

the settlers themselves were deputy colonizers not only of Pacific islands but of Maori people. She analyzes settlers' decision to retain an amicable relationship with Britain well past the period of local self-government. At the same time she interrogates white New Zealanders' prolonged posturing as a benevolent senior partner in nation building within a bi-racial society. She demonstrates well the ways that the later twentieth-century resurgence of Maori political pressure delivered a shock to white New Zealanders. This outcome, she suggests, came as a natural consequence of the depth of injury sustained by Maori and the blithe ignorance of that injury by most Pakeha.

Interwoven in this account is a subtle analysis based on gender. Mein Smith foregrounds issues related to women, children, families and constructions of masculinity that emerge as basic to comprehending the country's history. When she writes of causation, events and outcomes she is always mindful that there is no private sphere that is unrelated to the public realm, nor national identities forged that are outside of constructions of gender. Women as well as men are actors in this history, in which the writer is able to note women's importance without the obligation to construct them unambiguously as heroines. She indicates, for example, how the fortunes of women's civil rights campaigns interfaced with successive government's racialized policies, and persuasively demonstrates the ways women reformers' leadership on childbearing and child rearing interfaced with national health and population concerns inflected by class.

*A Concise History of New Zealand* is a fine addition to the Cambridge series that will be widely read and appreciated. The book points to the maturing of New Zealand's history writing, indicating the growing acceptance of revisionist appraisals of the histories of new white societies that have elsewhere caused anger and political backlash. One only needs to consider the labelling of similarly critical accounts in the so-called 'history wars' in Australia to appreciate the difference. It is heartening that Mein Smith and her publishers perceive a market in the country as well as abroad for such a challenging history. Mein Smith, it must be acknowledged, has been able to rely on the ample constructive work that the historical profession has produced in the last two decades. The search for social justice in the country can only have been furthered by the vitality of the profession and its commitment to communicate historical research to a wide readership as exemplified in Mein Smith's short history.

PATRICIA GRIMSHAW

*University of Melbourne*

*Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in Southern Dunedin, 1890–1939*. Edited by Barbara Brookes, Annabel Cooper and Robin Law. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2003. xiii, 434 pp. NZ price: \$44.99. ISBN 1-86940-301-0.

*SITES OF GENDER* is a product of the Caversham project undertaken by staff and students of the University of Otago over a period of more than a quarter of a century. The contributors to this book first met to discuss this work in 1995 and, since then, have presented their findings in conference papers and journal articles, and now an integrated collection of essays. Their agenda has been 'to analyse gender by "setting it deep" in a place and time: the suburbs of southern Dunedin between 1890 and 1939' (p.vii). This is a place well known to students of New Zealand history; perhaps it is the most thoroughly known of all our suburbs, yet *Sites of Gender* adds new insights, new stories and new understandings of its people, institutions and culture. Old South Dunedin hand Erik Olssen is joined by a new team of historians, Annabel Cooper, Barbara Brookes and the late Robin Law as editors, and other contributors working on a new aspect of the ongoing project.

The agenda of the book makes for both its strengths and weaknesses. It provides the

structural concepts and the coherence to enable the reader imaginatively to traverse the world of South Dunedin across time. We recognize the questions being asked, we know what the place looks like, who lives there, who is important, how they earn their living, who they visit and how they run their families. On the other hand, maybe we find out more about South Dunedin than we need to understand that gender was a shaping force, a political issue, an explanation for short-term change and long-term trends. Although gender might be an interesting aspect of much that is discussed, this is micro-history, and micro-history through the lens of one analytical tool produces a somewhat narrow rendition of the complex life of a community.

The opening chapter by the editors argues that a focus on gender can transform our understanding of this period in New Zealand history. It was the period of urbanization and industrialization, and South Dunedin participated in both movements. It was a period of construction of new family forms, declining birth rates and enhanced expectations about the health and education of children, and South Dunedin men and women shared in all three. Single women, including South Dunedin women, started to work outside the home in significant numbers. The State expanded its role, and working class men and women, who were the majority in South Dunedin, benefited from this expansion more than most.

A theme of the book is that during the period the lives of women changed more than the lives of men. Women, with the vote (a higher proportion of South Dunedin women signed petitions for the vote than in any other place); with higher levels of education; with an ability to earn and spend, especially before marriage; with a changed dress style, increased mobility and predominance in church congregations, had more confidence, more independence, more choice and more power over men. According to this analysis, the gender revolution of this period transformed life for women, and men had to adjust to this change along with the other social, cultural and economic shifts occurring around and to them.

So, although the study is evenhanded — using gender as a conceptual tool to understand the lives of men and women — the fact that gender change affected women more than men means that the emphasis is on what happened to women. The changes in men's lives appear as more consequential than pivotal.

The chapters of the book follow well-defined areas of gender study: work, education, dress, leisure, family economy, spatial mobility, health, religion and marriage. A chapter on gender and transport is less common and produces some ambiguous findings in relation to the general theme of expanded mobility for women. The bike, the tram and the car, although used by women, made more of a difference in the lives of men than they did in the lives of women.

Some heroic figures appear throughout the book and remind us how important a few historical sources can be in building an analysis of the past. Rachel Grimmer, Salvation Army street worker, suffragist, denizen of the salt-water swimming pool at St Clair, accountant and gardener, seems larger than life, partly because she was also a diarist. Samuel Lister's editorship of the *Otago Workman* has ensured that he is well known to later generations. Jane Steel, mother of four, casual worker and frequent flitter, is known through the records of the Otago Benevolent Institution which supported her and her children after various feckless men had loved and left her. Barbara Brookes's endpiece on the appalling story of Emmeline and Thomas Gallaway comes to us through the records of the court that found Thomas not guilty of killing his drug-addicted wife.

*Sites of Gender* adds to the growing number of books that deal with gender in New Zealand. Most deal with local and regional manifestations of gender. Maybe it is time for someone to draw the threads together and tell us what it all means for national history.

RAEWYN DALZIEL

*The University of Auckland*