

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN
(38.0072° S, 177.2871° E)

Rather than the long road, the coast road,
The narrow goat road that follows
the bowls and bends of this sundered shore —
sea on your left or now on your right —
we turned inland, for we had far to go.

The sun was already behind the hill, and we
had tarried in our sensible pants and water-resistant jackets,
over dusty dioramas, shoe shops and tea-towels for Julie and James.
Besides, the fuel's unknown with this wandering gauge,
And these Telly Savalas tyres and worn down shocks,
Sway the van through every bend (and inside we lean too).
No satellite for our GPS and the only map
from some ancient mariner's glovebox,
is drawn with krakens and sailing ships
and a pencilled phone number: 'If you get stuck call Phil.'

'It'll take a day, maybe more,' our host had explained.
But what splendours:
miles of pearling beaches,
sulphurous trembling plains,
azure pools and islands in the air,
farmers on the roadside with berries as big as your fist,
a dollar a bag and sweet as childhood recalled,
and mermaids in harbours singing to the sailors drowned there.

Every path in every yellow wood divides, again and again
Into a filigree of choice and regret, that somehow becomes the difference.