

REVIEWS

It also has to be said that structural clarity comes at the cost of stylistic elegance. *Social History* is not a graceful book. Fairburn is wedded to the counting approach to prose: thus we have five categories, seven standard problems, four rejoinders, a further threefold problem, five modes of inquiry — all before we have reached the end of the first chapter. There is too much labouring of explanation. In one memorable section we are treated to a discussion of the instability of social categories which deteriorates into a list of haddock-frying: 'The people who fried less than half a pound of haddock, could be split up into any number of subsets — by the amount of time it took them to fry the haddock, by the amount of salt and pepper they poured on the haddock . . . whether their fathers ate fried haddock — need I gone on? [sic]'. Indeed, no.

In short, it is difficult to work out the readership for this book. I am not convinced that it will be other than selectively useful for advanced students in history. Less-advanced students will be put off by the language: 'hypothetico-deductive', 'idiographic'. Those who wanted a guide to the concerns, approaches and history of social history will find instead a logic primer. Actual practitioners, if this reviewer is any indication, will be somewhat bemused. Will Catherine Hall really benefit from Miles Fairburn's criticism that she fails to recognize cultural complexity, given that she is one of the few historians to successfully negotiate the complex interactions of gender, class and race?

BARRY REAY

The University of Auckland

The Gendered Kiwi. Edited by Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1999. 256 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-219-7.

IN THE INTRODUCTION to *The Gendered Kiwi*, Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie note that it has been more common for historians to recognize women's experiences as 'gendered', rather than men's: in the historiography of the last 30 years 'the gendering of men remained largely implicit'. This excellent collection of essays by ten of New Zealand's best historians should certainly change this. Although the studies concern women's experiences as well as men's and the ways in which femininity and masculinity define each other, the most vivid contributions are, I think, those that examine the re-working of masculinity, in public and private, at work, at home, in recreation and on the playing field.

Some of the essays offer general discussions of the gendered assumptions of particular historiographical fields and the new directions of scholarship: Charlotte Macdonald takes issue with the demographic determinism that interprets women's status or lack of it in New Zealand as an outcome of their smaller numbers relative to men. By demonstrating the variability of population ratios across time and region and the specificity of generations, she asks us to reconsider the issue of historical agency: 'If gender analysis means an understanding of the social organisation of sexual difference, then numbers alone are not enough'. She also points out that demography-based arguments rarely take into account the changing population ratios of Maori and Pakeha and their changing interactions. Erik Olssen takes a different perspective on population dynamics and family formation in the colonial period and concludes 'it is much clearer now than it was twenty years ago that the idea of family was central not merely to the rhetorical invention of New Zealand as a New World society but also to socio-cultural practice'.

The fragility and dangers of family life were, on the other hand, graphically demonstrated in nineteenth-century courtrooms, where the 'dramas of private life' were played out on 'a public stage'. In 'Criminal Conversations: Infanticide, Gender and

Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', Bronwyn Dalley traces the power of certain cultural narratives in making sense of criminal acts such as infanticide and the ways in which 'individualised stories of good and bad characters, male and female' served as cautionary tales. Discourse analysis combines with social history in this exemplary study. The vulnerability of women and children is emphasized and the desperate measures taken by mothers unsupported by 'family'.

In 'Bread Queues and Breadwinners: Gender in the 1930s', Tim Frank charts tensions around men's failures at breadwinning and women's incursions into the labour market, concluding that, following the Depression, 'New Zealand society loosened its grip on the belief that it was unnecessary for women to enter paid employment'. In 'Sweethearts, Soldiers, Happy Families', Deborah Montgomerie looks at the impact of Second World War mobilizations on men and women and the dynamics involved in the 'maintenance of the gender order'. She emphasizes the importance of attending to 'the emotional history of the period': 'gender continuity' served 'the emotional and social needs of individual New Zealanders'. Montgomerie thus points to new directions for gender history: 'Writing the private and psychological dimensions of experience into our social histories of gender is not easy, but it is necessary if we are to understand the elasticity and persistence of gender asymmetry'.

The last two chapters, by Barbara Brookes and Jock Phillips, examine experiences in the 1970s, both concluding that, to some extent, that decade saw a new convergence in men's and women's 'roles' (to use 1970s terminology). Both in patterns of leisure and cohabiting, men and women came together in new ways, sharing recreation and home life in conscious efforts to open up more equitable ways of living. While women sought new 'masculine' freedoms, some men (probably a small minority) fashioned a more feminine appearance and closer personal relationships with children and partners, though there were clear limits to such 'self-abnegation'.

A number of the best essays in this collection focus on the different ways in which masculinity encodes power: through physically active bodies, smart business suits, the control of technology and machines or in relation to the subordination of wives and secretaries. The studies by Frazer Andrewes, Danielle Sprecher and Caroline Daley are especially illuminating in this regard. Together many of the essays engage (inadvertently as it were) in an interesting and unresolved debate about the power-relations of looking and being looked at. Sometimes the gaze is construed as domination, as when men look at women and 'commodify' them in advertisements; at other times, though, when women are doing the looking (as in Auckland's Domain gardens and grounds) they are said to be 'relegated' to a 'a spectator role'. The essays by Danielle Sprecher and Frazer Andrewes demonstrate clearly that having an appropriate 'appearance' was necessary for the business man, as well as the business woman. Spectacular masculinity in the public sporting arena needed an audience for its resonance, but did women also gain power through becoming the generic spectacles of modernity?

The gendered meanings of the bronze sculpture of the naked male athlete at the entrance to Auckland's Domain and the vocal criticisms it provoked are complex. Groups of schoolboys sniggered and laughed at the sexual object, yet was not the statue an ideal representation of men's physical mastery and masculine power? Or did the display of the statue's penis paradoxically emasculate the man? The essay by Caroline on 'A Gendered Domain: Leisure in Auckland 1890-1940' opens up a stimulating discussion of these new historical questions about gender, representation and power. Whether the collection of which it is part will contribute to the 'hanging' of the masculinist historiography which preceded it, as the editors suggest hopefully in the introduction, is yet to be seen. Certainly, however, *The Gendered Kiwi* makes a powerful case for the importance of attending to gender as an historical dynamic and an illuminating category of analysis.

MARILYN LAKE