

## A Sunday Morning Chat with Peter Minter

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**D**ebbie Comerford: for those who are not familiar with Peter's poetry, he has two published collections of poetry: *Rhythm in a Dorsal Fin* (Five Islands, 1995) and *Empty Texas* (Paper Bark, 1999). As well there is a selection from *Empty Texas* published as a pamphlet by John Kinsella (*Empty Texas – A Selection*, Folio 1998) and another pamphlet, *Morning, Hyphen* (Michael Brennan, Vagabond, 2000).

Peter comes from Sydney where, as well as writing poetry, he lectures at the Koori Centre at the University of Sydney, in Indigenous writing in English and Indigenous cultural studies. He has worked on the *Varuna New Poetry* broadsheet, *Cordite*, and is currently poetry editor of *Meanjin*. This year, Peter has also edited, with Michael Brennan, *Calyx: 30 Contemporary Australian Poets*, a new anthology from Paper Bark Press, an exciting addition to the Australian poetry milieu as it features many 'new' or emergent poets who have not previously been anthologised. Pete is going to start by reading two very different poems.

*Peter Minter*: one of the properties of this book [*Empty Texas*] is my interest in bringing together an investigation of the formal processes that might be at work in relatively experimental or innovative poems, compared to more traditional and lyrical pieces. In a sense, that is an aspect of my own personal history. I started writing about twenty years ago, while living out in the bush, so my first responses to my experience in language were making sense of, and engaging with, my psychic responses to my immediate environments. Over time, and in various ways, that has mutated into language itself becoming landscape.

These two poems represent this.

### *Living Systems*

Under the dim grey sky of an early evening  
in September, that mountain sky  
when air rests across the surface of the world  
and strays on the body like cold,

unremarkable sweat,  
you question the validity of new growth,  
an apparent urgency  
to fresh lime leaves unfurling from the tips  
of branches, knee-high grass left uncut for seeding  
heavy under the pressure of damp,  
point out to me the raindrops  
resting on leaves of grass like Indian mirrors  
sprayed out across the yard.

This one, like them all,  
held against the green verge by asymptotes  
of gravity and friction, the fabric of living  
and falling into the earth as a pebble  
or circle of life  
seems larger than the rest,  
the dark green shadow of the world  
and weight of the sky  
turned as an eyeball to eyes  
we bring and strain through the matter  
of belonging, here, against  
the matter of not belonging,  
the strain of accomplishment, the names  
we share and pretend again to forget.

When night falls, again  
forgetting the air that thickens  
from nowhere into rain,  
the raindrop gathers dark  
into its gentle, impressive detail  
and symmetry, the broad grass leaves  
sink to the ground and emerge  
as a field of black hands  
sprouting from the torso and blood  
and aeons of waiting for day.  
We stay to see the first lamp  
flicker away on the street,  
eyes watching the rain as it slides  
through arteries of light  
to our feet, and then, to the deepening clay.

*(Empty Texas 14-15)*

This is a poem from the 'Empty Texas' series, the central part of the collection; it begins with the very last line of Charles Olsen's *Maximus* poems.



than that. They bring in various kinds of thought process in a much more reflexive and self-critical manner. I think one of the great freedoms for poets, or anyone in any art practice now, is the valorization of a particular formal modality which may have the effect of producing some kind of hyper-significance to a particular form, this is not necessarily productive at this stage in the kind of work that we can do. It is very useful to be able to look at the entire range of formal categories and be able to look at them critically and use them in specific spaces and in particular ways. Also to be used by them.

*DC:* this issue of form came up in the dialogue between John Kinsella and Rod Mengham earlier in the conference. John suggested that the 'war over form hasn't been fought in Australia yet', and I guess in many ways that is what you are engaged in. I wonder also if you could discuss further what you mean by language mutating and becoming landscape?

*PM:* I suppose I have always been fascinated by language as a material substance. In many senses this substance can be sculpted, or in a macro sense viewed as a landscape in itself, but this is only in a descriptive sense.

*Glen Phillips* asked Peter about whether he has a certain audience in mind when he engages with these forms.

*PM:* I don't write with an audience in mind. The actual process of writing comes as an opening up of a particularly textured space, which is often a kind of sound, atonal-type space, and the words tend to fill that space. In terms of the editing process, and how the poem might end up looking, there is a distillation of that process. I'm very conscious of how the poem, how each line, word, works on the page. This is really important to me, and how it might work within a broader field of other works that might correspond with it in some way, so I guess there is an audience in that, that the poem is reflexively addressing in some way.

