

They Called Me Te Maari. By Florence Harsant. Whitcoulls, Christchurch, 1979. 188pp. N.Z. price \$9.95.

THIS IS no ordinary memoir. 'Te Maari' is the young Florence Woodhead who in 1913 and 1914 undertook an arduous series of journeys in the less developed regions of the North Island (Northland, the East Coast, and the Wanganui River) as itinerant Women's Christian Temperance Union organizer among Maori women. The daily journal entries of that time comprise the bulk of the book, but some interspersed amplification (clearly separated from the diary material) is provided by the edited transcripts of recent interviews with the now octogenarian author.

Aside from its appeal as the unadorned reminiscences of an intrepid but remarkably unheroic young crusader, the book's value for the historian lies in the access it provides to the nature of rural Maori life at this time. We can be grateful for the author's consistent personal and professional interest in the living styles and social conditions of the Maori communities she visited. An interesting section records her observations of the smallpox epidemic she stumbled into and experienced at close quarters in Northland in 1913. Elsewhere, not confining herself to the aspects of Maori life (rites of passage, festivities, and so on) conventionally thought worthy of note, she again and again describes in an incidental but often detailed way the routine and ordinary modes of housing, dress, diet and health. No starry-eyed idealist—squalor and contentiousness are part of the Maori scene she describes—she nevertheless infuses into her narrative a resilient sympathy for the 'warm and fascinating community' she works with.

Te Maari's task was to establish and encourage local women's temperance groups. That a mission so Pakeha in conception could be linked so successfully with the interests and aspirations of rural Maori women (for a good response was often met with) clearly owed a good deal to the way the relationship was established. Florence Woodhead's fluency in the Maori language (she had been brought up in a Ngati Tuwharetoa village where her parents were Native school teachers), her unpatronizing and generous approach, and her introduction into each community by Maori intermediaries, were just as important as what appears to be the inherent appeal of her message in the circumstances of the time.

RAEBURN LANGE

University of Otago

The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne. By Graeme Davison. Melbourne University Press, 1978. xiii, 304pp. Aust. price: \$18.80.

SINCE the early sixties urban historians have been pointing out that the reality of the past for most Australians was urban, and suburban, rather than rural. Graeme Davison's book *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* is the most impressive study so far to have emerged from this attempt by Australians to rediscover their urban roots.

The period Davison is concerned with is the decade of the eighties—with some forward glances into the nineties—when Melbourne earned the soubriquet

'Marvellous Melbourne'. The methodology is more akin to that of the English urban historians, Briggs, Dyos, and others, than that of the 'new' urban historians of America. This may be partly personal inclination; it is certainly in part dictated by the nature of the evidence available to him—a fact that will also shape the work of New Zealand urban historians in the future. Davison is very much aware of the neo-Marxist urban studies currently appearing in Great Britain but sees their analyses as inappropriate to Melbourne. Life in the colonial city cannot be explained in terms of class conflict or the struggle to impose a bourgeois hegemony. The conflicts were of a different sort; the aspiration to property ownership and respectable behaviour were not 'so much propagated as self-sown' (p.132).

The eighties have always been seen as a period of great development and expansion in Melbourne. Melburnians adopted the title 'Marvellous Melbourne', conferred on their city by the journalist George Augustus Sala in 1885, with great enthusiasm. It summed up their own feelings about the place. Melbourne was prosperous, rewarding, and exciting. They may not however have fully understood what was going on and they certainly did not anticipate what was to happen to them in the early nineties. Davison explains the boom of the eighties in terms of Melbourne's emergence as a 'fully fledged metropolis', dominating its hinterland and operating as the financial and commercial centre of a wide region. In his words, Melbourne was in the process of change from a 'walking and talking' city to a 'rail and mail' city. He does not however see the city as blindly responding to economic and demographic forces. People could, and did, shape these forces to their own ends; they could and did, at least for a few years, mould Melbourne in the image they wanted.

