

The Road Not Taken:

a Journal of Formal Poetry

Summer, 2010

- **The Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer**

Not so Lazy, Not so Hazy, Just Crazy Weather

I don't know how the weather is where you are, but out here in southwestern Oregon, where your friendly webmaster lives, things have been a little weird. Our Autumn was colder than our Winter and Winter has only slowly given over to Spring. The high today was about 68F (20C), but we should be at least in the 80s by this time of year.

I assume that it's hot in India, as it was back in the days of England's Colonial Empire. One of my favorite poets, Rudyard Kipling, was born and grew up there, and wrote wonderful poetry and stories of the time in which he lived. Who has not thrilled to the pages of *The Jungle Book* collection of stories?

My personal favorite poem of his is Gunga-Din, a fascinating look into military life in India in the late 1800s. It was later immortalized in a [1939 movie](#) starring Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen, Douglas Fairbanks Jr.. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

- **[Rudyard Kipling](#)**

[\[Rudyard\] Kipling](#) was one of the most popular writers in English, in both prose and verse, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The author Henry James said of him: "Kipling strikes me personally as the most complete man of genius (as distinct from fine intelligence) that I have ever known." In 1907, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, making him the first English language writer to receive the prize, and to date he remains its youngest recipient. Among other honours, he was sounded out for the British Poet Laureateship and on several occasions for a knighthood, all of which he declined. (from Wikipedia)

Gunga_Din by Rudyard Kipling

You may talk o' gin and beer
When you're quartered safe out'ere,
An' you're sent to penny-fights an' Aldershot it;
But when it comes to slaughter

You will do your work on water,
An' you'll lick the bloomin' boots of'im that's got it.
Now in Injia's sunny clime,
Where I used to spend my time
A-servin' of'Er Majesty the Queen,
Of all them blackfaced crew
The finest man I knew
Was our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din.
He was "Din! Din! Din!
You limpin' lump o' brick-dust, Gunga Din!
Hi! slippery *hitherao*!
Water, get it! *Panee lao*!
You squidgy-nosed old idol, Gunga Din."

The uniform'e wore
Was nothin' much before,
An' rather less than'arf o' that be'ind,
For a piece o' twisty rag
An' a goatskin water-bag
Was all the field-equipment'e could find.
When the sweatin' troop-train lay
In a sidin' through the day,
Where the'eat would make your bloomin' eyebrows crawl,
We shouted "*Harry By!*"
Till our throats were bricky-dry,
Then we wopped'im'cause'e couldn't serve us all.
It was "Din! Din! Din!
You'eathen, where the mischief'ave you been?
You put some *juldee* in it
Or I'll *marrow* you this minute
If you don't fill up my helmet, Gunga Din!"

'E would dot an' carry one
Till the longest day was done;
An' 'e didn't seem to know the use o' fear.
If we charged or broke or cut,
You could bet your bloomin' nut,
'E'd be waitin' fifty paces right flank rear.
With'is *mussick* on'is back,
'E would skip with our attack,
An' watch us till the bugles made "Retire",
An' for all'is dirty'ide
'E was white, clear white, inside
When 'e went to tend the wounded under fire!
It was "Din! Din! Din!"
With the bullets kickin' dust-spots on the green.

When the cartridges ran out,
You could hear the front-files shout,
“Hi! ammunition-mules an’ Gunga Din!”

I shan’t forgit the night
When I dropped be’ind the fight
With a bullet where my belt-plate should ‘a’ been.
I was chokin’ mad with thirst,
An’ the man that spied me first
Was our good old grinnin’, gruntin’ Gunga Din.
‘E lifted up my ‘ead,
An’ he plugged me where I bled,
An’ ‘e guv me ‘arf-a-pint o’ water-green:
It was crawlin’ and it stunk,
But of all the drinks I’ve drunk,
I’m gratefulest to one from Gunga Din.
It was “Din! Din! Din!
‘Ere’s a beggar with a bullet through ‘is spleen;
‘E’s chawin’ up the ground,
An’ ‘e’s kickin’ all around:
For Gawd’s sake git the water, Gunga Din!”

