The Cypriot brought his wine-dark eyes with him
Along with his skin and hair. He also brought
That shirt. Swathes of fine fabric clothe a slim
Frame with a grace bespeaking taste and thought.

Australia, 1940. There were few
Men native-born who had that kind of style.
Hence the attention Dobell gave the blue
Collar and cuffs, to make us pause awhile
And see a presence that did not belong.
This sitter, sitting here, caught by this hand?
Caught beautifully. No, there is nothing wrong
About this transportation to Queensland

Of ancient subtleties. It’s merely odd.
A man whom he had loved and seen asleep
The painter painted naked, a Greek god.
But then he had the sudden wit to keep

The clothes, and thus the heritage, in the next
Picture. A window from a men’s-wear store,
It doubles as the greatest early text
Of the immigration. What we were before
Looks back through this to what we would become.
We see a sense of nuance head our way
To make the raw rich, complicate the sum
Of qualities, prepare us for today.

Now that the day is ours, the time arrives
To remember destiny began as chance,
And history is as frail as human lives.
A young and foreign smile, love at first glance:

Painter and painted possibly first met
Just because one admired the other’s tie.
A year old then, I live now in their debt.
This is the way they live. I too will die.