

i think my surname is a hedge maze.

that in English, it jests victims' mouths

with syllables that dead end.

that it flowers into circular

paths that lead to nowhere.

that lead to everywhere.

everywhere like the fact that

every person with this name

is me and i am every person

with this name.

nowhere like how no one

on my American side of

the family knows

what it means anymore.

but i like the business of definitions.

so my surname denotes a hedge.

it means an endless loop.

it means a möbius strip tied

like the clumsy muscle

of a tongue trying to decide

what first prick of sound

originates with the letters.

it means a rural town

in central Italy where
the other half of my family
un-knows me. when Granddad
tells me how they did it,
he tells it in terms of Molise
and Carovilli. then five thousand
miles and American islands
with patina-copper statues and through
elongated lists of names.
long like a pronunciation held
and then shattered and lost.
long like how according to Granddad,
we say it differently than our relatives do
in Italian. we splice the sounds.
stretch the consonants against
the interiors of our cheeks.
we say it like we're speaking
through two countries
and three generations.
so i have to wonder if
in its initial language,
it was smoother, and
didn't lend itself to

knotting in mouths

or existing in

so many fragments.

and if i'm carrying the correct

under my tongue.