

a randomness in all of this

his eyes seek reasons for a wrecked bike
in river mud before his mind kicks in
while a girl forces laughter at a distance –
only he makes this link

there is no other – only he seems to
entertain a lack of order in everything
beyond stone or water or air

to live in the present he decides there must
be blurred borders around it to survive

there is a sense that a past existed
for how did today arrive?

this is his border of randomness
that needs to be crossed now and again -
and again when the laughter ends

cormorants standing

they are faux sentinels on the sandbar
who perch on their own private mound –

their stillness intimates lifelessness
which is much less than they are –

a chill and a cold current give no reason
to stir further as nothing sails upstream
and nothing down – their stillness is
palpable from the distance he watches them –

there is movement though minimal
in the sharp turn of a head alerted by some
small sudden change – as sentinels
they are alert to this and want to know
of nothing else besides their survival
guarded in stoicism when the tide is low

THE PK POETS

The PK Poets is a series of free to print poetry leaflets highlighting the poetry of a single poet. It is intended to be a sample introduction to the work of a poet who is also a member of the PK Poetry List. The PK List is a free to join community of poets who share their work and critique using email and the internet. Information about the PK List can be found on the front page of the Poetry Kit Website at www.poetrykit.org.

About James Bell

JAMES Bell was born in Scotland and has lived and worked for many years in Devon and gains great inspiration from the local rural land and riverscapes. He has released a CD of his poetry and original guitar music called “O’Grady and Mount Fuji”. Apart from being published widely in magazines he has been a PK Featured Poet and contributed to Transparent Words. A first collection, “the just vanished place”, will appear in 2008 from Tall Lighthouse.

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THE PK POETS

#9: James Bell



(Pic; James Bell)

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the society of mullet

today with others he watched mullet bask
in low river water beneath an old railway bridge –
earlier there was a heron cry and they saw
the poise as it first pointed at the water
swooped its beak below the surface and flashed
a little silver before swallowing breakfast

apparently life is slow in the society of mullet
who sift the gloom of bank sides for sustenance -
both their colour and outlook is grey hued

he concluded that the heron would not eat
a fish so unexciting and weighed down by grit
while the others did not speculate at all –
neither did he or his companions drop a stone
to liven up life for mullet in their element –

later he recalled the smoothness of the mud
and that mullet when cooked taste bland

another mullet tale

and mullet have soft lips you cannot tug
with a line or it will end in a broken kiss
as the hook slips and the relationship
decelerates abruptly – is defined by departure
from both worlds inhabited as one
though only in that one connected moment
where both feel the ancient pull –

a net is much better – will turn
divorce into romance – bring brothers and sisters
together for the last time
though gritty to taste

on the pallet – oriental food does well
with mullet – red or grey – and does not
taste so bitterly when treated with due respect

and the story ends happily if not for mullet

the mullet tale goes deeper

he knows the story can go deeper – this one
about mullet – more deceptive than those
shallow swimmers
further than the naked eye can see from bank
or bridge – to somewhere else other than down
though what is seen is clear rather than murk

and that will always be the difference -
what is seen in water is far beyond mullet
with soft mouths designed to pout at mud
and sift it like a lover – no – deeper still
is where the story goes to attain its mythic
qualities with beginning a middle and end –

this one does not have a turn or twist -
mullet must be left to their own devices
if the story surpasses natural environment

everything in its place

the cormorants have a black suited
conference on a sandbar further down
black-headed herring gulls stick closer
to humanity by the low old bridge
to increase chance of scavenging success

he who writes sits between the two
extremes who pass yet rarely meet –

he is like a lone heron - the grey feather
who makes no noise and remains still
on his island at low tide - a place
a place known for possibilities of standing up
to walk over to one side or the other

he is there because he does not wear black
or scavenge lunch and can see the difference

advances and retreats

a quiet competition goes on
below the opposite bank – the tow of water
in and out - continues regardless
though the growth of lichen on shore slime
begins to grip as water bottoms out – flows
beneath where it has been longer than humanity
and their need to harvest the river for fish –
the lichen quietly grows undisturbed
its only instincts sun and water
as it spreads and repeats what it does
just above the tide line –

he wonders if it has always been like this
a series of advances and retreats –
the grasp of roots amidst moving feet

one of those times

when it's only five minutes
and a quick seat beside seagulls
who screech for food -
go with disgusted parting squawks

in this sun there is no paradise -
with a cold wind and people who
like him sense autumn and winter

they too harbour the need for light -
lowered sun at mid-day is good enough
and now he notices the five minutes
have gone from this whatever paradise

where time is never enough
beside the desires of nature –
beside the natures of time