

DAEL ALLISON

dreaming poets dreaming

what if a raft were to loom from the dark with an old man at the bow, his hand firm on the helm? what if they stepped on, the two poets from another world?

life could be like this, real but another dimension, darwin rising from a blackout like a blazing fish in beagle bay, the air a flux of water, ondaatje and neruda adrift on a tropic river, the silent helmsman steering past up-lit cyclone ruins, emerald palms and the edifice to government the locals call the wedding cake, nudging through the flotsam of unconscious men, the raft a smudge on a rippled mirror.

what if neruda asks why make this building voiceless when stars are shouting, and the raft, caught in an answerless current, turns and surges into the brazen gorge of mitchell street where the waters churn with roach butts and mcdonalds styrofoam, pods of slick-sheathed girls, men tattooed like coral trout, where backpackers spew beer from balconies and bouncers circle like sharks.

the ferryman steers past throb, ducks nuts, shenanigans, neruda enigmatic at the prow, ondaatje, silver eyes alight, lurching from side to side yelling *giddyamatehowyagoin*. a black taxi cruises past, frangipani swilling in its wake, someone shouts

getofftheroadyafuckwits, apparitions loom blank-eyed and screaming, blood streams from glassing's jagged cuts. the poets cling grimly as they drift past the cocktail luxe of hanumans, the smokers clotted on the entertainment centre steps.

the flood ebbs, the raft eddies in a backwash of public housing, bottle shops, cheap car rentals, sudden quiet. clapsticks sound, ancient twig men sing the dark. waters whisper into sand, sand whispers into silence, a curlew cries the doors to dreaming open. the poets walk into the desert, deafened by the stars.