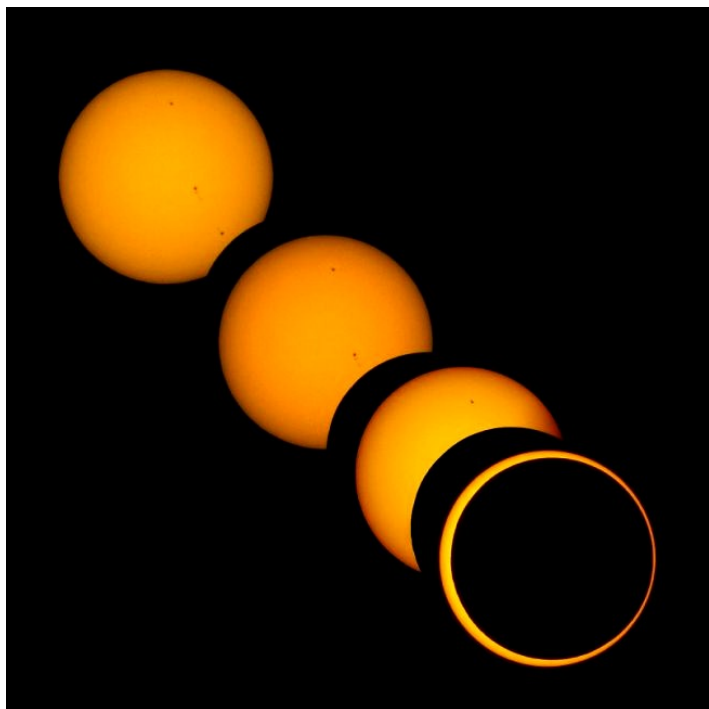
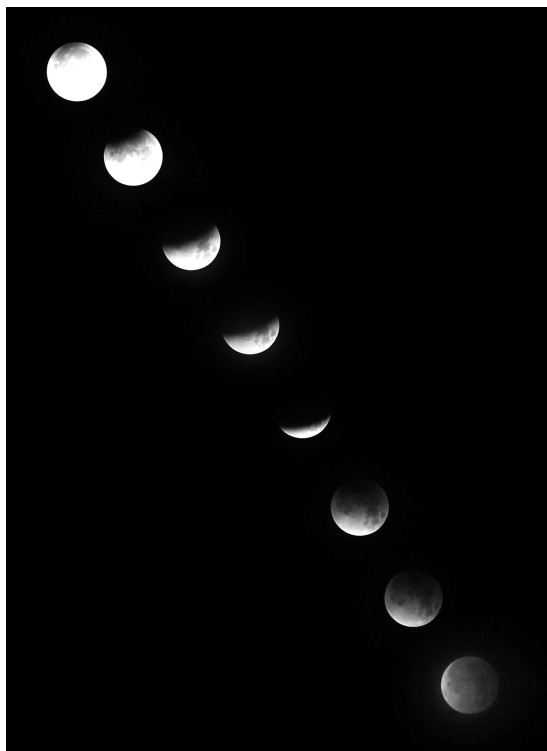


TOTAL ECLIPSE



POETRY AND PROSE

ISSUE ONE — JUNE 2019



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Total Eclipse

Issue One

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Geraldine Fernandez

Some days I wear the strength of mother's cologne

Hints of earthiness from vetiver
cling to mother's skin
like her anger
at the stretch marks
from July 13
no essential oil can erase

our love and hate relationship
an indigenous ylang-ylang
which has withstood typhoons
that wouldn't stop moaning
until your fears learn
to pay attention.

I keep my wardrobe
fragrant with the bitterness
of grapefruit I have picked
from the black soil
mother cultivates
with a hand
that hasn't figured out
the best time to hold a child's
and to never let it go.

*I saw the best nature poetry grow decadent from intrusive
lights*

I find the morning ripe
with the fragrance of breadfruit
and death bed;

my self-awareness
an unscented candle, its petal-
thin, infantile-blue flame
is a moth I yearn to save
from its curious reticence
without crushing a wing.

Fragile, I am a stunning
orchid - still hanging
on here, praying
no tree catches an infection
carried by winds
from the landmass of Depression -
a country without a true friend.

The tone of my skin
echoes the sentiments
of sunsets as if my body
could house an empathy
vast as the sky;
my mood diary a mosque
where dusk is a prophet
proclaiming that a poem
would survive its own holy war
if the author's childish cry
of anguish remains
anonymous in broad daylight.

If only I could say amen
and amen without glorifying
the knife that threatens
to decapitate the nightingales
if they dare escape my throat.

Ode to an orchid

The unusual intensity
of her broad lips
betrays royal blood

hardiness she inherited
from decaying litters shed
by history
makes you fall
on your knees,
a common gardener
before a national flower
whose center

is fiery orange
in its robust love
for the sunrise
and all acts
of melding nations.

A Few Good Words for Wanda

for Wanda Lea Brayton

There are nights when even the moons of Jupiter
cannot inspire you to carry on
your chest is heavy yet it feels half-empty
every heartbeat a funeral that passes by
you can't speak a word yet you are brave as a spoken word
you sigh the morning stars
no storm has ever seen with its naked eye
yes there are nights when flowers cry & cry a river
but thank god, you don't need to water them for days
thank god, your eyes are wet daisies

telling the mirror that they've once drunk
from the first hours of the sun
and they look forward doing it again and again
until you forget how deep the rain has cut
the landscape of your faith.
Wanda, your chest is only heavy because love is overweight.
Believe me on this
there are days when the sky runs out of blue robes
and only you can dress it up
there's a birdsong written on your palm
so you open your hand
and hallelujah, god starts believing
in himself again.

When it rains in April

I hear heaven purring
against the roof of my hell
while I try to stifle the howls
of March, a house pet
I neglect to unleash
from its separation anxiety.
Nothing flowers in this noise
save for rosebud of regret
about the past decade
I spent burying my fear
of thunder into pillows
I imagine as mother's bosoms.

Carrie Greenlaw

Equinox

September drags
wedding lace over
the high weeds

but what's honed
in the hearth of summer
emerges to blue dusk.

