Launch of "Released", a book of poems, by Lyn McCredden

3 October 2026, by Fay White

When Lyn asked if I would read and respond to her unpublished manuscript of poems, I was pleased, honoured, and grateful that she trusted me with her work. We had only met a handful of years ago.

I read it, start to finish, in one sitting. That was easy, because it moves and flows with a strong energy, straight from the heart – and sometimes straight from the shoulder – in language and imagery immediately accessible to me, and which didn't have me diving for the dictionary too often.

I knew already about the loss of Lyn's much-loved adult son Nick. I resonated fully with the cutting edges of grief in these poems, not merely "a grief observed", *(*C.S. Lewis*)* but a grief visceral, raw, embodied and authentic. And I could feel the catharsis in the telling.

Later when Lyn invited me to launch this work, I was a little surprised. Why me? I have no history of academic literary criticism, no literary qualifications beyond a very average undergraduate Arts degree with an English major. Lyn believed that because I had launched a thousand songs, (in my work as a song-writer) I could launch this "little collection".

Well, I haven't quite launched a thousand songs, but in my song-writing I have always proceeded with the thought that, if I am truthful in the particular, and because I am an ordinary human being, what I write - or sing - will generalise.

Feminist poet Adrienne Rich puts it this way in her poem "Stepping Backwards:"

> We are a small and lonely human race
> Showing no signs of mastering solitude
> Out on this lonely planet that we farm.
> The most we can do for one another
> Is let our blunders and our blind mischances
> Argue a certain brusque, abrupt, compassion. . . .
> . . .

They're luckiest who know they're not unique:
But only art or common interchange
Can teach that kindest truth. . . .
. . .
[But] all we can confess of what we are,
Has in it the defeat of isolation ----------
If not our own, then someone's anyway.

When Lyn hand-delivered a copy of this collection to my door, she murmured a moment of concern that, "hmmm, this collection has a lot of sadness in it." Yes.

But there is nothing maudlin, sentimental or depressing here. On each re-read the ostinato, the repeating rhythm that runs beneath and through it all is – Courage .

There's a word that's been used a lot lately in popular culture, maybe coming from the advertising industry and so-called "influencers", that designates someone or something to be "relatable". I don't want to use it here, but any of us who have experienced the untimely or sudden death of someone we deeply love will recognize and resonate with the struggle to comprehend the finality, the numbing disbelief, the helplessness, the ache and on-going "burden of absence". (*Song-writer Tali White)*

Here it is from Lyn:

Hide and Seek

From the thickets of the night
dark shapes flash past my window,
broken promises scuttle out of sight,
and I am looking
through frosted panes,
out behind the furthest trees,
for you.

You just might be standing there,
waiting at Woodend station,
watching out for me,
or for your girls coming home
from their adventures.

But I can't catch you.
Despair hunches among the shadows
as I gaze into the black.

Your pale face,
your ice-blue eyes
I will not forget.
But I cannot will you into being.

Always the trickster,
my naughty boy,
you do not obey me even now,
playing hide and seek
somewhere out there
as the train flashes by,
windows lit up,
faces peering out.
Can you see me framed
in a pane of light,
looking, and looking?

Uncalled-for grief can topple our whole meaning-making structures like a pack of dominoes. A different kind of death.

(This rings bells for me from a dark time in my life when I resonated with a line from Patrick White's novel *Tree of Man*. Fictional character Amy experiences one by one the loss of her hopes and dreams and the narrator observes that "All her bright certainties were gone").

After Certainty

Once, certainty and success
had gushed
from the wellsprings of promise.

Certainty had folded itself about
her choices, her vocation.
Love, likewise, arrived on time
(or perhaps a little early).
Top of the class
(she had to win),

she got the job
(earned, and ordained).
She determined to kiss
her reticent Victorian mother
whose embarrassment only fuelled
the daughter's passionate self-righteousness.

And for all this, every day,
she thanked her shadowy friend,
that Other who walked beside her,
source of assurance and self-content
and knowing.

The years affirm
until they destroy.
Her confidence
in the big choices
began to erode,
slowly, at first,
and then with awful fury.
Glittering prizes
were splintering in her hands,
the world growing colder.
After all,
who can sing praises
when gratitude
collapses, crushed
beneath the black waters
of failure and grief?

She'd had eloquent warnings:
the majestic lament
of 'Hymn to God, my God',
the bleak whimsy
of 'Because I could not stop for Death.'.

Now, an opaque, unrecognizable god
was advancing,
faceless, ferocious.

She began to comprehend
that gods come
not always in majesty,
but in the distant scream of missiles,
on tsunamis of filthy water,
with the hellish whoosh of fires,
or the low, deep groan

of lonely defeat,
as mercy dissolves.

Absolute grief devours all certainties.
The years, plump with love and promise,
were withering.
From the bonfire of fulfilment,
hot tongues, a million voices
hiss: '*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate*.'
She stands, now, thankless, knowing nothing,
a pillar of salt.

German theologian Barbara Von Wartenberg-Potter, in a search for authentic language for both prayer and poetry (which in my experience are not far apart) says, "I am on the search for courageous people who can train me in the right use of the heart, and give me Courage, (*French Courage/La Coeur, Heart)*

I do understand that there are fashions in poetry, and in music, as in every aspect of culture, and culture can be described basically as "what the people do". (John Hawkes in *Culture- the Fourth Pillar of Sustainability).* And although "what the people do" changes all the time, I believe that insights into the human condition that connect us all, insights that arise from lived experience. will never go out of fashion in communities of care.

I love the scope and structure of this collection as a whole and the keen and courageous honesty of every piece. There are beautiful nuanced descriptions of friendships, of ordinary life in its everyday mystery, of the natural world, childhood, love. And I love the direct speech and the shifts - from keen and precise objective observer to an unblinking subjective honesty that is simply - Courageous.

I'll finish with this one:

Coming Back

After my next trip,
coming back
I will not procrastinate.

I could make many excuses –
jet-lag, dietary considerations,
fear of absolute loss –
but I will write,
becoming a very she-devil of language.
I will weave a cradle
of gorgeous, intricate words
that will capture you
– your soft pale babyhood,
your wild, cartwheeling years –
and your weary returning to me,
over and over,
promising redemption.

I will believe you,
and I will keep writing,
storing up the metaphors
the stories
and the excuses,
knowing that you are
never, never, never
coming back.

So folks, here is *Released* - a title with many meanings, a "cradle of gorgeous, intricate words" from "a very she-devil of language".

Buy it, take it home, find a chair, fasten your seat-belt and prepare for a ride through real life. This is not fiction.

Thankyou Lyn. (Here we let go of that tense moment that most creators experience – the tender moment after the labour, between the birth of a work, and its launch into the world)

So . . I hereby declare that this poetry collection *Released* is now released!

Fay White

Fay White is a much-loved Castlemaine-based songwriter and singer; and an activist for indigenous rights, and for sustainability in a time of climate crisis. Her lyrics and music focus on themes of natural beauty, human responsibilities towards the natural world, and towards each other. Fay has been an encouraging and positive influence on bringing *Released* to publication.