

# IdeaFest: Interdisciplinary Journal of Creative Works and Research from Humboldt State University

---

Volume 5

Article 4

---

## Eddylines

Ann Nehaya Walsh

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/ideafest>

---

### Recommended Citation

Walsh, Ann Nehaya () "Eddylines," *IdeaFest: Interdisciplinary Journal of Creative Works and Research from Humboldt State University*. Vol. 5 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/ideafest/vol5/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in IdeaFest: Interdisciplinary Journal of Creative Works and Research from Humboldt State University by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact [kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu](mailto:kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu).

# Eddylines: a metaphor for navigating Life's woes

Ann Nehaya Walsh

We sat on the fence and watched the blaze of wildfire, my seven siblings and I, ten yards away in the meadow we played in yards below our property.

The neighbor kids, the Halls, Cartwrights, and Wilsons, sat with us as firemen steadily tamed the fire to smoldering, blackened earth.

That was 1972 in Carmel Valley, California, where wildfire was an occasional occurrence from late August into October during my first fifteen years. Save for the meadow being ablaze, most fires were distant; plumes of grey smoke rising as a huge billowy column further down the valley, or in the coastal range across the valley from our rural neighborhood.

We left Carmel Valley when I was fifteen for another culture, geography, and climate.

Eventually, after living in other far-off ports, I returned to live in California more than forty years later.

That was autumn 2018, when wildfires in the US western states and Canada's British Columbia were the worst anyone had known.

Autumn 2019 was worse than before. This horror was compounded with Australia's dry, red-soiled Land, ravaged by fire that decimated some of the rarest creatures on Earth.

I'd lived in Australia when I was 25. The experiences of that odd land had touched me deeply. It wasn't until Australia went up in smoke that I began to feel and grieve what had and was currently happening on my native soil.

Now, autumn 2020, the wildfire season has been horrific in scope and impossible to grapple with.

I've learned wildfire makes its own weather patterns; lightning, cyclones of fire, and fireballs spitting as far as eight miles out from the center, igniting more fire amongst dry grasses, trees, and soil. Wildfire can also make thunderstorms and rain.

Even though I've been deeply blessed to have, so far, lost nothing to fire, I've listened to people's stories of fighting fire, of homes and towns being destroyed, and the absolute devastation to people's hearts and souls.

I have endured long days and weeks of air so choked with smoke that even avid walkers, such as I, wear masks for brief, small walks throughout the day.

Throughout these experiences, moist memories rose of kayaking British Columbia's gulf islands and Washington State's San Juan islands with my then husband Keith Fredrikson.

Keith and I kayaked often, and I learned to traverse eddylines in a hardy, sea-faring kayak.

Eddylines are two currents that abut each other, causing a harrowing current that with patience and skill can be crossed.

\*

The air was chilly and damp. Low, gray fog lifted slowly from a small headland as we kayaked past.

Cold, gray-blue water swirled into stronger currents beneath my paddle's blades.

"Watch the current," Keith called from my right.

Nodding, I adjusted my grip on the paddle's rod and continued paddling rhythmically.

Blade in, slush, pull back and out. Seawater dripping from the blade sprayed my face. Other blade in; slush, pull back... suddenly the blade was torn askew underwater. Out came the blade. Other blade in. No beat missed. A jagged entry. Pulled back the paddle. The blade skirted sharply left. Lost momentum. I pulled back again, out, and looked ahead.

The current jugged up, forming a small, white line of water streaming away from the island's head.

I wasn't fooled by the smallness of the white water. "Eddyline!" Keith called. "Keep a blade in the water." Glancing at him, I nodded briefly, glad for his guidance.

Sinking my hips deeper into my kayak's plastic seat, I kept the bow directed towards the eddyline and was funneled forward.

\*

Now, the 2020 wildfire season has been compounded by Covid; which has spread like waves of fire throughout our species.

In light of this, I must ask myself, again, how have I participated so that this has come about? For, I feel and see a direct correlation between our ways of living and using Earth these past decades, century, and longer that has made the firestorm of Covid-19.

As for my participation...

True; I've been purposely without a car for two+ years; I have composted and recycled for 30+ years; eaten and grown organic foods for donkey years; and purchase foods from Humboldt County and Northern California shoreline...

