



The Oregon Trail Is the Oregon Trail

Gregory Sherl

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Loosely or not so loosely based on the iconic computer game The Oregon Trail, THE OREGON TRAIL IS THE OREGON TRAIL chronicles the journey of a family on their way out West. Along the way, they fight dysentery, a racist Mel Gibson, syphilis, and consumption while learning that letting go is sometimes easier than starting over. Read the book, play the game, and never welcome the small pox welcome wagon. We have done bad things, and we will pay for them.

The Oregon Trail Is the Oregon Trail Details

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Author : Gregory Sherl

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From Reader Review The Oregon Trail Is the Oregon Trail for online ebook

Matthew Salesses says

Fantastic. The poems build on each other in wonderful ways. I love that hush that falls on the reader when the rhythm of a poem takes over. I got that here for pages at a time. How much more can you ask?

There's plenty here for the reader who wants to reminisce about The Oregon Trail. But the book is far more playful than that. The Oregon Trail is more than The Oregon Trail, as Sherl knows.

Eric says

Am I going to memorize any of these poems or copy one out to keep in my wallet for inspiration? No, definitely not. But I have a great deal of respect for a poet who could take on such a bizarre Oulipian constraint and still come up with something pretty good. Creating a thematic thread based on a (relatively) ancient educational video game should have failed, but for the most part, Sherl slips his references to oxen, the Kansas River, and bankers from Boston into some insightful, powerful poems without crossing the tipping point into silliness. For the most part, I don't recommend reading this collection from beginning to end. Read a poem or two, put the book down for a while, and read a few more a little while later. That way you might appreciate the poems without getting galled by the cleverness of the constraint.

Now excuse me while I embark on writing a book of haiku poems based "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?".

Kevin says

Gone are the pop song references of Sherl's first two books (they're replaced by references to wagons and rivers) and gone are the drug references (for the most part), but these poems move in interesting new ways that seem like they're more fueled by starvation, fatigue, and the fear of dying. Oh, there's still some sex of course.

Schnaocl says

It's a book of poetry which often references The Oregon Trail video game. However, for a book of poetry that's tied to The Oregon Trail video game there is an awful lot of sex. I'd say most of the poems are 50% sex and 50% Oregon Trail the video game.

I wanted to like it more than I did what with The Oregon Trail connection, and there were some clever lines about various things having to do with the game (being limited to 100 lbs. after hunting, fording the river, hiring an Indian guide, etc). The line that stuck with me was "Manifest Destiny in our cocks."

Now I want a collection of poetry based off of video games and I want to play Oregon Trail.

Kristin says

Gregory Sherl's words drip off each page. There's a hunger in this world that can only be fed by his beautiful words. There is a word of his for every piece of loneliness, anxiety and depression that can be felt. This book is the sweater you want to wear when Florida is not acting like Florida outside.

Mary says

I was afraid this was going to be gimmicky and rely on novelty and pure nostalgia. It was refreshing that the narrative arc underlying the collection had so much heart. A little repetitive at times, but overall wonderful.

Jim says

There are plenty of ways to expire on The Oregon Trail, as the frontiersmen who used the route in the 1840s and anyone who has played the 1970s computer game of the same name can attest. Both the trail and the pioneering computer game that was developed to educate school children about its perils have proved to be maddeningly alluring. So it should come as no surprise that Gregory Sherl's new collection of poems, *The Oregon Trail Is the Oregon Trail*, is equally deceptive.

Unlike video games of today, the original *The Oregon Trail* game took place largely in the imagination. Its purpose wasn't to glamorize westward expansion but to teach kids that frontiersmen were far more likely to starve or die of illness than to reach their goal. Dreams of gold and glory were vanquished by measles or exhaustion.

In Sherl's hands, "*The Oregon Trail*" becomes a complex system of similes for things that seem easily attainable at the outset but prove far more difficult to achieve. In other words, *The Oregon Trail Is the Oregon Trail* is a love story.

"... We are naked under our clothes, we are drunk when we open our mouths. / You lift yourself onto me. / I can smell how much you love me. / I have put a heater on the inside of your thighs. / In 2D everything looks like it's burning."

