WHAT useful perspective on an interpretation of Pakeha society in colonial New Zealand may be gained from comparison with studies of North American society in the same period? Most obviously, comparison can assist evaluation of claims for national distinctiveness. But it can also improve interpretations of the patterns themselves when the societies compared have much in common, as these English-speaking 'new societies' had. Where similar phenomena have been interpreted differently, we are forced to consider possible meanings and causal explanations that we may have ignored or underestimated. Reading Miles Fairburn's *The Ideal Society and its Enemies* (Auckland, 1989), had that effect on me. For some of Fairburn's interpretations contrast sharply with recent histories on similar subjects in the United States.

In particular, Fairburn's interpretation of transiency and his use of it in characterizing Pakeha society as 'atomized' in the colonial period take an American historian back to a perspective on mobility which characterized the new social history in the late 1960s but which no longer finds much support. The sheer — and shocking — magnitude of migration in and out of North American localities discovered by the first generation of mobility studies in the late 1960s led quickly to speculation about how population volatility unsettled society. Stephan Thernstrom generalized the predominant tendency when he asked whether the higher non-persistence of manual workers, and especially of the least skilled, pointed to 'the existence of a permanent floating proletariat made of men ever on the move spatially but rarely winning economic gains as a result of spatial mobility.'

Certain patterns in mobility, such as the greater transiency of young men, were noted from the beginning. However, attention focused on the frequency of non-persistence for individuals of different ages, skill and property levels, and household statuses rather than upon the circumstances surrounding migration.

There was a tendency initially to treat transiency as having a similar meaning everywhere — lack of social connection — regardless of its particular social contexts. In the United States the most dramatic early challenges to this tendency came from labour historians in the early 1970s, who rejected the presumption of working-class atomization. But family and immigration historians followed

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quickly, emphasizing varied forms of co-operation with the migration process. Since then the few mobility studies published have tended to emphasize how the particular contexts for migration shape it, including the situation of ethnic and religious groups and the state of local or regional economies and occupational groups.

There is agreement on the need — daunting as that task is — to move beyond the study of non-persistence in particular localities to the tracing of individual and group paths in migration since the few studies we have so strongly suggest the importance of context, the rationality of individual choices, the frequency of movement back and forth between places of origin and destination, and continuing relationships of many individual migrants with both places. Studies of European immigration to the United States have reinforced this conclusion in recent years. Examining the experience of particular groups of emigrants on both sides of the Atlantic, they emphasize cultural continuity in both the selection of destinations and in adaptations to them. John Bodnar’s choice of metaphor for the title of his 1980 synthesis, The Transplanted, contrasts deliberately with Oscar Handlin’s earlier synthesis, The Uprooted, published in 1952.

How does this shift in direction affect comparison of The Ideal Society and its Enemies with studies of similar aspects of nineteenth-century American society, especially in those frontier regions whose conditions have some resemblance to colonial New Zealand? Is comparison problematic because of Fairburn’s national focus and his strategy of generalizing most social phenomena — such as transiency, kinship, home ownership, and domestic service — for the whole country, as if their meaning rarely depended upon more immediate contexts? This reader believes it is. My essay will identify some parts of Fairburn’s analysis which seem questionable in the light of recent studies of American localities. In so doing, it may suggest the usefulness of more disaggregated descriptions of society in New Zealand for comparisons with the United States and with other

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English-speaking frontiers. The analysis of transiency itself is a striking case in point. Fairburn's picture of individuals isolated by their wanderings contrasts dramatically with current descriptions of the westward movement in the United States. Studies of particular localities as well as more general accounts overwhelmingly show that, with the exception of some specialized frontiers like mining regions, families predominated in this migration rather than single men. That was true in many new areas which had high rates of non-persistence like agricultural Trempeleau County in Wisconsin. Kinship ties loomed very large in the peculiarly difficult and lengthy overland migration to the west coast at mid-century where extraordinary co-operation was required.

