

R.G. HAY

FOR ELIZABETH

There was a scuffling sound near the back steps
scuffling
so I switched on the floodlight
and there was an echidna snuffling
among scrap timber for termites.
A startled wallaby grazing the back lawn
hopped a few metres, paused,
decided I was no immediate threat,
stood — or sat, it's hard to tell
with wallabies — watching warily.
We don't often see a solitary wallaby.
And an owl rose from the long grass
perched grey on the black of an ironbark limb
didn't seem blinded, but scanning
for its next victim.
So there was the echidna unconcernedly crunching
termites, the wallaby waiting to resume grazing,
the owl readied to pounce on the next small
creature that moved, and me, standing at gaze.
No breeze, no moon, a clear sky, silence, stillness,
except from the echidna.
I think maybe this amounted to one of those
fields of coherence waiting for
the readerly spark to ignite its meaning
that my poems are said to lack.
But I'll leave that to you:
I'm careful with fires when the grass
is as long and dry as it is at present.

