

# **The Road Not Taken:**

## **a Journal of Formal Poetry**

### **Autumn, 2008**

- **New Poets, New Poems**

**Poetry reading before a blazing hearth.**

Fall is here and the leaves will soon be showing us their more flamboyant side, blazing reds and shimmering golds. We have a stellar selection of poets and poems for your reading pleasure. Pull that chair a little closer to the fire and settle in. We hope that your sensibilities are pleurably touched.

- **Please enjoy a Christmas Poem from all of us at The Road Not Taken: a Journal of Formal Poetry**

**For the Time Being: Advent III**  
**by W. H. Auden**

Alone, alone, about a dreadful wood  
Of conscious evil runs a lost mankind.  
Dreading to find its Father lest it find  
The Goodness it has dreaded is not good:  
Alone, alone, about our dreadful wood.

Where is that Law for which we broke our own,  
Where now that Justice for which Flesh resigned  
Her hereditary right to passion, Mind  
His will to absolute power? Gone. Gone.  
Where is that Law for which we broke our own?

The Pilgrim Way has led to the Abyss.  
Was it to meet such grinning evidence  
We left our richly odoured ignorance?  
Was the triumphant answer to be this?  
The Pilgrim Way has led to the Abyss.

We who must die demand a miracle.  
How could the Eternal do a temporal act,  
The infinite become a finite fact?  
Nothing can save us that is possible:  
We who must die demand a miracle.

—The Miracle has come to be. We are no longer alone. Merry Christmas.

- **Call for Submissions**

**Would you like to see your poems published here?**

We want to publish high quality formal, metric poetry. We are hoping to publish here online twice a year. If you have some work you'd like to see in this journal send it to: [jimatshs@yahoo.com](mailto:jimatshs@yahoo.com) We will try to respond within a month. And thank you.

- **Juleigh Howard-Hobson**

First up is Juleigh Howard-Hobson, who hails from Portland, Oregon. Juleigh presents two sonnets and one sestina. She writes of her own work:

My poetry has appeared in Umbrella, The Barefoot Muse, Worm, Contemporary Rhyme, Snakeskin, The Quarterly Journal of Food and Car Poems, Shit Creek Review, Mezzo Cammin, The Hypertexts, Odin's Gift, Shatter Colors Literary Review, Orb, Lucid Rhythms, Appalling Limericks, Arabesques Print Review, Strong Verse, Hex, Workers Write, 2008 Poets' Guide To New Hampshire (NH State Poetry Society), VerseWeavers (Oregon State Poetry Society), Silver Boomers Anthology (SB Publications), Mobius: the 25th Anniversary Issue, Bumbershoot, The Chimaera, Fourteen Sonnet Magazine, The Raintown Review... and a few other places besides.

I am the editor of The Runestone Journal, and have one chapbook, Sommer and Other Poems, put out through RavensHalla Arts, Portland.

I've won the prestigious Australian Returned Serviceman's League's ANZAC Day Award for poetry. I was a finalist for the 2006 Morton Marr Poetry Prize, won second place in the Formal Poetry section of the Illinois State Poetry Society 2006 Contest, and fetched third (Shakespearian Sonnet category) in the Oregon State Poetry Association's 2007 Spring contest. Poetry of mine has been nominated for "The Best of the Net 2007", and for The Pushcart Prize. As well, I just won the First Annual Torrington Library Poetry Contest.

My poetry is forthcoming in Pemmican, Orb, Candelabrum, Soundzine, PanGaia, Hex, Hawk and Whippoorwill, Poems For Big Kids (McAlister), More Sweet Lemons: Writings With A Sicilian Accent (Legas), and Poem, Revised: 54 Poems, Revisions, Discussions (Marion Street Press).

**Winter Rain, After Dark**  
**by Juleigh Howard-Hobson**

Now while the thin light, (barely light at all  
There's more grey in it than white) that half illumes,

Slowly recedes behind the grey of tall  
Winter clouds, a rain begins. A perfume  
Hinting of summer's glories in this gloom  
Rises from the dank earth as each drop falls  
Sending forth scents of blossoms, and of leaves.  
Who has not seen such afternoons as these  
Slow lurch across the sky towards a night  
Which does not end the day? (There is no end  
To what never was, evening will descend  
Anon, with out much changing of the light).  
Yet in the dim half-lit bleakness, there wends  
Beauty: dark rains bring forth damp fragrance bright.