Reconsidering nineteenth-century migration in the light of North American and European community studies, Gordon Darroch concluded that circular and chain migration were the predominant forms, primarily under the auspices of networks of family and friends. He found the 'transiency thesis . . . least convincing when it implies that migration was a culturally divisive and personally disorganizing experience'. Families predominated in emigration from the British Isles to America until the late nineteenth century and in most streams of European immigrants once footholds had been established in American localities. Moreover, they brought with them adaptive habits from their experience with transiency in the Old World, notably in seasonal migrations in search of employment.

5 While I think similarities between society in colonial New Zealand and in parts of the United States are sufficient to raise useful questions about parts of Fairburn's analysis, a more exact comparative evaluation is impossible without closer comparisons on a number of related subjects. The difficulty of these comparisons — like that of comparative history generally — should not be underestimated. For example, we need to know whether differences between the two countries in the timing of transportation and communication to the interior are associated with differences in the character, expectations, and social interaction of migrants. The strong mining and pastoral component in American movement west of the Mississippi River after 1850 makes that region most appropriate for comparison with the early decades of New Zealand settlement, yet railroad penetration of the interior would occur sooner in the US through extension of an already existing network to the East. How much of an advantage settlers on this last American frontier enjoyed overall in transportation and communication remains to be determined as do its social consequences. Similarly, we need to know how much greater the frequency of kin, friends, and neighbours was in the American West than in New Zealand because of the differing proportions of internal migrants and foreign immigrants. This will affect our view of how far either frontier was a gathering of strangers.

7 Merle Curti et al., The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County, Stanford, 1959; for a useful survey of the literature on population and mobility in the West, see Margaret Walsh, The American Frontier Revisited, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1981, chap. 5.
By contrast, the much greater importance of mining in immigration to New Zealand at mid-century necessarily meant a much higher proportion of single and very transient males, as Fairburn rightly emphasizes.\textsuperscript{11} Whether these men were almost invariably unrelated by blood or prior acquaintance is questionable. And whether they set the tone for society in most non-mining areas is unclear. The decadal non-persistence rates for heads of household which Fairburn presents for 15 localities do not tell us about the relative importance or transiency of single males, let alone distinguish between sons and unrelated individuals. Fairburn’s supplementary analysis of household structure from an 1892 survey is not conclusive evidence for his argument that kinship interaction was unimportant. Where the nuclear family prevails, as it did throughout the English-speaking world, the household usually is comprised of the nuclear family; but kinship relations extend beyond the household, often within the same neighbourhood, locality, or region.\textsuperscript{12}

A study of kinship through the 1850 census in a town on the Illinois frontier found that more than one-quarter of the adult males had at least one other adult male relative resident locally. By 1860 the proportion rose to one-third and by then kin linkages of four to five members were not infrequent. The investigator concluded: ‘Mobility would, in many cases, sever the ties between brothers, fathers, and sons, yet this was perhaps a sign of the strength of kinship in a mobile society. Many groups broken by migration would again be reunited, just as new kinship networks were constantly being reconstituted by newcomers to Jacksonville.’\textsuperscript{13}

Beyond the question of whether Fairburn’s analysis of transiency underestimates the frequency of kin and other kinds of relatedness among migrants lie further questions: do the studies he has used overstate the frequency of non-persistence? Does Fairburn himself pay sufficient attention to variations in frequency between localities? As Rollo Arnold has noted, the transiency statistics for New Zealand derived from directory tracing are less reliable than those for North America which link censuses.\textsuperscript{14} The fuller census data increase the likelihood of discovering persistence where names are either common or mis-spelled.