‘E carried me away
To where a dooli lay,
An’ a bullet come an’ drilled the beggar clean.
‘E put me safe inside,
An’ just before ‘e died,
“I’ope you liked your drink”, sez Gunga Din.
So I’ll meet ‘im later on
At the place where ‘e is gone —
Where it’s always double drill and no canteen;
‘E’ll be squattin’ on the coals
Givin’ drink to poor damned souls,
An’ I’ll get a swig in hell from Gunga Din!
Yes, Din! Din! Din!
You Lazarushian-leather Gunga Din!
Though I’ve belted you and flayed you,
By the livin’ Gawd that made you,
You’re a better man than I am, Gunga Din!

- Now let’s head out and enjoy some wonderful poetry by four excellent contemporary poets.

- [Kimberly Cavalier](#)

Kimberly Cavalier has enjoyed writing poetry for many years. She is very excited to be published on her first endeavor. She is especially thrilled to be included in this exceptional journal with many remarkable poets. Kim resides in Toms River, NJ by the beautiful Atlantic Ocean.

Twilight
by Kimberly Cavalier

I love the sky at twilight
right before the dawn
Before the day begins
before the night is gone
When all the stars
so brightly fit
inside a blackened dome
The beauty of the night is lit
before the sun has shone
I love the sky at twilight
I love the air so clean
There's nothing like the night
escaped into a dream

- [George Good](#)

George Good is a retired English teacher. His poetry has appeared in The Evansville Review, Light Quarterly, Iambs & Trochees and online at The Chimaera, The New Formalist and The Formalist Portal.

How The Bumpkins Got In Step
by George Good

These bumpkins we recruit are ignorant of
proud Achilles and the Trojan War;
also Aeneas and sweet Dido's love;
can't include "name.php"; that hero who had wandered far

afield to get to Ithaca, his home.
Great Alexander doesn't ring a bell.
The same lack of response occurs when Rome
comes up—who Caesar was and how he fell.

Just mention Charlemagne, you'll get a stare
so wide and blank that monarch's every deed
could in minute detail be written there.
Nor can they list a single famous steed—

Bucephalus, old fellow, sad but true.
More practically, if they're to make the grade
they'll need to learn their left from their right shoe
when we are drilling them out on parade.

But everything is relative, you know.
We can't tell hay from straw, we city types;
so since they can we put one on each toe
and "hayfoot! strawfoot" helps them earn their stripes.

Like, You Know, Hopefully
by George Good

In Hamlet's passionate soliloquy
the English language scaled an early peak.
Now leveled to: Like, you know, hopefully.

On life and death and dread eternity
the prince reflects. Great questions are at stake
in Hamlet's passionate soliloquy.

Our "tragic hero" cries on talk TV:
"I've quit the junk. I'll be so clean I squeak—"
Now watch him grope: "—like, you know, hopefully."

Pathetic! But with Shakespeare's tragedy
the troubled soul is eloquent though weak
in Hamlet's passionate soliloquy.

Today it's athletes' quotes, not poets', we
attend, whose words recall a faucet's leak:
"Drip, drop, drip, drop, like, you know, hopefully."

These six clear notes “To be, or not to be”
still trumpet what’s familiar yet unique
in Hamlet’s passionate soliloquy,
which will live on—like, you know, hopefully.

The Rime of the Ancient Formalist
by George Good

It is an ancient formalist
who polishes each gem
and bows his head to let there rest
the Muses’ diadem.

He stoppeth now and bids to wait
while blocking off his way
a student who is running late—
he cannot choose but stay.

“You lunatic! I must get by—
my class is meeting soon.
A famous poet shows us why
postmodern’s been a boon.”

The choler in the old man grows.
“Postmodern’s been a curse!
Their ‘poetry’ is simply prose
chopped up to look like verse.”

In disbelief the student stares.
“But this man is a star!
‘Deep imagery no other dares.’
That’s straight from APR.”

