

Silver Linings

Maree Silver and Janette Fernando (eds)

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Reviewed by Ian Keast

Silver Linings is the 2021 Anthology from Poetica Christi Press, which includes the prize-winning poems, as well as others, from their annual Competition. It takes its distinctive and distinguished place in the long line of Anthologies from their Competitions. Like the others, **Silver Linings**, possesses quality layout and design, from its stunning cover photo capturing 'the metaphor of cloud with a silver lining', (from the Foreword); appropriate photographs throughout; a range of poetic genre, including, prose poems, haibun, haiku; plus a wide variety of free verse.

John Foulcher, the judge of the Competition, writes in the cover blurb of the Anthology,

The poems in this engaging anthology are drawn directly from the process of converting sensation to meaning, of taking the random detail of the world and making them something to live by, to take forward.

The poems explore, 'Silver linings', (which) *are the elements of hope or the redeeming qualities in otherwise negative situations.* (Foreword). As the Editors, Maree Silver and Janette Fernando point out, *we all experience loneliness, loss, lack of certainty, and alarm. We live under, the clouds of Covid, climate change and calamity. Yet, there are silver linings as small epiphanies, under the storm clouds. There is hope. There is ultimately, light. The poems traverse this diverse map of experience and subject matter. What links them?*

The quote of John Milton at the beginning of the book, provides the heartbeat of the Anthology,

Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.

Mark the vocabulary here: *gratitude...reverence...epiphanies...transcendent...awe...experience...* These are words that point us to a larger and greater and more expansive story; all within the context of the *everyday*.

Any one of the poems embodies this. By way of illustration, the one I am drawn to is a prose poem, *Great Alpine Road*, by Janine Johnston (p14). In a wild storm through the mountains, the narrator draws in to the protection of her father. It is a difficult drive, dangerous and tense,

*...wind buffets
the car, rain thrashes the windscreen. He leans forward for
a closer view and the storm slaps his face...No conversation.
A collective holding of breath...*

Even here, *silver linings*, ...

*At each bend the lights capture slivers of iridescence on the
snow gums...*

In this experience, insight gained,

*I'd never noticed the silver streaks on the trunks in daylight...
Another time, another weather pattern, I would never have
known of these luminous sentinels marking the way...*

The struggle is with,

*...a restless, roiling black, (and) a single vehicle edges its way
on a ridge, on top of the world. Only the smacking rain, the
wild cross winds. Each other.*

Finally,

*...respite, under the bridge, we share a glance, half-smiles.
Almost there.*

This is a powerful poem of the metaphor of *silver linings*, referred to earlier; Milton's vocabulary evident throughout. (And on p15, the apt symbiosis of the photograph of a snow gum, the *luminous sentinel*, with the poem. Perfect.)

John Foulcher's cover blurb quotes Les Murray's poem, '*Satis Passio*', in which he describes experience as,

*...condensed by memory
to roughly vivid essences:
most people's poetry is now this.
Some of it is made by poets.*

Here is the poetic gift that *Silver Linings* offers to the reader. In Foulcher's words,
(The book) *demonstrates the strength of the human spirit, the elegance of its incarnation in words. This effervescent anthology will reward many readings.*