Michael Katz believes that even the North American rates of transiency ‘probably reflect the crudity of instruments of measurement rather than a real uniformity in nineteenth-century America’.\textsuperscript{15} He argues that population persistence and in-migration will turn out to vary systematically with patterns of local

\textsuperscript{11} In the United States the contrast in transiency between mining and other areas was sharp: only 10\% of the 1870 population of five Idaho mining towns persisted to 1880, for example. Roger Nichols, ed., \textit{American Frontier and Western Issues: A Historiographical Review}, Westport, 1986, p.115.
\textsuperscript{12} Fairburn, pp.129 (Table 5.1), 163.
economic development. It is hard to believe that transiency did not differ greatly among New Zealand settings as diverse as the large runs, areas of subsistence agriculture, mining frontiers, rural trading towns, and seaports.\textsuperscript{16}

There already are significant variations between localities in the statistics Fairburn presents, but he does not ask how they may be related to economic and social differences among these 15 towns.\textsuperscript{17} In Masterton and New Plymouth, for example, half or more of the households persisted through the decades examined. Is this greater stability related to the character of the local economy and its predominant occupations? Is the sex ratio less imbalanced than in other areas and the proportion of single males less? Do sons account for more of the latter than they do in localities with higher rates of transiency? We do not learn. We cannot make reasonable guesses about the representativeness of the 15 localities for New Zealand as a whole in the absence of some breakdown which reveals major variations between regions and localities, for example, in population density, sex ratios, and occupational structure.

Even assuming, as we should, that decadal non-persistence — the only measure of transiency Fairburn has — was frequent if not uniform in most settings in a new society, its meaning remains to be determined. Here evidence on individual moves in American community studies shows how that measure misses the extent of individuals’ relations with particular localities over time. Annual directory traces reveal that many manual workers moved in and out of a given town repeatedly over several decades. Their local stays often lasted several years, but rarely a decade, so that they would figure repeatedly as transients. Yet they clearly were familiar with the town and when resident elsewhere probably kept in touch with local employment opportunities through acquaintances. A study of the unemployed in Massachusetts emphasizes the purposiveness, if not always the success, of their movements and the vital role of kin networks in helping them ‘find jobs and in providing a sanctuary for men and women who were leaving town, leaving the state, or leaving the country’.\textsuperscript{18}

Search for the familiar also appears in the settling of new frontiers. Most foreign immigrant groups followed paths already travelled by kinsmen and village neighbours whenever they could. In addition, they tended to choose for their new homes areas as similar as possible in climate, landscape, and soil type

\textsuperscript{16} Ideally, we need studies of these settings which distinguish rates of persistence (and their relation to household status) for more permanent and more transient or seasonal kinds of workers. In rural settings where single male workers were more numerous, as on the bonanza wheat farms or the great sheep runs, greater stability for more permanent workers (often with families) may well have created an atmosphere that differs from the one overall transiency rates suggest. John E. Martin describes the more permanent and transient kinds of employment on runs and estates in \textit{The Forgotten Worker: The Rural Wage Earner in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand}, Wellington, 1990, pp.49-56, 98-104.

\textsuperscript{17} Fairburn, p.129: Table 5.1. Fairburn does mention ‘sharp but fluctuating differences in economic growth and prosperity from region to region or even within regions’ but does not describe them or relate them to transiency. ibid., p.137.

to those from which they had emigrated. Migration did not cease for many settlers with the choice of homestead, but that migration also tended to become patterned quickly. On the Dakota frontier new farmers supplemented their income while they were establishing themselves through labour for others, usually within a 30-mile region. Many also left North Dakota in the winter months to work in the lumber camps in the Upper Lake States. Frequent movement, often with severe hardship? Yes. Isolated wandering with little social connection anywhere? American studies of movements on new frontiers do not suggest this was the experience of the majority of migrants.