Blunt violence:
thick fists of goldenrod
swing their
match-head filigree
while katydids
dismantle the evening,
the sawing cough
of shank, invisible.

We murmur, insatiate.
Beside us
the river coils,
black as a
rat snake
coal cellar
two-day-old bruise
seeping under a hemline.

Industrious decay
lurks in the culvert;
owls know
the last mice

of the season
gnaw bones.
Cats know this too
but my love,
we are tender
and dull to danger.

The air is swollen
soft as a hound's ear;
we cut through
the twilight
like a wire
strung over the road

and carry death home.

The Secret Moment of Scarcity

Tree canopy
thunderheaded with
the bruised fingertips
of mulberries.

Seedy multitude
half-sweet with rot
and limitless as angels
until
until not.

Fat waxwings
fly home their
thieves' masks
and tattoos blue
under seventh summer.

A thin blade of grass:
this is the moment,
and the moment after.

A hand
the width of your thigh
on your thigh,

a dark stain
spread like a curtsy,

but in what secret hour
did the last fruit fall
like a plucked bow?

Agnes Vojta

Vanishing Act

First published in Porous Land, 2019

The stream disappears, swallowed
by insatiable karst. We live
on porous land.

Skin deep soil hides the unknown:
passages that worm through earth flesh
open into wombs and cathedrals.
Flowstone gleams wet like mucous membranes.

Water seeps through fractures,
dissolves and deposits.

We must descend deep
to understand

what lies below,
where crystals form
under heat and pressure.

Grown larger, the stream
emerges again down valley,
unexpected.

The First Warm Day

I knelt on the ground
and admired
the dark purple veins
in the throats of the violets.

Barefoot,
I walked in the grass,
and my feet felt where the moles
had dug their tunnels.

Not caring that it might
look silly, I lay down
in the middle of the lawn
and listened to Earth's heartbeat.

Cheryl Caesar

Aubade

Not just divided, but subdivided.
In 1970 we moved
from the town of tall trees
to a razed new neighborhood, like a kid

with a buzz cut.

But there was a field, to trudge through mud
to school (better than the bus), ride bikes
and motor-scooters, skate
on the hose-flooded pond. And to create
our own subdivisions, like Tin Can Alley.

Field for miles, as far as the highway.
I'd open my window, mornings, and hear
a faint roar, a rumble, as though
the earth was breathing and waking up.

Fifty years later, and the field is gone.
It's all subdivisions now, and back
window looks into neighbor's yard. My father
would have felt invaded. But I still hear

it, mornings, that dim roar. Sometimes with a faint
descant that is probably just tinnitus. I don't care.
I can still feel that the earth
is rousing, coming awake, and I with her.

Lying awake

Minutes go by, each one
a kernel carried on the back
of one small tired ant. Back
and forth, grain by grain,
heap of evening to heap of morning.

Oysters

To oysters, the pearls
Are not precious stones, but just

Relief from an itch:

Much like Seymour Glass,
Whose pockets filled with poems
In dull waiting rooms,

So his brothers learned
To shake out his windbreaker
Each day for treasure.

But you, my oysters,
My siblings, open your shells
And pockets to me.

Raymond Luczak

First prayer

woods across the street no markers
for dead trapped in dank tunnels
collapsed water surging chunks iron ore
my tenners could never shake free powder rust-soil
past lives murmuring among grasses just beyond
cave-ins half-buried graves mineshafts
shadows outlined cartographers dreaming together
measuring walking back starting again
rust-colored coins prosperity now stones
winds teasing me ghosts no name
stalking me trying whisper stories
tall figures flickering among birches
leaves tiny blades flip-turning
breeze kept shouting my name
kept turning hoping find someone there

hands clasped in prayer would open release
crows fluttering black answers
inking november skies

Debutantes

Tentativeness coagulates the blood of bulbs.
Too many April rains sparks revolution:

they strip away all their clothes
until their lingerie hang and taunt.

The dull grass blades slake off
the drabness of huddled waiting.

Each blade will prance sharply,
fence with each other for clarity.

They learn to whisper names well
enough to make us go mad,

trampling their bruised egos
until they revolt into a mob of green,

their prickly swords firmer than ever.
Then it's time for a mass crew cut.

In the distance the gowned babes giggle.
Spring is an endless ball.

Joan McNeerney

A glimpse of spring

shy blue morning
black trees etch sky

children skipping
over puddles

bramble on snow
soft birdsong

listening to water
race downstream

winds gently kiss
my forehead

grass shoots push
through first thaw

Terrence Sykes

Proverbs

are often found
on rainy mornings
in early spring
meandering
beneath
pine groves

Appalachian revelation

chestnut flowers mimic
vast arrays of spring constellations
light years away from
this isolated coal hollow
cloaked in fog & mizzle
I came to forage mushrooms
amongst budding laurel beds
but the moss laden creek
drew me deep within
fragrance of seaweed
oceans & seas many rivers away
we contrive to commingle

Lynn White

I Saw A Bird

First published in Extreme Anthology, Vagabond Press, 2018

I saw a bird today,
just one.
I wasn't alone,
many people saw it,
more came out to look
dusting off their long unused
binoculars.
Facebook was buzzing
like the insects used to buzz.
And so many tweets
trending for all those lost tweeters.
It made the local headlines,
then the national ones.

It flew a long way that bird,
then it was gone.

Blow It Away

First published in Blognostics, 2018

I'm thinking
that every grain of sand
represents some part
of my life
as I lie wet on my towel.
I'm thinking
that every speck
has some meaning,
some significance
for me.
And now
I've shaken them up
to dry them off
and
I'm watching them float away.
Float away
likes motes in the sunshine
leaving me
ready to begin again
with a clean towel.

Chill

First published in The Moon, August 2017

I close my eyes
and listen
to the birds.
I can't name them,

but it doesn't matter,
I can still feast on their song.
Song,
well some sing beautifully,
others need to learn.
I sympathize with them,
I can't sing either,
but there's no shame
It doesn't matter.
There's no one to hear me
if I join in.

Carol Aronoff

Noticing

Watch how rain
drops
on an oil-slick,
black brim
of pavement,
how it washes
winter
from slovenly lanes,
building altars
of twigs
and ticket stubs
to the unexpected.
How honeybees
hover,
sipping sweetly
from wet jasmine,
how taro leaves

make umbrellas
for storm-weary
toads.
What else
do we miss?

