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.