One group which loomed large on some American frontiers is conspicuously absent from Fairburn's analysis, if not from his literary evidence. A historian of Midwestern towns long ago called attention to the early emergence of ruling circles there and to the importance of shopkeepers and members of the professions in promoting town growth. Because the prosperity of this leadership group depended upon the prosperity of their towns, they had continuing incentive not only for boosting but for reaching out to newcomers to make them feel at home and so settle, buy, or invest. (Occupational mobility in their case did not lead to atomization, quite the contrary.) Other historians have called attention to the mushrooming of political activity as new towns in the northwest competed for advantages — like internal improvements or designation as county seats — and so for population. That the proprietorial and professional class usually was more stable than the rest of town populations has now been shown by several community mobility studies. But their most striking finding is that those who remained in American localities more than a decade — regardless of occupation — tended to remain for the rest of their working lives. They provided communal memory as well as a source of information and services for newcomers.

The universality of boosterism on English-speaking frontiers and the importance of towns in colonial New Zealand have been emphasized by David Hamer. Raewyn Dalziel notes how townspeople, 'anxious to be seen as progressive and community-minded and wanting to attract more residents and economic investment', joined together to 'build churches, schools, town halls, athenaeums and even theatres' and to form a variety of cultural institutions and civic services as villages and towns multiplied during the 1870s and 80s. So it is surprising that Fairburn gives so little attention to the question of social interaction in towns. He

20 Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border, Bloomington, 1954, pp.22-28.
chooses instead to emphasize, through a quantitative analysis of clustering, that a large minority of households remained dispersed. Although he provides no mappings to indicate how dispersed they were, he argues that primitive transportation and communication left them 'isolated, buried in space'.

One can imagine a case being made for the lesser importance of rural-town interaction in areas dominated by bonanza wheat farms or large pastoral estates, as was true in the United State of the plantation belt in the Old Southwest; but one can also imagine that in many farming areas, towns in New Zealand played a role more similar to that of towns in the Old Northwest.

The limited disaggregation of transiency which Fairburn provides makes comparison problematical. His sharp contrast between New Zealand and the American frontier in social relationships is equally difficult to evaluate. He remarks that while Frederick Jackson Turner 'postulated that extreme individualism co-existed with much informal community interaction and neighborly collaboration, in New Zealand this was rare'. Fairburn's literary evidence on loneliness can be matched on American and other frontiers where homesteads were scattered and transportation difficult, but that rarely tells us enough about the character and extent of social interaction. For example, in the northern United States in the early nineteenth century before production for a market was usual, account books often reveal more than letters, diaries, and journals of the varied and ingenious forms of barter exchange by which rural families co-operated to maintain relative self-sufficiency.

Fairburn believes that an imported ideology — the insider's view — encouraged the tendency to social atomization. But American studies make me wonder whether the themes of this ideology were distinctive to the New Zealand frontier and so should result in any stronger preference for 'minimal social organization' than occurred on other frontiers. Pictures of the trans-Mississippi West as a Garden of Eden predominated in the United States, despite the forbidding realities of much of that region. The pervasiveness of the theme of natural abundance in defining the national experience has supported characterization of the Americans as 'people of plenty'.

Whether the insider's view was as pervasive within New Zealand as Fairburn claims also seems questionable. That a tiny minority of immigrants utilized

24 Fairburn, pp.172-5.
25 ibid., p.13.
28 David Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character, Chicago, 1954.
Arcadian language in their letters home does not warrant assuming their representativeness in the absence of any systematic analysis of the writers' situation and background. An American reader finds it hard to believe that the majority of immigrants to New Zealand preferred minimal social organization even if colonial rhetoric 'largely ignored and underplayed . . . its governmental and judicial structures, its schools, voluntary organizations, joint stock companies, family ties, patchwork of informal groupings, and so forth'. 29 The evidence from American frontiers suggests that the majority of settlers wished to re-establish most of the customs and institutions of the places they left as soon as possible and were pragmatic in sharing and using government and voluntary association to achieve their purposes.