Unreflected

There is a longing
for mango blossoms,
the promise of fruit,
a heaviness on bough
and tongue that weighs
the value of laughter.

What is asked
of the moon falls
flat on human ears.
Unreflected, the shine
in love's eyes. A scatter
of roses.

The solitude of simple things,
wordplay of a poet. Oranges
and candles on a table,
an inquiry into light and hue,
the severance of known
from unknown.

The Sound of the Moon

How does the wind look?
Not the slow dance
of palm fronds

or sway of branches
before sunset, not
the arc of kiss laid
soft on doe's cheek.

I have seen the way
moonlight plays
on still water
but cannot hear
its music. Or taste
late sunlight's nectar.
Or touch the heart
of winter.

So many things
unknowable.
Blind to the plight
of honeycreepers,
we are orphaned
from nature.
No grief is large
enough for this.

Jeremy Nathan Marks

Timshel

Rain
in winter
run bourbon rivulets
over summer's vacant beds
the last hangers on
almost intoxicate themselves

in this wash

I know Rain
driver of a heedless drunk
in this late season
a night's toast become
a sacrilegious boast
his misuse of the biblical line
Thou Mayest

In the near ruins
of an empire of lettuce
two brothers watched
a beneficence
fall to poor planning
their distracted care of a land
where everything grows
provided its proper share of focus
it is nearly unforgivable
to let the fruit of seed and sun rot
mortal sin to the seedsman

But Rain pours his spirits
when the sun has set
with leaves properly pruned
and shades of night
turning their crimson fruit
towards eden
he can be traded for eden

Not his eden

But Tomorrow
or next year

Winter's shoes

It was surprising to me to find how alyssum flowers
with their pencil point blooms released more perfume
than any plant in our yard

I had just put in a flowering pear whose blossoms
attracted bottle flies by their rotting stench
when a passerby stopped to admire the tree and said
Your tree is just like winter, yes?

You welcome the white before you know its appetite.

I pulled that last clump of purple alyssum out of the plant tray
and digging my fingers again into the cool soil
they turned over their numb tips to my awareness
that spring

Moves about in winter's shoes even as she casts off all of his
clothes.

Sam Smith

Crowland (1)

Squiggles and splodges of heather
purple the moorland's flanks
much like a boozer's jowls.
A one-croak raven coasts down
over its own shadow.

Audrey Howitt

Rebirth Redux

I have no feeling left
fingers to thumb flayed
like snake skin left in the sun.

When the horizon took me
I sang of its dissolution
packing oranges in an old suitcase
bound in spit and steel.

When I return, I will bend my thumb
back to meet wrist,
feel its pulse
and move on
to sleep in the night air.

Storm Warnings

slanted rain fits mood
even the trees bend to its will

hollowed burls suffice
for squirrels and birds

when, too brazen for the wind
they report the weather

by absence

Nathan Kukulski

Fall Risks

for Liz

The autumn is a really risky time
tis not the season during which to climb
a broken ladder to a rotten roof, or jump
through windows that are shatterproof
or sans strong anaesthetics to perform
a root canal upon a great white shark
or go kite flying in a lightning storm
or practice juggling axes in the dark.
In fall it's also prudent to refrain
from ultralighting in a hurricane
(unless, I guess, you're in its tranquil
eye) much less coteleporting with a fly
performing surgery on your own brain
or battling Nazis high atop a train
while whizzing upon an electric fence
& lacerating leaves of angry Ents.
& when non-Entish trees begin to change
their color in a dazzling optic feat
it might not be the safest plan to eat
a picnic on a missile testing range
or go way back in time & kill an ant
tell Grand Inquisitors you won't recant
sneak up behind & steal the hats of cops
or surface without decompression stops
fly too close to the sun with waxy wings
sprint into enemies bereft of rings, freak
out & flail in quicksand, eat mad snow
when hypothermic, build a dam & slip
& fall into the wet concrete below

act rude to parrots on a pirate ship
with crossbow whack a hapless albatross
pour frackjuice into, then eat, applesauce
beam down to planets sporting a red shirt
& so forth – mind these risks & don't get
hurt! At other times of year I'd not advise
such extreme caution, but in fall it's wise.

First Time

Cleveland, Sept. 2000

What we do to water, we do to ourselves.

–Vernon Masayesva

We sit on the grass
down by Wade Lagoon
& look at the small waves
& the smaller waves within them
& the yet smaller waves within those
a dynamic of apparently static moments
instant by instant accreting motion
& I'm moved by the wild stillness
of all that activity, the waves, &
long may they ripple, but also
the grass grassing through my
fingers, or vice versa, bound
somehow to the rest of our
bodies & each other & this
bewildering world in a way
that always made sense if
you didn't think about it
too hard, or even if you
did, not to mention
the people peeping

& the buildings building
to a transcendent crescendo
no Global War On Terror yet
& all my dreams of planetary
death mostly osmosed
from scifi pulps
dissolving in waves
& all manner of things
& their siblings spinning
toillessly, choreographed
by a nearly glimpsable
penumbra of hands
like certain deities
are said to have
like they know
the steps, but
as far as anyone
can tell, making it
up as they go along
& there is only this joy
& I am every burbling &
gurgling molecular bundle
unexpectedly blurped, splash
into the curveball pitch
of this openly secretive
life, looking at the water
& seeing it again, finally
for the first time.

Milica Bogetic

Desiderium



Dead people's things



Shana Ross

Forboding

In the aftermath
There are sticks on the sidewalk
I look twice at this one and
Against all odds it is the body of a snake
Twig-like, nearly trodden, small story
Unraveled and finished this day between storms.
Two days ago the wind and rain and tonight
They call for snow, at least eight inches
This tableau pauses in passing, a city small and
Colorless with the exhaustion of winter, this winter
Where only the hard surfaces seem real
As you try to find a horizon past buildings
The clouds so thick you wonder what they would
Look like if we invented a world where it was
Oil not water that roiled in the winds
Clustered in droplet colonies
I have been startled by this body
Which scares me less for what it is
Than what it portends. Overthink it.
The questions collect faster than the ants will find
Even such a small body. This then is certainty
That the story here will remain unknown
And there is no explanation that will seem commonplace.