I think there is a certain responsibility in writing to attend to how a text might be situated by yourself, by readers and by itself, within textual and psychical/spiritual environments.

*John Kinsella:* it has always struck me that your work comes out of a narrative sense of spatiality, a kind of process of recognizing where language can exist in a space at the particular moment of production. You mentioned earlier, that you started writing poetry twenty years ago in the bush, it has been fascinating watching the progression through the verse as place has become seemingly (almost) subservient to language, in fact what has happened is that place is being constantly reinvented in language, and there are a number of spatial options presented in your poems, you can actually physically locate yourself in a particular place and you can take that narrative option of going elsewhere. My question is, and it does connect to the point I was trying to make the other day about form and the political implications of this, your work strikes me as being extremely political, intensely so, and these narrative choices we make about the journeys into alternative spaces via language, are these kinds of nodal points, these positions of choice, consciously built into your poems, or are they something that happens through accidents of language?

*PM:* my creative practices I hope are attentive to using language and investigating

critically the poetic experience, whatever that might mean and however one might create it, such that two or three different functions can be produced. One is that the poem itself as an object, and this comes from my interest in a kind of open field poetic, that the object itself isn't one that delimits the capacity for the voice to connect and the also capacity of the reader to connect.

*JK:* Peter read recently in Cambridge and it was quiet fascinating seeing a very different audience receive these poems, comments I heard most frequently were how incredibly smooth the transitions between theory and subjectivity were. For me though, as an Australian hearing this, these smooth transitions are actually moments of incredible tension, where you're making this choice of which way to go, it's like sliding through a wildly moving road. I'm wondering if while there seems to be a massive shift in voice and style between *Rhythm in a Dorsal Fin* and *Empty Texas*, I'm wondering if they are very similar books in some ways, in their approach to macro/micro situations of self. I think the first book is actually extremely innovative and hasn't been seen as such because it has been seen as a straight lyrical book, but it is totally concerned with the positioning of the self in terms of the outside world and the object. Do you think that is the case, because critics certainly thought it to be a major shift, is it as much as a shift as a transition and a conscious one?

*PM:* the facts of that history are that the poems in *Rhythm in a Dorsal Fin* were written in a very specific time and location, and in fact, the work I was doing prior to that is much more similar to the work that was produced in *Empty Texas*. I was writing very long, almost hallucinatory explorations of narrative and space for many years. Probably from about 1992 to 1994-5 I simply had this fascination with more stable or traditional form and attempted to really try to get inside that and in a very condensed way tried to push my writing to those extremes of what those formal processes were and could possibly do. That's what I was doing in *Rhythm in a Dorsal Fin*.

*JK:* so there is almost an experiment going on there, and the earlier material, does that still exist?

*PM:* Yes, I've got all of it.

*DC:* why were your earlier poems not included in *Rhythm in a Dorsal Fin*?

*PM:* a few of them are, and there are a couple that are about ten years old.

*DC:* with regards to publishing, you weren't conscious of a risk in publishing those type of experimental poems as your first poems?

*PM:* no, I suppose my engagement with publication is not one of worrying too much about creating a particular representation of me as a poet, and where that might rest. I'm simply interested in being honest about the engagements I have with the work I produce and letting it go.

*Kate Fagan:* if I could add to the spatiality discussion, if we look at it from the point of observation and description, an attentive molecularising of something we might call the natural world and an attentive picking up of language as material space, are not that different. So there is a similar spatiality in operation, it's just that the materials you might like to incorporate are altered.

*PM:* that is really true and I think that one of the big differences in the way that exploration is represented between *Rhythm in a Dorsal Fin* and *Empty Texas* is that

*Rhythm in a Dorsal Fin* is connecting with, as the title signals perhaps in the word rhythm (and this is only one way of looking at it), locating that specific exploration within a very long tradition of all those processes being condensed into particular singularities of voice. In the 'Empty Texas' series, as well as many other things, I think I was attempting to create a space where those explorations could occur via a kind of molecular opening up of space in which numerous/numinous voices could work simultaneously along side one another without any kind of hierarchic signification of precedence.

DC: and that is where you would see part of the politics of your poetics?

PM: yes, totally.

JK: the use of singular spatiality and the use of sound is quite fascinating in *Morning, Hyphen*. You subvert grammar, especially the comma, where the pause actually comes before it should, you delay it. This caught me at first, I thought they were typographical errors, but in fact they're not, they're fully intentional. Where time itself becomes object, you actually pause and you look at it, you examine it, it has shape, and then you move on. Is this the direction your work is moving into now?

