



Lost Property Box; An Odd Kettle of Fish; Elephant Dreams

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Fun, fun, fun, but is it enough? **Elephant Dreams** is the most recent book to be published in the 'Sandwich Poets' series. It is full of jokes, wordplay and the obligatory verses about aliens, but not much substantial poetry. Do Macmillan have a set of rules in this series which the poets have to obey? Because where they are allowed to, Harmer, Cookson and McMillan slip in the odd memorable poem which is then immediately suffocated by the interminable routine of zany subjects and verses.

Lost Property Box is a new cover reprint from 1995. The new series cover style is garish and the inside illustrations are crude and cartoonish. Even the drawings of each poet at the beginning of a section do not do them any favours. Neither does the selection of poems in this title. Magee, in particular, can write some stunning poems but this book's theme seems to be the insubstantial, the 'whatever can be consumed quickly'.

Also a reprint, **An Odd Kettle of Fish** was first published in 1995. This is the sort of selection that Macmillan should be aiming at in this series. Yes, there are the crazy poems, the plays on words, the poems about school or parents but the quality is higher, the jokes make you laugh and the word play is fun. There are also the more thought-provoking poems like John Rice's 'Big Fears' where the subject, the language and the rhythm become melded into a memorable poem which resonates long after one has turned the page. This is a collection which is relevant to everyday experience and also fulfils the promise in Pie Corbett's poem 'Poetman': 'The Poetman/ calls at each house/ in the early hours./ When the stars are frosted flowers/ and the night a velvet mole./ The poetman shoulders his bundle -/ At each doorstep/ he sheds a poem or two.' Mmmm...

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