E.E.L.

Ant Genocide

Ants, when crossing paths with ants from neighborly colonies, always regurgitate their half-digested food to nourish the ant that they encounter. If an ant is selfish and does not share their food, upon return to their own ant community, they are treated as an enemy and ostracized. Ant life is carried out according to the principles of voluntary mutual aid, it is a fact of ant life to share one's food with any ant that may desire it.

Humans regurgitate food too. Into toilets after drinking too much, after receiving chemotherapy for the second time, after their guts are torn to shreds by the teeth of their once lover, or during their seasonal stomach flu.

Humans share food sometimes. They pass the bread basket down the table at the fancy Italian restaurant. The one with floral tablecloths, the gay waiter and the high-eye-browed parents. Humans meet their friends for lunch and split the bill with specific calculations. I'll pull out my phone calculator as my friend pulls up the Venmo app on hers. Sometimes we treat each other for lunch, if it's a special occasion, if it's a birthday. Maybe we donate to a local charity. We all knowingly but innocently, throw our food in trash cans while ants and people alike are hungry everywhere and always.

When I was thirteen and it was summer, and my beloved friend and I were passing time on the front porch of an old house in Regent Square, he told me how ant genocide was necessary, how his dad had confirmed it. I watched and argued as he joyfully stomped on the lines of ants. They were so graceful in their militancy, ordered with precision and determination.

Innocence and minute kindness. I would adamantly argue against ant genocide, through the serious and sweaty hours of the summer evening. We would continue this particular argument from time to time for years to come, until my arguments grew softer and softer, and eventually dissolved into laughter.

If you added up the weight of all the ants in the world and the weight of all the humans in the world, they would equal the same number. The weight of the ants that I would genocide in my life, inadvertently or otherwise, would add up slowly. Growing indefinitely, incrementally and seamlessly. The weight of the ants would unavoidably add up like the weight of the dead air in our chests. Or the evolutionary weight of selfish routines that my father passes down to me through air, genes, words.

Humans, when crossing paths with humans from neighborly colonies who might be hungry, keep their heads down in shame. They indulge in their plasticity tourism in Eastern Europe. They marvel at the architecture of the Ottoman Empire, forgetting to mention the Muslim women, who sit before the buildings in their colorful cloth, rhythmically shaking their cups in a plea for loose euros. One human's vacation spot is another one's refuge, one ant's vomit is another ant's dinner.

So the weight of the humans and ants and ant like humans and human like ants incrementally shrinks and grows. Ants march on in careful lines, generously spewing sticky clear liquid into strangers' mouths, and I keep searching for mutuality at awkward family dinners, through a mature sense of agreeability, a newfound complacency with ant genocide, easily predicted by adulthood.

violets

together in our dreams
vibrating through twirly
telephone cords attached
to walls of the past,
in between words that sing
unapologetically of the post
rock, traced in the paper flowers
dead forever in store windows.
we cannot delete our dreams.
22 smartphones tossed
into the Allegheny river
over an old steel port to discover
the car wheels, our spinning guts — dreams
airplane engines, our fingers clutching — dreams
together backwards and brave
in the D major chord
in the writing on the shoulder or ankle
in the smelling of an herb
in the rescue of the japanese knotweed
in the breaking of an orange peel
whose acidity stings our eyes.
after dreams there will be no more visa
there will be no after-shave or electric
stoves, and i will find you spooning
the growing skunk weeds
while your sweat dissolves the concrete
in the december after the dream.

Lauren Scharhag

Canada geese

The edge of the ice storm,
cars creeping along
windswept highways;
huddled leeward on an embankment
a flock of gray-black-brown Canada geese,
necks drooping like peonies
past their season,
great flight machines landed
by the insidious chill.

The riddle of the bees

Honey, they say, is the lifework
of twelve bees. Honey never spoils,
but the bees are all dying.
Man has slain them, and when
the last hive is silent,
he will eat all of the
remaining honey.
We can't imagine such labor.
It is chief in our nature
to squander, and chief in theirs
to die after dispensing
a single sting,
but what will come someday,
when the sweetness has gone
and only the eater remains?

Victoria Crawford

Granola years

We were fearless in the granola years
communing with self-sufficiency,
freedom,
on a little downhill land
between a million acres
of national forest deep trees
and salt water depths.

A vegetable garden and a typewriter
our M & M's, Maddie and Mark,
augmented by a Scotty pup called Fearless,
hoping she would be, in name and nature.

Our terrier territory was Douglas firs,
salal and blackberry bramble.
Earth dog, vermin hunter,
vegetables well guarded
as we dug and raked and seeded.
Morning arrays of voles, mountain beaver,
and wood rats on the porch:
snap bean, squash, and tomato safe
living the wild life.

Independence amended by time:
children grow
that novel unfinished;
local school needs teachers.

Fearless scootches under
the wood stove, warming old bones.
My daffodils rise in the spring

and rhododendrons glow pink
on forest hikes.
Fresh vegetables emerge
even as we
grade papers, chop wood,
and college calls the kids.

Every year we make granola
and know Fearless is a choice
as well as a name.

Early Call

fur-rill, fur-rill, Ko-el shrieks
5 A.M.

