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The Border Issue: Poetry in Queensland – 1980. Eds Peter Burton et al. Bardon, Qld: Border Image Press, 1980. 69 pp. Paper \$2.50 plus 55c post and packing.

As one might expect in a collection of poems by different authors there is little organisation of concerns or consistency of theme, but *The Border Issue* does have variety of style, subject matter and genre.

The anthology of previously unpublished poems by Queensland poets is fairly representative of the State's most published writers. The genre of lyric, sonnet, elegy, narrative and ode are represented and there are some interesting freer forms, such as the unrhymed sonnet, "The Aged Poet Opens a Window", by John Blight. Also more experimental are the poems in parts by Cornelis Vleeskens and Thomas Shapcott.

It is always refreshing to read modern poetry that is not all bleak and depressing. *The Border Issue* includes light satire, like the tongue-in-cheek poems, "Do Not Feed the Daleks" by Andrew Legget and "Me and My Caramello" by Paul Milo. Light treatment of a subject that could have been exploited solely for its sordid aspect occurs in David Wood's "Old Mrs Kopp", a poem about an eccentric old woman. Mrs Kopp is sensitively characterised much as Dobell characterises in paint. Wood employs sounds as Dobell employs brushstrokes, to suggest rather than state outright:

A girl
she ran her white carved hands
through the suns of hair that
whispered the falling shadows:
a garden and orchard
enclosing the hewn house timber,
her body swelling seven times with the
yeast of children. . . .

Nearly a hundred years.
and still her heart is strong
though she runs her knotted hands
through the tufts of hair
like frosted straw
in a bitter winter's season. . . .

A similar sensitivity is found in a reflective lyric, "The Boy", by Sylvana Gardner, although this time the sketch is a portrayal of the poet's inner feeling with which it is easy to identify:

The boy in me leapt up from childhood years
to silently reproach this comrade of the soil,
wept for not being recognized, grew smaller
and smaller somewhere in the wilds.

Many of the poets represented here have a fine sense of sound, and one illustration of form and texture of verse augmenting subject matter is Thomas Shapcott's "Sub Tropical". With densely-packed word upon word description, Shapcott conveys the dense luxuriance of the sub-tropical rain-forest:

Rainforest remnants, sapling trunks fifteen feet
before they scramble into canopy. Lorikeets,
spiders, the skinks, yesterday a fat land-mullet
across the track. Squint of beach below.
The kids step out with inflatable surfmats,
skins salt as gold-brown quartz, limbs smooth
like any sanded pebble. They are littoral dwellers.

Most of the poetry in this collection is what one might call good reading, with little of the over-cerebral or prosaic. At first reading Cornelis Vleeskens' "Toward the Discovery of New Holland" might seem to resemble a line from its fifth part, "only words and disjointed images grubbed out", but closer attention shows that the interest of the poem lies in the way the parts are connected. Such poems are not for reading aloud, although many others in the collection are ideal for that kind of enjoyment. Barbara Sugden's "Immortality", for instance, would make beautiful listening.

One criticism I have is about the indexing which is by poet, not by poem. Both forms of indexing are only a courtesy to the reader and prevent many a frustrating search for a haunting line when the reader has an imperfect memory and has just made acquaintance with the collection. But for anyone interested in the reading of poetry, this book, at its comparatively low cost, is worth buying.

