

## ROSS SMITH

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It is a pleasure to welcome this second number of *Poetry Monash*. Most of the poems are enjoyable, and attractively intelligible. They convey a wide variety of subject and mood, in a matching variety of successfully handled verse forms.

A number of the poems are concerned with the agony or the ecstasy of human life. They celebrate the splendour and the wonder of the world, or they lament the loss of these. Margaret Kilpatrick's poem catches the triumphant joy of experiences along the beach. Isobel Robin's "Easter Morning, Delphi" celebrates the ageless process of renewal, regeneration, resurrection, whether pagan or christian. Barbara Giles's poem "Praise Be" does just that. On the other hand, Bruce Lundgren's punning title "New Moon" heads a poem which laments the passing of romance for dull scientific fact. Graeme Oliver's poem "Nameless One" laments the failure of a female pup to survive its birth.

Some of Barbara Giles's poems express a more personal, human lament. "My Son, My Son" laments the ageless anguish of the slaughter of the innocents. "Lines in Respect of Mourning," too, is a poignant expression of compassion for another's loss, yet at the same time an earnest plea that one's own child may be spared. The stark simplicity of these poems is very moving.

Yet Barbara Giles is capable of that rarer quality than rejoicing or lament. I mean the quality of humour. "Matinale" insists that woman must be for ever wooed and won anew, with no ready surrender to male self-complacency. "No for an Answer" is a similar mockery of male impotency. "Apparition" admits what a woman wants, and does not want, to see in her mirror. "O Oedipus? O Mores" satirically debunks much Freudian sexual dogma. And there is the old but still witty pun on "husbandry" that climaxes "Miscarriage."

She has her own comments, too, on the values of education. The false one of worldly achievement but inner emptiness is the subject of "Dans le Jardin de mon Pere." The little poem about the kingdom of Lo presents the contrary view that education is not a mere acquisition in our acquisitive society, but a growing in joy. These poems are complemented by the earlier ones, by other poets, expressing disillusionment with the teaching of university English.

Another achievement of the poets in this small collection is a lively sense of form. They move from fashionable free form to a variety of stan-

zaic and other forms, including Philip Martin's rhymeless sonnet and Barbara Giles's couplets.

A related achievement is the sense of balance, structure, design. Poems move, with seemingly natural ease, towards a satisfying finish. Their formal neatness is part of the pleasure they provide.

This standard of writing should assure *Poetry Monash* a continuing and enthusiastic readership. The biographical notes are welcome, too. So is the simple but generous layout, and the uncluttered but informative cover.