Fairburn does not examine closely the process by which social organization developed even at the local level. He does provide evidence for a few localities on the time it took to create institutions like churches and lodges.30 He emphasizes the slowness, but this reader wonders what standard for comparison he has in mind. For the timing seems remarkably similar to that on a Wisconsin farming frontier of the 1850s and 60s. There, relative speed in institutional development was to be expected given the importance of New Englanders in Trempeleau county's early leadership and the experience of many migrants with settling previous trans-Appalachian frontiers.31

On American frontiers there were significant differences among areas and groups of migrants in terms of their desire for well-developed institutions. Turner long ago insisted that the southwest, whose hero was the Scots-Irish Andrew Jackson, differed in important respects from the area of New England settlement in the northwest represented by Abraham Lincoln.32 Turner's treatment of cultural differences was impressionistic; investigators since then have tried to specify more precisely the transplantation of different cultures on new frontiers.33

More relevant to New Zealand are studies which stress the importance of

29 Fairburn, p.27.
30 ibid., pp.182-3.
31 By contrast, in the first rush into the Ohio River valley early in the century, settlers had to turn for some years to ad hoc arrangements — like lay preachers and circuit-riding clergy gathering the faithful in clearings or homesteads — before they had the time and resources to create congregations with regular places of worship let alone resident pastors. Curti et al., pp.124-31; Rohrbough, pp.145-52. For the argument that the dissenting denominations on the frontier provided not only the major means for strangers to establish close personal relations quickly but also to discipline them and create group unity, see T. Scott Miyakawa, Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier, Chicago, chap. 15; Elizabeth Nottingham, Methodism and the Frontier: Indiana Proving Ground, New York, 1966.
33 For a review of the literature, see Carleton Qualey, ‘Ethnic Groups and the Frontier’ in Nichols, ed., American Frontier. For the argument that conflict between indigenous peoples and the new settlers defines and so must be the central focus of frontier studies, see Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds, The Frontier in History: North America and South Africa Compared, New Haven, 1981. Few studies of frontiers and frontier periods in either the United States or New Zealand meet that criterion.
different British regional folkways in shaping who settled where in America and the character of the new regional cultures they created. The most ambitious and recent effort identifies four major (and several minor) sets of transplanted folkways: from East Anglia initially to New England, from the south and west of England initially to the Chesapeake region, from the North Midlands of England and Wales to the Delaware valley, and from the borders of North Britain and Northern Ireland to the Appalachian backcountry. It argues that while the people of these four British cultures shared many traits, they also were very different when compared in rank and wealth systems, polity, family, marriage, and child-rearing patterns, literacy, architecture, work and sport habits, religion and magic, foodways, and dress. It argues further that these cultures did not coexist comfortably, that their conflicts in values led to mutual detestation long before they experienced conflicts in material interests. This investigation finds that during the eighteenth century the rural parts of British America became more insulated and fixed in their traditional ways; in the nineteenth century these four cultures expanded rapidly throughout the United States with many of their distinguishing traits persisting.

Whether this new emphasis upon cultural division among British streams of immigration will survive criticism more easily than did the early preoccupation with mobility in the new social history is not clear yet. But at the very least it forces anyone concerned with frontiers where English-speaking immigrants predominated to try to discover how far cultural differences in Britain shaped the immigrants’ patterns of settlement and social interaction in their new environments. Given the obvious differences, for example, between the concentration of Scots Presbyterians in Otago and of Anglicans in Canterbury the absence of attention to cultural differences in Fairburn’s book is striking. Why does he not discuss — if only to argue against — the possible influence of different religious and regional traditions among British immigrants in areas where particular groups clustered strongly. Lacking this discussion, this reader finds implausible Fairburn’s claim that ‘geographic mobility was so strong everywhere that it homogenized the lifestyles of colonists, and prevented almost every locality from insulating itself from the wider society to the point where it could evolve its own sub-culture’. Transiency in North America did not have that consequence.

