

The Eyes Have It

By Pat Prime

The woodpile grows beside the garden shed.
The moon gazes from a vacant eye as I draw the curtains.
In my hand is *21st-Century Modernism*, Marjorie Perloff.
The first title to catch my eye is Gertrude Stein's book
Tender Buttons (with its French *double entendre*
as *bouton tender* or nipple). The nipple seems to
have a natural hardness, that perhaps *sees* things
no other part of the body witnesses.

In a flash of memory (a la Proust's madeline)
I am back on the boat on Lake Taupo
where one of my overseas visitor caught a trout.
The small "i" of myself watched with baited breath –
all eyes on the catch as the captain drove
an ike (or spike) into its eye.
The stomach was opened to reveal that it had
been feeding on smelt and green beetles.

The fish was held aloft to have its picture taken:
the fisherman's eyes gleaming behind sunglasses,
his mouth pursed in an "o" of delight. The trout's eye
a bloody socket.

*Blood is our Esperanto, flesh
our zaum, who
have no verbs*

*to frighten away
the night.*

*(Nothing
but words.) Noting
more than notice*

(Charles Bernstein, "Common Stock")

Climbing the Cliff

The unhinged wing of a butterfly, gold-flecked, lies on the beach.
Noon light focuses on sun-yellow sand in the midsummer heat.
Putting corner-to-corner, edge-to-edge, we fold the towels.
Alone on the beach just you and I.

Halfway up the flaring brow of rock
the pohutukawa hang by their roots.
A searing pain is felt through the worn sole of a sandal.
Something is half-seen further up the bluff –

an old pine's striving branches lift
a cumbersome and imperfect shape.

A shower of self flows out
lost at the fingertips, elbows and toes.

Briefly, there's joy in the loneliness,
until the sombre kettledrum of heartbeat
remind us of age, and the ground we're on
begins to shift beneath our feet.

The Return

Gulls circle the ocean bearing the sea-gift
of prophecy. A little girl running
across the sand waves at me to stop.

Behind the smooth unfinished slope of nose,
those bland planes of lip, cheek and chin,
too undeclared as yet to signal character,

what else can the child do but look
for support from someone she supposes
older and wiser?

I am startled from daydream
by a face, a voice, a hand, a word –
all so sudden, innocent and immaculate –

the sight of another child in the water
in obvious difficulty. Over the inevitable
tide, a slight attack, a half dozen retreats

until the child is safe in my arms.

In the far distance, look:

tiny blades flash.

Road Sweeper

There is a man,

 a faint scar

 halfway down his forehead,

who rides a bike

 along the footpath

 picking up rubbish

with a fork-like instrument

 and slipping it under

 the lid of a container.

He wears a crash helmet

 and protective clothing

 for this menial task.

Chip packets float

 about him

 like a flock of doves.

He raises his hand
 in salute, greets me
 each day with a smile,

so there's nothing
 left for me
 but words –

and soon the birds
 whistle
 distantly.

Willowware

In Stonington Jimmy & David
consulted the ouija board
 in the 3rd storey tower room,
 an octagonal cupola adjoining the sitting room,
 painted vermilion pink with white trim,
 and lit by 5 windows.

Side by side they sat at a round table
with a white milk-glass top,
on lavender Victorian chairs.
The board was a standard pattern,
 an upside-down blue-and-white
 willowware teacup their pointer.

At first nothing happened but after a while,
the cup twitched in its sleep.

“Is anyone there?” they whispered.

Finally words came pouring out,
capital letters, soon to make sense
and be gathered in a hundred notebooks.

At the spirit guide’s suggestion, Jimmy & David
propped a mirror in a facing chair:

“We saw each other in it. He saw us.”

The messages *twice as entertaining,*
twice as wise as either of its mediums.

Their relationship with the supernatural
had begun, a book-length poem
was about to start, and the possible
destruction of two separate lives,
that were never to be the same again.

Bio:

Patricia is the editor of the New Zealand haiku magazine *Kokakō* and the reviews editor of *Haibun Today*. She writes reviews for *Tak ahe*, *Atlas Poetica*, *Haibun Today* and for several Indian journals. She is currently co-editing a transtasman tanka anthology, *100 Tank a by 100 Poets*, and the world haiku anthology, *A Vast Sky*.