

New Year in Esperance

Helen Bradwell

Here we're in a dish of storm.
Wind claws at guyropes
as rain beats at the skin of our tent.

Thunder batters my ears
and I could lift my throat and bay
with the clamour of the pack

but for you, placid child,
your freckles rinsed by lightning.
I tune in to your steady breaths, I breathe,

teeth clenched. Outside the clouds still
circle, hunker down, hurl all
their electric vigour at us. You sleep.

It's ten years since that other night of storm,
my back arched, my belly taut,
your birthpangs gusting through me hour on hour.

There was the long low groaning in my spine,
fluorescents in my eyes as they
sliced and tugged and stitched,

wiped and handed you back to me,
little mouse, brand new,
mouth wide, wailing.

Here at last the din is easing,
thunder grumbles out around.
Flashes subside into quick mica glints.

I breathe in the salty damp
of wet granite ranges
and bear witness

to the morning sky, spent,
milk-white, of our new year
cracked open.