

designed to check the increasing tendency to use the popular Pākehā appellation, the 'Whanganui Tribe', and to establish a Māori, pan-Whanganui entity capable of confronting Pākehā power. Even if this material was eventually rejected on the basis of better Māori evidence, at least it should have been discussed.

These issues might not have been of such importance if it was not for the possibility that the amorphous treatment of identity on the river has obscured motivation in some of Young's accounts of the great Māori crises in the later nineteenth century. Why did the lower river tribes support the colonists and the government against the up-river tribes? Was it self-interest, proximity, or committed loyalty, or was there not also a long-standing division of allegiances based on whakapapa? Why did Mete Kīngi refuse to join Te Keepa's grand, land-preserving union, symbolized by Kemp's Pole at Kauarapāua in 1880? Was it not at least partly because his mana — his local paramountcy — would have been compromised? The basis of that mana was genealogical and confined to a particular river tribe and its set of hapū.

There is no room in a short review to substantiate these kind of points, or for other criticisms, and it would be ungenerous to continue. Young has written a fine study, and has properly subtitled it '*histories from the Whanganui River*'. That there are other histories still to write springs from his self-imposed limitations, deriving from the sensitive integrity of his dealings with the river people. Leaving aside these matters, however, one is enriched after reading *Woven By Water*.

Some minor quibbles concern the map at the beginning — it is a very clear representation of the river from about the mid-nineteenth century but lacking in names important earlier (more detailed maps of limited stretches of the river would have been helpful). Other strictly minor concerns include various incomplete references, and the strange use (at times) of the macrons which mark long vowels. Young has chosen not to macron personal names, a necessary touch of sensitivity because people alive today are apt to react negatively to macrons on their names, but he has used macrons for iwi and hapū names, some incorrectly (e.g. Ngā Rauru, not Ngā Rāuru — *vide* Ruka Broughton, Ngāti Hāua of upper Whanganui, not Ngāti Hāua — *vide* Pei Te Hurinui and Bruce Biggs). Why has he chosen the form Te Atihaunui-a-paparangi, when the late twentieth-century convention is to separate the name of the ancestor from the group prefix (Ati, Ngāti, Ngāi etc.), and to capitalize proper names within a larger name (Te Ati Haunui-a-Pāpārangi)? Some place names have macrons; others do not. Why not Rānana, Rākātō, Ohinemutu, Opepe, Hātete, Whakatāne, Ruamāhanga, Tāmaki and Waihi, and why Petaania instead of Petānia? In the end, however, these are minor matters of optional style, and they probably upset only a few copy-editors.

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*Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*

*To Be a Hero: Sir George Grey 1812–1898.* By Edmund Bohan. HarperCollins, Auckland, 1998. 374 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-86950-279-5.

LAST YEAR was the centenary of Sir George Grey's death. Unfortunately Edmund Bohan's biography of Grey, *To Be a Hero*, is not the book New Zealand needed to mark that occasion. Admittedly, Bohan has beautifully rewritten long-known facts for popular consumption, and does introduce new material which nuances Grey's complexity. However, he does little more here than 'humanize' the perspective of Grey that emerged years ago with the work of Sinclair, Rutherford, McLintock and Dalton, and an unfortunate television series.

The dated nature of this biography is shown in three main ways. First, it is curiously innocent of recent theoretical studies in race relations. Frantz Fanon and Edward Said at least should have provided Bohan with a base for analysing Grey's responses towards the indigenous cultures he intruded upon. This absence marks a serious lacuna. The poverty of South African sources and literature on the period in Bohan's bibliography marks another. A modern author who can almost paraphrase 'Grey-speak' by stating that the Xhosa, at the time of the cattle-killing, had 'reverted to superstition and grotesque interpretations of fanciful dreams', has lived too long and without detachment with his subject to the point of partial identity. Bohan's prose carries him away when he states that 'the prophetic frenzy was inexorably consuming the Xhosa people'.

Second, Bohan is reluctant to discuss Grey's controversial sexuality. He remarks that there is no proof to support allegations about Grey's sexuality, but this is not enough. Texts that do give indications of Grey's sexual behaviour — such as Annie George's letter to Isobel Ashton alluding to blackmail — are brushed aside. Lady Grey comes out of all this a neurotic figure, with scant acknowledgement that the man she was married to might have contributed greatly to her instability. Grey's view of her appears to win out.

A third reason why the biography seems a little dated is its reliance on chronological narrative technique. A subject whose life is of significance to British Imperial history, to Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, without any connecting base between them, presents a challenge that may yield to other approaches. Grey is revealed candidly enough in *To Be a Hero*, with all his eccentricities, 'paranoia', 'melancholia' and 'pathological' behaviour, and yet strangely desexed, which is all the more peculiar as Bohan makes the marriage breakdown the keystone of his biography. The man who instigated atrocities against Maori and Xhosa is just made to look 'dotty' and pitiful in his middle and old age.