PM: absolutely. It is of fundamental importance to me if we're really serious about totally re-examining what we can do in creative work. We have to get right in there totally and explore the limits of everything that a poem can possibly be, including grammar, syntax, lineation, punctuation, whatever, just push it as much as possible, open it up, move it round, do whatever one can to allow the presencing of different kinds of subjectivity that poems might be used to express. Which is a political thing too, allowing that presence to presence itself.

DC: so that we all have a better understanding of what you're discussing here, could you read some poems from *Morning, Hyphen*?

PM: sure. This was produced by Vagabond Press this year, a small press run by Michael Brennan, Jane Gibian, and Jane Sloan in Sydney. They have a great series of new poetry. *Morning, Hyphen* is a series of new poems which started being written when I was trying to get up at five in the morning and trying to write before going to work, which lasted for about six months. One of the formal properties is that there are three line stanzas of lyrical text alongside prose poems.

From beginning  
 & bent to break syntax,  
 your beautiful rush

Against surface  
 necessities of life  
 and a dream, again

Detailed as wanting  
 complete exposure, nightly  
 excoriation

Of feeling  
suspended then above  
this rush:

Names, we forget them,  
ghost fingers lost between  
hyphenated vertebrae.

To collect sky to trace our repetition. Wet sand condenses over evaporate surface. You said your lips contact repeats contact. Those black crows rising over the city as you think to walk into leaving. At the centre a solution of crystal polished below earth, light emergent at regular intervals. Red transposes the bending of spirals, already bleeding from the chin. A series of foaming, the division of foaming. I feel the border of your body arrested in mine. I repeat the border of your body arrested.

Calibrated  
gestures get syntax  
appears

s set off  
optimistic & unspent  
corporis fabrica

Audio surface impress  
ions come in  
hot butterfly & euca

lypt ears &  
eyes drive little kisses  
Zuk, much ado

The blueprints'  
immediat  
e alphabet.

Complex iteration, sight, memories index & soft point fire's regard. Carnelian. Each afternoon my arteries precedence in cloud. What branches mortality's arrest – earth, ocean, spray & the shadow our body makes out, on sand. This debris we wake, these eruptions of consistency are totally groundless. Flicker as constitution, so utterly grounded, as you say, a praxis of spatiality recohering as accuracy. Or the mirror of stars, your belly's relation to myth & symbolic touch as coffee traced over hands. I am redistributed, thus: what I do not know yet, but sense. Luminous, real, recognised in. Leaning. Then astonished by blue, its careful organization each moment's testing.

The notion of organization in this more experimental work is very important. In being able to distribute points of voice and points of linguistic self-reflexivity within the poem, points of colour, points of sound and punctuation and syntax as a distributed array, to me is a process which is political in the sense that might in some way be reflective of a good way of living.

*JK:* how much does editorial interaction interfere with that? For example, with the Five Islands Press book, there would have been certain processes with the way that pamphlet series works, and with *Empty Texas* there would have been certain editorial influences at work with Paper Bark, given those processes you were talking about, how much fragility is there when it comes to editorial intrusion, or have you been able to negotiate your way around this?

*PM:* I'm really open to taking on board critical reading and responses and dialogue about my work, I find that to be important to the politics of production, and I'm always open to asking questions and discussing, usually with intimate friends or colleagues, how they might feel about how a work is functioning as a whole, getting advice and a feeling about that.

*JK:* so it's about a discourse, a dialogue, and *Morning, Hyphen* strikes me as a very dialoguing poem, whoever they might be or whatever voices are being engaged, there seems to be an exchange going on there, between the morning and the hyphen. Your voice is opening, maybe it always was open, but it is allowing these nodal points, the reader if you like, to become part of the dialogue. Is this part of a political process?

*PM:* the notion of *Morning, Hyphen*, with the comma in between, in my own personal history goes way back to when I was about 18, 19, 20. I had a big thing about the word 'I' and wanted to be able to write everything without the word 'I', not to represent myself textually at all but still be able to work. That was a function of various political concerns that I had at that time. A link back to that, and also a placement of that concern within a much broader sense of community in which I do function as a subject, is attempting to textualise a hyphenated space in which the space between words, language, process, isn't one that needs to be filled, is one that can be involved in the distribution of potentiality, and the capacity to be able to explore that distribution within language is one of hyphenation and being able to attend to the moments of meeting between unknowables.

