

land Medical Journal' (p. 114). Later, Hercocock tells us that 'the medical profession rejected the ... Mental Health Committee report' (p. 130). The nature of the bitter reaction and supposed rejection is left unexplained. Finally, there is one curious statement relating to an article Bush wrote in 1953 entitled 'Is Motherhood Enough?', which advocated part-time paid employment for women outside the home. Her suggestions, according to Hercocock, 'were based on shared experience, down-to-earth, and within the reach of most' (p. 89). She urged her readers to make sure that their first earnings were directed towards purchasing 'an electric dishwasher, to be followed by any other gadget that will make the housework easier'. It is hard to imagine that electric dishwashers were within the reach of most women in 1950s New Zealand.

The book aims to be more than hagiography. Hercocock sets out to contextualise Bush's life and work, but while she succeeds in establishing the social climate in which Bush worked, she does not adequately contextualise her professional activities. There are also some curious omissions from the bibliography. Although the blurb states that Hercocock has published 'a number of articles and essays on Alice Bush', they are not listed. These omissions include her own 1988 MA thesis on Bush's early career, which she unfortunately embargoed for more than a decade. The archival sources for Bush's life and work, which were kept by Bush but collated posthumously by her husband and a close friend Phoebe Meikle who handed the material over to Fay Hercocock, are impressive. It is hoped that now the biography has been published the material will be placed in a recognised depository to allow other historians access to it.

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Life over Death. Tasmanians and Tuberculosis. By Michael Roe with a specialist chapter by Richard Wood-Baker (Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1999, 234).

This is a story of the impact of, and the attempts to cope with, tuberculosis in Tasmania from the time of first European settle-

ment to the present day. In it Roe uncovers evidence of the prevalence of tuberculosis in the convict settlements of the early nineteenth century and the extent of transmission to the Aboriginal population. In the section dealing with the second half of the nineteenth century, the main theme is the contribution of Tasmania and Tasmanians to the debates that raged throughout the Western world about the impact of climate on tuberculosis. As elsewhere, the anti-tuberculosis movement in Tasmania began in earnest around the turn of the century, an era dominated by progressive views of man and society. The major site of the movement was the sanatorium, which continued to be so at least up until the mid-1930s. Labor dominance in local government from 1934 to 1969 led to 'socially-purposeful politics' in Tasmania, in which anti-tuberculosis measures played a significant part. The most notable legislation was a 1949 Act making regular x-ray examinations compulsory. Roe makes the interesting point that these examinations 'became part of life for most Tasmanians, something of a ritual and in outlying districts even a communal bond' (p. 163).

Roe has elsewhere characterised the post-1970 period as a time in which the values and achievements of the preceding years were subverted. However, he writes here that this was not the case in relation to tuberculosis, the incidence of which continued its downward trend until the present day. Roe's assessment of the anti-tuberculosis campaign since the late nineteenth century is fairly positive, as is his claim that the early twentieth-century campaign 'on balance benefited contemporaries' (p. 38) and probably did more overall good than harm' (p. 48). He asserts that case records backed claims that 'many patients owed prolonged lives' to surgical treatment in the 1930s (p. 102). However, far from writing a triumphalist history, in the mould of many accounts of tuberculosis, Roe complains that as a historian he found it disconcerting when his central interest shrank towards nothingness. He warns us in the section covering the post-1970 period, 'Disquiet will recur as the following pages pursue stories which sometimes become almost trivial' (p. 136). Yet his predictions are not trivial: 'A doom-sayer could well insist that the present happy mode is a mere transitory remission—that soon the barriers of Tasmania's isolation will crash, and the disease wreak all the more havoc because no immunity prevails (echoing the Aboriginals' plight), and because the penury that accompanies this isolation will mean that public health resources prove

unable to meet the inexorable challenge' (p. 193). This thinking is in line with another recently published history of tuberculosis, *The White Death. A History of Tuberculosis* (London 1999). Its author, Thomas Dormandy, writes of a likely explosion of tuberculosis, asking if and when the epidemic can be expected to burst through social, geographic and political barriers: 'That it will remain locked away forever in a few conveniently remote hot spots seems as fatuous as was the hope that nuclear devices can be confined to a select club of "mature" states' (p. 392).

In his introduction, Roe claims that his book reveals more about Tasmanians than about tuberculosis. Generally the anti-tuberculosis campaign in Tasmania appears little different from that waged elsewhere in its timing and features, although occasionally there are glimpses of distinctiveness. For example, we are told that Tasmanians' so-called rooted objection to institutions 'probably remained yet truer in the island than the nation at large' (p. 42), though this alleged Tasmanian peculiarity remains unexplored. Nor does he probe the aversion to immunisation, or 'needle antipathy', which he sees as pronounced among the Tasmanian 'commonalty' (pp. 162, 183); his subsequent comment that 80 per cent of school leavers accepted immunisation rather contradicts this belief. For a book that aims to inform readers about Tasmanians there is one glaring omission: what happened to the Aboriginal population after 1840? After citing a military surgeon, located in Tasmania from 1838 to 1840, who commented that the severest impact of tuberculosis on Aboriginal people had passed by 1840, there is absolute silence regarding this group's experience of the disease.

There are, indeed, plenty of 'human interest' stories in the book. However, Roe makes no attempt to develop these or tease out their possible significance, but rather leaves the evidence to speak for itself. For example, he writes, 'One swain came for an interview [at the Northern Chest Hospital some time in the 1950s] with his prospective mother-in-law, the courtship thereafter halting. Various sufferers were discouraged from marrying, sometimes effectually, sometimes not' (p. 149). Why did the courtship end? Who was discouraging marriage? If it were the health professionals this could tell us something about official approaches to public health. There are many themes introduced and then dropped, sometimes within the same paragraph. An example on page 177 typifies Roe's approach. He opens the paragraph with a reference to tuberculosis

in mining areas being of particular concern to officials. He then tells us that infection could be encouraged not only by the job itself but also by a social life centred on heavy drinking in noisy crowded pubs and the Western climate. The providence of this statement is unclear. He goes on to cite an epidemiological test in Rosebery school that gave 'alarming' results, and discusses the 'further troubles [which] later arose when the local medical office declared himself unqualified in radiology, and the hospital jibbed at taking x-rays for the Division'. He then notes, 'Defying earlier optimists, Queenstown long supplied sufferers'. Finally, in this same paragraph, he introduces another unrelated theme: 'In February 1972 the region's medical officer rebuked the Division for causing anguish through the indeterminacy of its advice when asking that people attend further examination'. Thus we are given plenty of information, but there is a frustrating lack of discipline in organising the material effectively and giving it meaning.

Occupational tuberculosis, particularly relating to mining, is an underlying theme that warrants greater attention. 'Tuberculophobia' is another. How these differed from what occurred elsewhere is for others to discover; Roe considered this beyond his remit. He was clearly hampered by the absence of studies in other Australian states, yet shows no interest in engaging in larger historical debates or assessing how his history contributes to the historiographies of either tuberculosis or Tasmania. His book will prove useful for others writing on the history of tuberculosis in Australia, though they will be left to draw out the relevance; Roe has not done it for them.

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The Birth of the Cell. By Sir Henry Harris (Yale University Press, 1999, xii + 212).

A Regius professorship at Oxford might be seen as a glorious accolade for a brilliant career. A knighthood, in addition, is an honour of some consideration, while an FRS is a yet greater distinction. But Sir Henry Harris has surpassed himself by writing a magnificent history. It deals with the discovery of the cell and is called *The*