

*The Irish in New Zealand. Historical Contexts and Perspectives.* Edited by Brad Patterson. Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies/Victoria University Press, 2002. 212 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-473-08968-8.

THE SOMETIMES TEDIOUS PREOCCUPATION of New Zealanders over the last few decades with 'national identity' has at least focused interest on the diverse people who converged here. It is curious that the first to draw the attention of academic historians were the Dalmatians, and the most fully recorded were the Chinese, while the statistically far more significant Irish and Scots were virtually ignored until recently. This attractive volume helps to bring the Irish to light and shelves well in the mind alongside earlier collections like *A Distant Shore* (2000) and the books of Patrick O'Farrell and Donald Akenson. The book is impeccably edited by Brad Patterson, whose introduction carefully guides us into the 12 essays. Some questions run throughout, although often just below the surface: who were 'the Irish', how different were they, and from what, and what effect did their difference have? And what, in New Zealand, was 'Irish' and what 'Catholic'?

Terry Hearn provides the necessary hard demographic data in a succinct outline of Irish immigration 1840–1945, the long time-frame being important because the migration varied in religious composition, place of origin and destinations. This does not entirely negate the notion that 'Irish' equalled 'Catholic'; even as we are warned against that assumption, it does turn up in some of the essays. Substantial numbers of Irish, often with a disproportionate presence in particular places (e.g. Auckland), were not Catholic. Furthermore, 'Irish Catholic' was an unstable identifier, because of what Patrick O'Farrell refers to as 'ethnic fade'.

In Hugh Laracy's excellent account of the Irish-American missionary, Patrick Hennebery, Irish Catholics in New Zealand emerge as less Irish and more Catholic — a Catholicism of regular observance, respectability (temperance was a theme) and modernized devotional practices in a confident new ecumenical community. Even Irish nationalism was separated from secularist and republican energies and co-opted by the church, a point succinctly made by Kevin Molloy in a refreshing essay which sets *The Tablet* in the wider rhetoric of Irish and Irish-American publishing. But *The Tablet's* announcement in 1886 that 'it was distinctly Irish, as well as distinctly Catholic' gives rise to expressions like 'the New Zealand Irish community' which convey little.

In her study of 'Irishtown Hamilton East 1864–1940', Cathy O'Shea-Miles makes strong claims for 'traditional Irish associations and patterns of behaviour', yet what is described almost wholly revolves around the church. By the third generation, she says, 'the narratives indicate there had ceased to be any difference between Catholic and Irish'. Yet if Hamilton East — and even the provenance of the name 'Irishtown' is doubtful — seems rather too insistent on 'being Irish', at Pukekohe another cluster of Irish, Protestant and Catholic, lived so quietly together, untouched by sectarianism, that in his account of them Alasdair Galbraith is prompted to ask why they were 'not noticed'. Perhaps they did not seek to be noticed in this way, preferring to be seen as successful farmers. Angela McCarthy hints in her study of immigrants' letters how these carried codes of self-fashioning.

The instability of markers like 'Irish', 'Catholic' and 'Irish Catholic' is compounded by the strong sense of 'being British'. Seán Brosnahan's entertaining account of the Wellington IRA shows how thin on the ground Sinn Feiners were, and how for most people the struggle for Home Rule for Ireland was concluded in the Treaty of 1921–1922. The Catholic leaders of Rory Sweetman's essay, even Bishop Moran, steered the Irish towards the mainstream. The remarkable Catholic schools were, after all, a parallel system, not an alternative one: the national syllabus taught in a Catholic environment.

In Edmund Bohan's portraits of them, the 'Irishness' of Stafford, Fitzgerald and Grey was overwritten by the Anglo narrative of Reeves' *Long White Cloud*. But these Irishmen

were British imperialists, which is how they came to be in New Zealand, and why there were so many like them all over the empire. Among them were the Mulgans, Church of Ireland Ulsterman, of whom Vincent O'Sullivan writes gracefully in an account of John Mulgan in Northern Ireland in 1940–1942. If Mulgan felt himself something other than a New Zealander, it was British, not Irish. Then again, 'British' and 'New Zealand' were not polarities; one subsumed the other.

The Catholic Church, Irish Catholicism, Ireland, the Irish of the diaspora, England, the United Kingdom, the British Empire — all these have their own historical trajectories, and it is at the intersections of these that real lives are lived. Donald Akenson reminds us in the final essay that national narratives tend to be Whiggish and aggregative but says that the work of future historians of New Zealand 'will be disaggregative and explosive', i.e. the parts will be given precedence over the whole. Maybe, maybe not. The 'History Wars' across the Tasman are an indication of why 'master narratives' persist: experience has to be made into story for it to become experience. If the 'story of the nation' was held together by the suppression of the parts, we need to be careful that the new version does not rest on the invention of them.

So who or what were 'the Irish in New Zealand'? Conscious of not being Irish, and that even his Irish-born father ceased to be Irish, Patrick O'Farrell yet wants to acknowledge that 'Irishness' might persist, sometimes as an emotional mis-remembering; sometimes as 'convenient allegory' for other battles, against imperialism or capitalism, but most of all in the spiritual dimension, the inner life, what is not said, the assumptions, the things understood but never expressed, the habits and sets of mind, the unspoken language of life, this Hidden Ireland, enduring when all other visible indicators and appearances disappear. This is, as he says, difficult terrain to map, but *The Irish in New Zealand* provides stimulating pointers for the task.

BASIL POFF

*Massey University – Palmerston North.*

*British Capital, Antipodean Labour: Working the New Zealand Waterfront, 1915–1951.*  
By Anna Green. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2001. 202 pp. NZ price: \$39.99.  
ISBN 1-877133-99-X.

ANNA GREEN'S LONG AWAITED and much anticipated study of the New Zealand waterfront was launched amidst the (relative) blaze of publicity that accompanied the 50th anniversary of the 1951 waterfront lockout. This was a fitting environment for a book which delivers a substantially new interpretation of work on, and the politics of, the New Zealand waterfront.

The book's origins lie in Green's PhD thesis, completed at the University of Auckland in 1990. The anticipation for this book was heightened by the fact that the thesis was embargoed by the author. While Green did drip-feed some of the content through a series of innovative and well-received articles on nicknames, spelling and other workplace matters, interested readers were required to wait and see the sum of the parts. Was it worth the wait? Emphatically yes! On a number of fronts this is both an important and innovative work.

A longstanding mantra for labour historians has been the need to engage simultaneously with the history of both capital *and* labour, that is to say both sides of the class struggle. Yet in most work the employers are neglected, appearing on the stage as little more than bit-part villains. One of Green's greatest achievements is to bring the employers to centre