

The Road Not Taken

A Journal of Formal Poetry



Winter, 2018

The Road Not Taken: A Journal of Formal Poetry

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Contents: Fall 2018

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Kevin Shyne | Lost Keys | Feature Poem |
| Mary Beth Hines | Dunmanway, 1914 A Cry So Close To Song | Editor's Choice |
| John Byrne | Dance Laura's Lament | |
| Karen Shepherd | Apple Harvest | |
| Larry Thacker | A Synchronicity | |
| Thomas Schmidt | Weaned | |
| Robert Beveridge | Ground Rules | |
| Mary Cresswell | Blood Memory | |
| Louis Hunt | Green Mountains Walk | |
| Thomas Tyrrell | Alexandrines | |
| Eric Larson | The Doctors Couldn't Reattach His Hand | |
| Will Begley | Fount of Wisdom | |
| Yates Young | Sam | |
| Martin Elster | At Kill Devil Hill | |
| Michael F Gray | Forever Autumn | |
| Robbie Gamble | Reading Seamus Heaney While Winter Camping | |
| Ron Singer | Nature Is Not a Symphony | |
| Nell Wilson | Circle Line | |
| Wallace Kaufman | Fires of Friendship | |
| Marc Alan Di Martino | Cat Person | |

Poet's Corner

Welcome to the fall issue of *The Road Not Taken*.

The Road Not Taken is, as you all know, dedicated to formal and metrical of all kinds: poems which feature in interesting ways the ongoing juxtaposition of form and content. Sometimes these two reinforce each other to make a harmonious whole. At other times the conflict between the two constitutes an ironic commentary, or illustrates the stress inherent in the subject. Either way, sound patterns layer and alter the obvious meaning of the text until they constitute a commentary of their own.

This issue contains plenty of traditional forms: alexandrine, sonnet, ballad and blank verse, to name just a few. But it also contains poems that are unobtrusively formal: for instance, rhyming poems with flexible line length (some of the line combinations add up as pentameter to the ear). The traditional forms flaunt their forms, acknowledge them, and make good use of them. The hidden use of sound-patterns on the other hand soft pedal their use of sound-patterns; they prefer to sneak up on you.

In short, this issue of The Road Not Taken tries to offer a variety of skilled approaches to form and meter and sound patterns of all styles. We hope you enjoy it. --

Kathryn Jacobs
Editor
Road Not Taken

Kevin Shyne

Feature Poem

Kevin Shyne is a lifelong writer whose work once appeared in national magazines, corporate annual reports and employee newsletters. Turning to poetry in his retirement, Kevin has had poems published in *Poetry Breakfast*, *Clementine Unbound*, *Poetry Porch* and *Blue Heron Review*. Recently elected president of the Prairie Arts Council, a nonprofit group that promotes arts activity in North Central Illinois, Kevin is learning that being a poet is about more than writing poetry.

Lost Keys

Forgive me if your name
wiggles free, slippery and silver,
from my aging memory.
Be patient, please
until I crack the mystery
of where I left my keys.

The experts say
these awkward episodes
arise from inattention,
not forgetfulness.
With mind on mid-day meds
braking for a shopping list
bumpered by a book that's overdue
cut off by wedding gifts to buy and send,
pulled over by a diagnostic test, flashers on,
my power of recall
is a rush hour traffic jam
slowing to a crawl.

Bear with me in this bottleneck.
I'll soon be getting through.
Your name will come to mind.
The keys will reappear as if on cue
while elsewhere in my memory
beloved faces old and new
my dearest inventory,
rock gently, close to shore,
tethered to the mooring buoys
of my reminding story.

Mary Beth Hines

Editor's Choice
(Rachel Jacobs)

A project manager by profession, Mary Beth Hines is a member of the Farm Pond Writer's Collective, and an active participant in Boston-area writing workshops. Her work recently has been, or will be, published in *Aurorean*, *Blue Heron Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, and *Muddy River Poetry Review*.

Dunmanway, 1914

Friday morning, light snow on Coole Mountain
Changed to drizzle then biting sleet
As the girl trudged to school, past cows, townsmen,

The royal constabulary on Castle Street,
Patrolling the square in their army green,
Wool caps on heads, new boots on feet.

Their moon, mottled faces, shaven clean,
Loomed on necks snapped into uniforms.
Eyes down, she passed by, small, unseen,

Remembering one boy from a year before.
Dark-haired, lithe, he hauled turf with her brothers
By day, by night teased kisses from her

On Pipe Hill behind tall, sprawling rushes.
But yesterday afternoon, in heaving
Rain, he stalked into her school along with the others.

