

The fold

outside the window, a cool space
the breeze blowing the leaves
like the space between us

the fold in the fabric
the crease on the page
the lines of your palm

your breath on my shoulder
the sound of your voice
the sight of your face

the beginning of an endless thought
of what happens between us
and how our history shapes us

in the fold, something obvious
easily seen but not easily known
an impenetrable nexus

absolutely unlike a blank slate
I stare at the lines of your palm
at the language I don't know

I bring a whole world and its history
all my silences and monologues
forgotten languages, generations of stories

apparatus to understand you with
files and files of glances, movements, expressions
ways of being, ways of looking

serious person, happy person, modest person
unhappy person, person-in-need, independent person
and moments when expression breaks out

in the fold, things are safe
the sound of your voice, your breath, is soothing
relieving, animating

even before speaking there's intimacy
the sight of your face, the way you walk
the way your fingers gently fold across your palm

in the face of danger things go quiet

our faces become impenetrable
we wait for the storm to pass

we live in two worlds, one
where politeness dictates that I say your name
the other, where I never say your name

I say hello and nothing else
to name you is to step away
to be overt is to step away

we're conspirators in silence
keeping our bonds hidden
so they can't be crushed

the winter air folds over us
our breaths fog up the windows
inside and outside become separate

each moment which passes is vital
every gesture is laden with beginnings
the germs, the seeds of the future

these periods like hibernation
retreating to some core experience
some safety

I remember those dark pine trees
black and vivid now
as in childhood

dark places in the town
like the site of a mishap
embodying all the past tragedies

the unrecognized endeavours
the acts of selflessness
the heroic acts

everything swept aside and away
by the anglo elite
submerging people like us

eliminating the differences
any disturbance or challenge
like cutting out our tongues

the city is different
it folds us in
opens up a space to rest

the harbour breathes us in
we exhale into the glow of the city lights
in the night sky

the stars are faint
like a reflection of the reflection
of the city lights in the harbour

swing back from dark to light
open up the windows and shout into the street
this relief

out of the fold and into the world
take up the pen and the brush
prepare a clean sheet

one sweeping brushstroke
the ink, the water
bleeds into the paper

the tip, the side of the brush
follows your arm
the line of your jaw

it traces your poise
makes you suddenly
just like real life

is this you is this me
am I looking at or looking for
and what is your appearance

the line for your voice
the shape bleeding slightly
showing music or pitch

waves breaking slowly in the night
moving from within
rising and falling, over and over

a slow release and a long search
like finding a hill and leaving a valley
travelling through light years of feeling

unfolding, folding back

Surry Hills, Redfern
Waterloo, Moore Park
Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo

Crown Street
the backbone of my life
Central Station

Those years we shared that space
it wasn't just geography
our lives were softly colliding