

## ON SECOND THOUGHT

These are the inward years.

Semestering is over.

Over

as well the military folderol  
of orders and salutes, the titles  
that defined the jobs that came  
with offices and staff, junkets  
to Jamaica, Lebanon and Greece  
or side trips for the hell of it  
to Bethlehem, Granada, Montreal,  
Kilkenny, Paris and Beirut.

Tonight I try to understand  
the memories I made when life  
meant only going somewhere  
or doing something.

But why?

Only the goer and the doer  
think that going and having gone  
or doing and having done  
mean anything.

No matter

where I went my destination  
changed to here the day  
I got there.

Countries

visited, borders crossed  
and strangers met have vanished  
with the years.

Philosophers claim

that who we are evolves  
from how we act.

I disagree.

Action for me meant doing  
what I had to do—some  
of it important, most of it  
routine or simply unavoidable.  
Regardless, why bother matching  
life with mileage, memories

and recognition?

Doings that outlive  
the doers matter more.

Lincoln's  
stepmother knew how doing  
should be done by schooling him  
to write and read the writings  
of Bunyan, Aesop and the Bible  
of King James.

Had she done nothing,  
Lincoln would have farmed  
and died in Indiana.

Instead,  
he practiced law, campaigned  
for votes, became a president  
and kept the states united.  
Credit Sarah Johnston for that.  
Historians mention her, but briefly.  
Few others do.

Knowing  
how women shun rewards  
or praise for sacrifices made  
for those they love, I think  
she would have wanted it that way.