Part homage to the game that introduced "You have died of dysentery" to nerd parlance, part idiosyncratic love story, Sherl's collection mines the idiom of the analog trail to map the unexplored territory of the heart.

Robert Vaughan says

I could not love this wacky, heartfelt, strange collection any more if I tried (and I have, since I have read it more than just a few times!) All I can say is, you want your own copy of this. And everything else Sherl publishes.

Bonnie says

This is definitely a book to keep in your purse, backpack, or pocket for frequent reading. The book follows a speaker who is apparently trapped in a perpetual loop of the computer game Oregon Trail. He and his family face hardships, conquer them, and are sometimes conquered themselves. The book is rich with surprising metaphor, and the speaker's voice is very strong. The poems in this book are, in keeping with Sherl's style, full of sex, love, and the longing for both - topics by which I, for one, am entranced. Additionally, there is a lot of humor, partly to be found in jokes and partly just in the startling nature of some of the metaphor. Oh man. I'm going to get flowery if I keep going on. If you like life, and poetry, and sex, and being in love, and the feeling of wistfulness, and having a sense of humor and acceptance about bad things, and looking at life in new ways, READ THIS BOOK. Read it anyway.

Matt says

The past does not exist in a vacuum. What I say re: Sherl now:
<http://sarahxcerta.wordpress.com/2014...>

<http://www.connotationpress.com/creat...>

Cannot abide.

What I wrote in 2012:

It's so much easier to give you one of his poems than explain all the brilliance of this collection.

"The Oregon Trail is based on a true story"

This one time we watched the weather.
You were naked & I was naked
& the sound of everything was louder
than the thunder we couldn't see.
You said *I love you more than not getting dysentery.*
I said *Sing this trail to sleep under me*
& you did. You sang it cold dead.
At the Kansas River crossing we fed
our oxen to the mouth of the river, slept
under our wagon as we lit it on fire.
When we burn you said. *When we burn,*
our ashes will bathe our children, feed
them throughout the night.
The fire was the color of fire.
It was so red we saw Hell & everything in it.

*When we burn I said. When we burn,
our ashes will mix & I will only be you
& you will ever only be me.*

[5 stars for all the times I died of dysentery back in '94 and '95 and for all the times I've wished to burn up hard & bright.]

Meg Tuite says

One of the best collections I've read in a long time! Gregory Sherl works magic on words, but more importantly emotions. He gives us truth, vulnerability and the unexpected, always! A treasure! Hope everyone gets a copy of this! I keep for inspiration! Exceptional!

Shawnte Orion says

Somehow Gregory Sherl was able to turn one of the most primitive slow-paced computer games ever created, into a series of rich lively poems full of humor and emotion.

Kerri Anne says

<http://sarahxcerta.wordpress.com/2014...>

<http://www.connotationpress.com/creat...>

Ariadne says

If you didn't play the iconic computer game The Oregon Trail in your youth the charm of this book will be lost on you. Each poem uses the imagery from the classic game to describe various feelings and situations, some to better effect than others. Loved ones perish of dysentery while green oxen look on by the riverbank. Because of this unifying theme there is a repetition throughout the book, which almost makes it read like one long heartbroken fever dream. While I wasn't always moved by these poems I was consistently impressed with the raw, and almost desperate, feeling they could invoke. If you're a Gen Xer, especially a man who has loved and lost, then give this collection a read.

Ampersand Books says

Reviewed by C.L. Bledsoe at The Ampersand Review:

"The Oregon Trail is the Oregon Trail is a collection of poems narrated by a character who seems to exist in the world of the classic computer game The Oregon Trail, while, simultaneously experiencing various elements of modern culture – it's as though a player were caught in the game, though it isn't presented as tritely as that. He, and his family, travel the trail and seem to be caught in a kind of Groundhog's Day situation, forever redoing the journey. And imagine what that would be like; forever dying of dysentery, having to ford the Kansas River over and over.

Sherl's poems are full of pain and love. He commits to the conceit completely, which is the only way this collection could work. His narrator is a driven dreamer."

[Read the rest of this review here](#)
