

the Plunket nurse. These extra details about Sutherland's personal life show him as someone who was prepared to go against the then 'norms' of society. While all the extra detail in the book might have been culled by a more ruthless editor, it would deprive the reader of a well-rounded picture of Sutherland.

All the factors that led eventually to his suicide are clearly laid out and show a man struggling to maintain his family life and academic career. Sutherland's own attempts to help others through his work with 'mentally defective children', Māori and even his fellow colleagues, may have meant he had not fully looked after his own welfare.

Oliver Sutherland has produced an insightful and nuanced biography of his father that explores a staggering range of activities packed into a life of 54 years. This biography serves as a great resource into the life of an extraordinary individual whose ideas and work were well ahead of his time.

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Fitz: The Colonial Adventures of James Edward FitzGerald. By Jenifer Roberts. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2014. 392pp. NZ price: \$40. ISBN: 9781877578731.

Jenifer Roberts is a British writer and photographer who has published two historical biographies and several articles in the magazine *History Today*. Though not a professionally trained historian, she has approached the life of James Edward FitzGerald with the thoroughness of an academic, tracking down letters in private collections and consulting a wide range of archival sources. The book is dedicated to her New Zealand cousins and to the memory of her great-great-grandparents, James and Fanny FitzGerald.

FitzGerald's life is already well known, thanks to Ned Bohan's excellent 1998 political biography.¹ He was by far the most energetic and colourful of the leaders of the infant Canterbury settlement of 1850. He was the first of the 'Canterbury Pilgrims' to get ashore at Lyttelton, where he was greeted by his best friend, John Robert Godley; he was the first editor of the *Lyttelton Times*; he was the first Superintendent of the Canterbury Provincial Government; he led the first ministry in New Zealand's first parliament in 1854, yet wrecked the ministry of 1865; he founded *The Press* newspaper to oppose Moorhouse's railway tunnel scheme; he moved to Wellington as Comptroller-General in 1867 and was Auditor-General from 1878. He was a talented artist, versifier, journalist, orator and politician. And yet, as William Gisborne observed in 1886, he was also 'a brilliant failure'. His political career had been 'the flash of a meteor – dazzling for the moment, but leaving no lasting trace behind'.²

Jenifer Roberts argues that FitzGerald's writing left plenty of lasting traces and that his editorials were influential beyond New Zealand, sometimes being reprinted

in the English press. This is mildly ironic, given that FitzGerald wrote his editorials as impulsively as he wrote his private letters, usually without bothering to check the facts first. His tactlessness was legendary in his own lifetime. He regularly irritated and offended men who might have been his political allies. So what more needed to be said about him?

A more accurate title for this book would have been 'Fanny and Fitz', for this is really the story of their marriage. We see FitzGerald in a new light, and not always a flattering one, from the letters Fanny wrote to his friend William Vaux and other friends in England. She loved him dearly and bore him twelve children, only to see half of them die young. He was the most infuriating of husbands, yet her devotion never wavered. His fertile brain was constantly hatching new plans to advance his political career or make his fortune, yet these periods of frenetic activity would be followed by weeks or months of illness, depression and seclusion. He never did make a fortune, though he had ample opportunity to do so, along with the other leaders of the Canterbury settlement. Roberts is probably correct in suggesting that he suffered from some form of bipolar disorder, or what used to be called manic depression.

We learn more from this book about FitzGerald's health, or lack of it (he suffered from rheumatism and eye infections), and Fanny's life of unending drudgery as she struggled to cope (often without servants, because they were always in debt) with cooking, housework, child-rearing and reassuring James. She increasingly relied on her elder daughter, Amy, for domestic help. Fanny was a talented and intelligent woman, fluent in several European languages and blessed with a fine singing voice that was much in demand for concerts in Christchurch and Wellington. Yet she was often neglected for politics, even when she was seriously ill, as in 1862. FitzGerald seemed oblivious to her needs, spending freely on himself and his career, but rarely on her. Her happiest years were when the children were small, out in the country at their Springs Station on the Canterbury Plains, but her husband's restlessness meant they never stayed for long in one place. Even the move to Wellington condemned her to muddy isolation in Karori until they built their big house on the cliff above Clyde Quay, which again saddled them with a big mortgage. Fanny still had to walk to choir practices in Wellington. She became involved in a wide range of charitable activities and was highly regarded by the Wellington élite, who probably felt sorry for her. Here was opportunity for a feminist interpretation of the marriage, but this book is innocent of feminist theory.

Indeed, narrative predominates over analysis throughout this book. It is clearly aimed at a general rather than an academic readership. Referencing is light, sometimes only a handful of notes per chapter, and usually to identify the source of a quotation. Political debates reported in detail by Bohan are here summarized in a sentence or two. At least we hear more of the voices of Fitz and Fanny, from his editorials and their letters to friends and family, than Bohan had space to include, and most are paragraphs rather than sentences. Some extracts fill half a page. Unlike Bohan's more rigorous analytical structure, the seamless narrative of this book makes it easy to lose track of the year being referred to, as events unfold relentlessly month by month. We learn more about their later years in Wellington and Fanny's grief at the loss of her

children in anguished letters to Mary Rolleston and others, but FitzGerald seems to have retreated into his own inner world. He expressed his grief in poetry that now seems somewhat superficial and sentimental. Yet this was the man who had once held an election crowd or a meeting of parliament in the palm of his hand with golden oratory and was regarded as the leading New Zealand politician of his generation.

The bibliography is impressive and more extensive in both primary and secondary sources than Bohan's, yet it must be asked whether or not the additional letters unearthed by this industrious descendant add much that is new to our understanding of FitzGerald himself. We certainly know more about Fanny after reading this book, but many of the quotations about FitzGerald are already familiar from Bohan's book. Life battered both of the partners in this marriage. They both had to live with disappointment and loss, reminding us that colonization was never a simple march of progress and success. There were many casualties along the way. This book nicely complements Bohan's political biography and gives us new insights into a remarkable marriage and a career that promised so much yet disappointed so many.

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NOTES

- 1 Edmund Bohan, *Blest Madman: FitzGerald of Canterbury*, Christchurch, 1998.
- 2 William Gisborne, *New Zealand Rulers and Statesmen from 1840*, London, 1886, pp. 64–5.

Hello Girls and Boys: A New Zealand Toy Story. By David Veart. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2014. 314pp. NZ price: \$65. ISBN: 9781869408213.

This inviting book is a social history of toys played with by New Zealand children, and toys made here. The economic history of New Zealand is summarized through this examination of the sources of our toys.

Veart begins by noting the concept of *homo ludens*: man the player, which acknowledges play as central to the development of culture. He applies this to pre-colonial Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. Kites were toys. They were also devices to assist with fishing and sailing, ephemeral objects easily constructed using local materials (raupō, flax, supplejack, mānuka, toetoe). The account of kites in Māori culture gets this book off to a fine start. The standard of scholarship is quickly affirmed; this colourful book is no casual stocking-filler, but a rigorously researched history of everyday artefacts.

The early European settlers included toys in their luggage. Those items corresponded to ideas of that period about gender, class and child-rearing. A few of these toys survive in museum collections. In days when the contents of ships were