

Poetry Review

The Testimony of the Trees

by Lynne Wycherley, Shoestring Press, Beeston, Nottingham, 2018, 58pp,
ISBN: 9781912524198, price £7.50 (+ £1.50 p&p)¹

Reviewed by **Julian Nangle**, Poetry Editor, *Self & Society*

This volume of poems is unique. It is unique in its insights, unique in its vision and unique in its unflinching ability to hold the reader even if, at times, as with this reader, s/he finds some of the content difficult to grasp due to its scientific overlap. This volume of poetry is also the best I have read in a decade or more.

Wycherley is a poet of impressionism. She prefaces each poem in the main body of the book with a telling and prophetic quotation, such as “‘The call of the garden will not be readily silenced’ – Jeremy Naydler, philosopher”, which heads the poem ‘Troubled Light’. There is a secondary collection in the book, entitled ‘Coda: a gift, a grace’, to which this does not apply but which carries on her argument presented in the body of the book, for a serious growth in awareness to the dangers of electromagnetic pollution and radiating masts.

This may sound heavy, but the poet’s chosen language precludes any feeling of weariness and hopelessness. These poems are bald, stark warnings dressed in beautiful lightness of touch, but warnings we ignore at our peril. The poems challenge the developing status quo of instant accessibility to everything, through our screens, our computers, our mobile phones. The poems also challenge our ability to grasp the hidden subtleties that lie in references throughout the collection.

Thankfully there is a ‘glossary’ and a history of the research into the dangers of electromagnetic and radiation pollution continually referred to in the poems. This helps the reader understand that we are in the hands of a poet-scientist of



extraordinary power and intellect.

This is a political book in its attempt to bring focus on the corporate need to put all of us in harm’s way in order to satisfy its greed. The book is titanic in its strength and its vulnerability. The iceberg it addresses is barely seen, but is there. The book is barely seen, but is there. Let us hope more and more people spot it on their horizon and read the poems, for they are surely truths wrapped up in ethereal, spare language which, while they do not sting, bite at the very core of our conscience. Wycherley’s constant use of italics, as seen below, appears only to be there to emphasize. One can almost touch the sense of impotence and frustration felt thereby. She knows she is writing of deeply important but ignored issues. I salute her attempt to wake us all up.

I end with Wycherley’s poem ‘The Strangers’ which has a prefaced quotation

from Mahatma Gandhi:

‘What we are doing to the forests... is but a mirror of what we are doing to ourselves.’

Bleak, aloof,
they needed among us,
Grey lightning-streaks through the living.

Phone-masts, cell-towers, WiMax,
Verticals, a cold-edged gleam.

Marching steel-steel-steel

Cadres on rooftops,
microwaves pulsing through stucco,
bone: nano-hailstones.

Marching steel

We are hallowmas-in-summer,
rust-tinged leaves

strange, someone says, *there's been*
no drought, hands mid-text,
eyes in data-fix

while daylight dips half-seen
trailing saris, Indian dyes

in gloriam Dei

Julian Nangle, Dorset, UK
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Note

1 Available from: SHOESTRING PRESS, 19 Devonshire Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 1BS, UK (OVERSEAS orders via www.centralbooks.com, orders@centralbooks.com). www.shoestring-press.com/2018/08/testimony-of-the-trees/

A Commentary from the poet, Lynne Wycherley

This anthology is to raise awareness of wireless risks – especially to children and to Nature – this time using beauty. It also says: where is humanity going with these dark, addictive trends? The starting-point is research showing phone-mast damage to trees.

Faced with the looming technological shadow of our times, I mined the book from my very depths – my deepest being. Although it's a soul-searching, planetary sort of book, I wrote it partly to show the radiation and addiction risks to *children* ('living aerial, played out eyes, / love, my love, return to me').

Here¹ is the link to my UK Parliament essay-testimony on this theme (and also to my *Ecologist* article).²

In the wider world, most digital debates miss out the *irradiation* of children and its peer-reviewed neurotoxic³ and genetic risks, something which makes microwave-transmitting toys, etc., a growing crime.

Notes

1 See 'Using Healthier Media and Reclaiming Life Beyond Small Screens – a dual approach for young people's wellbeing. Written evidence by L F Wycherley', accessible at goo.gl/2HYbdr.

2 See 'Smart meter radiation and health - why are we neglecting non-toxic alternatives?'; accessible at goo.gl/iq6uVK.

3 Pall, M L. Microwave frequency electromagnetic fields (EMFs) produce widespread neuropsychiatric effects including depression. *J Chem Neuroanatomy* 75(B) Aug 2017.