*KF:* in terms of subjectivity, perhaps one of the difficulties with the erasure of the 'I' is that obviously, in relation to poetic practice, you enter a space choosing subjectivity in relation to language. That is an obvious link to the very exciting notion of the body as a hyphen, the body as moving link between spatial moments. Rather than seeing yourself as a closed subject, subjectivity becomes slightly more porous, but is still a choosing between. One great quote about the hyphen from Bergson is that 'the body is the moving link operating in moving space, yet choosing how to work in that space.' So you're still foregrounding the collapse of the 'I' or a redistribution of the 'I' by foregrounding the choice to work as poet, and by bringing yourself forward in that dialogue.

*PM:* and that then does in fact constitute a space in which dialogic processes with community can function in extremely ethically productive ways.

DC: in relation to the choice that has been mentioned, there is a privilege in having that choice. Not everybody has that choice, and as a poet you're consciously engaging with this choice. This brings to mind the place of the reader in your poetry. I think the answer to the question 'do you have an implied reader?' is yes. Your poetry does because of its complex textuality. In many ways there would be readers who feel isolated from your poetry, and especially in the context of Australia where there has been a suspicion of such complexity in poetry.

*JK:* hatred is probably more accurate than suspicion!

*Everyone present:* yes!

DC: are you conscious of that?

PM: of the hatred of my poetry?

DC: No!

PM: At times I am!

PM: but seriously, about the privilege, I mean it is a fact that we are engaging with particular forms of privilege by the fact that we're talking and writing about poetry, and sitting here, while there are an enormous amount of people who don't have the economic or whatever resources to do that. There are those who are actually denied them. For me, given that I choose to engage with that privilege, there are specific responsibilities that come with that, without attempting to colonise the disenfranchised other, it is extremely important to me to be able to do other forms of work along side the poetry, which can have real effects upon those culturally denied choice. I think it is a given that poetry is a privileged space. I suppose one of the things I try to do in linking those two spaces is do as much as possible within the poetic to radicalize the poetics as a space, so that alternative ways of thinking about being or about subjectivity can be produced, and hopefully they might have some effect on material stuff as well.

DC: could you read us some of your most recently written poetry?

PM: I have a new series called '*whatever*'. I'll read that.

*whatever*

I.

Where. Again angels, simply  
intelligible or groundless

As locution, fission  
in ampersands' sidereal  
precession

Or prompt neutrino's  
camouflaged erasure

Your definite stance  
leaking into harbours  
of mercury,

Substantially, being  
a journey accommodate trust

& lyrical border's  
lips against signage, replete  
with congruity, my irises

Primera pregunta  
bound to position & consistency

As insects in summer,  
warm water,  
phosphorescent detail

Or a nation of trees, hope,  
designate

Appropriation  
accumulating another city's  
full moon predicative

Mackerel sky  
glistening above glass floors'

Codified transition, plans  
made folded, forgotten against  
living, gifts

Of foresight & attention's  
graceful pleasure

& insight transitive,  
here, our skin's smooth  
recompense

Fading like memory,  
recollection ginger

As storms come hover  
the ledge of the shoulder,  
perfectly illuminate.

2.

In the ground as flanks rise  
retreating faces  
heavy thighed

Haemorrhage

*at the rim of the throat of plants;*

Tactful soil

infuses crimson, a nation  
piling black bones

Washed at the shore's breach,  
ash point of origin & virtue

A footnote's apocalypse  
or semaphore appetite bled  
out through evening,

Commuters

pouring over acres of redundancy,

Sunlit just, photogenic  
passions at the far edge of damage  
as proactive labradors &

Atavistic mortgages slip  
into chlorine & wait,

Refluxive, adjectival occlusion  
plastered benign against cornflowers'  
spotlit, toxic reveries.

3.

Some channel's  
cognitive apparition &

Suspension free beginning  
as abundant footnote to purpose,  
spring, bareback

Hiatus running over  
liquid & stone flares'

Tenuous accuracy  
or significant gentleness belonging,  
amplified languages'

Crystalline utterance  
our novice for fact, aleoteric

With reason, swift  
belongings' azure falcon at the sleeve  
of tautology, contact

Exterior dreams  
abandoned to air, skin.