The class was quick though, prepared for deceiving.
Miss Walsh heard the gang coming two minutes out,
And the kids jammed the Irish they'd been reading

Under floorboards, then watched the cops scout
Through desks and drawers, scan suspect papers,
Rip maps from walls, curl fists, shout

Strangled threats until they left, failed raiders.
When the rain stopped, a weak sun dappled
The muddy ruts gashed by collaborators,

And the girl stepped outside to whirl, unshackled,
By herself in the rocky playground clearing,
Her face in the blanched light flushed, rattled.

But her loose hair flew in a blazing ring,
Maeve, Fianna, Dierdre of the Sorrows.
She squared her shoulders, chin up, glaring.

Her long arms were spears, her fingers, arrows.

Mary Beth Hines

A Cry So Close To Song

That middle-of-the-night cry tears right through
my weeping, mounded flesh stretched full
of fresh, Grade A, mother's milk, the real
deal, pulsing and puddling. Who would have guessed
I'd fall in line at twenty-nine? As if on cue
my body grew a body through a wild
seed dropped onto my lawn – blossoming black
cherry tree fathered by a migratory bird.
And my child screams like a gull, all guzzle
and swallow, suck and squirm, scrabbles 'till he hollows
my insides out, cracks nipples black and blue.
But afterwards, he curls in, silk-skinned, sated,
a milky-mouthed songbird, nestling, sedated.

John Byrne

John Byrne lives in Albany, Oregon with Cheryl French, an artist, and Sean Marie, their daughter who is currently attending Hampshire College. He writes formal poems and plays. His work has been staged in small theaters around the country and published in journals that are receptive to formal poetry. Both Cheryl and Sean Marie frequently appear in the poems.

Dance

I complicate the steps the leader calls
And allemande to left instead of right.
I bow when I should offer hands to all
And flee as other wax confused, uptight.
It's age compounding weakness always there
That needs commands to come one at a time
With ample intervals so mind prepares
Analyses of which step's likely mine.
Now squares and contras both are in the past –
The lines and fours reducing down to two
Which leaves me waltz and two-step, slow or fast,
Where all I need to do is follow you.

John Byrne

Laura's Lament

I'm saying seven hundred years is quite
Enough to be observed obsessively,
Past time he found a life excluding me –
But let my name be mentioned, he's in sight
Reporting every step or how the light
Enlivens locks of hair the wind blows free
And though he's silent, his intensity
Is redolent of menace, not delight.
He's now abetted by the learned fools
Who hammer his devotion into heads
That ought to study privacy instead
And let me live far from poetic schools.
Enough's enough I say. You must agree.
Now help me find the me-too hash tag key.

Karen Shepherd

Karen Shepherd lives with her husband and two teenagers in the Pacific Northwest where she enjoys walking in forests and listening to the rain. Her poetry and flash fiction have been published in various journals online and in print, but most of her work just lives on her laptop. Follow her at <https://twitter.com/karkarneenee>

Apple Harvest

A downward pull on limbs, the branches sag --
the weight of apples, red and ripe, can be
too much to bear despite their sweetness. Pick
the harvest now. Distribute mass by hand
to baskets, carry inside. Wash in sink
the dust of summer, autumn's early rain:
the seasons' troubles need not be your chore.
Remember the mere seeds that came before
this fruit created such an ample strain.
The tending till the blossoms ripened pink,
then core and color's deepening expand.
Such adoration plays to nature's trick:
her beauty's tenderness is what we see,
not heavy burdens making branches snag.

Larry Thacker

Larry D. Thacker's poetry can be found in over a hundred publications including *Spillway*, *Still: The Journal*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *Poetry South*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, *Mojave River Review*, *The Lake*, *Town Creek Poetry*, and *Appalachian Heritage*. His books include *Mountain Mysteries*, and the poetry books, *Drifting in Awe*, *Voice Hunting*, *Memory Train*, and the forthcoming full collections, *Feasts of Evasion* and *Grave Robber Confessional*. His MFA in poetry and fiction is earned from West Virginia Wesleyan College. Visit his website at:

www.larrydthacker.com

A Synchronicity

Like streaking planets from lost galaxies
secretly living in the twilit woods,
firefly swarms wait for you to stumble in,
sweet rot in the nose, humidity's tongue,
a bioluminescent alchemy
firing the brain and torching the heartwood,
swallowed down on the wing, a pulse aching
up from underfoot, cool through the toes, feet, legs,
lifting the body, turning you green, brightish.
We tried capturing fireflies as children,
our mason jars glowing like living hearts,
or the all-knowing eyes of forest gods.
Tried creating our own found galaxies.
Did we ever close our eyes and listen?

