

Flood delusion

In his sleep it comes through pipes and gutters. *Spurt Gush*

It runs; like in a burst aqueduct bearing weight; litre per kilo

Heavier than the tractor in the barn, fleeting as hay batches donated to feed

His cows. *Gout Spout*

It comes; over the north fence. Changing his world, changing levels and notches

On termite-eaten four-by-fours marked for decades with dates of past floods;

Over the tombstone in the far paddock where Horrie lies, buried with his gun.

Flow Run Past night windows it eddies; swirls, smelling

Of grass and dung and crushed foliage from gums at the Five Mile

It comes. Whirling and pooling up coronet, fetlock, hock of the last horse standing

Of a team of six. Up gaskin and ergot, over forearm and knee of

A long-suffering mount raising its muzzle

In alarm at the change, the shift, the sudden downpour sheeting

From skies purple with possibilities, with relief. *Stream Rush*

Remnant streaks of a white sunset turned orange. Orange with silhouettes

Of mill and trees cut from carbon; singed with the soot of flames so close

They warped the gate. That gate Horrie fashioned from lengths of pipe

Welded roughly in the half-light of the shadowy barn

The day he declared he'd never seen it so parched and dry. So hopeless

He took off to the crags and never came back.

Thank crikey he cannot see it now. *Rush Surge*

Torrents reel against the house, peel away cladding where

Nails were never enough. Where bins and dog bowls are carried away

By current and wave; rise, bounce, wallow. Disappear

Into a creek so swollen it is the stuff of dreams. Dreams

Spurt Stream Steam Dream

Wake, wake to chalky sensation of dry tongue, dulled eyes;

To red red dust and gusts through glass louvres curling eyelashes

With latent heat. *Singe Scorch*

No change, no change. It's the auction brought this on; hammering head and gut

With figures, totals, sums so poor he swore. Perhaps it's not worth seeing them

Trot, clatter over a ramp onto rivals' trucks,

His cows.

But better than taking the tractor to them, bucket spannered on

With desperate fingers; shake, tremble. Dry as bone. Dry

As horns on a carcass skull going white out there. Ah - better, he knows,

Than piling them for a fire. Out there where two dams are dams no more,

Where silent creek and ghastly memory of fish kills

Assault the mind's nostrils like a plague. And sand pours through fists like water.

Water? Water? No such thing. The future Horrie foretold,

Of water politics and water war is upon them,

Searing, branding onto hide and soul this symbol of desolation.

Two waves, once the emblem of the farm

Now signifies not water, but steam; heat miraging a prospect of fear

As obvious, as blatant as that in their eyes as they climbed that ramp

His cows.

But in his dreams, it flows. Every night a flood to bait and tempt,

Tantalize and bruise, to prove

He cannot help but dream. *Rush Splash*