**Meandering**  
by **Juleigh Howard-Hobson**

The water from the automatic drip  
Hose is supposed to give the vegetables  
A steady stream to drink. But a small rip--  
A squirrel's thirsty bite, a sharp pebble,  
Perhaps, in just the wrong place—has become  
A fountainhead, shooting soft lashings of  
Water up and over the garden stems, and from  
Their end, small rivers have begun to carve  
Out wet meanderings through tomato stalks  
And strawberries like fingers through long hair.  
Swirling and curling past plant stakes, roots, rocks  
The errant brooks race and spread, unaware  
That they are frowned on, from a broken hose,  
And muddy up the order of the rows.

**In the Spring**  
by **Juleigh Howard-Hobson**

The old stump sits, heavy barked, with fat roots  
That ride up from the ground like some long backed  
School of serpents. Where it's been chopped, thin shoots  
With shiny skins rise up: thin fingers, tacked  
Upon a mighty hand, that sway and end  
Among their own selves. Everywhere on them

Are small blooms, tiny leaves. Far under them  
The curtailed tree soaks up water through roots  
That once fed a giant. Now that thirst must end  
In sips that gently flow to flowers backed  
Not by huge branches but slight sticks grown tacked,

Rangy, struggling to stay alive. Shoots

All the more fragile because they are shoots  
Not shot from seed but from a stump. It's them  
Or nothing, though. Fragile or not, each tacked  
Twig is a final gasp and these thick roots  
Know. Once there was an orchard this tree backed.  
An orchard that ran all along the end

Of the ridge to the river. The far end  
Was a pasture. And every year shoots  
Of new trees grew up from last years fruit. Backed  
By meadow and water, each one of them  
Had time to flower and to put down roots  
Before they were sold, using small signs tacked

On rail fences: "Fruit trees for sale", or tacked  
Up in feed stores. That was before the end  
Of orchards and farms around here. The roots  
Of that life are dug up. A highway shoots  
Though where the old farm roads were. All of them,  
All the farms, all the old places that backed

Their fields to each other. Gone. None were backed  
By money for higher taxes when-- tacked  
Along the highways--came progress. To them,  
Of course, it wasn't progress. It meant "end":  
Their end. New developments, not new shoots,  
Would sprout in their meadows, disturbing roots.

This land's backed up with houses, end to end,  
Each tacked to a yard where old stumps send shoots  
In spring, fed by roots still attached to them.

- **John Byrne**

Our next offering is from the pen of John Byrne of Albany, Oregon. John writes:

I write short stories and formal verse, some of which has most recently appeared in Umbrella Journal and Autumn Sky (No. 10).

**School Murals**  
**by John Byrne**

The paintings weren't much: the zebras looked  
A lot like dogs, although the rainbows in

Their eyes were startling; the jungles took  
A leap of faith to see; the monkeys' grins:

Ungodly huge; the birds: too bright, too small  
And other animals more dashing than  
Precise. The paper: cheap. The paints were all  
From dollar stores. Unframed and saggy when

They lined the empty walls and every kid  
Who didn't know her Rubens from her Klee  
Would shout and point at animals she did  
Which made the halls a bit disorderly

So wall to trash they went as they deserved  
And thereby walls and order were preserved.

**Platonic Love**  
**by John Byrne**

Platonic? Sure, of course, no problem there.  
Our situation calls for special care  
And I'm an adult, right?, and always in  
Control, I think, at least, I think I can

Restrain my heart and hands and wear loose clothes  
And feign indifference so no one knows  
And if I blush and stammer when you're near,  
I'll claim my allergies are bad this year.

And when the others complement your looks,  
I'll sigh, and say I'd rather speak of books.  
Oh, I'll do fine, ignoring all your charms  
While exercise should occupy my arms.

But all the time, remember it's still true  
That Plato'd be unplatonic around you.

**Snow Geese**  
**by John Byrne**

From nothing – paper bare and pencils still  
Inside their case and hands in pockets deep  
Against the cold, we walked out toward the hills  
Which hold the marshes hosting birds that keep

Honoring the rituals of spring. We tread

Without a word when blizzard-like arose  
Wing clatter, honking, clouds of geese to shred  
Our silences, circling, settling as snows

Again within the wonder, the surprise.  
You touched the page and lines became the sky,  
The hills, the reeds, the marsh which draws all eyes  
To where the waters leap as snow geese fly,

White wings outstretched, black-tipped, a blur that beats  
As yet where curves and lines and shadows meet.

