

POETRY

JAMES NORCLIFFE

Three Poems

1. Voyeur

1

to see
as the hand sees
the line of the cheek

as the pastel sees
the softness of flesh

as the pencil sees
the edge of the smile

is my safety

2

to feel
as the hand feels
the edge of the cheek

as the pastel feels
the flesh of the paper

as the pencil feels
the thin sharp line

is my fear

2. The Naked Eye

to see beyond the limits
to hold still for a longer moment
after the disappointment
of the discovery of the body
the excitement of that hope
which mocks inevitability

the movement of the grass
in a wave over a silky hill
the wind lifting beyond the peak
to ride the flow of it over the ridge

the wings' after-image
the hawk-like hover
only a suggestion
in a dark glass

to cup the not-knowing
like a moth in your hands
the dusty flutter of it
caged in your fingers

the fragility of being strangers:
of not knowing the local dogs or horses
or the cow named after
the publican's wife

3. Hororata

he said he had perfect pitch
that he dreamed symphonies

the yellow clay thrown
up from the ditch would fall
in arcs of graceful arpeggios

his rough hands had worn
his shovel handle so smooth
it would slip like silk
between his callouses

and he would warble *sotto voce*
in a voice with a cracked glaze
as he bent and stretched
to dislodge the ancient boulders

it was so hot and flat
he would pause sometimes
to gaze at the blue hills
cool in the distance

drawing his shovel
towards him gently
sympathique

like a lover