Thomas Schmidt

Tom Schmidt is a retired academic (religious studies & literature) who lives in a bee-loud glade in Vermont. His poems have appeared recently in *The Penwood Review*, *War, Literature & the Arts*, *Blue Collar Review*, and *Poetry & War*.

Weaned

Old footage of a moon shot shows the tower
awash in smoke, slow motion flailing arms
release the fragile craft from cradle bower
to launch into the dark of untold harms—
and glory, yes. But now the tower trembles,
the vestiges of vapor dissipate,
the arms fall still, its silent stance resembles
a mother peering outward from her gate
as off he runs. He may look back—he must—
or maybe not, who merely took his life
from her and left behind a cloud of dust;
who may, beyond whatever stars of strife
surpassed, return to earth, the primal sea,
where nearby, waiting, she will always be.

Robert Beveridge

Robert Beveridge makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in *Savant-Garde*, *Other People's Flowers*, and *The Indiana Horror Review*, among others.

Ground Rules

Keep this in mind: all affairs are illicit.
Respect the paths of those who tread beside you.
In all the world, the place you choose to tryst
Seems overrun by those seeking privacy, too.
Times in life when your loved one's missed
Elicit reflections—sometimes it's true.
Never let the other boyfriend know.

Leave the moment panic strikes—let go
Even in the passion of a kiss.
Deal with your rejections well—you knew
Extremities would lose you friends. But bliss
Begets no bounds—the obstacles, though few,
Overreach their limits. Again, you knew.
Even in the deepest passions, know:
Reluctant though you may be, you must go.

Mary Cresswell

Mary Cresswell is from Los Angeles and has lived for many years on the Kāpiti Coast of New Zealand. She is a science editor and tech writer who turned to the dark side after retirement and writes poems. Her latest two books are *Fish Stories* (ghazals and glosas, Canterbury University Press, 2015) and *Field Notes: a satiric miscellany* (Mākarō Press, Wellington, 2017).

Blood Memory

A double riddle in the Anglo-Saxon style

*

I nourish the furrows where dragons' teeth grow,
I gush like a fountain, spill over the ground,
Who would have thought there was so much of me in him?
You think I am thick but I'm famously thin.

When the battlefield's snarling with dogs of war
I shout out your name over festering fields,
Without me you linger in anguish and die,
At the end of the day you have me on your hands.

**

Staunch when I stand to temper your mind
to muster your arms and move you to glory.

Without me as mentor the melee goes shapeless,
banners go blank and friend belies foe.

North turns to south, senseless and shouting:
If I'm taken down, you're dusted and done.

*Answers Blood

** Memory

Louis Hunt

Louis Hunt teaches political philosophy at James Madison College, Michigan State University. He has had poems published in *The Rotary Dial*, *The Road Not Taken*, *Autumn Sky Poetry*, *Snakeskin*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *The Asses of Parnassus*, and *Lighten Up Online*.

Green Mountains Walk

Priest Daokai of Mt. Furong said to the assembly: “The green mountains are always walking; a stone woman gives birth to a child at night.” Dogen, *Mountains and Waters Sutra*

Green mountains walk too swift for the eye to stay,
too slow for thought to comprehend their passage.
Because we do not know that mountains walk,
we stumble on the way.

The stone gives birth to a child. There is no witness
to its conception, no midwife to ease its birth,
no way to calibrate its slow gradation
against the curve of earth.

Not knowing that mountains always walk, that stone
gives birth to stone in ceaseless generation,
we stumble on the way. There is no sign
to mark our destination.

Green mountains walk. They whisper as they pass
that change is born in stone, and stone erodes
the hopes we thought were true when we stood still
and mountains did so too.

Thomas Tyrrell

Thomas Tyrrell has a PhD in English Literature from Cardiff University. He is a two-time winner of the Terry Hetherington poetry award, and his writing has appeared in *Spectral Realms*, *Wales Arts Review*, *Lonesome October*, *Three Drops From A Cauldron* and *Words for the Wild*.

