

Mum and Dad in the Family Portrait

1. Write a ballet of this dream

Our older daughter elects to stay on
the white page of the canvas studying
for her science test, while our younger
comes with us down the rutted footpath
- this year's margin mountain devil,
Hardenbergia, nothing demanding
the camera brought for the anniversary
till near the sandhills, where she snaps us
kneeling at a stand of leek orchids.
Her twelve years make me shy of anatomical
analogies. But they recur. Returning
up the track, where you confronted the bikie
till he veered and hilariously heeled over,
another stand: perhaps of bee orchids
with half-mast laterals. Incensed,
you fifth-position their posture for them.
To me, whatever the wildflower manuals
may comment, you are still out there
youngest of all of us, dancing the flower.

2. Acne and eternal recurrence

This morning I flush remembering
those shames of male adolescence
I wouldn't go through again, ever
- not only the shames, the pretensions.
Mouth lunar, red and yellow
saying: *They're not like honourable
scars* [sport, not war the reference].
*All they seem to mean is something's
wrong inside.* My hankies like memory
still carry, still sop up the colours.
So I come back to my father:
the wet-dream clogging sheets already
stained from the ulcerations
of a cancerous groin. His comment:
I'm too old for that. Now it
doesn't seem so great a difference
between those macho scars
a teenager wouldn't have minded
sporting and these mementoes,
less of being male, than of being.

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