Fairburn does address directly another kind of group separation: he rejects the relevance of class division to New Zealand, even for its four major cities in the late nineteenth century. It is unclear to this reader whether the studies Fairburn cites of town and suburban electorates in the 1920s (which show substantial

35 As Jock Phillips observed recently: ‘In its ignoring of culture, Fairburn’s thesis invites a much richer analysis of the peopling of New Zealand. We cannot understand what made New Zealand different unless we understand the habits and the values of those who came here.’ ‘Of Verandahs and Fish and Chips and Footie on Saturday Afternoon’, New Zealand Journal of History, 24, 2 (1990), p.133.
36 Fairburn, p.134.
residential mixing of social classes) predict what will be found for the late nineteenth century. But even if they do, American studies suggest that residential propinquity is not essential for class solidarity. In Pittsburgh from the 1860s to the 1880s ‘laborers, craftsmen, merchants, and manufacturers lived close together, often on the same street’, but worker organization and militancy also flourished. By contrast, in the 1920s when the city was sharply segregated residentially as well as controlled by industry, workers were passive.  

More important, as Fairburn himself notes, judgment about working-class subcultures requires more systematic attention to voluntary associations, recreation, and other social traits and values attributed to class. Comparison with studies of urban working-class subcultures in the United States during the same period of time suggests that several phenomena that Fairburn cites as evidence against class division and in support of the opportunities and masterlessness of New Zealanders may be interpreted differently. His assumption that transience ‘was an individualistic and conservative mechanism of self-improvement’ is not supported by North American studies, if that presumption precludes working-class mutualism and even militancy when there are reasonable prospects for its success. This reader guesses that Fairburn underestimates the frequency and importance of class distinctions and resentments among manual workers.

That workers’ grievances and class feeling might not result in successful political mobilization or union organization does not mean they might not shape everyday social interaction in a host of ways. This shaping is evident in North American cities with diversified manufacturing economies as well as those dominated by mass production industries where unionization was broken or blocked in the early twentieth century. Fairburn makes much of the collapse of the temporary boom in union membership after the 1890 Maritime strike; there was a similar collapse after boom in membership for the American Knights of Labor in 1887. The slump in union membership persisted through the early 1890s, which saw some of the angriest episodes of class antagonism in American history. Moreover, at its lowest point in 1894 New Zealand union membership as a proportion of the non-agricultural labour force seems to be somewhat larger than the proportion unionized in the United States at a time of growth for organized labour in 1901. 

Comparison with the United States on home ownership by wage-earners suggests a need for further refinement in Fairburn’s analysis before the meaning of home ownership for different groups can be generalized confidently. Ameri-
can community studies thus far emphasize, as Fairburn does, its usefulness for reducing wage-earning families' economic vulnerability. But they tend toward less optimistic interpretations of the degree of independence from the market power of employers which this entailed. For home ownership, usually a small house and lot, was most frequent at mid-century among less skilled immigrants. In Poughkeepsie, New York, for example, nearly one-half of the unskilled Irish day labourers in 1860 reported real property. At the end of the century, immigrants continued to be homeowners in American cities more frequently than natives. In Detroit 55% of all German heads of household, 46% of the Irish, and 44% of the Poles were homeowners compared to 27% of the disproportionately middle-class native whites.

Fairburn uses the frequency of home ownership and of domestic service in New Zealand to argue that the working-class did not suffer from a demeaning paternalism. Since this reader has never assumed that many historians found this interpretation applicable to Pakeha society as a whole, he thinks the more interesting question is whether these indices are compatible with a society in which class division, if not dependence, remained significant. Comparison with the United States on frequency of domestic service — which working-class women tended to flee whenever they could find non-menial employments — sharpens the question.

