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

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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.