

**All the colours of light: Mary Lloyd Jones by Carolyn Davies and Lynne Bebb  
Pont Books, 2009. 32pp, £7.99**

Review for Planet by Caroline Juler

On first opening this booklet, the gorgeous colours of Mary Lloyd Jones's paintings spring out at you, beautifully reproduced. They are so sumptuous that it's hard to tear yourself away from the images to concentrate on the text.

It's designed specifically with children between 11 and 16 years of age. If you're at the top end of that range you might have misgivings that the words would be either so bland or so complicated that you'd be better off without them. Joy of joys, it's not true: the authors have managed to write neither up nor down to their readers but straight at them. None of their phrases is extraneous, vapid or misleading. Never mind the target readership: children who are too young to make out the words for themselves would surely love to gaze at the reproductions. Their parents could spend a happy half hour reading it to them and learn something for themselves. Old people who can't read would enjoy listening to the words just as much as looking at the sensational colours that Mary Lloyd Jones throws at you with such apparent ease.

Carolyn Davies and Lynne Bebb are teachers and here's a sample of how succinctly they write: 'Mary is drawn to places where people and their work have marked the landscape. One of her earliest memories is of "a livid orange and grey scar which can be seen in the Rheidol Valley". She says "poisonous stains of cadmium and ferrous oxides seep from the old mines, creating a constant threat of pollution." Mary often responds to those early memories by pouring, wiping, staining and splashing coloured dyes onto calico. Then she folds and sews the cloth just like her great-grandmother and the generations of women before her... But Mary is also excited by the curious marks carved deliberately into stone by early peoples... She wonders what messages have been left behind and she interprets them in her paintings.'

Words and pictures have come together in Welsh art many times before. You could go back hundreds of years to search for the origins of this particular form of symbiosis but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century interest in it has been growing. The painter Christine Kinsey and the medieval historian Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan put a deal of thought into the phenomenon in *Imaging the Imagination*, a book which grew out of the META exhibition in 2005. Gillian Clarke, who's written an appreciation at the start of this booklet, is a poet who thrives on the synergy between words and pictures. A real test of the words in this book, of course, would be to read them to a blind person.

Coming after *Josef Herman* and *Kyffin Williams*, *All the colours of light* is part of a series which receives support from the Welsh Assembly's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (whose acronym DCELLS translates to APADGOS in Welsh).

Its simplicity belies the heavy-duty bureaucracy that helped give it birth. This is a lovely publication in anyone's book.