4.  
Consideration's lunging  
exchange our bodies' aurora  
of ambiguity, closer now

To verbal measure,  
slow warm recall

Blind under night,  
double receiving & translucent  
confidence

A certain aporia  
as lips seal & invite, the wet guest's  
endless volume

Flesh, geranium  
evaporate as written tea, sky

Blue disordering & visible  
as parallel snow, armpit, arm's nape  
licks above freedom &

A city anticipating rush, coal  
scent saliva the number of alterity.

I think the things I'm trying to do in that text are in some way similar to what I'm trying to do in other poems. I'm trying to allow the presencing of the constitution of material fact in terms of body and perception and sense, various forms of sense, within a linguistic spatial structure that will allow them to resonate and be distributed

in meaningful ways. I think it is important for linguistically innovative poetry to be able to do that. Some reactions I've had from some of the work I do is that 'oh it's experimental or innovative so therefore it doesn't have any connection to emotive or physically attenuated or constituted drive in a sense.' I'm actually trying to do something quite the opposite to that.

*JK*: well it actually does that in the context of the poem, because the title is flippant and you've got lots of points of ambiguity in the fluidity of the poem which touch on an openness of body, but I found an incredible defensiveness as well. There is the word occluded which occurs at various times in your poems and which is obviously a defensive word. So while there is this negotiating of the public space and so on and movement between body and language, there is also quite a lyrical personal voice there which the reader is never able to touch. So to describe the poem as being purely within that context [as experimental] is almost limiting because the poem is actually tackling or dealing with your grand struggle of the removal of the 'I' [a lyrical concern]. Do you think this is true?

*PM*: the two points that come to mind immediately are that I'm no longer interested in the erasure of the 'I', I'm interested in the distribution of ...

*JK*: ... or participation maybe, participation of the 'I' that's what seems to be happening within that poem, which is interesting because that is very different to what is happening in *Empty Texas*.

*PM*: there is a gesture towards flippancy in the title, and that flippancy in a sense occludes fairly serious engagement, so that in a way these poems may be able to challenge the notion of category. I'm interested in processes of being able to engage with otherness or alterity which don't necessarily absorb the production of meaning into processes of sameness around specific subject positions, but allow a distribution of engagements which can produce various forms of meanings simultaneously within a space.

*DC*: are you suggesting that the title of the poem '*whatever*', and its flippancy, seeks to subvert a type of reading that will categorise it as 'experimental', a reading that closes off different potentials of innovative poetry?

*PM*: actually I'm interested in that poem to flatten out category. The fetishisation of 'contrast', moments of drama or pathos, comedy, etc are all part of the pantheon of bourgeois writing and reading practices which over time function to limit the capacity of language to really work. '*whatever*' as an expression is both flippant and serious in that it invites a sense of all forms of mutual becoming. So yes, whatever is whatever.

*JK*: what is interesting is that there is less reference to theory in that particular poem because the actual language is generating the theory itself. Whereas in *Empty Texas* there is direct engagement with theory, whereas in '*whatever*' it is producing its own theory rather than the other way around.

*DC*: in relation to the idea that your new poetry is creating its own theory in contrast to *Empty Texas* engaging with pre-formed theory, I'd like to suggest that there is an engagement with your own theory, your own poetics just as much in *Empty Texas* as there is in your new or more recent poetry. If we consider the central 'Empty

Texas' series, sure, you are engaging with a pre-formed theory, that of Language writing, but your engagement is one that allows a space for your own theory, or poetics. That is, whereas Language poetry seeks an erasure of the 'I' your poetry seeks to spiral in the 'I' but with as much attention to the instability of the 'I' as is attended to in Language writing. In this sense the poetics (or theory) of *Empty Texas* is similar to that of your new poetry. Similarly, I see *Empty Texas* as just as involved in the participation or distribution of subjectivity as is *Morning*, *Hyphen*, the difference is in approach rather than the theory engaging that approach. Could you comment on this?

*PM*: I suppose that in the 'Empty Texas' series the 'glue' is fairly visible. It's not necessarily just about Language writing, but more a broad range of poetic styles and influences. My more recent work takes what I learnt there and applies it on a more microscopic level to how syntax and ideation might work to absorb and excrete meaning within and between words. This is the same as in *Empty Texas*, but perhaps the approach is a bit quieter now.

*KF*: can I ask a question in relation to epigraphs? A lot of recent poetry almost cannot operate without the epigraph, setting itself up under a proper name of a previous writer in some way. I wonder what the recent fetish for epigraphy might be about, and what we can read in the textual scaffolding of the epigraph?

