

economic field. The arguments for control versus freedom, the concern for international justice, may well have coloured authoritative works upon which so many of us are tempted to depend. Whether those insecure generalities are also put to sinister use by advocates of economic reform is another matter; and Professor Platt is wise enough to let his doubts do their own work, without any unhistorical declarations of his own.

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*Historical Anthropology of the Family.* By Martine Segalen. Translated by J.C. Whitehouse and Sarah Matthews. Cambridge University Press, 1986. x, 328pp. NZ price: \$112.95.

THIS IS a book worth knowing about, whatever one's field — partly because it makes available, in an excellent translation, the methods and interests of a continental academic stable, but chiefly because it combines with the techniques of a sociologist both the perceptions of anthropology and the raw material of history.

One has customary misgivings: in spite of her avowal that 'now is not the time for a general theory', there are many instances where the isolated particularity of the evidence inspires only partial confidence in the author's conclusions; and inevitably much of her 'raw material' is lifted from other secondary works, where its argumentative purpose may have sifted out already its less predictable implications.

But the general logic of the book is stimulating and informative, allowing as it does a movement on the part of the reader from a consideration of kinship generally, through the dynamics of the parent-children group, to an examination of the family's relationship to and impact upon the economics and power structures of a wider society; all presented with constant attention to historical change.

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*Auckland Girls' Grammar School: The First Hundred Years, 1888–1988.* By Heather Northey with J.A. and M. Asher. AGS Old Girls' Association, Auckland, 1988. 286pp. NZ price: \$19.50.

HISTORIES PRODUCED to mark school centenaries are notoriously prone to a celebratory Prize Day version of the past. They are generally designed to publicize and promote the school in question, and to inspire the pupils of the present to follow in the footsteps of their successful and illustrious forebears. Such works, like school magazines, are potentially useful sources that express the official ideology, the rationalizations and self-image, even the doubts and contradictions, of the institution. They give comfort to past pupils who can organize themselves in the unfolding pageant. At the same time, they reinforce a notion of a distinctive school 'tradition' that usually legitimizes existing structures and ideals. The historical value of the enterprise, on the other hand, is strictly limited by the conflicting pressures which are at work to sanitize the past and to make it suitable for celebration. One might have hoped that a history of Auckland Girls' Grammar School, a school that has so often resisted the stereotypes imposed upon it, could have avoided this tendency. It is therefore something of a disappointment that Heather Northey's centenary history of AGGS makes no attempt to do so.