

to present a narrative framework, and the book comes to an abrupt conclusion without a drawing together of threads.

Francis has selected a small number of governors for close study and explains that in choosing them he was motivated by a desire to stir up controversy among historians of colonial societies: this is badly needed, he thinks. The governors are shown as serving as moral exemplars and as representatives of the qualities of an idealized monarchy. This meant that much, indeed often extreme, importance was attached to a governor's character and personal style. These were minutely scrutinized in what were usually tiny and isolated communities in which the governor was more often than not on his own, struggling to survive and appear an embodiment of authority in a rapidly changing new society. There was a great deal of biting satire and cruel exposure of real or impugned personal weaknesses.

There is a chapter on New Zealand with discussion of FitzRoy, Grey and Gore Browne. He concludes that 'since government was more of an ideal than a reality, basic theoretical issues were more prominent in New Zealand than in other colonies.' However, he also argues that their personalities were of critical importance, not least because of the way they were regarded by Maori, and the book contains some pungent thumb-nail sketches of their foibles and eccentricities. In a few pages Francis engages vigorously in a defence of Grey against his numerous critics and claims that Grey was a sincerely religious man. His concern for the welfare of Maori if the settlers should receive self-government has been unfairly obscured by the willingness of historians to accept the misrepresentation of him by contemporary leaders of settler opinion as power-hungry and devious. Francis sees New Zealand as different from the other colonies in that the ceremonies involved and appealed to the indigenous people as a recognition of their crucial significance for the establishment of sovereignty.

This is an original book whose interpretations are certain to have a considerable influence on the writing of nineteenth-century colonial history.

DAVID HAMER

Victoria University of Wellington

Fatal Success. A History of the New Zealand Company. By Patricia Burns. Edited by Henry Richardson. Heinemann Reed, 1989. 327pp. NZ price: \$39.95.

THIS BOOK begins with 12 gentlemen at dinner in Hampstead in March 1839. Key members of the New Zealand Land and Colonization Company, they were gloomily considering a tangled history of past endeavours, their company's tardy subscription list, and its failure to gain a charter, when William Hutt MP 'dropped a bombshell' — the government was about to legislate for its own pre-emptive right over land in New Zealand. Thereupon Edward Gibbon Wakefield galvanized that gloomy dinner table by recommending the immediate dispatch of an expedition to 'acquire all the land you can'. His maxim, 'possess yourselves of the Soil & you are secure', reverberates throughout the book. This policy was pursued to 'Fatal Success'.

This is a fast moving narrative throughout, with thumbnail sketches of the participants, a feel for their changing moods, and indications of the errors and ignorance associated with their thoughts and actions. *Fatal Success* is perhaps as much in tune with *Pride and Prejudice* and *Vanity Fair* as with the central purposes of today's historians. Patricia

Burns's expository skills were shaped in the scholarship of English studies and she gives us a well-crafted account, strongly laced with moral comment, of the origins of our New Zealand Company legacy of moral dilemmas.

It is an intricate, confused and tangled story. To understand the sailing of the *Tory* on 12 May 1839 one must know something about the New Zealand Company of 1825, the New Zealand Association of 1837-38, the New Zealand Colonization Company of 1838 and the New Zealand Land Company of 1839. Their political context included ten changes of colonial secretary in these 14 years. While official policy continued to fluctuate in a fluid political situation, the consistency of the New Zealand Company's actions was subject to the wild card of the erratic input of Edward Gibbon Wakefield. At times his other involvements, especially that with the Beauharnois property in Canada, 'an odd and sordid footnote in Canadian history' (p.200), took him out of the picture. At other times he charged into the New Zealand business with 'frenetic energy' (p.86). But the tangles and confusions arise even more from the story's widely scattered arenas. Policies and actions adopted by the British government and the company in London, by the company's representatives in its New Zealand settlements, by Hobson, FitzRoy and Grey in their capital at Auckland, and for a time by Hobson's immediate superior, Governor Gipps in Sydney, were always based on stale information from the other centres. All decisions taken outside New Zealand were vitiated by a general ignorance of its geography and settlement potential, and of the customs of its indigenous people. To the inevitable cross-purposes that resulted must be added the deliberate obfuscation perpetrated by the company. Any moral judgment of the various actors must begin with an understanding of their specific knowledge, at any particular time, of the policies and actions of the other actors remote from them in space. Of their various ignorances and misunderstandings, which were excusable, which culpable? The careful narrative of interlocking developments in *Fatal Success* gets us some way along the track for the answers.

