

*Each Mind A Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity and the New Thought Movement 1875-1920* by **Beryl Satter**. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. Pp. xi + 382. \$39.95 (cloth).

Many of the books which have been written on the purity campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have argued that purity reformers mainly wanted to accomplish a total denial of desire as a factor which motivated people's behaviour. By arguing so, historians have remained faithful to the concerns of a great many women's groups which believed that the sexual moral standard was at the root of many social problems. Beryl Satter's book, *Each Mind A Kingdom*, however, breaks away from this approach, choosing not to look at traditional women's groups, but the New Thought Movement, the genesis of which coincided with the height of the purity campaigns.

Many historians acknowledge the prominence of desire in nineteenth-century purity debates but leave the concept of desire itself rather opaque. Satter sets out to change this by beginning her work with a fascinating discussion of the gendered constructions of desire. This is one of the most clear-sighted and interesting discussions available of the intellectual underpinnings of the purity movement and through it Satter helps to overturn the old myth that purity campaigners were more emotional than intellectual. She considers Mary Baker Eddy's work and the phenomenal success of Christian Science in attracting women and goes on to show how one of Mary Baker Eddy's breakaway disciples, Emma Curtis Hopkins, helped to spread and make popular New Thought ideas and tactics. Using the biographies of these two women, and the novels of New Thought writers, Satter shows the parts which sex and desirelessness played in the early New Thought Movement. But this changed radically with the influence of Helen Wilmans who helped to change the movement so that it gave greater prominence to the connection between desire and money by arguing that the desire for luxury that people felt was not their own greed, but rather was a sign of God's desire within them.

Many readers may primarily associate New Thought and "self-help" with the search for material as well as spiritual happiness but they may not see the gender significance of a shift which began to promote matters of wealth as a matter of spiritual importance (many New Thought Leaders made considerable sums themselves through their classes and retreats). Satter argues that one of the principle reasons that nineteenth-century women were supposed to be selfless was because they linked desire and wealth with manliness. So a movement which encouraged people to associate wealth with God provided a unique avenue for women to escape gendered notions of class and property-ownership. The shift from a movement which promoted self-denial to one which promoted self-fulfillment gives the movement a complexity which other movements which may have remained more faithful to their initial goals may perhaps have lacked.

Satter's work shows, however, that the early years of the movement provide an excellent avenue to explore the contestation within women's groups about the appropriateness of expressing or recognising desire in everyday life in the nineteenth century. Her discussion of New Thought and Progressivism is not limited, however, to ideas about femininity. She also provides some very interesting analysis regarding the

rise of masculine culture in debates about the progress of society and she shows through her work on popular psychology the influence that "hyper-masculinism" (the idea that masculinity had over-inflated rather than feminine influence having deflated) had both on society as a whole by the early twentieth century and on the New Thought Movement. Her discussion on this topic holds interesting potential for anyone working in the field.

Satter describes her book as a study of the intellectual trends of the Movement rather than a study of its popular campaigns or wider social impact, and I think this is a fair description of what she achieves. Having said this, I think that such a book has been badly needed in both the purity field and the field of women's history, and unlike some books which focus on ideas, Satter's uses a wealth of material and introduces a team of fascinating characters to bring the work to life. But it is not just a book about a quirky spiritual movement; Satter goes to considerable lengths to show the inter-connections between the followers of the New Thought Movement and more mainstream women's groups such as the WCTU and Alcoholics Anonymous, and then documents the reasons why some of the groups finally ended up so far apart. In a tiny chapter at the end of the book, Satter gives some intriguing insights into the continuing elements of New Thought in New Age culture well into the 1990s and it is in this willingness to give both the broad and the detailed view of American history and culture that this book makes a valuable contribution.

ELLEN WARNE

*University of Melbourne*