

Stephen Robertson

Creek mud

As I drift on mirror water, following the bend,
the curlew rises suddenly,
screeching at my invasion of its space.
Two plovers wait a little longer,
then follow suit; the oystercatcher
busily foraging across the bank
lets me get much closer
before giving me an earful.

To my left, the foraging ground: a smooth bank of mud
slopes up from the creek. On the other bank
a mud cliff, undercut and crumbling in places,
crested by the fuzz of last year's growth,
looks like a great sea-crag in miniature,
a tumbling precipice of rock—or maybe ice
from a dying glacier.

On the next bend, the banks
will exchange character.
A flowing river, meandering across
a flood plain, excavates one bank
as it lays down the other,
switching favours at each turn.
(Stay close to the carved bank
for the deeper channel.)
In the tidal creeks that snake
across the saltmarsh, the currents
are complex but have the same effect.

On a spring high tide, I would be floating
at the height of the marsh, or maybe over it.
But today we are in the neaps:
even at high tide, with the mud cliffs
above my head, the rest of the marsh
is out of sight.