Fairburn provides a comparison with other English-speaking areas, but his one American comparison (with Rhode Island in 1689) is misleading and odd, given the good surveys of the subject available. Fairburn is impressed that, among the Australasian areas he compares, New Zealand shares with New South Wales and Queensland the lowest proportion of households with servants in 1891: 18 out of 100. Yet in 1880 the average for the United States as a whole was less than 10 servants per 100 families. (The highest rate, for the mid-Atlantic states was 12; the lowest, for the West, was less than 5.) That proportion declined substantially by 1900. The United States already was more industrialized than New Zealand and (in cities at least) conspicuously stratified. So, if anything, the greater frequency of Pakeha households with servants suggests more of a carryover of Old World attitudes and habits, including class division, although in both countries domestic service declined as women found other job opportunities.

There are other subjects where comparison with the United States could provide a different perspective. For example, Fairburn argues that if a parliament dominated by an economic elite had exercised paternalistic influence it would...


42 Fairburn, pp.87-8; David M. Katzman, Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America, Urbana, 1981, p.56: Table 2-3.
have been quite irrational' for them voluntarily to give the lower classes by extension of suffrage and voting reforms the political competence to overthrow their social power. Yet that is precisely what local notables in American states often did as they extended suffrage early in the nineteenth century, hoping to win the future votes of those they enfranchised.43

Where Fairburn explains litigiousness in colonial New Zealand by paucity of social interaction and so of potential mediators, the experience of colonial New England suggests that a culture supportive of mediation may be the more crucial variable. Puritan convenanted communities in the wilderness began with a remarkably successful emphasis on mediation of disputes; the dramatic increase in litigiousness a century later reflects the decline of that earlier tradition rather than of decline in social interaction.44

Where Fairburn thinks the large size of completed Pakeha families probably was due to the weakness of society, a study of farm families in old and new areas in the northern United States in 1860 suggests that parental perception of the availability of land for their children nearby may be the most satisfactory explanation of the marked differences in fertility between frontier and more settled regions.45

American studies also suggest that more of the ethos of respectability may have been transplanted to New Zealand frontiers and more frequently, especially where families rather than single males predominated, than Fairburn seems to think.46 Most settlers in the trans-Appalachian west were eager to establish the amenities and many of the norms they associated with settled society as quickly as they could, despite the inevitable difficulty on a new frontier. In Fairburn’s interpretation hostility to ‘vagrants’ seems to be the one prejudice of Old World respectability which was reinforced by experience in New Zealand and so survived the conversion to New World ‘Arcadian individualism’.47 This reader suspects that Fairburn’s insistence on his ‘insider’s view’ as norm forces him here into unnecessary acrobatics in interpretation.

My guess is that working-class immigrants to New Zealand, like Americans, distinguished easily between respectability — including its distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor — and Old World accompaniments which they generally rejected — like putting on airs or trying to pull rank. Getting beyond this guesswork will require closer examination both of the

43 Fairburn, p.89; Chilton Williamson, American Suffrage from Property to Democracy, 1760-1860, Princeton, 1960, chaps 8-10.
46 The greater frequency of migration in families in the first two decades of Pakeha settlement — before the gold rushes of the 1860s — and the clustering of a sizeable minority in a few centres would have made cultural transplantation easier. Jock Phillips notes that the ‘cult of sentimental domesticity . . . spread to New Zealand through the import of books, magazines and migrants throughout the period of settlement’. A Man’s Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male — a History, Auckland, 1987, p.222.
47 Fairburn, pp.245-8.
cultural baggage which different groups of immigrants brought to New Zealand, and of the way in which it was selectively rejected, adapted, or reinforced there. I hope that examination will become part of a more general turn among historians of the English-speaking world to comparative analysis of cultural transplantation. J.G.A. Pocock set the stage for it as early as 1972 in his Beaglehole lecture with the wise admonition to place investigation of the derivation of our pluralism 'in a context of inherent diversity, replacing the image of a monolithic “parent society” with that of an expanding zone of cultural conflict and creation'.

