

Constantly Overheard

Peter Hammill

You can repeat it as often as you like,
The story won't ring true.
You've been inventing a cocktail of confections
No-one believes but you.
Contradictory fictions together form a track:
Once the words have been spoken they're out
And you can't take them back.

Opinions you've ventured adrift upon the wind,
No council is kept your own,
As quiet as you whisper your thoughts can't be preserved
For one person's ears alone.
There's always an eavesdropping multitude in on your words.
You always were overheard.

Nothing's secret now,
Nothing's safe and sound,
Nothing's private.

You didn't mean it to come out as it did
But the narrative still escaped.
Benign indiscretions and confidences spilled,
They've got them all down on tape
And sooner or later they'll hold you to account.

I hear you've been spouting
All kinds of poppycock
To any prepared to hear.
Better be careful,
Don't speak so loud or so clear.

Remember whatever you say can't be unsaid,
Not once it's tripped off the tongue.
A flippant aside might in later light be taken
As proof of a smoking gun.
And so here's a maxim for life you'd do well to observe -
Choose your words
As if you were constantly overheard.