Davison has solved the problem of imposing order on the city by dividing his book into two parts. The first part is an analysis of the sectional interests of the city. In this he describes the structure, organization and operation of commerce, the construction industry, manufacturing, the professions and the civil service. He then shifts his attention to the private life of Melburnians through a study of suburban expansion and suburban life styles. Structurally this makes sense. It ignores certain aspects of urban life, such as government and politics, but it expresses very well the interaction and separation between workplace and home and gives scope for discussions of patterns of occupation, home ownership, transport, leisure activities and so on.

Each of the economic and occupational sectors Davison discusses was undergoing change which he explains in terms of the changing city. A metropolis demanded different forms of organization, different institutions from a small city. The old mercantile élite, men who had migrated to Victoria in the gold rush days and grown into a comfortable prosperity in the sixties and seventies, were being pushed aside, or forced to alter their methods, as manufacturers' agents entered their field. The generation of pioneer industrialists who worked on the shop floor with their employees was giving way to impersonal factory organization and large scale operations. The old, established builders and their skilled tradesmen were being inundated by 'spec' builders and unskilled workers. The typewriter, women clerks and typists, and the need for greater efficiency were threatening the easy informality of the male office. In Davison's view the conflicts that developed in Melbourne were contained within each sector. It could be argued that his approach imposes this analysis on him for it makes it difficult to discern relationships across the sectors. It is possible that the changes in organiza-

tion produced an identity of interest that over-rode the sectional interest. As Davison points out the large scale of operations and their growing complexity meant a change in social relations and a narrowing of opportunities for social mobility. It was no longer so easy for the young clerk or talented mechanic without contacts or capital to rise in the social scale. They may have felt similar discontents.

It is Davison's argument that any such discontent in Melbourne in the eighties was diffused by the suburbs. They acted as a safety-valve, offering a stake in prosperity, a high level of material comfort, the advantages of being close to the city yet away from urban congestion and pollution. In the eighties suburban building went on at a great pace. Tramways and railways pushed the city to its outer limits. Melbourne had one of the highest home ownership rates in the world. This suburban expansion was related to economic development, to emotional longings (suburbanism was 'the soul's defence against the metropolis', p.137) but also to the demographic structure of Melbourne. The sons and daughters of the gold rush founders of Victoria were coming of age, coming of marriageable age. They had thoroughly imbibed the ideals of a property-owning democracy and wanted property and homes of their own. They provided the dynamic for suburban growth.

Part I of Davison's study focuses, for the most part, on the men of Melbourne. Women worked in industry, mostly as its victims, in sweated piece work; they were invading the offices. However their real place is in Part II—the suburbs. Father and son belong to the public world; mother and daughter to the private world of home and garden. The suburban life of the housewife is sympathetically, if too fleetingly, discussed.

In the early 1890s Melbourne fell from its great height. The property boom was over, the firms allied to construction that had risen so high in the eighties, fell the hardest. Marriage rates declined, the bankruptcy rate increased, people left the city. The social evils of the old world cities were uncovered or revealed themselves. Unemployment, slum housing, poverty provided the Victorian pamphleteers with details as lurid as one could find anywhere in London or New York. Marvellous Melbourne was facing its nemesis. The subsequent reaction against urban life is a partial explanation of the popular legend of the Australian out-back as the real heart of Australian development.

There can be few Ph.Ds which have been turned into books as readable as this one. Davison handles the vignette with ease and point—the Exhibition of 1880 is an extremely effective setting for the entire decade. He writes well, the diagrams and photographs complement the text, and the design and layout of the book make it a splendid presentation.

RAEWYN DALZIEL

University of Auckland

Class, Race and Colonialism in West Malaysia. By Michael Stenson. University of Queensland Press, 1980. xii, 234 pp. Aust. price \$15.95.

MICHAEL STENSON won a Commonwealth Scholarship to the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, in 1965. During the tenure of his scholarship he not only