

## Book Review

## Embraced by Love: Pearl essence on our shores

Kaimana Wolff

There's a quiet shine to Tanis Helliwell's hundred pages of poetry in *Embraced by Love* (International Institute for Transformation, 2008) that asks to be described as nacreous, like the pastel swirl of oil on water, or a pearl.

Not that Ms. Helliwell, who has published two previous books of universal spiritual interest, sticks to safe topics or pallid truths. Of teens, she writes,

"Who can tell teenagers anything?  
They will not listen  
to truth, to love, to threats.  
Nothing will move them from their path."

Of death (or perhaps the door of the meditation room), she asks, "Do you want this?"

"Beyond the door  
Nothing.  
Nothing to speak  
Nothing to hear  
Nothing to hear nor taste.  
Beyond the door  
Peace  
Stillness  
Silence

All that is wanted  
and all that is not."

If your taste runs to conceits and extended metaphor, to stretched imagery or complex rhymes, you will not find it here. The contained imagery invariably points up a spiritual truth:

"Rainbow Dust  
Skirting your issues, circling your core  
leads to endless illusion.  
But 'Who am I?' is an arrow  
piercing the veil  
killing you dead.

Fears of greater and lesser disappear  
only 'What is' remains.  
Nothing to defend, or uphold,  
Rainbow dust of God everywhere."

As she takes us through poems for eros, philia, and agape, the three Greek concepts of love, perhaps the most moving poems are those for her dying mother and those for a lost love. Personally, I found myself also affected by unflinching portraits of aging.

Self-proclaimed "spiritual poetry" is hardly my favourite genre—so often there's a self-righteous, holier-than-thou scent to the stuff. But there's none of that cloying quality here. On the contrary, I enjoyed the book and read it at one sitting. The reader can readily understand how the author's honesty is a factor in her success in her chosen vocation of leading groups to the world's spiritual locations.

If you're looking for a few forthright and beautiful words of comfort and insight on virtually any aspect of life, Tanis Helliwell will almost certainly fill that need with these well fashioned little gems. Her book is, indeed, one of the nicest poetic pearls to take home from the Sunshine Coast. ▀

