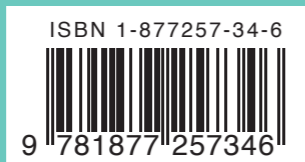


This book considers the issue of typicality in biography. Biography is the single largest genre of history written, published and read. Yet what can a study of the one tell us about the many? Biographers often acknowledge the tension in selecting the 'obviously significant' subject rather than one who is 'representative', yet they rarely consider the problems arising from using a single case. They sidestep the question: how typical is my subject of her or his class, profession or gender? Melanie Nolan focuses on this issue of variance within the New Zealand working class by examining the life, culture and identity of Jack McCullough, Workers' Representative on the Arbitration Court 1908–1921, and his four siblings – Margaret, Jim, Sarah and Frank.

'Five life stories of individuals not connected to each other constitute five separated pieces, perhaps five gems but with no cumulative power unless they are taken from the same social world. But the life stories of five persons connected by close kinship ties . . . bring more information than five separated stories: they illuminate and reflect upon each other like the gems of a necklace.'

– Daniel Bertaux and Catherine Delcroix

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KIN: A collective biography

Melanie Nolan

KIN



A collective biography
of a New Zealand
working-class family

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