Siam alarm cuckoo
arrives early in winter's bones
Old Man Rain Tree's leaves
droop dirty flaccid
above mud polygons
gashed in stone soil
like parched lips upraised
to hard sky
trunk scraping dirt
Elephants bathe dusty

screaming seduction, Ko-el
forages for the feminine
patent leather black
feathers slicked back
red devil eyes
cuckoo for brevity
a one day Valentine
fur-rill, fur-rill

thirteenth moon passes
Pisces sun transits north
to longer days
Ko-el finds Ko-elette
Old Man Rain Tree drips rain
cracked mouths swell shut
with moisture
Elephants spray
in the swift river

Ko-elette ditches her egg
in a sparrow's nest,
cunning, she crows,
for-real, for-real

Carole Cohen

The wedding

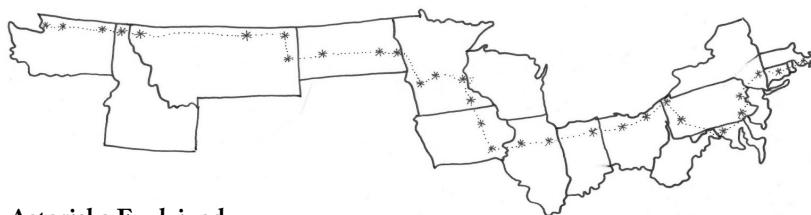
I hold my arms out and up,
in love with this wedding.
The woods witness
all the promises
scattered in vows.
Petals blow in the wind,
in my hair, all over my gown.
I am in love with a dogwood
who has spread
like one in a botanical garden,
breath taking and so white
it hurts your eyes.
Come into my bed,
let us entangle our roots.

Sara Crawford

Cycling Across North America

Notes from the Northern Tier Route

In June 2018 I began my journey across the US (west to east) with my bike, too much gear, and my friend Ange. After the first 10 days I was on my own. With a lot of help from the weather, friends, kind strangers, and luck, I made it to the other side of the country in 77 days, with 17 days of rest.



Asterisks Explained

A selection of arrivals

6/13 Anacortes, WA
6/15 Washington Pass,
North Cascades, WA
6/19 Kettle Falls, WA
6/22 Sandpoint, ID (**461 mi.**)
-1 day off
6/29 Cut Bank, MT
7/1 Harlem, MT
7/3 Wolf Point, MT (**1,197 mi.**)
7/4 Glendive, MT
7/6 Dickinson, ND
7/9 Kathryn, ND
7/10 Fargo, ND (**1,750 mi.**)
7/13 Holdingford, MN
7/14 Little Falls, MN
7/17 Hager City, WI
7/18 Winona, MN
-1 day off
7/20 Marquette, IA

7/22 Oxford Junction, IA
7/24 Cambridge, IL (**2,590 mi.**)
7/26 Ashkum, IL
7/28 Monroeville, IN
-1 day off
7/30 Grand Rapids, OH
8/1 Cleveland, OH (**3,166 mi.**)
8/3 Erie, PA
-1 day off
8/6 Pittsburgh, PA
-4 days off
8/14 Frederick, MD
-9 days off to visit family,
plus a car ride to Philadelphia, PA
8/24 Delaware Water Gap, PA
8/26 Millerton, NY
8/28 Providence, RI
8/29 Fairhaven, MA
(**Final mileage: 4,247 mi**)

6/15 DIABLO -> JUST EAST OF WASHINGTON PASS

What a day, we hit our 100 mile marker overlooking Ross Dam! We stopped to high five and do cartwheels and blow a party favor from my nephew Finley's birthday party.

Steep from the start, with about 3 miles of steep grade similar to Mathilda street in Pittsburgh. Then some 10 miles of traveling all uphill to Rainy Pass, which peaks at a whopping 4,855 feet!

We stopped a lot and gave each other pep talks/ ate Cliff bars. Rode happily downhill for some miles (they go so fast on the downhill!) to the start of Washington Pass. We met it already at 4,500 feet, so it was "just" a thousand feet up from there but gee it was steep. Snow everywhere. We powered through though! Saw some folks coming the other way without much gear...people who live and bike here must get a kick out of tourers like us. It's all love though as far as we can tell. Not the cars though, sheesh. And some rude motorcycle gangs who take up whole lanes with 2 bikes. Scary stuff with such a small bike shoulder!

Anyway we made it to the top!



Ange (left) and Sara (right)

We bundled up with our woolens and such because we heard the descent can be quite nippy. It was. Also beautiful! You should go! Oh! We Also ran out of water going up Washington Pass...not awesome. Luckily I had a Lifestraw water filter thing which was more trouble than it was worth but actually it was still worth it because you need water. We drank from mountain streams with tadpoles right there in them. The first campground we came to was Lone Fir, we spent the night there. They didn't have any water either, but I walked over to a neighboring camper and he was able to spare a whole gallon! He said "why don't you drink from the stream?" Doesn't he know I'm from the city? We ate some rice and shared an Indian food packet for dinner and it was sooooo good.

ODO: 134 (39 miles today in 9 HOURS! Serious climb y'all!)

6/29 DEVIL'S CREEK -> CUT BANK

The day started off with some rain, which kept me inside my tent.

I set off pretty late and immediately realized my rear tire was low. I started pumping it up and realized my pump is somewhat broken! It worked well enough to get me through the day. Hit Maria's Pass which was 5000 and change feet. I bundled up and rode some glorious miles down the mountain. Then a storm hit me right after Heart Butte and it was pretty cold and relentless. Even so, I kept telling myself how lucky I was to have stayed dry through the Cascades. The miles into Cut Bank were long and miserable and I was basically a cold, wet grumpy cat when I arrived. Sat inside a Subway to use their WiFi and check my warmshowers request: sadly she wasn't available. So I pulled myself and my flat tire together and took cover in the Wash-A-Way Laundromat.

That was the best decision ever. I had some nice conversation with Irene who works there, washed my clothes, and called the parks and rec people to make sure it'd be okay to sleep in the city park. As soon as I was all set to go it started pouring again! As I was hiding under the building ledge, waiting for it to stop, the door opened up and Irene asked if I'd like to stay at her house for the night. I teared up a little and of course accepted! I stowed my bike in the laundromat for the night and hopped in the car with Irene and Ben, her husband.

I don't think I really expressed to them how bad I'd been feeling for a couple days at that point, but dang if they didn't change my whole outlook. I had a nice shower, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with Irene's homemade strawberry jam (!!!), and there's even a big comfy bed to sleep in!

ODO: 842 (69 today)

*7/31 GRAND RAPIDS, OH -> WHITE STAR CAMPGROUND
SOMEWHERE IN OHIO*

Day 48: a rough day of rain + headwinds, no doughnuts, and stealth camping. I did pass a car accident (nobody was hurt) in which a car went off road into a mud pit. By the time I passed it was being pulled out by a tow truck and the passengers looked surprisingly cheerful.