Alexandrines

The light licks up whole libraries, insatiable
for information, sweeping through page after page,
shelf after shelf, impatient to acquire it all:
pamphlets, critiques and chronicles of every age,
First World War propaganda, Restoration plays,
ethics, philosophy, mathematics, civil law,
tomes, tracts and treatises: they for one moment blaze
beneath the scanner's light, then go to feed the maw
of Google Books; and yet, uncharred and unconsumed
the scanned originals return to shelf intact,
so glancing at the screen, you'd think the page illumed
intangibly, mechanically, not by the act
of manual labourers, uncredited by name,
save here and there you catch their hands, caught in the flame.

Eric Larson

Eric Larson writes poetry and fiction, and has been published in *The Avalon Literary Review*. He teaches literature and writing at Kent State University and Padua Franciscan High School near Cleveland, Ohio. He is also a musician, photographer, husband, and father of two.

The Doctors Couldn't Reattach His Hand

One weekend back in college, me and Ted
Went to a party 'cause his roommate said
There'd be this girl from physics Ted was into,
Or something—I don't know. And so we went to
This house off College Boulevard where four
Or five lacrosse team players lived. I swore
That we would all regret this, but I bore
It mildly: I had nothing going on.
We pulled up to a bonfire on the lawn,
A massive bro named Kevin, and a blonde-
Haired girl I'd seen around named Allison.
They all were rabid 'cause I guess they'd won
The conference title. Anyway, this Kevin
Walked both of us into the house where seven
Disgusting jock rooms full of people I
Had never met were congregating by
Some kegs or playing cards or sitting there
On filthy couches with a vapid stare
Upon their faces. It was awful. Ted
Was looking for that girl, and then I said,
"What are we doing here? This sucks." But he
Was much more patient with this stuff than me.
And so I stood there, feeling like a fool
And passed the time by watching dudes play pool.
But then this Kevin staggered in to us
And slurred, "Hey...*hiccup*...everyone...you *must*
Check out what's going on." Some guy named "Blunt"
Was calling everyone to see some stunt.
I really was so bored I didn't care;
I'd rather be outside than stuck in there.
And so we went outside. This Blunt was standing
In front of everybody on the landing.
He only wore some gym shorts and a cape
Which bore a yellow "B" marked out in tape.
And Blunt was hacking at an old banana
With (swear to God) a three-foot-long Katana.
Then Kevin yelled, "Now listen everyone,
Ol' Blunt here's telling everyone he's done
Long years of ninja training in his youth,
And I say we demand some kind of proof!

So Blunt here's gonna slice this apple, and
He swears he isn't gonna touch my hand."
Immediately I said, "Ted! He's a nut!"
But what was I supposed to do? And what
More noble thing do you think that you'd do
When every guy there's twice as big as you?
So on it went. The music stopped. Then Blunt
Stepped off the steps, and walked out to the front
Of everyone, while Kevin grabbed the fruit.
I thought of leaving, but it would be moot.
Blunt donned a ninja headband, red and yellow
And strode determinedly up to his fellow.
Then Kevin held the apple high aloft.
We all were mute. (One guy, though, had to cough.)
Blunt raised the silver blade toward Kevin, and—

Will Begley

Will Begley is a medieval Latinist and teacher in North Carolina who reads poetry avidly. His poems and translations have appeared in *Spitball*, *Hobart Park*, *Minerva*, *Dappled Things*, and *Asses of Parnassus*; his only original Italian poem won the Kyser Award in 2015. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Fount of Wisdom

While cursing in English and nursing the scald,
You wished you recalled
Your French 101. You then might have told
That “C” isn’t “cold”
On faucets in France. *Quelle malchance*. Now you know.
It just goes to *chaud*.
But sometimes, alas, it’s how a lass learns,
Reflecting on burns,
And crossing the sea, you will see that a “C”
Means one thing to me,
Another to you. *Faux-ami*! What to do
When one becomes two?
And making things worse, it’s a curse that has sprung
Up here, in our tongue,
So “tolerance,” “freedom,” the “justice” of old
Are taps that run cold
Except when they don’t, and nary a spigot
Will stay how you rig it.
But really I’m saying I’m sorry, albeit
Too strangely to see it:
Of all of these faucets I’m frightenedest of,
The greatest is “love.”

Yates Young

Yates Young majored in English Literature and minored in Mandarin Chinese at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition to writing original poetry he translates Chinese poetry. His poems have appeared in *The Caribbean Writer*, *The Road Not Taken*, *Ancient Paths*, *Spitball (The Literary Baseball Magazine)*, *frogpond (Haiku Society of America)*, *Bear Creek Haiku*, and *The Hartford Courant*. He resides in Palm Coast, Florida.

