

## Looking with dispassionate eyes

ROSEMARY HUISMAN\*

What he had was the social confidence to speak,  
he'd stand there, balding, forward on his toes,  
his head thrown back, the softening throat upheld  
poising his lips to make the salient point.  
His prose impeccable. She watched  
dust-flakes of dandruff ruffle on his coat  
a corduroy collar once held *de rigueur*  
for academic rigor mortis. Now  
a fading green surrendering to the dust.  
He had it made. The consonants still crisp,  
a rounding of vowels but not too much  
to blur Antipodean origins. A travelled man,  
doing his doctoral while he had a job,  
taking sabbaticals to write his first book  
with his first wife. Those were the days  
sherry at four. Slippers for Auden  
kippers in Edinburgh. The *mots* slip out  
probably heard before. The prose is clean  
the sense a little vague. Only speedreading  
could keep up the mileage output these days.  
And books are dear. Would have been better  
if they'd bought that first small place in Glebe.  
He likes the mountains. Only three days a week

\* Rosemary Huisman is an honorary associate professor in the Department of English. 'Looking with dispassionate eyes' is taken from *The Possibility of Winds*, Brisbane, 2006.

worth coming down. His study is up there,  
gardening, a little potting in the shed,  
his second book. His words are in her mind,  
she doesn't want to know.

The dinosaur  
will die of natural causes, in meteor rain  
or centuries of drought, a species  
doomed by excessive bulk.

All he had,  
always, was the sacred confidence to talk.