- **Don Thackrey**

We now present the poetry of Don Thackrey.

Don Thackrey spent his formative years on farms and ranches in the Nebraska Sandhills. He now lives in Dexter, Michigan, where he is retired from teaching and administering at the University of Michigan. During his university career, he published prose, including a book on Emily Dickinson, but only recently began submitting verse for publication. His verse has appeared in The Raintown Review, Poet Lore, Blue Unicorn, The New Formalist, The Deronda Review, The Lyric, Slant, Lucid Rhythms, and other journals and anthologies.

**Prairie Life Memoir**  
by **Don Thackrey**

I searched for purpose till this farm found me,  
A land that once was Grandpa's stern homestead,  
A section he proved up in eighty-three,  
Which Pa then built into a thriving spread.  
It's mine today and soon will be my son's.  
Then I'll have time to spare, a chance to test  
My thoughts on farming, a life for simpletons,  
As subtle folks in cities might suggest.  
It's simple, yes, to work outdoors all seasons,  
To show one's children how to do a chore.  
And it's quite simple also finding reasons  
To write in verse a prairie life memoir,  
A poet-farmer's winter strategy,  
Like filling silos—not for cows but me.

**Training**  
by **Don Thackrey**

My prairie jottings are an exercise  
To gather kindling for the fire of mind,

Ignite imagination, learn surprise,

To train my eyes and ears so I can find  
Fresh ways of thought, new images of earth,  
To reexamine all I've praised, maligned,

To bring me, through long labor, to rebirth,  
A man made new, who wrote some verses, laughed  
About them, but still thought some lines were worth

The paper used to put them in a draft  
For working on as he improved his craft.

**Pa's Poet Son**  
by **Don Thackrey**

The farm devoured our work, demanding more,  
Its appetite was never satisfied.  
Pa grimly faced the foe as if in war  
And ranged his seven children by his side.  
The oldest, I, was Pa's four-star top gun  
Who led the seasons' sorties in the field.  
The trouble: I'm the versifying son,  
And verse, Pa thought, lost out to corn in yield.  
When Pa would see me rest and sneak a peak  
At notebooks carried in my overalls,  
He'd sometimes sniff it might as well be Greek  
For all the sense I made with metered scrawls.  
Years later, when he gave my verse a nod,  
I was as struck as if I'd heard from God.

**Little Song**  
by **Don Thackrey**

I write my sonnets ("little songs," you know)  
To celebrate the farming life, my calling,  
And praise the Lord for stock and crops we grow.  
Results this year, however, were appalling:  
The drought and hoppers stripped the corn and wheat,  
And Brucellosis hit the cattle herd.  
How can one sing in view of such defeat,  
Have heart to score a single note or word?  
Well, why not try? Let's choose a minor key  
And add diminished sevenths here and there,  
Then modulate through changing harmony  
Into contentment and a hopeful prayer.

My song's discordant sounds are thus drawn toward  
A pianissimo C-major chord.

- **Kathryn Jacobs**

Our next contributor is Kathryn Jacobs, a Professor in Harvard University's Department of Literature and Languages.

I am a poet and medievalist from Harvard with book of poetry (Advice Column) appearing at Finishing Line Press in November and an e-chapbook sponsored by Poetry Midwest (The Boy Who Loved Pigeons) appearing in the next few weeks (by invitation). I have also had over 65 poems accepted at various journals in the last year and a half, including New Formalist, Measure, Washington Literary Review, Acumen (UK), Pulse, Slant, Candelabrum (UK), DeCanto, Quantum Leap (UK), Mezzo Cammin, Deronda Review, The Same, Contemporary Rhyme, Ship of Fools, Eclectic Muse, Barefoot Muse, Mobius, Chimaera, Toasted Cheese, 14 by 14, Wordgathering and The Interpreter's House (UK). I have also published a scholarly book on literary marriage contracts in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (University Press of Florida), and sixteen articles. I have two daughters; I lost my son; Ray died at 18 (2005).