ODO: 3,060 (36 today)



8/25 DELAWARE WATER GAP -> NEW PALTZ, NY

Turns out traveling alone can be really lonely (surprise!). Luckily I have some great people to encourage me that are just a phone call away. Unfortunately you can't always reach people when you're deep in a forest, and sometimes you don't meet any wonderful strangers for a couple of days. That's where I was at this morning. Plus I had a migraine. I pushed off from the campground telling myself to breathe deeply and find the goodness available. It actually wasn't hard once I got going. I rode through the forest for a couple of hours and, despite the crazy hills, enjoyed the heck out of the ride.

When I hit the town of Peter's Village a cyclist names John came up alongside me going up a hill. He was super smiley and I was relieved to run into a friendly person. We chatted for a while and rode together for maybe 6 miles. He told me the road we were on (Old Mine Rd.) is the oldest in the country. He also told me that he invented a game called Football Intuition, which comes in a handmade wooden box. He's going to send me one! We said goodbye when he turned to finish his loop.



I had planned to ride to Gardiner, NY and stealth camp somewhere along the rail trail. When I told Midge (Jeanmarie) from Borderline Deli about that she wasn't hearing it. She gave me the money to get myself a campsite, and when we found out they were fully booked she got on the phone pretending to be my mom and demanded an explanation. We figured out that there's a hostel in New Paltz so I called them up and reserved a spot. With my heart full from the unconditional generosity of John and Midge I tore up that trail, making the extra 20 miles up from yesterday to get to New Paltz at sundown (8:00).

ODO: 3,963 (91 today)

8/28 Hartford, CT > Providence, RI

I have been going off route from the Adventure Cycling maps since Windsor Locks, CT yesterday, and am following the East Coast Greenway route. This treasure is free and if you have data on your phone it will direct you in real time to follow tried and true roads and trails suitable for bikes. I was skeptical about relying on my phone, so I wrote down each direction on paper as well.

I tried following those paper directions from the start this morning and ended up traveling about 5 extra miles and getting to the top of a ramp on a busy highway before I broke down and looked to my phone. The main issue is that many roads aren't actually marked, so ya have to either know what you're doing already or have GPS. This was stressing me out because I was worried I would have to use my phone all day and it would die and I'd be stranded. I tried calling Sean to help me alleviate some tension but no answer. Then I pocket dialed my brother Todd and started crying. He was really sweet and helped me relax.

As soon as I got on the right path I smelled freshly mown sweetgrass and it bolstered my confidence. A little later I saw an Eastcoast Greenway sign. These babies are (usually) posted at each turn of the route. Between my written notes, phone, and these lovingly posted signs I was able to get where I needed to go. This section of the Greenway took me along at least 20 miles of rail trails and through several sweet train towns.

It was a scorcher- 100 degrees at some hours. I got a Powerade at one point and it was nasty. Gatorade for life.

Hills, hills, hills, then Providence! JC hosted me and he made clam and lobster pasta...holy heck.

Tomorrow I'll cruise the last 50 miles to Fairhaven Massachusetts where my journey will end!

ODO: 4,194 (93 total)



I hope these snippets of my journey have been inspiring for anyone who's been reading. If you've been putting off your own adventure I hope it is a nudge in the right direction — you can do it!

Check out sarasbiketrip.blogspot.com to read the rest of my travelogue.

Jeff Santosuosso

Impact

I'd have heard them
if they were raindrops.
Even on a sparse November night,
colliding into branches and twigs.
I'd have heard the collective rainfall.
But tonight, Boston winter,
what falls falls silently.
I know of hush,
This is the sound of snowflakes sliding down
branches, cornering the trunk to soil
in mounds.

Runway, Midwest

Flowing grasses, serpentine concrete,
footlights and arrows,
skid marks and black rubber,
white numbers like the seven wonders,

the storm having passed,
clouds swept by a great rake of wind
scattering the emptied water whales
like oats in a warm white zephyr,

grass tops and cattails bending,
juvenile ash laden with green sails
nearly uprooting their determination,
bark stretching at the trunks.

We lift off into layers of dispersion and light,
tops and bottoms, canopies and undersides,

horizontal strata of sunlight,
a harlequin ascent to triumphant cobalt

layers of light lying like lamina
in temples then mosques then churches,
variants of worship, spirits in the fascia,
fly-eyed visions of God,

that press upon the Earth, inevitable, insistent,
why Man worships Nature.

Cynthia Anderson

Blue Beetles

—After Jane Hirshfield

In dark woods,
they worship *the god of More*—

filled with sweet liquor
of vines and leaves,

submerged on the forest floor.
They have eyes I dare not

meet in dreams—
eroded cones of light.

They ask where I look
with my twin candles,

where I go
with my wobbly hips.

They whirl past my ears
toward buried treasure.

To them I'm a senseless
rumor—tree with no fruit,

stone in the sky, breath
of no consequence.

They do their work
without me.

Two birds, one stone

Only the best hunter
could pass that time-

honed test—

one whose arm and aim
were prized by the tribe.

It's an old saying
from an older time.

When I say it, killing
is not my intention.

I try never to say it.

*

A dream-crag falls
straight out of the sky,

filled with prehistoric

fliers—brown pelicans,

by the look of them,
lined on a branch

near their nest.
They watch me

with something like
serenity—then vanish.

Worried, alone,

*

I search the ground,
find a bird-mother

bearing her young
on her back, her belly

bloody. She lets me
comfort her, knows

she needs help
to survive.

How can I help?

*

100 million years
of star fire—

then bullets, fishing line,
six-pack rings, DDT.

And still not extinct.

They ask for
a new metaphor—
Two birds, one home—

as they watch from
the dream-crag,

rainbow feathers,
strong beaks.

Kenneth Pobo

Porch seedlings

Mexican sunflowers—
where will they go?
Orange makes demands.
Petunia seeds, less weighty
than salt, charge up.
Only a few months
of pleasure. Autumn
grows in our eaves.
We can't see
or hear it.
Yet.

Dirt stains the messy
porch table,
a signature.