It’s the ancient’s turn at disbelief.
“He’s hornswoggled you all.
He is at best a clever thief
who stole the Moderns’ ball.

With spastic moves he runs a route
and feigns a touchdown grab
from Williams, whose poetic clout,
alas, has yet to ebb.

The game they're playing must amount
to merest anarchy.
The center cannot hold the count—
he's lost his memory.

Most of the fans will soon be gone—
such chaos is a bore.
You cannot know what's going on
if each keeps his own score.

The varsity seems satisfied
to give themselves a cheer.
To those who bring up rules they're snide:
'In free verse all is fair.'

When all is fair then all is foul—
the stench is rising fast.
It's either throwing in the towel
or turning to the past.

Tradition's not the ball and chain
they'd have their dupes believe..
Through measures there is much to gain,
for poetry's a weave

of what we have inherited
and what will come to light.
I will not put my sword to bed
nor cease this mental fight!"

The student gazes, hypnotized,
and counts iambic feet.
The feeling comes as advertized—
the metrical sounds sweet.

Convinced postmodern is a fad
whose moment's sure to pass,
a happier and a wiser lad
he skipped his morning class.

- [Joe R Christopher](#)

Joe R Christopher is a Professor in the English Department at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas.

The Quest of Los
by Joe R Christopher

Within the sight of th' high and honored peak,
Beneath the burning, solar radiation,
Came Los, one man to seek the pathway out,
Beyond the sandy soil, the piles of stones,
Above the mesas, above the higher cliffs,
Beneath the strange, far-seeing eye of Tawa.

He came on foot, brown-skinned, praiser of Tawa,
Seeking to journey to the highest peak,
Having to climb the walls of granite cliffs,
Sweating beneath the daytime's radiation;
No warning on the petroglyphic stones
Would keep him in this world, who wanted out.

He thought he knew the doorway heading out,
The opening in the wall, the gift of Tawa;
And so he walked, by cacti, yuccas, o'er stones,
Keeping in view his goal, that highest peak,
Bearing throughout the harshest radiation,
Expecting soon to reach those rising cliffs.

Arroyos led him t'ward those waiting cliffs,
The foothills showed him ever nearing out,
And shadows sometimes cut the radiation.
"All praise to Tawa," he sang, "great fiery Tawa!
For I will climb all night, and on the peak,
At morning, greet my god, above all stones."

Beyond the desert sands, Los climbed the stones;
Above the cacti and the yuccas, the cliffs;
Up and still up, until he reached the peak—
Then leapt from off a sheerness, his arms spread out:
And then he changed against the rays of Tawa:
Arms became wings, absorbing radiation.

He metamorphed; against the radiation,
Huge wings, unbeating, far above sharp stones,
Responding to the bands of fiery Tawa;

And so he lifted far above the cliffs,
A kite against the solar winds, far out
From earth, transformed, to leave behind the peak.

The radiation frees him from the cliffs,
The Sundered stones; it lifts him further out;
O blessed Tawa! beyond all earthly peak.

- **C Dahlen**

C. Dahlen lives in Siren, WI. His works have appeared in *The Wisconsin Review*, *The Anglican Theological Journal*, *Play It Again*, *The Woodsman*, *The Dachshund Club of America Newsletter*, and *The Lyric*. More of his poetry may be found on the [Wisconsin Fellowship of Poetry](#) website. Click on Member's Pages.

To Keats: A Response
by C. Dahlen

Oh soothest Sleep?! Thou Master Thief of Time!
Thou soft embalmer of my gloom-pressed eyes
With warm, grey-shadowed gloves conspires a crime
To droop my lids, and then with soothing lies
Of promised dreams to steal away the day.
In fitful starts my fluttering eyes remain
hard on the edge of Nil, refuse to stray
Between realities. These visions strain
Until with subtle perseverance Sleep
Will push away the clearer sight and purge
My mind of lucency. Then shadows leap
To conquer Time in one last weary surge!
I find no succor when my day is done
For Sleep inhumes what I have just begun.