**Lightning Strikes Twice...**  
**by Kathryn Jacobs**

What are the odds of lightning striking twice?  
No lower than before, if you're the soul  
who made it through the first time. Ask the dice  
the risk of snake-eyes on the second roll,  
and if they alter, once you've thrown a pair.  
Although a prudent gambler ought to check:  
they might be loaded, or they're not quite square.  
And you just might draw lightning -- you're a wreck;

there's got to be a reason. Don't ask me:  
maybe you're ten feet tall and made of steel  
(all metaphors break down eventually).  
Just trust me: anytime you start to feel  
you've sacrificed enough to pay your dues  
and half the state besides – you've more to lose.

**Choosing Your Muse**  
**by Kathryn Jacobs**

You can't expect too much. Your average muse  
is gifted, sure; an asset I'd commend  
to any poet. They have issues, though:  
they don't work well with humans. Messages,



inspired effluence—they're great at that.  
Communication on the other hand...

Well, what do you expect? They talk through dreams,  
which people garble – witness 'Kubla Khan,'  
where Coleridge got a private symphony  
and could not sing a note – believe you me,  
that damsel with the dulcimer was pissed.  
You'd think they'd learn, when even Chaucer lost  
the grand finale of the 'House of Fame';  
but no. In fact, that's issue number two:

they don't adapt. Afraid that's up to you.  
So, skeptics: please suspend your disbelief.  
And moderns, flippant won't go over well.  
Respect – remember, the relationship's  
a chummy one. You have to like your muse,  
because you'll find him popping up in bed.  
The gender, manners, personality –  
it's all important. If you just can't click  
then say so frankly: surrogates take time,  
but fake it, and it shows in every line:  
proceed with care. Good luck folks: do you your best.

**Soldiers at DFW Airport**  
by Kathryn Jacobs

A sprinting streak of khaki, blink-and-gone,  
amidst the clogged and multi-colored lines  
of stop-n-go in clusters. Nothing's wrong.  
But for a moment, those of us confined  
by snap-on neon ribbon – lives on hold –  
were filled with secret envy. Camouflaged  
and crew-cut, straight-out, bolting: what their souls  
had seen no man could picture, much less judge --

but not today, on furlough: footloose, free  
of baggage claims and bus stops. Not like us,  
who moved in fits and spurts, precariously --  
kicked into place like luggage, with a thrust,  
or nudged to death and fretted to the quick.  
They moved like nothing stopped them. Take your pick...

**Jalopy**  
by Kathryn Jacobs

They look contagious: rust-pocks, blisters, sores.  
Like auto-leprosy; you're scared to park  
too close, in case it's catching. Yet that car  
strung out on safety pins and coaxed to work

on bumpers tied with hope and chicken wire --  
somebody cares about that baby; cares  
enough to keep a basket-case-on-tires  
alive and puttering. His neighbors there

are dent-and-switch constructions. Pop-on limbs:  
no shame, no blame: our no-tell swap 'n' shine  
makes accidents so easy. Frankenstein:  
composite made of corpse. Who cares for them

is more than I can swear to. Still, I think  
it noteworthy that nobody loved Frank...

**After A Death**  
**by Kathryn Jacobs**

Just so you know, we're bound to hold a grudge.  
Now, don't go silent, like you're all surprised --  
not when you know damn well you haven't budged  
an inch on this one. If we'd been advised  
ahead of time...but no: we never got  
one syllable from you to put us wise.  
Bud, dying's not allowed. Okay, that's not  
contractual, but -- damnit, all the guys  
are taking this one personal. I mean,  
one minute I'd have sworn you wouldn't leave  
for anything; then suddenly...between  
the two of us, I'm willing to believe  
you had to go, but did it have to be  
so friggin final? You could email me....

- **Melissa Lamberton**

Melissa Lamberton is an Environmental Sciences and Creative Writing major at the University of Arizona. A native to Tucson, she wrote her first poem at the age of nine, and published for the first time in middle school. She holds a third-degree black belt and is the Education Coordinator for NASA's Phoenix Mars Mission.

**Return to Innisfree/For Yeats**  
**by Melissa Lamberton**

I will arise and go now, to search for Innisfree  
which lies almost out of hearing on the lake's long shore  
and the beans in wild blossom curl thickly round the tree  
welling sweet and sacred at its core.

For I cannot find peace here, in dream or desperate rhyme  
though I seek the lispings lakeside where there breaks a brittle dawn  
in a sky vibrant with insects, while the leaves shake off their shine  
sheer rain so swiftly gone.

If I could find my way there, by foot or simple shallop  
and trace the poet's footsteps—but he has disappeared in night

no place prepared for his arriving, and the wind a bruising gallop:  
All's changed since once he chanted the green glen out of time  
and sang the chiming light.

