

into nineteenth-century life and love or whether it was an extreme case forced by separation. But these questions relate more to the nature of the material than Fry's interpretation of it. To some extent these questions simply reflect the fragmentary and partial nature of this kind of historical evidence.

Tom's Letters is a book of many strengths. It succeeds in supporting two main analytical threads: the analysis of the King material and the integration of current historiographical debate. Fry relates her close readings of the letters to recent scholarly observations about family, the private lives of nineteenth-century men, love and courtship. These discussions do not distract from the narrative but enhance and 'flesh out' the personality of Tom King. *Toms' Letters* is therefore an important contribution to our understanding of nineteenth-century social relationships. It complements other works that have illuminated the lives of women in the nineteenth-century, both in New Zealand and further afield. And in exploring the life of early settler New Plymouth, the book sits alongside Frances Porter's biography of Jane Maria Atkinson, *Born to New Zealand* (1989). Like Miles Fairburn's *Nearly Out of Heart and Hope* (1995), it shows just how rewarding a close reading of one person's life can be.

An immensely enjoyable and satisfying book, *Tom's Letters* is carefully considered, well written, lively and engaging. It does not attempt any grand generalisations but aims instead to unsettle our notions and assumptions of marriage, love and intimacy in the nineteenth century. I finished the book wanting to know more about Tom and his family's life after 1860 when the letters end: but the book focuses on the journey itself, rather than the destination. In the end, Fry succeeds in bringing Tom King, in all his facets, to life. *Tom's Letters* is a timely reminder that nineteenth-century men, like nineteenth-century women, were no less complex, difficult or contradictory than ourselves.

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Notice

"as fair as New Zealand to me"

Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2000.

The full title of this book indicates something of its context and purpose: *"as fair as New Zealand to me" New Zealand Writers in Katherine Mansfield's Menton*

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is a celebration of the Mansfield Memorial Fellowship, which since 1970 has given a New Zealand writer an opportunity to write in Mansfield's Villa Isola Bella on the Cote d'Azur. In an imaginative contrivance, twenty-three of the writers were sent a belated letter from KM and asked to reply. Their responses were first read at a function celebrating the Fellowship, and are here published to provide a more permanent record of these very individual reactions to the Menton experience, to the processes of creative writing, and sometimes to the abiding influence of Katherine Mansfield.