It's also true that I happily buy foods grown or fished thousands of miles from my neighborhood; would book a ticket and hop on a plane taking me to my parents in San Diego, Ireland, and Maui

in a minute; I drove a vehicle copiously for decades and have, at times, felt socially pressured to seriously consider buying a car so I've more options for employment; and I may not remain in North America for permanent settlement.

Many of us have paths in Life that are enthralling and fulfilling, which have us traveling, teaching, researching, and forming fresh protocols for professional conduct in ports far from our own neighborhoods.

It's kindly true, also, to include the visions of explorations we wish for those we love who have held back on going to the Trinidads, Istanbuls, and Tanzanias of this beautiful, bountiful World... because... they can.

However, this belief of travelling hither and thither in our counties, States, and further forms an eddyline with our awareness that we must deeply change our daily ways of living because our treatment of Earth is bringing Humans and Earth to our knees.

\*

Earth has been an extraordinarily gracious Hostess to us.

Many of my colleagues and I know/feel Earth's intelligence and believe She resonates at a frequency higher than Humans.

Earth can swallow us whole in a matter of breaths. She could regurgitate whatever She wants and, with time, bring Life to Herself anew.

I sense Earth is well aware of the taxation being done to Her, and is willing to wait things out till we bring ourselves to our own knees, and our Minds humble into our Hearts.

For all my experiences, Divine communiques and guidances, I do believe a stout few can shift Consciousness for many. How can this be done? And how can this come about?

Love—truly, tenderly, without bounds of judgement, shame, nor restriction—One's Own Dear Self.

Love—especially in the Dark Hour—however this hour shows itself; with difficult aspects of yourself; with a natural catastrophe decimating your home, land, trees, and animals; with a troubling colleague; a disturbing neighbor; the too busy friend or spouse; the loss of something or one Dear; with governmental Leaders; with Covid-19.

Feel the anger. Feel the grief and pain. Feel compassion for yourself; compassion for that, or who, you hate.  
Love these things, too. And be thankful for what is good and steady.  
For all your ills will, too, pass.

\*

The current roughened.  
Wind pushed deep against my stern.  
Glad I was, for a heavily packed bow and stern with a fortnight of food and water. Keep a blade in, I chanted, terrified of capsizing.  
Keith had practiced “Eskimo rolls” in a pool, then later Lake Padden as I watched how he did it.  
I hadn’t the guts to purposely capsize; sprayskirt swaddled and latched to my cockpit as my body and kayak met water, with pole in hand rudder some maneuvers underwater and, Voila, Pop!  
Up to surface, water flooding off everything.  
No thank you.  
Instead I practiced ripping my sprayskirt free of its latched sealing. If I capsized I trusted my slithering and swimming finesse more than purposely staying captive till, maybe, I surfaced.  
Grey-blue water sucked and pushed at my blades in jagged swirls.  
The water was cold and deep. Chilly wind sunk beneath my raincoat.  
Don’t think. Blade in. Pull back. Out. Exhale. Blade in.  
I churned through the wide eddyline. Controlled Fire Mind.  
Ache built in my shoulders. My knees pressed the hunnells deep. They would be bruised later.  
I shortened the reaches of my paddle. All that existed was the fierce, contorted current. Blade plunged hard and deep, slush. Back. Up. Seaspray drenched me. Blade plunged.  
Sharp wind cut against my neck. Heat fumed up beneath my coat.  
Keith was lengths ahead. I smiled, wryly. It was how we walked, lived. I slowed. He quickened.  
My shoulders burned from battling the current. I persevered. Blade in, pulled deep, then.... Nothing. No resistance. The current carried my kayak as I thrust a blade in, not trusting to break the quick, stout rhythm.  
Whoosh. I was carried swiftly away from the eddyline, caught Keith’s eye and shook my head as if to say, “Damn. Whew!”  
He smiled, noddingly. We kayaked abreast, leisurely and were carried swiftly around a small headland and began to seek camp for the night.

\*

I believe as each of us continues to do our part as we can, we will come through this stalwart eddyline that we have been in for some time and have more to traverse until we come to good, safe shore.

Surely, the Love I feel for myself, Earth, and Humanity is my prayer and pervades my entire presence. This prayer—this “kayak and paddle”—I offer in every situation.

Will the great trees, animals, and birds of western North America and Australia replenish themselves...? I pray enough will. This trust entwines with loving, yes, loving these recent horrors and rips to our Psyches... because I can.  
We can.