- **Paul Stevens**

Paul Stevens has published verse and prose in a number of online journals, including Poemeleon, The Centrifugal Eye, CounterPunch, The New Formalist and Contemporary Sonnet, as well as in print. In penance for his many sins he edits The Chimaera Literary Miscellany and The Shit Creek Review. He serves as a selection panelist for the sonnet ezine 14by14.

**Map of Tasmania**  
**by Paul Stevens**

From a cloud, drawn  
to liquid trickle  
to ferned wet gully  
and rivulet's fall,

I push through fen-sedge,  
and bracken, through rich  
forest-scent of fertility,  
deep moss on bole

and boulder, down roiling  
white-water cataracts,  
Wineglass to Cradle,  
and all the way home,

and all the way home:  
at last to sail free  
between southern capes

thick with kelp and wild foam,

with wave awash, surging,  
late sun on the headland,  
and shadow down valley  
past all memory.

**That Close Clinch**  
**by Paul Stevens**

"This is my own country"  
are words I cannot say -  
born there, raised here,  
owning and owned by neither;

grown up severed  
from that close clinch  
with land, that the poets  
reckon so vital;

a fugitive from place,  
at home in no weather.  
Here, too hot, the stones  
cracking dry; seasons

disconnected, reversed,  
from the ancient festivals,  
sleigh bells tinkling  
in burning high summer.

There, too close confined,  
the flat sky pressing  
flat down on my head -  
the millions locked

in that huge electric grid  
of houses, estates, pubs;  
huddling sheltered in  
their tight interior world,

packed together, sliding  
into the ice night of north.

- **Jean Syed**

And now we have two poems by Jean Syed, who did not tell where she hails from.

I have been published in the St. Anthony Messenger, The Lyric, Writers' Haven Press, Bird Watcher's Digest and I have been broadcast locally.

**Backyard Doe**  
by Jean Syed

Suddenly, leaping leaves glitter gold light  
Betray your devastating raked debris.  
My tidy hillocks not quite hid from sight  
Your rooting wrecks your anonymity.  
Urgent as a burglar stuffing jewels  
Greedy into the guilty sack  
You show all nervousness. What danger fuels  
Your fright. Your looting stalls, your lips haul back,  
Pickings poking through white perfect teeth  
Undignify your statuesque alarm.  
O wild suburbs! The cat is hunting beneath  
Gunless trees. Sweet robber, fear no harm

For you're preying on me in my backyard  
But I'm not a victim, I'm a bodyguard.

**Red Spread**  
by Jean Syed

Crested red cardinal  
And red breasted robin,  
Sanguine and cordial  
Fluttering as brethen,  
Caroling on a winter's day  
As if they'd never known decay.

Red were the bushy twigs  
That they frolicked at.  
Above, the trees had sprigs  
Of berries red and fat,  
And on the black topped street, impressed,  
A squirrel dressed in his red vest.

- **Peter Austin**

We continue with two poems by Peter Austin, who is a Professor of English at Seneca College in Toronto, Canada.

Over a hundred of my poems have been published, in magazines/anthologies in the USA (such as Iambs & Trochees, The New Formalist, Contemporary Sonnet, The Lyric and Lucid Rhythms), Canada, the UK and several other countries.

**Enraptured**  
**by Peter Austin**

Flash of a bird's bi-coloured wing.  
Passing, I hardly wondered what  
It was, till it began to sing.  
An eerie feeling, Gveret Lot,

This being made to face about  
And freeze. 'A cardinal', I'd guessed,  
Striated by the dusk no doubt  
And robbed of its distinctive crest,

But wasn't that a thrush's cry?  
Stopping mid-stride, I swiveled, heard  
A bar of Brahms's 'Lullaby'....  
My God – it was a mocking bird!

Agog, I stood there, glued in place,  
Enraptured as Hippomenes  
When he beheld Atlanta's face  
As, with a virtuoso's ease,

It rattled through its repertoire  
From rusty hinge, through Berwick's wren  
And whippoorwill, to burgled car  
And something from 'Remember When';

Then, tiring of the popeyed gawk  
Of so uncool a devotee,  
It uttered a derisive squawk  
And promptly flew away.

