

Swimming

for John and Tan

Pitter patter pitter patter,
soft rain on a tin roof,
so romantic, so quintessentially Queensland,
this soporific summer wet,
until the bomb arrived
overhead.

Whereupon it turned demonic,
its thumping battalions of water
bringing us to cower,
not from cats and dogs now,
more like elephants and tigers,
dropped from a stagnant river
in the sky.

Finally flowing southwards
where two people clamour into the ceiling at sunrise,
waves rolling down the hallway, climbing the walls,
a daytime darkness descends and they do too

to save their skins.

Diving under bookcases,
collapsed against the doorway,
wedging their bodies through windows,
clutching at a gutter that abruptly snaps unclipped,
they swing out and up like acrobats,
into the currents of a rising tide
that waits for no man.

Dragging buckets of phones,
chicken necks for the dog,
to the roof where, sadistically pelted upon now,
they slip and slide,
call the SES
and wait for an ark.

Things had cruised along swimmingly for a while,
in the Great Australian Way:

‘If it moves shoot it, if it doesn’t chop it down,
dig it up or put a road through it.’

And in a country run by fossils,

the money rolled in.

But roads are highways for boats now,

rivers sit in the sky,

cows land on beaches

and the eyes of an orphaned doll

stare blankly as she drifts by,

desultory in the deluge.