

ELIZABETH PERKINS

GOOD, DURABLE MATERIALS

Hilarie Lindsay, *One Woman's World*. Leichhardt: Ansay, 1980. 80pp. \$5.50 softcover. Enquire 19 Beeson Street, Leichhardt 2040 for leatherbound.

Hilarie Lindsay, who grew up in Sydney, began writing seriously in 1965, since when she has twice won the Grenfell Henry Lawson Prize for prose. This collection of poems is her fourteenth publication, and among her other work are books on toy-making, a play, children's stories, cookery books and books edited by her. In 1974 Ms Lindsay received the M.B.E. for Services to Literature, so her writing activities must carry with them considerable community involvement.

The softcover edition of *One Woman's World* is a small, attractive volume, decorated with motifs of doves in flight, with typesetting and lay-out by the author. A special limited edition, numbered and signed by the author, and handbound in leather, is also available, and would make excellent gifts for older readers.

For older readers, because these verses of a mature woman are true homecraftship, made from good, durable materials and sensitive observation. Only the few that torture some inoffensive words into the vertical, when the horizontal does just as well or better, have a slight plastic appearance. Her subjects are women and their husbands and families, the things they see on the way to the office or while driving in the country, and their thoughts when alone in the house. Several, like *The Honey Man*, are like character sketches in verse, and might be even more appealing as prose pieces.

In many poems there is in the background a faint murmur of the earlier poetry of Judith Wright and Elizabeth Riddell, rather than of Emily Dickinson or Mary Gilmore, which is only to say that it is Australian and of the mid-century. The poems that please me most for originality and economy of means are *The Fat Girl's Phantom Lover* and *The Blind Man's Eyes*, the latter, about a blind man married to a dwarf, ends:

She'll press her lips
on sightless eyes and say:
'I would not have you
any other way.'
He is the tall strong lover
of her night.
She is the window to his world
his light.

She writes of women's menstruation with barely suppressed anger that many women of her generation share for the years when taboos and the discomfort of inadequate toiletries were incommensurate with sensible decency or health:

My mother gave me
a clean white rag
two pins
and a length of tape
a little flag
to hoist between my thighs.

This poem, *The Secret Spring*, is complemented by another on the same subject, *The Curse*, and although the creative, positive way of thinking about menstruation is present in both, perhaps more deliberate celebration of what Hilarie Lindsay calls "the ancient sensuous spring" is needed to balance the negative legacy.

Usually the poems in this collection are not unduly careless of the anguish of the other half of humanity, but their bias and solicitude are naturally for the female, and there is something of the polemical about some of them. A wide concern for waste and suffering is their dominant note. Technically, perhaps, the use of rhyme, intermittently, without any discernible good effect, is the most jarring element. Otherwise, these are the poems of an intelligent woman who has lived and felt, and found pleasure in words. The tendency, perhaps, is not to stop soon enough. For example, the first stanza of *Discords* is perfect in itself, saying all that the poem says, and does not need more:

When I tell my daughter
stories of the past
she curves her slender arm

into a violin
and with her fingers
plucks the empty air
and mocks me
with the mirror of her eyes.

NANCY WALLACE

Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane. *Uphill All the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1980. 335 pp. Cloth \$22.95; Paper \$10.95.

During my first history lesson in secondary school our teacher asked the class to give him a definition of 'history.' Confronted by a predictable silence the teacher stepped smartly to the blackboard and promptly wrote 'HISTORY = HIS STORY.' Beaming, smug, self-satisfied, he faced the class and read his definition aloud for further emphasis. Silence again prevailed. Not one of the female students even thought to question this historical apartheid, this culturally ethnocentric and simplistic view of history. History was, for the most part, written by white males who assumed that women, like Aborigines and other minority groups, played no role in Australian history, or, if they did, it was considered too slight an occurrence to warrant mentioning.

It wasn't until the mid 1970's that a serious challenge was mounted against this pervasive, male-orientated view of Australian history. Dissatisfied with traditional interpretations, a num-