

from the 1960s. Her writing was direct and unadorned, exhibiting none of the circumlocution and 'high diction' common to her contemporaries. Tolerton could have made more of these factors, for it seems to me that Ettie's life signifies a moment when two competing discourses about the body intersected — the idealized chalice or vessel of the spirit envisioned by the social purists, and the medicalized, biological conception of the scientists. Perhaps it was because the New Zealand medical profession was slower than its counterparts elsewhere to propound the strictly medical view of venereal disease that Ettie was so unequivocally designated an outcast. By 1918, Australia's doctors in nearly all the states had brought about legislation redefining venereal diseases as a medical rather than a moral problem, and views like Ettie's were no longer controversial.

Ettie did make some compromises in order to achieve her ends. She had no children of her own but she espoused the current ideal of maternal citizenship and constructed an image of herself as the social mother. She also found it necessary to be married to have credibility as an exponent of ideas about love, sex and child-bearing. Tolerton here confesses some frustration in reconstituting Ettie's life and laments the biographer's difficulty with a subject who leaves no record of motives and feelings. She suggests, however, that Ettie's life was primarily a public one and that she may even have deliberately constructed it that way. It would be interesting to pursue this insight further and look at differences in the ways men and women construct their world views. For women, unlike men, perhaps there is no fundamental dichotomy between the public and the private, the personal and the political. The causes Ettie chose, the relationships she built with soldiers and with her husband were nurturing and maternal ones, and none of the conventional political categories satisfactorily describes her ideas. But these are matters more appropriately taken up in academic journals or seminars for one of the great merits of Tolerton's book is that it is accessible to a wide reading public and, while she alludes to some methodological and conceptual difficulties, she does not interrupt the flow of a compelling narrative.

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Women in History 2. Edited by Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992. 322pp. NZ Price: \$34.95.

FOR THE SECOND TIME Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant have brought together a rich variety of writers and subjects offering valuable, sometimes remarkable, insights into the past experiences of New Zealand women. Clearly the fast-developing fields of feminist theory and the exciting wealth of women's history appearing worldwide have energized New Zealand historians in constructive ways. There is in the pieces clear acknowledgment of intellectual debts to scholars outside the country. At the same time these writers are alert to the specificities of New Zealand women's particular historical situations, and above all remain sensitive to the unexpected in the texts, oral or written, with which they deal. What perhaps draws the various studies together is their authors' display of the multiple ways in which New Zealand women have confronted cultural expectations of proper femininity, of appropriate female behaviour, with compliance or resistance, sometimes with denial and now and then, tragically.

The collection commences with a superb chapter by Judith Binney, in which she reflects on current accepted notions in anthropological and sociological literature concerning the social status of Maori women. Judith Binney is a good listener. Here she deftly and sensitively records the self-representation of a group of Maori women, from Ringatu communities on the East Coast and Bay of Plenty. The Maori narratives challenged orthodoxies about women's access to leadership, to the sacred and to higher knowledges once assumed the province of men. She demonstrates that the Maori narratives must throw 'serious doubts about the orthodoxies on gender currently purveyed about traditional, colonial and even modern Maori society'. If rank and gender intersected for these kin groups in such subtle and complex ways, then we should be cautious about assuming knowledge claims for the breadth of Maori historical experience.

A similar contestation of scholarly orthodoxies surfaced, surprisingly, in a chapter on women and mental illness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The writer, Barbara Brookes, concerns herself first and foremost with the pragmatic choices women made in distressing life situations when they sought to commit a relative to the Seacliff Asylum, or even at times when they sought entry to the institution themselves. Women were fewer in number in mental hospitals in New Zealand, and were more often discharged as cured. But then some deliberately entered for a period of rest when they were exhausted beyond coping: there was no drug regimen. Many women were thankful for the asylum when they wished to be free of violent, drunken or syphilitic husbands. The notion that men chiefly used asylums to put away inconvenient spouses she refutes in this instance. The study has a vital originality, arising from Brookes's careful and nuanced reading of her sources.

