

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

announced in newspapers, a 1853 inventory from the *Chelydra* included ‘musical and other toys, very novel, instructive, amusing and grotesque’. Wellington customers could buy these luxury goods at a Lambton Quay shop. Levy’s Emporium in Shortland Street provided toys for Auckland children, with other dealers across the nation. Meanwhile children in isolated areas, or whose families could not afford toys, played in their environments. They went bird nesting, bird hunting and swimming. They built dams and huts, climbed trees, caught eels, and made shanghais and other playthings from found materials. Veart describes these activities as suited to the development of their natural inclinations, initiative and independence. Perhaps the claimed ‘can do’ aspect of national character began with these childhood activities.

By the end of the nineteenth century, marbles and knucklebones were beloved by Māori and Pākehā children, and a version of the latter game had been played by Māori before the colonists turned up. Finding an 1845 drawing by Rev. Thomas Hutton featuring Māori children playing knucklebones must have been a moment of great glee for the author.

During the Depression a dearth of commercial toys meant reliance on the home-made. As Veart notes, the Farmer’s catalogues of the time showed slim pickings indeed. Toy imports were banned during the Second World War. Wartime hospitals included toy making in their occupational therapy programmes. Handmade dolls were given to little girls who were kept in isolation from the polio epidemic at the end of the war. In 1946 just one import licence was issued for toys: Meccano.

In the 1940s local toymakers tried to fulfil the need for toys by setting up backyard businesses. Selco, Hercules, Die Cast Toys Ltd., Lincoln, Torro and Fun Ho! specialized in toy vehicles. Robust farm machines, especially tractors, suited a rural-based population: the indoor carpet toys of a more genteel way of life were less appropriate here. Joy Toys, Luvme, Traders Supplies and Harrison’s made soft toys and dolls. Parro’s forte was cast lead toys. Buzzy Bee’s almost continuous 70-year history is tracked back to a specific address in Newton, Auckland. All of these mid-twentieth-century toys are now coveted collectibles, occasionally turning up on TradeMe. Today’s purchasers are adults, not children, perhaps nostalgic for their own or their parents’ toys of an era before cheap plastic, rapidly dying batteries and screens that *disengage* children from the world.

The ratio of imported to local toys ebbed and flowed with changes of government and new economic policies. Overseas crazes could easily be copied – for instance, the 1950s hula hoops and Davy Crockett hats. During the first Labour government Finance Minister Walter Nash played a significant role in establishing international toymakers Line Brothers here. They sold goods under the Tri-ang label. This company developed a new industry, created jobs, decreased the need for imports and provided children with a larger variety of toys.

By 1967 toys were being exported from New Zealand. Impetus was provided by the new notions of development economics and diversification: with Britain joining the EEC, new products and markets had to be found. The government offered export incentives, with tax relief based on the quantity of product exported. To succeed

in international markets, the quality of local toys, and their packaging, rose. For a short time until the 1970s New Zealand-made toys enjoyed a worldwide market. In the 1980s Rogernomics put an end to that. The managed economy was dismantled and the market ruled. Toys from Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong flooded into New Zealand shops. Television and its advertising showed new playthings. Robots and action heroes, along with pubescent Barbie dolls, dominated the new mall chain stores that displaced traditional local toyshops.

Veart points out that his own view of toys is coloured by growing up as a post-war baby boomer. Across his lifetime, both toys and play have changed. The privatization of screen viewing has been paramount (the lone child plugged into a game or show): this is an era of virtual playgrounds which are not abandoned at adulthood. The electronic revolution has also changed physical toys so that the child becomes the controller or operator. Meanwhile some traditional makers of toys have evolved into creating collectibles and miniatures for adults.

Veart explains that toys illustrate 'New Zealand in microcosm'. There are sections on toys as playtime versions of war weapons, and on dolls and the cult of domesticity. While Veart does not mention it, Te Papa's Golden Days and Auckland Museum exhibit many of these toys, acknowledging their serious place in the narrative of the nation.

This book is the product of an obvious labour of love, along with meticulous research. The range is extensive: fortune-telling toys, optical toys, fireworks, rocking horses, pea rifles, board games, plasticine, paper dolls and coloured pencils all receive attention. Given the possibilities, one's favourites may not be present: Bakelite construction sets! Wind-up tin toys! Clickers! But the survey of information, especially on local toy manufacturing, is remarkable. A section at the back of the book usefully refers to sources consulted, chapter by chapter.

This book is the only comprehensive study of toys in New Zealand. Post-war toys turn up in kiwiana texts, and handmade toys in craft and needlework histories. But Veart's work is exceptional for its temporal overview, and for the contextualization of local material culture within the political economy. This project was recognized for its value, and supported by several history and culture institutions. It has lovely production values: cover, paper, illustrations and design that express but do not overplay the nostalgic elements of this strand of history. Amateur family photographs of children and toys contribute charm and authenticity: 1900 boys playing marbles; a barefoot girl and her doll; 1940s boys with model aeroplanes; a 1950s girl choosing a Pedigree doll. Occasional short anecdotes personalize the narrative. As the author explains in his introduction, toys help to define the place of children in New Zealand. Our toys, after all, are a significant part of the memories of the culture we grew up in.

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