

certainly thought-provoking: in all, *Dislocations* is a triumph for Hospital and must enhance her reputation as a writer of international standing.

Georgia Savage *The Estuary* Brisbane: Univ. of Qld Press, 1987 (Hardback) 216 pp.

*The Estuary* is a lively and entertaining portrait of Vinnie Beaumont, her suffering and survival. She does a *lot* of suffering, necessitating a lot of survival, but it all turns out well enough. On the way to a happy ending she has quite a few adventures and learns all about people and love.

Vinnie is a fully-rounded and convincing character. She narrates the story, and the combination of her thoughts and actions is a happy one. By the time the first few chapters have passed we feel that we know her, that she has a reality beyond the novel, and our sympathies are fully engaged.

Vinnie's goal is to come to terms with love and suffering and the all-too-frequent connection between the two. There are many relationships in the novel, and they are all flawed by too much or too little giving. Georgia Savage guides Vinnie through these relationships as both observer and participant until she finally strikes the balance needed for contentment.

Vinnie's childhood sets the pattern for her later mistakes. Her mother's rejection precipitates her into an almost idolatrous and extremely dependent relationship with Brook: his death leaves her without supports and with nothing at all to offer their daughter, who desperately needs her. So history begins to repeat itself: Clare, rejected by Vinnie, withdraws entirely and falls an easy victim to the predatory Pandora Hunt.

Savage leaves us in no doubt that submerging one's identity in another is a Bad Thing. Vinnie does herself and Clare harm by depending so much on Brook. Pandora Hunt smothers her husband, and when he leaves is reduced to "stealing" Clare to replace "the [baby] who got away to Ireland". Faith is drained by Victor and influenced to such an extent that she has no perception of right and wrong and no loyalty to anyone else.

The lesbian-feminist taxi-driver Marcia animadverts upon the same theme many times, but Savage does not espouse her more radical view. She is sympathetic to the need which prompts women to submerge themselves in others, and advocates a peaceful and moderate reconciliation within relationships rather than a definite and perhaps unsatisfying independence. Savage also acknowledges that it is not only women who

suffer within relationships. Vinnie's father is not an exemplary character, but he has certainly suffered from his wife's inability to love and give at the same time.

Vinnie realises the danger of loving too much, and settles for a relatively meaningless relationship with Duffield. Its ending causes her no pain, but its positive benefits have been very few. Such relationships are clearly inadequate, and do very little in any case to protect one from vulnerability. Vinnie is still able to fall in love with the debonair and unreliable Jan Tadic, and not having the courage to act on her feelings also hurts her.

Fortunately the novel ends in a satisfactory manner, with Vinnie able to give Clare just the right kind of love, and Clare able to receive it. We know that Clare will not make Vinnie's mistakes when she refuses to give up her own career to satisfy the scruples of the man she loves. All the lessons about loving and giving have been learnt, and the sins of the fathers — or mothers — very definitely stop at Clare. To crown Vinnie's happiness, her former unacknowledged love, Beauregard, returns to her, and presumably they all live happily ever after.

It's a nice ending to a thoroughly entertaining book. Certainly it has its faults: some of Vinnie's early sufferings and some of her insights are a little glib. Some of the characters are stereotypic, and there are *too* many relentlessly colourful characters. It is improbable that one could reach Vinnie's age at the end of the novel without having met a single ordinary or even remotely sane character. The names, too, are unlikely in such a predominantly Anglo-Saxon country as Australia, and they have that jarring, ineptly-made-up ring to them.

But these are mere quibbles. *The Estuary* is a good read, and not just a light one. It has a lot to say, and does it in a very palatable way.