Bohan runs a thread of psychiatric insinuations through the book which he only fully explained outside the text in a Christchurch *Press* interview, where he stated that he considers Grey likely suffered from manic depression occasioned by his wife's 'infidelity'. If authors have an agenda on a biographical subject, they should simply spell it out or else desist altogether.

I appreciate that there has been an unspoken convention among New Zealand historians to avoid any analysis of character in depth, and that Bohan may well have been negotiating his way through protocols about what may or may not be feasibly introduced into historical narrative. The profession's reluctance to examine personalities in this way is all the more extraordinary given the results that British historians have had in illuminating Hitler, Stalin, Sir Richard Burton and T.E. Lawrence. The best British biographers, like Alan Bullock for instance, admit that they can never dispel the mystery of human evil to a given personality but they have made a significant achievement by submitting what they could to rational explanation.

This kind of analysis should only be attempted in an historical biography with subjects whose dysfunction implicated itself in political events. Attempts to do the same with John Ballance or Sir Robert Stout for example, would be invasive and beside the point. But Grey told lies and made exaggerations even in his youth. The questions to ask are why he did this and why could he no longer manage it from later mid-life onwards as effectively as he had done before? There are delusional and paranoid systems in Grey's personality that are clearly identifiable. In Grey's case, however, we can never know the origins of any mental illness or neurosis he may have suffered. It would be impossible and presumptuous to 'psychoanalyse' him. We have almost no independent accounts of his childhood and youth. He remains trapped in his own historicism. There are responsible and ethical ways of going about such character analyses: it just seems that the techniques are less known here or are more resisted than

elsewhere. As it is, Bohan is in the false situation of having constructed a lock and then exhibiting the key to it quite separately.

In trying to humanize Grey, Bohan has failed to break through the 'Romance of a Proconsul'. The source of both the charm and the horror that Grey emanated is left intact. Even the eccentricities Bohan details were only 'positive' symptoms or defence mechanisms that highlight the isolation Grey experienced with his contemporaries. Still, the coy enthusiasm Bohan has felt for him is an important step in Pakeha New Zealand towards owning up to Grey. A pervasive disavowal over the past 40 years has made it easy for us to dissociate ourselves from him, as an imposition from outside on one who was simply *sui generis*.

It would be a huge step if we could own up to both Grey's brilliance and our complicity in the evil he did. I look forward to the books that Xhosa, Zulu, Aboriginal and Maori historians will publish on their own people's experience of this tormented and tormenting man.

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*The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography Volume Four 1921–1940*. General Editor Claudia Orange. Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books and the Department of Internal Affairs, Auckland, 1998. 650 pp. NZ price: \$130.00. ISBN 1-86940-203-0.

THIS LATEST — and penultimate — volume of the DNZB covers lives of note of the years 1921–1940. It is formatted in exactly the same way as its three predecessors and again achieves, seemingly (not in fact of course) without effort, the same high standards of design and usability, the same sure touch with respect to choice and representativeness of entries. Obviously with a period so much shorter than a life span there is considerable overlap into earlier and later periods, but by and large the editorial team has succeeded in keeping the focus firmly on those years which ever since 1939 have borne the label 'inter-war'. It seems superfluous to comment, therefore, on these aspects and this review instead considers the contribution of the volume to the present and future historiography of the inter-war period.

Is anything harder to capture than passionate commitment to a cause which has died? Volume Four performs good service in reminding us how important monetary reform was for so many — H.G.R. Mason, A.R.D. Fairburn, A.N. Field, Harold Rushworth for instance — in the 1930s. It is less successful in conveying a much more pervasive faith — that in imperialism, or, in its Labour Party guise, attachment to the British Commonwealth. I am not sure a reader of this volume would be able to discern what a near-universal ideology this was (rather like today's 'Europeanism' in continental Europe). In both cases historians need to be alert to these now unfamiliar dimensions of a not unfamiliar world.

One 'empire' which is remembered is New Zealand's own Pacific one. Indeed this reviewer picked up two further entries which did not make the end-list of those with Pacific connections. Fred Furkert, the engineer and hydro dam builder of the 1920s, advised the administration in Samoa on hydro development. R.A.K. Mason evidently related the beginnings of his disillusionment with New Zealand nationalism to what he had learnt of the New Zealand record in the Pacific on an island trip in 1931.

The many biographies of labour activists and socialists of this era — individuals like Jean Devanny, Alex Galbraith and Sid Scott as well as trade unionists like Dan Sullivan and Ken Baxter, Elizabeth McCombs and Robert MacFarlane — convey a