

# JOAN PRIEST

## A WEEK ON THE REEF

Out on the reef the power boat  
is silenced: one frog figure  
watches black spouted swimmers.  
In still water, weightless,  
meet the calm eyes of fish,  
stately columns in a colony of coral  
colour-tipped, swaying,  
mushroom upon mushroom;  
a starfish startles,  
slivers of fin and tail  
vanish in filigrees,  
a large cod lurks. Drift muted,  
mouth breathing with the sea,  
arms tentative as tentacles  
explore . . . sharply the heart jerks,  
creeping kite-like, huge below,  
a manta ray — it feeds on plankton  
this, they say, but what other instinct,  
    what is prey?  
too fine a balance, fierce flipper kick away,  
boatside clamber, goggles pushed to gulp  
the air, pause, then go: by week's end  
we learn to share seastrange harmonies  
    and intricate warfare.