*PM*: you're absolutely right in saying that there is an anxiety around producing or asserting some kind of link to particular lineation by using epigraphs. I think there are different ways of doing it, though, which will produce different effects within that political economy. Personally, I swing between using an epigraph which might function to welcome the reader into a text, like a handshake to the reader 'you are my guest here, come in'. That can only work with attention to the whole irony of the process itself. For example, one of the other poems in the '*Whatever*' series is called '00000010101' which is the time which will be shown on a digital clock at the point of the change over of the millennium at the end of this year. Here my epigraph is 'like strings of broken lyres (from omitted 1903)/at once a voice arose anon (arose changed to outburst 1903). These are lines six and seventeen of Hardy's 'Darkling Thrush', which was written a hundred years ago, with the inclusion of alterations and dates. So there are very specific surface links back to Hardy within the use of that particular epigraph which is an epigraph I created myself – it's not really an epigraph. It is obviously attempting to undercut and ironise the whole process of doing that within a system of an historical dialectic; the notion of the changing of the millennium is an easy position from which to address these kinds of notions. It's a tricky thing to do though, using epigraphs in a way that adds to whatever distribution of effects might be going on in the poem. I'm trying for a productive use of epigraphs.

*Nathan Hollier*: in relation to linguistic self-reflexivity and the politics of your work, I was wondering if you could talk about that a little more, and why you consider it to be political.

*PM*: I suppose what I mean is that there is a way in which it scaffolds down to microscopic detail from the level of an entire book right down to the level of how a

letter, or spaces between letters, might function. In the more experimental type (I don't like using that word, but for the sake of conversation, experimental text) getting inside the linguistic, the syntax, the grammar, punctuation and a particular form of lineation, and being able to push or condense or twist or in some way produce some kind of mutation of grammar or syntax or whatever, does produce a critical effect. There is a politics of the line. The kind of subjectivity that is represented by an iambic straight line is very different to that which is produced by one which is challenged. In terms of self-reflexivity, I mean that process of getting in and challenging the properties of the linguistic space the poem is attending to, and seeing what kinds of political effect that might have in terms of what kind of subject it can represent. I think that that process for me is highly significant also because of what I see to be much broader tectonics that we're experiencing, which also goes back to the molecularisation of the subject and language, the reduction or breaking up of everything into capital – on a global scale – and the absorption of material environment into capital and to exchange whereby everything can be exchanged into bits of dollar. Equally everything is being digitalized into ones and zeroes; equally genetics is doing the same sort of thing in terms of information of the particular molecular structures which can be produced given specific arrangements or circumstances. In a sense there is this huge tectonic cultural process going on at the moment where everything is being broken down into bits that can be infinitely rearranged for the process of exchange. Unfortunately in a capitalist global economy this means processes of exchange that attend to money. In terms of writing poems, linguistic self-reflexivity and the political effects it might have, it means getting into specific formations of how these bits are arranged, questioning the logic of how these bits are arranged.

*DC:* we'll have to close the session now, so would you like to read one last poem?

*PM:* I'll read 'Endurance' which is one of my most recent.

*Endurance*

Somewhere at the far end of thinking,  
by the evening crest of trees, uncalled for  
but calling this uncommon light

Wet, green, fluorescent yellow  
traced last along the roadside, in this  
deepening hour of our travelling

To the light, as if our union's thought  
attracts composition always, or cultural constants  
like sunset, the shadow's bruising weight

As the car glides weightlessly on purpose,  
stores fire's glare in compression,  
combustion and motion

By grass stems peripherally undividing  
as they pass destination's  
post-wire affixed unto speech, all mortal ashes

Healing the progress of wind, stars,  
the first nail of the moon  
planted tenderly in the plain of arrival.

From this common roadside, gravel  
and young green blades, by the rising and falling  
of sap, pollen and hair

Three wallabies leap west onto tar,  
slide slowly under wheels' grace and vanish,  
spatter into thin air, smooth rubber.

With what rasping with angels dragged  
to cessation and ordinary blood  
we stand, invisible noses gone from the valley

But still singeing as the car  
creaks somewhere behind us, night smelling bent or  
rubbed out ferns glittering with sleep.

(All our life limbs shake, like all there is, to embrace  
what we don't see together  
already gone as if knowing that tearing

Encountered will already know us, to begin firstly  
on this side of grief, departure,  
wide fields opening the whole, uncoiling lastnesses

*This conversation took place in the Graphic Design Studio of the Tasmanian School of Art on Sunday 9 July, 2000.*