Sam

There was nothing about the man
That struck the eye.
This puzzled people because greatness
Should somehow look like greatness.
Lacking the flair for catching one's eye
He could never look like anything.
He could never make the things
He did look special.
At first glance, he appeared an ordinary sort
Very short, small and rather spare
Below average in most respects.
His whiskers were long and luxuriant
Matched with sandy brown hair.
Often found out of uniform
A black felt hat worn down over eyes
That were gentle, thoughtful and kind.
In time the face could grow on you.
To his soldiers he was a firm
Quiet, determined sort of man
Unusually modest and retired of manner.
He never made any sort of speech
But improved morale in tangible ways.
In a short time, delivery of letters between
Home and camp became more efficient.
When work was ordered to be performed
There was evidence the work made sense.
A misspelled last or missing middle name
Would no longer deny a soldier pay.
He did not speak a great deal
Unless he had something to say
Weighing his words cautiously.
Straight-forward and prompt he
Did nothing carelessly, working slowly
And could be chatty in the right company.
To friends he was not the sullen
Taciturn man of legend
A long way from home, wife and son

Who couldn't leave the bottle alone.
To them he was considered affable
Becoming silent only when strangers were near
Or when formalities were observed.
If suspicious of the one's motives
He could become cold and reserved.
He never spoke for effect or to be heard.
Those who spent any time with him
Could remember nothing other than
When he came around things happened.
If you asked anything of him, it was done.
Once overheard to say - If I had one wish
I think I should like to remain thirty-five
So that I could be considered intelligent
Without seeming fogey-ish.
One could picture him sitting under a tree
Smoking his pipe and studying a map
With elaborate red pencil marks over land
And down long rivers leading to the sea.
A man equal to the emerging situation
Who held no particular views on slavery.
His goal had always been to hold together
A senselessly fragmented nation.

Martin Elster

Martin Elster's poems have appeared in *Astropoetica*, *Antiphon*, *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*, *The Centrifugal Eye*, *The Chimaera*, *14 by 14*, *Light*, *Lighten Up Online*, *The New Verse News*, *The Road Not Taken*, *The Rotary Dial*, and elsewhere.

At Kill Devil Hills

December 17th, 1903
atop a lonely dune in the Outer Banks,
in all the raggle-taggle history
of humankind's achievements, that day ranks

as one that caused perhaps the most elation.
The viewers could be counted on one hand.
The news soon faded. But not aviation!
The seabirds seemed to understand that manned

air travel wasn't some trifle to ignore,
although they laughed and chattered seeing us glide
a mere ten feet above their private shore
against a freezing, blustery breeze. The tide

nonetheless had turned. Now, ever higher,
far higher than those herons, hawks and geese
who watched that first low effort of our Flyer,
we climb and climb and ... Will it never cease?

To what strange shores are we ordained to fly?
One frabjous day we'll reach an alien beach
where pelicans dive for dinner, killdeer cry,
and gulls, foreseeing garbage, screech and screech.

Michael F. Gray

Michael F Gray was born in Salford, England. An inveterate hill and mountain walker, he eventually settled in the hills of Derbyshire and took early retirement from his profession in the U.K. Civil Service, which he combined with voluntary work in the community. He has been writing all his adult life, mainly poetry. Previous work appeared in various journals, latest of which were *Envoi* and *Candelabrum* (U.K.) *Mobius* (U.S.A.) and *The Eclectic Muse* (Canada.).

Forever Autumn

Trees stand tall against the wind
and breathe out life that saves the soul
of mortal Man who covets death,
who seeks to sow the demon seed
and casually kill what grants him breath.

The roots of life spread out through time,
nourished by earth and atmosphere,
but in the shadow of the night
the light is failing, life is plagued
by pestilence and parasite.

And branches reach out to the sky
imploringly -- to stay the sun
and reap no dark nor bitter fruit
from poisoned earth and atmosphere
that shames the trees from branch to root.

The buds of Spring have come and gone
too soon to Autumn out of time.
The leaves are falling one by one
and trees are trembling to their roots,
knowing Summer now will never come.

Robbie Gamble

Robbie Gamble's poems have appeared in *Scoundrel Time*, *Stonecoast Review*, *Solstice*, and *Poet Lore*. He was the winner of the 2017 *Carve* Poetry prize. He works as a nurse practitioner caring for homeless people in Boston, Massachusetts.

