

who were not born with any special privileges, to overcome their own disadvantages. The picture may perhaps inspire male readers rather than female, and the latter may spend some time pondering over the implications of Catherine's life.

Boolarong Publications has produced a fine, well-designed volume with a multiplicity of well-placed photographs, cartoons and informal family snapshots. *Scholars and Gentlemen* is perhaps not the title that would most accurately indicate the sweep of family and public life included in this biography, but it does represent some of the preoccupations and the lifestyle of the people who emerge warmly and humanly from its pages.

Ross Clark, *With Fires on Every Horizon*. College Writers 1. Brisbane College of Advanced Education, 1986. 48 pp. \$6.50.

This is Ross Clark's second collection, *Chameleon*, published by Queensland Community Press appearing in 1982. *With Fires on Every Horizon*, launched at the Warana Festival in 1986, was given an interested reception, partly because it captures so well some aspects of Brisbane life and evokes something of the physical and intellectual climate of the sub-tropical city. Yet it is in no way a provincial collection.

Clark's particular skill is in addressing the sensibility of those who think and reflect but who do not find thought and reflection a mere professional habit. These poems do not suggest that there is a moral or intellectual obligation on poets to evoke abstruse experiences or make deliberate metaphysical connections between different areas of living. Meditation seems to be a natural part of life, whether, as in "Searching for Angelo", it results in a quartet of poems on bike riders noted at traffic lights, or, as in "A Discarded World", in a series of lyrics occasioned by visiting a one-roomed school now converted into a museum. The last lines of "A Discarded World" show the speaker back at his "comforting desk" in a tertiary institution that teaches "the newest knowledge": "Remember, salvage nothing", says the final line. It is true enough that Clark's poems do not salvage material from past experience, but they are concerned with continuity and with learning from and making sense of the past in terms of the present. This means that he can deal with what would seem to be nostalgic themes, like the First World War, and find in them something more urgent than nostalgia. In "Letter Home from the Trenches", the soldier's voice begins "This war, I am afraid, has made writers of us all", as though for these men reflection and writing were irrelevant and useless activities. At the end of the poem, however, the voice says:

we have begun to speak to others, and to listen.
we have begun to think,
and we have begun to write,
and we have begun too late.

The effect is like a physical blow, for the statement seems not about the past but about the present.

The title, *With Fires on Every Horizon* not only accurately describes the Brisbane landscape at certain times of the year, but images Clark's concern with a political and international landscape. He is not a polemical writer, and "Pax Mundi: a poem for voices", read at the Peace celebrations preceding the Palm Sunday Peace Rally at Kelvin Grove in March 1986, is a celebration of the fact that a Year of Peace had been declared as an ideal, in spite of the violations and cynicism which rendered it a mockery for many people.

A notable trait of Clark's poetry is its concern with and accessibility for young adults, a circumstance perhaps not surprising given his work with various levels of educational centres. Nevertheless it is an achievement to write accurately and seriously about younger people, as in "Late-Night Trading", "Punk with Pram" and "Bikie Funeral"; and in "The Descent of the Dragon" and "Post-Party Blues" he draws two quite different but thoughtful conclusions from suburban experiences.

With Fires on Every Horizon retains some of the whimsy of *Chameleon*, a wryness that is natural and unforced, but there is a greater sense of ease and the writing has lost all trace of the tentativeness that sometimes was felt in the earlier poems. The strongest movement of Clark's verse at present seems to be in fluent, conversational yet shapely lines, but he does sometimes use terser rhymed lines with interesting effect. His is a distinctive voice, not concerned with shouting from rooftops or large gestures, but not easily ignored, for all its watchful reserve.

Tony Page, *They're Knocking at My Door*. Pariah Press, Melbourne, 1986. 57pp. \$9.00 (\$10.00 mail order from 101 Edgevale Rd, Kew, 3101.)

Pariah Press has several very good collections of poetry to its credit, including Joyce Lee's *Abruptly from the Flatlands* and Stephen J. Williams's *A Crowd of Voices*. Tony Page, a Melbourne poet of similar age and experience to the Brisbane poet Ross Clark whose work is reviewed above, has published here an intense but disciplined selection of poems.

It could be said that Page's poems are suffused with and toughened with politics, or it could be said that for Page politics and life are