Clear, blunt moral comment is pervasive. A few random examples: 'one of the strangest expressions in print of naked pride' (p.14); 'the new venture was launched with a plain, unvarnished lie' (p.84); 'cocky, cheeky letters, full of virtue and self-congratulation' (p.173); 'this was close enough to the truth to deserve war to the knife' (p.176). At times characters are quickly epitomized by a quote from a contemporary. Thus Lieutenant Best described Dr Evans as 'pretty a specimen of humbug as you could meet in a day's march' (p.156); and Sam Revans called J.T. Wicksteed a 'vulgar hound' (p.206). Little space is given to discussion and evaluation of these moral judgments. This, of course, would have broken into the easy flow of narrative, giving a much longer book. And *Fatal Success* is not a long book. When one allows for more than 50 well-selected illustrations, and the space used to divide the book into 29 crisp chapters, the effective text is only about 250 pages.

The nature of the book must owe something to the author's death in 1984, with the manuscript still incomplete. The *Auckland Star* (23 April 1984) reported that 'she was within three chapters of finishing the work'. This is probably why the narrative tails off after 1845, giving little on the decline and winding up of the company; and why there is little final evaluation either of the company's record or of its long term consequences. There is much else that this book does not do. It gives little on the British political, economic, social, commercial context of the company's story. It gives no real analysis of the make up of the company's directorate, investors, supporters, and lobbyists. Even its moral judgment approach is inadequately applied. There were surely some positives in Wakefield's vision, but he is given no credit for any here. And once the company's juggernaut was launched on its way (see p.210), how morally free were any of its servants to deflect it from its fatal course? There is no sensitivity to their dilemmas. And were the

Maori always as utterly blameless as they appear here? It is implied that the company and its servants were wrong to treat them as 'primitive children'. Are we then to take them as adult participants, equipped with the experience of decades of European contact? If so, should they be fully excused for their ignorance of what the company's agents were up to in the land purchases?

ROLLO ARNOLD

Wellington

The Making of Wellington 1800-1914. Edited by David Hamer and Robert Nicholls. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1990. 272pp. NZ price: \$39.95.

ANNIVERSARIES are a mixed blessing for historians. They provide opportunities to publish — and to secure financial support to do so (as in this case). Conversely, historians are expected to come to the party — even if they had not planned to, and thus their offering can be miscellaneous (as it is here). This well-presented collection of 11 essays commemorates the sesquicentennial of Wellington city and of organized European settlement around its harbour. It offers (as the editors concede) only a sampling of current research which focuses on Pakeha social history in the nineteenth century.

A majority of the essays are concerned with origins and developments before the 1860s. Prior Maori occupancy of the land adjacent to Te Whanganui-a-Tara is recognized by including Angela Ballara's meticulous account of complex Maori migrations into the area during the three decades before 1840. The facts of land sales to the New Zealand Company established the final arrangement of Maori tribal boundaries in the area. This provides a link with Rosemarie Tonk's analysis of how the New Zealand Company's land claim in the Port Nicholson district was handled by the Spain Commission. She demonstrates the limitations of humanitarian motives. In fact a 'final' settlement was pushed through in 1847 by Colonel McCleverty appointed by Governor Grey. Displaced to the outskirts of the new town and to rural areas beyond, Maori gradually disappeared from the streets of Wellington, and (as David Hamer notes) late nineteenth-century visitors perceived that Maori did not belong in the Pakeha city. Apart from these essays, and brief comments in two others, Maori also disappear from discussion in this book.

Six other essays concerned mainly with the first two decades of European settlement reveal the limitations of this collection, based as it is on disparate research interests with little to link them. Brad Patterson draws on his substantial research on the surveying of Wellington and its hinterland in his narrowly conceived account of the breakdown in relationships between early surveyors and the Principal Agent of the New Zealand Company in Wellington. Kathleen Coleridge's account of early printers and their newspapers has much detail on individuals but little analysis of their products. The use of timber in the building of early Wellington is explored by Chris Cochran with the emphasis of his essay being on the architectural legacy. The use of a famous wooden building, Barrett's Hotel, as Wellington's main social and civic centre in the 1850s, is described by Julie Bremner. An occupational analysis rather than an examination of local issues is the substance of Diana Beaglehole's account of political leadership in Wellington before 1854. In 'Life after Death', Margaret Allington ranges widely over the origins, uses, life histories revealed by, and twentieth-century legacy (in face of the encroachment