

Short-list

- ‘Rain at Eltham’
Mark Tredinnick

Rain at Eltham

Between showers I stand on the deck not dying,
talking to myself, saying *Stop talking to yourself.*
Come back to the sex of standing in the body of the present tense.
Drop down from the stream of twitter you use
to remind yourself of everything you ever did wrong; remember
the larger mind that makes you up. And at that point the sky decides
to haul up its net, and rain drops
cold from the crush of its seething catch like seawater,
cold and black as Kali's eyes.

Spend your life dying. Take each step, make each clause,
and every next move an act of willingness
to die again. Turn up, in other words. But right now, come in out of the rain.
Which falls on the roof like a school
- of groupers ecstatic in escape and plunging willingly back
to live again and again in the darkness. I sit where I sat a year ago
when the garden was a camp in the desert.
This high room is crying out for a lover, but there's only me,
and I am, as ever, alone, and the room will just have to
get over it.

The ironbarks, black as coal-seams in the rain,
 are in flower. The one that weeps beside the deck sweeps its blue leaves
across my sightline. A lorikeet and a silver eye, voluble and garish circus acrobats,
trapeze the tree's pendulous gesticulations
 and swig in full swing sly grog from virtual pink plastic cups.
The cloud frays and summer remembers itself in a few chaste phrases
spilled across the shining deck. Borrowed light steals
slantwise through the eight panes of glass in the door
 and falls like a sensual elegy on pale blond boards.