Kim Whysall-Hammond

The moor and the sky

All landscapes sit equally under the sky
yet Exmoor stretches out to embrace it
reflect it's moods and many colours

Only the moor is as fickle as the sky
as nurturing and destructive
both bleed rain

Trees hide in hollows
afraid to stand in the open
sheep bones litter spring hillsides

High on the moor silence
Broken by decoying skylarks
Under lowering cloud

Bone moon

Grey bone, alone
Stark in the star fled sky

Veiled in sorrow
By a wandering cloud

Lonely satellite
Goes to find her glitter path

Mary Anna Kruch

Three Haiku

1.

Lilac-golden sky
canvasses evening's last light,
elevating stars.

2.

Watercolor dusk,
fleeting tonic for my angst,
moves to navy blue.

3.

Moonlight through windows,
radiance on children's dreams,
rids the night of beasts.

Giles Goodland

Heron Ascending

A heron holds up a corner of the boat-pond
with a sense of history
its springloaded neck makes a stab at water
and itself scarce, leaving
rings that expand upon emptiness.
The pieces of you call themselves
bird of discarded tubing
and white sails, weather and

waste, abandoned among
submerged prams: I jog past your weedy
prayer-mat and you do
not stop standing until you
are several trees above me.

Something clicks and you are inside me.
We redouble across water calmly
enough to make apparently no
noise, only reshuffle the light
as if the creator dropped a pack
of cards and put together
over its stained greyness
an act of contemplation, sustained.

Theresa Stoker

Oitylo to Kelefa Castle: Walking the Inner Mani in the footsteps of Jules Verne

‘Vitylo is built in the form of an amphitheatre on the rugged rocks which defend the old acropolis of Kelapha. Above it rise several ruined towers.’

The little town perched on a cliff above the harbour, facing Kelefa castle, has apparently barely changed in the hundred and fifty or so years since Jules Verne wrote those words. His novel *The Archipelago On Fire* is set during the Greek War of Independence and opens with a brief but dramatic visit home of the pirate Starkos.

The town is quiet on this March morning. The only resident we meet is a dog. From the edge of the village we look over to the ruins of the Ottoman castle. It looks close but there is no route across the gorge. To reach it we must first go down the old kalderimi or mule track to where the sea glitters far below in a palette of the palest blues and greens. Then we will tackle the more difficult uphill climb. Last time we walked this route in October the path was easier to find. A mild wet winter means the neglected stones are hidden under soft succulents and the path obstructed by huge prickly pears.

Verne was a keen sailor, and travelled the Mediterranean on his yacht, *Saint-Michel*. When he came to the Peloponnese this stone staircase would have been the main route down to the harbour of Neo Oitylo, with plenty of room for pack mules and horses to pass. Since the coming of the road in the 1970s these pathways have been neglected, loose stones and missing sections making them tricky to negotiate. Verne describes a monk ‘hurrying down to the (lower) village and signaling with

his arms' the imminent arrival of a ship.

Today there will be no hurrying.

We walk carefully, testing with each step for loose boulders, thorns snagging our clothes and scratching our arms. The harsh call of a circling buzzard breaks the silence. After a few minutes we stop to visit the tiny cave church of Agios Spyridon, carved into an overhang of the cliff. Everywhere in Greece, however isolated, you will encounter these little chapels. Some are plain, whitewashed rock like this one, in others the walls are covered in colourful narrative paintings. Almost all are visited by a priest at least once a year and many are left unlocked. Another hundred metres or so and we find a grander church, with a broken arch spanning our path. This one is locked, but a stone inscription suggests it's the family ossuary for a local clan. In Greece, burial is temporary. After a few years your loved ones' bones must be dug up, taken home, washed in vinegar and stored in a family vault or church.

The Mani is still recovering from the mass exodus of the 1940s and 50s. In this barren and hostile landscape migration has been a theme. When the Byzantine city of Mystras fell to the advancing Ottomans in 1460, many aristocratic families fled to the Inner Mani. Overcrowding and lack of good agricultural land perhaps led to a dependency on piracy, and the feuding for which the region is famous. In the late 17th century some eight hundred Oitylans emigrated to Corsica, no doubt at least partly in response to Ottoman incursions. Today there is a slow trickle of returnees, turning abandoned stone cottages and derelict towers into holiday homes and boutique hotels.

According to Verne, 'Nothing can be more desolate than this coast' having 'neither orange, lemon, eglantine, laurel, jasmine, fig, arbutus, mulberry, nor any of the trees and bushes which

make certain parts of Greece a green and fruitful country.' Impossible to say how far he was exaggerating for effect. Today olives are cultivated, the regular mowing of the fields creating a perfect environment for wild herbs and flowers. The kalderimi flattens out to a wide dirt track as we get nearer to the shore. Wooden bee hives amongst the olive trees are thrumming with life. The groves are a pointillist frenzy of colour: black bee orchids, yellow and purple anemones, white daisies and wild carrot, creamy yellows, lurid pinks, jostle for space with dusty sage and bright green spikes of wild asparagus. The thyme we crush beneath our feet scents the air. But the bare sides of the Taΐgetos mountains and the rocky terrain retain their austere appearance. It is still a tough place to make a living.

The Maniots have a reputation for being hostile and warlike. Verne calls them 'semi-savages', 'almost impossible to subdue', 'quarrelsome, vindictive, handing down . . . an inheritance of hate'. They were never conquered by the Turks and spearheaded the Greek War of Independence. The many war towers that dominate the village skylines evidence the bitter blood feuds that poisoned generations. In contrast, the Maniots today are a warm, open people.

At sea level we follow the tarmac for a few hundred metres parallel to the beach. White ripples and splashes tell the wind is getting up. On this main road from Kalamata to Areopoli traffic is so light that passing motorists wave. It's hard to see a route up to the castle but we find the start of the track. After a few minutes we're no longer walking but clambering over boulders. The wind is trying to strip our clothes from us, but also cools the sweat on our bodies. We struggle on, with frequent stops to rest and gasp at the stunning seascape below. In Verne's novel, the pirate Starkos seems to find an easier route as he 'gradually made his way up the slopes of the cliff',

taking 'a rough footpath leading up round the acropolis of Kelapha . . . skirting the ruins'.