The present essay has emphasized comparisons between Fairburn's interpretation and perspectives in North American studies of similar phenomena in the belief that the American experience is relevant. I assume that social patterns and their meanings cut across English-speaking settlements, and that what is truly distinctive in any one of them will be more easily identified through comparison. And what is distinctive may include greater or lesser continuity with British ways than characterizes other colonies, a possibility suggested in Thomas Cholmondley's 1854 prediction: 'Now, while I am convinced that society in such a colony as New Zealand must daily Americanize, I am also persuaded that the New Zealander will retain more of the Briton, than any other colonist, for the following reasons. We have no other colony which so much resembles England in climate, size and position.' As Keith Sinclair's complex analysis of New Zealand's search for a national identity makes clear, Cholmondley's environmentalism was naive, but that does not diminish the continuing relevance of his concern with comparison of Britain's colonies and former colonies in order to determine how and how far they would depart from their British origins.

It may be that colonial New Zealand will prove to be peculiar within the English-speaking world in the character of its individualism and petit-bourgeois egalitarianism, but *The Ideal society and its Enemies* is not persuasive on that point yet. It is not persuasive for a social historian of the United States because, as this essay has tried to show, Fairburn's argument for an 'atomized' society with a preference for 'minimal social organization' rests upon interpretations of phenomena — notably transiency and an Arcadian 'ideology' — which seem implausible in the light of comparisons with North American studies of the same phenomena. Even in those New Zealand settings where Fairburn's interpretation seems most plausible, comparisons raise questions. For example, the preponderance of single males in the mining and pastoral economies may have made antisocial tendencies more frequent and influential in New Zealand, but recent North American studies show important forms of co-operative behaviour among those populations.

Beyond the doubts raised by comparison, this reader finds Fairburn's interpretative framework inherently curious. Colonial Pakeha are depicted as an undifferentiated people who collectively are driven by opposite extremes in

environment and ideology. On the one hand, they appear to swallow hook, line, and sinker an optimistic and boosterish ideology which made them allergic to social organization, even where it might be practical for survival; on the other hand, they seem to be reduced by transiency through a harsh and isolating environment to a homogenized mass of lonely social atoms who have lost whatever (and it remains undiscussed by Fairburn) cultural baggage they brought with them from the Old World.

Were New Zealanders so much more susceptible to ideological blinders than immigrants to other English-speaking frontiers, who learned before long to put in more realistic perspective the ‘land of opportunity’ and ‘streets of gold’ or ‘garden of eden’ stories and rhetoric they had heard from promoters or family and friends? Were they so much less pragmatic in resorting to government and voluntary association wherever they could to lessen their hardships and advance their interests? Were the physical environments of New Zealand so much harsher and the social results — as well as the frequency — of transiency so much different from other frontiers as to produce a society different in kind, and not simply degree? If so, a much more fully developed explanation of differences between New Zealand and other frontiers than Fairburn provides will be needed to make the claim persuasive. Were there no significant differences between social groups and settings in attitudes toward and experience of ‘social organization’?

This social historian suspects there may be negative answers to these questions in future research on social interaction in colonial New Zealand if it adopts a disaggregating strategy and examines closely differences among localities, regions, and industries. What seems desirable now are community studies which combine the systematic analysis that Fairburn favours of mobility and voluntary association with the kind of reconstruction of forms of social interaction and meanings of mobility from personal records that Rollo Arnold does. In the meantime, North American studies make this reader distrust attempts to generalize New Zealand society as a whole during the colonial period. That includes — so far as their proponents have so generalized them — what Fairburn characterizes as the hierarchical, class division, and cohesive local community interpretations as well as his own hypothesis of atomization and minimal social organization.

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51 The sharp and sweeping contrasts Fairburn makes amongst the three hypotheses he rejects made this reader wonder whether he has overstated what the historians cited have claimed for them, just as his flat assertions that he has ‘falsified’ these hypotheses are undercut by the frequency with which he — here to his credit — characterizes conclusions from his own specific analyses as probable or ‘likely’. 