

sided. Again Dorothy Page's introduction compensates for much that is omitted from the essays though she might have made more use of the content of Parliamentary and newspaper debates. I felt that only in the study of Kate Sheppard by Tessa Malcolm and the two portraits of writers Jessie Mackay and Edith Searle Grossman, both by Heather Roberts, were the ideas of the subjects given real primacy. In part this is an unavoidable problem of the format of the parent *Dictionary*; the limited size of the entries in many cases precludes much beyond a recital of events and activities.

Perhaps also after a century women's right to political and social equality seems so self-evident that it hardly needs much depth of explanation. But it wrongs both those who supported and those who opposed women's suffrage to underestimate the complexities involved. The belief that men and women have different and separate spheres of activity has been fundamental to most societies throughout recorded history; not everyone who questioned the wisdom of changing the apparent order of nature was a blind reactionary. As historians we need not endorse such views but we should not unthinkingly censor them out.

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The European Peopling Of Australasia. A Demographic History 1788-1988. By W. D. Borrie. Demography Program, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1994. xviii + 403 pp. Australian price: \$24.50.

W. D. BORRIE is undoubtedly a scholar of high distinction. Born in South Canterbury and educated at the University of Otago, Professor Borrie founded the Department of Demography at The Australian National University in 1952. His trans-Tasman connections provide the impetus for this demographic history of Australia and New Zealand, a study which not only emphasizes the close parallels between the two societies but highlights the ripe grounds for historical comparison which exist between them.

The scope and purpose of this book are made very clear at the outset: the author insists that this 'is not a *social* history; it is not an *economic* history; it is a *demographic* history, so that its primary concern is with the factors and nature of population growth, mortality, fertility and migration'. Borrie's pugnacious staking of the boundaries of his book will undoubtedly induce a sense of unease among the generations of historians trained under Lucien Febvre's clarion call: 'It is a nightmare, madness, wilful mutilation! Down with all barriers and labels! At the frontier, astride the frontiers, with one foot on each side, that is where the historian has to work, freely, usefully'. For those so inclined, the author's distinction is an artificial one, and demographic patterns and behaviours cannot be explained and analysed in historical terms without reference to the wider economic, social and intellectual conditions which shape human activities.

The greater part of this book is a chronological account of the post-1788 peopling of Australasia. These chapters contain a wealth of statistical data on the population history of Australia and New Zealand, much of it very well presented in graphic form and tables. The accessibility of the data makes this an invaluable reference book and teaching resource. Other chapters examine the convergence of demographic phenomena which produced what Borrie terms 'the evolution of the unique human being', and the demographic prospects of Australia and New Zealand. However, perhaps the most

stimulating section of the book is Borrie's exploration of population thought and theory in the two societies in the period 1900-1945. He writes in considerable depth and with rich contemporary references about the concerns of government officials, especially in Australia, at the level of the national population, and catalogues the numerous attempts of geographers, economists and other 'experts' to define the optimum level of Australia's population. In this chapter Borrie highlights a rich discourse which certainly deserves renewed interest from social historians.

Despite its strengths, a number of reservations must be expressed about this book. First, the secondary sources upon which Borrie draws are, in many parts of the book, quite dated, and important new scholarship is overlooked. To cite one example, Borrie describes Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore* (1987) as the most recent major study of convict society in New South Wales, the bibliography suggesting a lack of familiarity with the more recent scholarship of Steven Nicholas et al, or David Neal. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case, and similar deficiencies affect those chapters which deal with New Zealand.

Second, Borrie's handling of the concept of ethnicity leaves much to be desired. He writes (p.243): 'In terms of ethnicity, the situation at the time of the census . . . was that about eight out of ten of the population were Australian-born, one in every ten was born in the British Isles, and that most of the rest were foreign-born Europeans'. While the meaning of ethnicity is itself the subject of much scholarly debate, the simple equation of place of birth and ethnicity is an outmoded one. So, too, the author's question 'Is a "naturalised Australian" an "ethnic" or an "Australian"' (p.275) demonstrates an important confusion of different concepts and ideas. It is noteworthy in this regard that, in a study containing such voluminous detail, the results of the self-evaluating question on ethnicity in the 1986 Australian census are not included.

The European Peopling of Australasia is a book which some readers will find dated in its belief in the possibility of demarcation between demographic history and social and economic history. However, it is nevertheless a valuable book, rich in detail, which emphasizes a vital dimension of the interrelationship between Australia and New Zealand and highlights the tremendous opportunities for studies adopting a trans-Tasman perspective.

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A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand. By Charlotte Macdonald. Allen & Unwin and the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1990, 283 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-04-658258-4.

UNTIL RECENTLY, as Charlotte Macdonald says in her introduction, the field of women's history has been a 'largely uncharted one in New Zealand'. Her project is to use as a starting point for mapping the history of Pakeha women an analysis of the group of immigrants poorer and more vulnerable than any other: the single women. Her focus is on women recruited to the provinces of Otago and Canterbury during the 1850s and 1860s when immigration was a matter for provincial governments. Of the 12,000 single women who arrived in New Zealand during these decades, most landed in the southern colonies: