

'remembering this occasion is ours'

Pomes Flixus, MW Bewick (87pp, £9.99, Dunlin Press)

The Orphaned Spaces, MW Bewick, Ella Johnston (148pp, £9.99, Dunlin Press)

These beautifully produced paperbacks evidence a writer who looks carefully at the world around him and is aware of what he sees and also the nature of seeing and experiencing. The poems in *Pomes Flixus* (a new title) veer from the seemingly simplistic and confessional to more abstract experiments such as 'The Other Humanities' which offers clusters of lists under repetitive a, b, c titles for each verse. Here is the second b. verse:

b.

The morphology of word.
The direction of the gaze.
The structured relationships
between elements of the whole
and the space and interaction
between observer and world.

There's a summary of sorts in the final stanza, which suggests '[t]he procedure for guided readings / towards a general tendency / of tempo and expectation'.

This could act as a guide to the reader for the whole collection, a note of advice to look out for the rhythm (tempo) of things, and to engage with the narrator's tendencies; for otherwise the reader may miss what is being seen, not share the same direction of the gaze'.

Bewick's last volume, *The Scarecrow*, was over-reliant on abstractions and generalisations, *Pomes Flixus* is not, it is rooted in the very specific and real world around him. Although nothing like Creeley in form, these poems document the act of seeing and thinking about what is being seen just as Creeley's work sometimes does. Memory and imagination are also here in abundance, and the book is punctuated by both abstract gestural images and clusters of photography, which act both as an aside and a pause as one reads through. The photos remind me of the way Sebald uses found images in his [non-]fictions: they do not comment or illustrate, they stand slightly apart as a digression and expansion of what is being said elsewhere.

The Orphaned Spaces, which I bought on the strength of *Pomes Flixus*, is in many ways more straightforward, but is no less appealing because of that. It is a journal and visual 'exploration of overlooked areas of natural beauty', and should quickly find its place amongst other writings about the edgelands next to where we inhabit, (sub)urban exploration and psychogeography. Bewick's journal entries are prose poems, focussing not only what is seen but drawing on a wider ecopoetics and sense of nature. Ella Johnston's drawings and watercolours are exquisite visual descriptions, and I also loved the section of visual postcards from abandoned

industrial spaces. This book – as the '9 July' entry notes – is a wonderful exploration of the '[w]ild orphaned spaces at the edges of our minds'.

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