Several of the historians in the collection were concerned with the problematic of the controls that charitable ladies or 'the helping professions' exerted on the girls and women brought within their orbit, and the strategies of these clients for negotiating the boundaries of expected behaviour. Margaret Tennant's excellent work on women and charities in the nineteenth century is here usefully explored, as she shows change over time in the structures of ideas shaping public or private policies on prostitutes and homeless women, and on the circumstances of the women pressured into such care. Just one such institution, the Te Oranga Reformatory for delinquent girls in the early twentieth century, serves in the hands of Bronwyn Dalley as a striking case study of the obtuseness, even cruelty, which female custodians could measure out in their efforts to transform their by no means willing pupils into the mould of dutiful servants or wives. Anne Else's poignant study of the pressures experienced by pregnant single women to relinquish babies for adoption by strangers, under the auspices of the Motherhood of Man Movement, brings these stories close to our time. One is left reflecting on how such harsh ideas become hegemonic, and where individuals find a code for resisting them.

With so wide a range of subjects, it is difficult to do justice to all the writers' efforts. Just as challenging and innovatory are another group of pieces which look at aspects of women's labour, waged and unwaged. Again there is this familiarity with western scholarship in women's history, and this impressive attention to the particular and the unexpected whether the subject is colonial women's experiences in the sewing trades; the urban housewife in the period when the application of technology to domestic work supposedly transformed housework; or the responses of Waikato farmers' wives to their lot in the 1950s, and the responses of women pressed into work in essential services during World War II. The focus here is on social history, the history of working-class women, rural women, 'ordinary' women. One further chapter, a meticulously researched piece by Dorothy Page, explores the lives of the earliest women graduates from Otago University through their tertiary studies, and for the most part into one of those 'helping professions', that of teaching.

Two of the editors, Barbara Brookes and Margaret Tennant, attempt to construct an overview of the lives of Maori and Pakeha women in New Zealand history. There has not been a bold attempt to construct a model of New Zealand women's identity, such as Anne Summers and Miriam Dixon did for Australian women in the 1970s, and perhaps in a post-modern age, with its distrust of meta-narratives, no congenial climate any longer exists for the development of one. However, the fragments of women's lives that these writers offer in their short studies invite some synthesis, which some courageous scholar may attempt at a later date. Meanwhile this collection reveals women's history in New Zealand to be already established on a firm footing. The editors are to be congratulated on their initiative.

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Woman Suffrage in Australia. A Gift or a Struggle? By Audrey Oldfield. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992. 263pp. Aust. price: \$29.95.

THE MAJOR PROBLEM in writing a history of women's suffrage in Australia, and presumably the reason why no-one has attempted it before Audrey Oldfield, is that you have to deal with not one but several campaigns. The struggle, for Oldfield presents it as a struggle, went on first in six colonies, subsequently in four states, at the conventions on federation and, in a limited way, in the federal Parliament. And yet because the Australian colonies became Australia, there is a feeling that somehow the story must have a unity, must be of a piece.

Oldfield has dealt with this difficulty by dividing her book into two parts. Part I covers the individual campaigns; Part II attempts to answer some general questions relating to the politics of suffragism, the social composition of the suffrage movements, the arguments and issues involved and the aftermath of suffrage at home and abroad.

W.P. Reeves' dismissive account of Australasian women's role in gaining the vote cast a long shadow over the historiography of the women's suffrage. In 1972 Patricia Grimshaw's book, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, exploded the myth Reeves had purveyed as far as this country was concerned. It has become increasingly clear, through biographical studies, articles and theses, that Reeves was just as wrong for Australia. Australian women's enfranchisement was no gift; it was a matter of argument, contest and campaign. Each area had its own struggle and in each area remarkable women emerged to formulate the claim and direct the campaign. Oldfield's book presents the first complete picture of this struggle.

South Australia was, in 1894, the first Australian colony to give women the vote and to enable them to stand for election to Parliament (incidentally it was the last state to elect a woman to its legislature). Victoria, which had unwittingly enfranchised women ratepayers in 1863 and disenfranchised them two years later, was the last to fall into line in 1908. As in New Zealand, the Women's Christian Temperance Union was a major player in all the colonies, except New South Wales. The WCTU was joined by what Oldfield describes as 'open' societies, usually run by elite women, which, as the campaigns stretched on, increasingly took over the work. Politics played a significant role everywhere but political forces were not the same. In South Australia the 'confluence' of Liberal and Labor forces after the general election of 1894 was a factor in the victory. The