Reading Seamus Heaney While Winter Camping

--after Glanmore Sonnet #6

Too cold to mark much in these slanting lights.
Dusk drops like a fatigue. It's never noon
in winter. Dense pine even precludes the moon.
The poet mourned his friends from Irish heights,
'I will break through' he said, 'what I glazed over.'
On this ridge I shiver in absences
also: my brother, beyond the mist and ice,
beyond his broken home on the Snake River;
my homeless patients caught and dropped by winter.
It's cleaner to remember, washed in snow
than in broad crowds of clinic, studio
and chapel. Memories here no longer founder
but rise and migrate like a northward goose
diagonally cackling over my house.

Ron Singer

Poems by Ron Singer (www.ronsinger.net) have recently appeared, or are forthcoming, in *Ascent Aspirations*; *Cake*; *Danse Macabre du Jour*; *District Lit*; *The Folded Word*; *Grey Sparrow*; *Snakeskin*; *The Society of Classical Poets*; *Waterways*, *Poetry in the Mainstream*; and *Word Ways*, *The Journal of Recreational Linguistics*. Singer's 11th & 12th books are scheduled for publication in 2019 & 2020 by Unsolicited Press.

Nature Is Not a Symphony

If you think nature is a symphony,
start with hummingbirds --piccolo duets--
in the manner of Mozart's bird-call flutes.
Then, add some rat-a-tat woodpecker snares.
The robin, too, is an obvious choice.
But which instrument? If the human voice,
have we hatched a choral symphony
in the titanic manner of Beethoven,
Stravinsky?

But the conceit collapses
when minor symphonists evoke canyons
-- whining, echoic winds-- brook-burble,
sandpaper leaves. Still, for Beethoven, encore,
in the Waldstein, Tempest, Hammerklavier,
nature and music are seamlessly joined.
"But sonatas," you say, "aren't symphonies."
Nor are Schubert's, Schumann's, cycles of song,
where scarcely a note, or zephyr breeze, goes wrong.
So, returning, rondo, to our opening theme,
"Nature, as Music," may be the better meme.

Nell Wilson

Nell Wilson studied English at St Andrews and currently lives in Lincolnshire. She was runner-up in Girton College's Jane Martin Prize in 2016 and has had poems published by *Measure*, *Sidekick Books*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Acumen*, and *The Moth*.

Circle Line

At mercy of mechanics, we begin.
Breath-beaten, baking, trapped where hot air flows,
we race beneath a city turning in.

Above where twilight builds, the light goes thin,
enamelled panels shimmer daylight's close.
At mercy of mechanics, we begin.

Tiles melt, dissolve in mass of darkening.
History is forced, pummelled, bent by blows.
We blur beneath a city turning in.

A crowd reflected on a window skin,
a memory of soulful buskers' echoes -
electric melody, cheap mandolin,

and dirty music of the line, ripening,
rack-rattling as sodium and spacetime glows.
We race beneath a city, seraphim

enclosed inside a labyrinthine sin.
The depths of industry. A dark we chose.
At mercy of mechanics, we begin.
We race beneath a city turning in.

Wallace Kaufman

Wallace Kaufman's non-fiction, poetry, and fiction have been widely published in the U.S., the UK, Germany, and Kazakhstan. He is the author of several non-fiction books and a sci-fi novel about genomics.

Fires of Friendship

For Diana Coogle, Surrounded by fires in the Siskiyous, Sept. 2017

The mindless fires raging in the hills
Approach invincibly by day and hour
Immune to all our will and high tech power.
They do not know the names of what they kill.

The thinking and the thoughtless they devour.
Nature does not give justice to the just
But burns the great and makes life from the dust.
Now ash of warning falls on your sweet bower.

May your home be safe from tigers and fire.
May early rains come to your rescue soon.
Then winter bring the snow you so desire.
In spring let fire fed morels be boon

Let peepers sing in hidden evening choir.
Let's pretend these words make you immune.

Marc Alan Di Martino

Marc Alan Di Martino is a poet and translator currently living in Perugia, Italy. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Rattle*, *the New Yorker*, *Gravel*, *Poets Reading the News* and many other publications. He contributes regularly to the online journal *Verse-Virtual*.

Cat Person

It's not that I love cats. I love *my* cat,
the way she pierces me with her clear eyes

and bites when she's excited, how her belly
fat feels in my hands & her domestic size

so perfectly selected for my palm
my fingers engineered to navigate her

haunches that lift and shiver, sway and roam
free as the trip-hop cadence of her purr.

I love the way she disappears for hours
materializing when we sprinkle food

into her dish. I love her haughty, proud
imperious demeanor as she glowers

slighted by some lack in our attention -
real or perceived - requiring intervention.