

companies, supersedes the importance of human safety. Quarantine and trade will only be safe, if there is a uniform policy of sanitation and farming throughout the globe. In this work, Harrison makes an effective case that a globally uniform policy of sanitary control is vital to protect against instances of contagion.

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***Fitz: The Colonial Adventures of James Edward
FitzGerald***

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Biographers have not mined New Zealand's colonial era substantially. There are all too many individuals about whom we know much too little, lacking any greater treatment than a brief entry in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* or a dusty and often sycophantic old Masters thesis. The list of individuals with biographies almost appears respectable until the names of individuals without biographies are listed alongside. There are central premiers, provincial superintendents, and Māori leaders who have not yet been

studied in detail. The rich and interesting lives of ordinary citizens have often only been examined when they have intersected with a narrow range of events that define New Zealand's current national myths – especially the Treaty of Waitangi, the New Zealand Wars, and women's suffrage. This is not to say there are no biographies that break this mould or fruitfully resurrect the story of obscure individuals to illuminate broader themes, but the field is underdone relative to its potential.

Hence it is both surprising and refreshing to see James Edward FitzGerald become the subject of a second biography in sixteen years. This new book, *Fitz: The Colonial Adventures of James Edward FitzGerald* by Jenifer Roberts, follows Edmund Bohan's *'Blest Madman': FitzGerald of Canterbury* in 1998. FitzGerald – 'Fitz' to friends and contemporaries – was the son of Anglo-Irish gentry, the first Canterbury settler to disembark at Lyttelton, first superintendent of Canterbury Province, and became a long-serving central politician and administrator. He was renowned for his oratory skills and established both of the leading newspapers of Christchurch's history, the *Lyttelton Times* and the *Press*. Although well known to many Cantabrians, FitzGerald's fame is not replicated to nearly the same degree elsewhere in New Zealand, not even in Wellington despite his lengthy residence there. It is only fitting that a man whose regional and national influence extended to international fame in his day has now experienced something of a minor revival in the past two decades.

This book is not only the story of Fitz himself, but also of his wife Fanny Draper. Approaching this book with some scepticism is understandable, as it is written by a direct descendant of FitzGerald and could easily be a bland recitation of a fabled ancestor's achievements. Roberts avoids this trap, and Fanny emerges as the hero rather than Fitz. This remarkable woman, whose family deeply disapproved of her marriage, went with Fitz to found a new settlement on the other side of the world while she was still a teenager. She endured his frequent changes in temperament and recurrent financial difficulties with almost unfathomable strength, bore thirteen children, and buried six of them. Roberts' entirely justifiable admiration for Fanny shines through this book, providing a great case study of the invaluable role that colonial women played in the achievements of their husbands. Fitz's fame is as attributable to Fanny's energy as it is to his own. The study of colonial history, especially the oft-neglected role of women in founding, running, and peopling colonies, is richer for biographies such as this.

In most regards Roberts' account of Fitz complements Bohan's book and deepens our existing understandings. As her title suggests, Roberts tells a more personal story about Fitz and his family. She delves into the FitzGeralds' private life to a greater degree than Bohan, whose book – which is more dense and less immediately accessible to a popular audience – places Fitz in his political context. That is a hallmark of Bohan's biographies, which have a rather traditional emphasis on the public achievements that made the individual notable; his best work, on Edward Stafford,

illuminates not only the man but also much about his era. Roberts sometimes struggles with the complexities of colonial politics, often failing to fully introduce institutions and leading figures. There is an assumed familiarity in parts of the narrative, which is fine for an academic market but this book clearly aims for a wider readership. For example, when so few New Zealanders today are aware of the former provincial governments or the power and role of the press in colonial society, some lengthier explanation of the separation of powers between the provinces and the central government, the course of the provincial versus central struggles in which Fitz was intimately involved, or the character and circulation of the press would be beneficial.

Roberts avoids the cliché of writing a brief overview of her subject's early life. This is not a lazy biography that skips over an individual's youth in as few passages as possible to get swiftly to the 'action'. The first six chapters contain much essential information to understand Fitz's career in New Zealand and the account of Fitz and Fanny's marriage is one of the book's most memorable passages. Roberts has accessed sources previously overlooked by or unknown to historians and used them to debunk a number of falsehoods about Fitz, especially his young adulthood. The man himself told and encouraged many myths, and Roberts dispassionately reveals the truth – in the process showing Fitz to have struggled and failed at numerous endeavours, an impression quite contrary to the narrative that has been handed down in Canterbury and within the FitzGerald family. Her most contentious claim is her suggestion that Fitz's erratic behaviour can be

explained by an undiagnosed bipolar disorder. This is quite a bold assertion to make, especially for one without medical training, and requires more rigorous exposition with greater references to medical literature and studies in the history of medicine. The bibliography contains just one book on bipolar disorder. While Roberts' diagnosis may be valid, it needs very firm substantiation before it can be accepted as the source of Fitz's often baffling or frustrating actions.

The book is well produced by Otago University Press and is a credit to them. It contains plenty of illustrations, including many of Fitz's paintings; among his achievements and skills, his artistic talent is poorly known but depicted prominently here. The photographic selection brings the narrative to life, especially with previously unpublished photographs such as one of Fitz's 'circulating medium', his horse-drawn cart of peculiar design. It is a shame that Fanny's considerable music talents, of which Roberts leaves readers in no doubt, cannot be showcased in a similar manner. The promotional claim that this biography 'reads as a novel' perhaps oversells it a little, but it is a very accessible and engaging narrative and it has been rewarded by appearing in top ten lists of non-fiction book sales in New Zealand. This book speaks to a number of themes in colonial history and should be of interest to historians beyond as well as within New Zealand.

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