At last we reach the plateau and see the magnificent ruin of Kelefa directly in front of us. Half collapsing, half whooping with joy at making the summit, we stumble across a rock-strewn field of asphodel, black sticks of burnt thorn bushes showing evidence of last summer's wildfires. A jangle of bells and the pungent whiff of goat are carried to us and snatched away. A straggler from the herd follows us as we stagger out of the wind and into the sunny lee of the castle walls. This mighty fortress was built by the Turks to subdue the Mani. It failed, and quickly became a ruin. We climb the external staircase onto the wall, crouching for fear of sudden gusts. The castle walls provide shelter for an olive grove on this windswept plateau. The abundant trees within contrast vividly with the stunted bushes without. Looking down we see our goat has found his flock inside the castle walls. A lone goatherd wanders amongst the olives. Spotting us, he waves his arm. We wave back, then cautiously grope our way down the stone steps.

Edward Schmidt-Zorner

Reflection on passing moments

Gorse, rhododendron and fuchsia nod at me. On the horizon a mountainside erodes.

The heathers that have held the slope together have vanished, the land is now a threatening wall ready to slide. Herbs climb persistently, and lichens are anchoring to stones in the ground.

A green light flooded strip, like the hem of a druid's coat, on the black skirt of the mountain. Against a dark grey background, the white flashes of darting swallows as they weave their way. Patchworks composed of green, dark green, light green, grey-green, yellow green, silver green cover the mountainside.

Clouds gather behind the mountains. They rise and fall forward like the softest of cushions.

Bog land offers me its white flowers and waves of cotton grass. This has also filled pillows in times of old, provided material for candle wicks and for dressing wounds.

An oak track leads the way through the bog containing the ideas of thousand years ago.

Grazing sheep dot the grasslands with white spots reflecting the white wool like clouds on the blue sky. Gentle slopes invite us to rest under alder and willow trees.

Shrubs grow in a mosaic, with exposed rocks. A dusty road leads to a farmstead, testifies heavy work, an arduous rise and hard access.

Old barns, a ruined cottage, overgrown by brambles and nettles.

An undergrowth and dense thicket hiding behind a hill.

Reed and iris mark the proximity of water.

The Caragh River runs from this, its fresh clean water spills from headwater to estuary. Rocks around the smaller mountain streams support a lush vegetation of bryophytes.

A thrush in a juniper scrub finds shelter and a warbler calls this woodland a second home.

A wood ant rushes by and takes no notice of a snail, which patently follows its predetermined path. Dragonflies indicate that the lake is near.

Flies dance the ritual dance of the ephemeral in the afternoon sunshine.

Waves of light on the lake, its surface broken by leaping fish forming silvery foam, creating a fleeting ornament.

I walk to the shore and see my reflection in the water, an old face, surrounded by sky and crowned by greens, the wind blows and the picture fragments in trembling undulation, admonishing me to turn inward to a reflection of my transient existence.

Branches that hang into the water, dribbling water beads reflect the sun's rays as tears of the day, drying up before nightfall.

The only human trace on the shore is a boat; its colours faded, left here to decay. Water seeps into its timbers, future food for beetles, isopods, worms, fish and fungi.

What is time doing when it passes?

*time dissolves - marks change,
moon and sun move as clock hands
church bell sounds die away*

Gregg Shapiro

Fear of Muses

Never, ever tell anyone you hate Walt Whitman.
They will look at you askance. They will never
ask you to dance. Even if you don't say a word,

you know they are dying to ask you why you left
Leaves of Grass on the subway platform, near
the edge, so any clumsy, distracted, unsuspecting
passenger, boarding or exiting, could kick it onto

the third rail, where it will sizzle like the sunny
and ample lands in "Song of the Redwood Tree".
Best not to mention, in polite conversation, how

you wish that Lavinia Norcross Dickinson would
have minded her own damn business, left her sister
Emily's poems stashed in the drawer where she found
them. If they listen closely, they may hear you humming

to yourself, a melody that possibly resembles Aimee
Mann's "Stranger Into Starman", about Anne Sexton's
"star rats", or "Cemetery Gates" by the Smiths.

Nowhere Fast

Fog dances across the windshield like steam on a mirror.
The highway is still there under your tires
even if you can't see it.
Will there be mirages between Chicago and Philadelphia?
Look at the map, then look away.
To get from first to second, use the clutch.
If you hurry, you will get nowhere fast.
To get from first to second, use the clutch.
Look at the map, then look away.
Will there be mirages between Chicago and Philadelphia?
Even if you can't see it
the highway is still there under your tires.
Fog dances across the windshield like steam on a mirror.

James Croal Jackson

Blur

for Mary Oliver

We walked along
the gray edges of
the river. And my
glasses had shattered.
This removed
the shape of things,
the perfect barren limbs
now perfect trees,
what I thought were boats
in the distance you told me
were wild geese going home—
and where else to go

but deeper? I wanted
to see what might be
around the bend, always
something– exactly the
grass we could not know
we needed, pines
that waved us
further into forest.

At the edge

there is the sea

beautiful silver
chrysanthemum

wine crystal

Max Reiver

Interlude

I wanted to write about the clouds
I've seen
and the watery hues
that possessed them.
They remind me of
cigarette smoke
expelled from my ex-lovers' lips
and the fog
that haunts the space
behind my eyes.
Clouds conjure
my periodic inability

to differentiate
dream from reality.
I feel as though I am walking on clouds.
With each step
my shoes grow soggy
the rubber beginning to rot
the moisture slowly creeping
up my appendages
until I am thoroughly soaked
shivering
once my cheeks have flushed to the color of roses.

Alice Morris

Walking

First published in the Broadkill Review, October 31, 2018

and there at my feet
a dead bird newly fallen
poised on its belly, its beak
stuck
into the grass

as though this unblemished bird is on display
as though its streak of industrial yellow
across the end of its tail feathers
a warning
to me

to yield
to this sacrifice
for my need
to feel something poetic
this day

Glen Armstrong

Cool Eclipse Animals

As the squid looks for a bell,
it looks like the ringing
that the bell makes.

It's all over the place,
everywhere,
like God,

who was never breastfed
or was breastfed radiation
from the big bang,

which I expected more from
somehow.
Destruction

seems like a high price
for creation.

I am but a mammal
with dirt on my dress shirt.