[Gveret is Hebrew for Mrs]

**Spellbound**  
**by Peter Austin**

Something down my garden: what?  
A hummock in the snow –  
Bulky, hunched, of brownish black –  
A log? A boulder? No:

Something living – birdlike, but  
As big as a raccoon,  
Rooted there, immovable  
As though from granite hewn.

Scrambling into coat and boots  
With butterfingere haste,  
Inch by inch, I close with it,  
Unbreathing, poker-faced.

Sudden, silent wingspread, as  
It soars above my head,  
Something in its talons, in  
The day-gloom ruby-red.

Spellbound, I hallucinate  
The terror-stricken squawk;  
Bloodied feathers stain the snow –  
The altar of a hawk.

- **John Grey**

Our Fall issue continues with a poem by John Grey of Providence, Rhode Island, who writes of his work:

I have been published recently in Agni, Worcester Review, South Carolina Review and The Pedestal. with work upcoming in Poetry East and REAL.

**Loosestrife**  
by **John Grey**

The brash invaders soon create  
Abundant blossom on each spike,  
Pink-lavender, no two alike,  
Leaves linear or lanceolate  
As native plants soon abdicate  
To stems so close, each hardy pike  
Stakes out its claim, forms dense green dike;  
What can't compete meets bloomless fate.

For beauty's sake, we introduce  
The death knell of what's always been,  
A war of hues that knows no truce,  
The loosestrife overwhelms the scene,

A bitter dream, well meant abuse,  
Beneath the wide wetlands serene.

- **Kimberly Sherman**

And now we present a poem by Kimberly Sherman who lives in southern California. She writes:

Last December, I returned to writing poetry after a hiatus of twenty years. My work is not yet published. I hope you enjoy the poem.

A word is due on the form of these poems. They are syllabic couplets. "Lazuli" has an unusual device: each line in the stanza is reduced by one syllable.

**Lazuli**  
**by Kimberly Sherman**

The white ash and black ash did combine  
with the red clay to form a fine  
powder that billows and clouds.  
Sprockets chatt'ring out loud,  
our wheels kick up dust.  
coated in rust,  
we reach the  
valley.  
Home

to oaks, coyotes, lazuli bunting  
with breast of rust and turquoise wing.  
Across a stream in a lee  
my two wheels carry me,  
and as I roll by,  
edge of my eye,  
a blue flash,  
a dash.  
You're

first to return after fire's destruction,  
herald of nature's reconstruction,  
(while yellow pines are gone for good,  
oak saplings work to make wood)  
and I saw you, lazuli.  
Through the graveyard you fly.  
nothing in nature  
seeks our nurture,



least of all  
her fall.

- **C. B. Anderson**

A late arrival has been added to this edition for your late autumn and winter reading pleasure.

C.B. Anderson was the longtime gardener for the PBS television series, "The Victory Garden." His poems have appeared in numerous print and electronic journals, most recently Blue Unicorn, Nassau Review, Innisfree and Lucid Rhythms. His e-chapbook, A Walk in the Dark, is posted on the website of The New Formalist Press.

**Vin Ordinaire**  
**by C. B. Anderson**

A bottle of red wine improves with age,  
Unlike the many holy manuscripts  
Unable to inform or to engage  
Imagination from the musty crypts

They molder in. On simple faith and hope  
Our ideology is based: we trust  
That God is not some twisted misanthrope,  
But someone who will always do what must

Be done in order that we may secure  
Expected blessings. Therefore, we will drink  
The wine -- a lot of it -- while still unsure  
What lines we toed or crossed, or what to think

Of balances we've yet to pay. O Lord,  
Protect us from new debts we can't afford.

**Moving Targets**  
**by C. B. Anderson**

Sheer purity of purpose is a notion  
so poorly framed that good examples are  
as rare as toes on snakes -- a cure-all potion  
for every known disease is not as far-

fetched. Though they're always ready to endorse  
free access to ideas, open minds  
must guard against opinions backed by force  
and when they see them coming shut the blinds.

Equality is not the greatest good  
if every thought is likened to the next,  
with false interpretations understood  
as valid readings of a sacred text.

On several points we should agree: There's not  
a woman or a man born in this world  
who knows the future or can even plot  
the hour at hand; no flag has been unfurled

in any war in any land that cheats  
the risk of failure; few things are as sure  
as how unstudied history repeats  
itself; for ignorance there's one good cure,

and that consists of critical self-knowledge  
like nothing we were ever taught in college.