12-line poem reflects that invitation.



KAREN GEORGE

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Waking from a Dream

Like a bird sheltering  
under the thin hollow of a leaf  
one must take whatever comfort one can  
falling down into the plumes  
and feathers of sleep to seek  
a lost world, a doorway remembered  
a past love bathed in yellow light  
his name a murmur of green sea waves  
the sound wound up into the air  
the wheel of sensation  
a feeling of living merged  
an indescribable air of expectation.

An ancient song, a fountain of radiance  
green and flowery, bubbled up  
from a mouth in the earth; the moment  
seemed to stand up, thick with time,  
a kind of understanding made of a fire  
as burns only once in a lifetime  
twisted into the marrow of her bones,  
the power to evolve a wilder life  
to extract every ounce of pleasure  
within touch. She could not help laughing,  
stars in her eyes and veils in her hair—  
a conspiracy of moonlight and want.

ABOUT THE POEM

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“Waking from a Dream” was created from Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Waking from a Dream” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Karen George writes:

My cento poem was created from words and phrases found on three series of 12 pages in *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. I browsed through those series of pages, writing on a separate sheet of paper words which interested me because either I liked their sound or they suggested some image or meaning. I wound up with six pages of phrases, and I read through them until I found what sounded like either a title or an intriguing beginning line of a poem. With that initial phrase in mind, I paged through the list of chosen phrases to find the next phrase that made sense following the one I’d chosen. Eventually, images connected and a narrative of sorts emerged. In the process, I changed the order of the lines of the poem I was creating and at some point decided to make the poem two stanzas of 12 lines each.



DEBORAH PURDY

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## Remember

I must remember  
my thoughts are walkers in soft sand  
but time is a river forever in flow,

and by untroubled streams  
there is no ending  
in the eye of the sun.

The robe of dreaming  
like flocks of birds fluttering in the serene weather  
shut out the storm,

the voice of water falling down from leaf and fern and stone,  
a wavering sign like the gleam from an ancient anchor,  
towards light the skylarks go.

ABOUT THE POEM

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“Remember” was created from poems collected in *Twelve Poets: A Miscellany of New Verse* (1918):

- line 1 “The Thrush,” by Edward Thomas
- line 2 “Love Speechless,” by W. H. Davies
- line 3 “Sam’s Three Wishes, or, Life’s Little Whirligig,” by Walter De La Mare
- line 4 “To Idleness,” by Vivian Locke Ellis
- line 5 “Over the Corn,” by A. Hugh Fisher
- line 6 “The Ash,” by John Freeman
- line 7 “Night,” by Ruth Manning Sanders
- line 8 “The Dead,” by Robin Flower
- line 9 “The Storm,” by James Guthrie
- line 10 “Clerks on Holiday,” by W. J. Turner
- line 11 “Processes of Thought: I,” by J. C. Squire
- line 12 “Two Lovers,” by Rowland Thirlmere

On the occasion of the twelfth volume of *Heron Tree*, we invited poets to incorporate 12 in some way in their work. “Remember” reflects that invitation.

About the poem and the process of composing it, Deborah Purdy writes:

From each of the poets in *Twelve Poets: A Miscellany of Verse* I selected potential lines to create a cento representing a contribution from each of them. As I reviewed my selections, I started compiling lines that seemed to work well together and continued this process until each of the 12 poets had been represented.

