

sionals in control the *Journal* is, in Bruce Biggs' words 'well respected' but 'some might say, boringly academic . . .'

This is a thoughtful, well-crafted book. It opens up many areas of future research, for, as Sorrenson says, now that the 'faults and fetishes' of Percy Smith and his generation have been exposed, we can re-explore their material in the archives and realize the true value of their contribution.

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Respectable Lives: Social Standing in Rural New Zealand. By Elvin Hatch. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992. 221pp. US price: \$30.00.

AS THE TITLE SUGGESTS, this book seeks to offer an account of the way in which rural New Zealanders rank one another. Since it is written by an anthropologist of a rather old-fashioned kind, it relies heavily on ethnographic methods. This, in turn, means that the magnification will be high. We are offered an account of social ranking in rural New Zealand based on detailed study of one valley in south Canterbury.

Much of what we are told is interesting. Hatch organizes his discussion around three topics: wealth, farming ability and respectability. Local folk models — that phrase will go down well among the Canterbury squatters — distinguish farms from runs. Owners of both farms and runs form a distinct social set, clearly distinguished from local working people enjoying not dissimilar incomes. Business people and professionals occupy anomalous positions. The local social system is firmly bounded: landowners in the study area (divided in three parts, and lurking under disguises as South Downs, Midhurst and Glassford) know each others' business intimately, but know nothing of farmers just over the hill, close at hand but living in a different county and sending their sheep to a different market. (But what, one wants to ask, about factors that bind rather than separate? Why, for example, do we hear nothing about that superbly effective un-leveller of playing fields, Federated Farmers?) For a rural sociologist the book's greatest interest lies in its discussion of the farm family's development cycle. There is a huge literature on this topic, centred on what has come to be called the Mann-Dickinson thesis. One might expect Hatch to use this work in either its North American or New Zealand manifestations. One will be disappointed.

Much of the book's interest comes from Hatch's comparisons with his previous study in northern California. By contrast with there, Hatch argues, New Zealand farmers rank their fellows (for they almost all *are* fellows) according to how well they farm and not, as in California, on wealth alone. While Californian schoolteachers were ranked alongside skilled farmhands, Hatch discovers to his surprise that in New Zealand they enjoy greater prestige. He ascribes the difference largely to the autonomy that teachers enjoy here, controlled not locally but centrally. Our recent glorious education reforms give us a chance to test his theory: watch New Zealand teachers zoom down the prestige slide under the benevolent tutelage of local boards of trustees.

There are problems with the book. One is scale. This is a modest monograph. It would have made an excellent article. Stretched to book length, much of it forms what music critics call passage work. Beyond that, the study largely offers historical interest today, though this should not discountenance historians. The fieldwork was done as a leave

project more than a decade ago, following a swing through the country a couple of years earlier to identify a research site. Hatch is scrupulous in noting that the study must be read in 1981's historic present. A footnote (p.39) records that state agricultural policy has swung massively since then, eliminating the subsidies that underpinned much of the system he studied. The point could be extended. The rather flat prestige pyramid that he found (by comparison with California) was also an artifact of the command economy introduced by the first Labour government. One would need a restudy to check his conclusions.

But would a restudy tell us much about rural New Zealand? Hatch's initial survey sought a setting for a piece of research to put against his earlier work in California. Constructing that earlier work from hints in this book, the place seems to have had a rather simple structure, and an unclouded prestige order. Hence, one suspects, the attraction of south Canterbury. What would prestige rankings look like in the Waikato, or Bay of Plenty? We might expect that dairying, or horticulture, or sheep-beef farming, or complex mixtures of them, would give different patterns. Ethnicity would cloud the issue in a way that Hatch does not have to face: the word Maori appears neither in text nor index. When Hatch reports south Canterbury cockies telling him that they were not wealthy compared with farmers in other parts of New Zealand, one wants him to try telling that tale in Runanga, or Ruatoria, or Kaikohe.

Hatch's preference for simplicity extends to the explicit historical material in the book. In the usual manner of an anthropological monograph on an exotic people, he gives us an early chapter on local history. It employs the secondary sources that readers of this *Journal* would expect him to use, and it is commendably up to date. Due deference is given to the views of eminent scholars like Erik Olssen and Miles Fairburn, their work blended to a single, simple story of how the study district came to its (historic) present economic and social shape. What one misses here is any sense that this history is contested: that Olssen and Fairburn stand toe to toe, slugging it out for different versions of what the past should be understood to look like. In the manner of many of his respondents, Hatch's book is too *respectable*, too concerned to treat conflict as bad form.

One final puzzle. Hatch has read widely about New Zealand. He quotes what one might expect him to quote, with one exception. There is no mention of Crawford Somerset's two *Littledene* books. That is odd, for the study areas are not widely separated. More, Somerset considered many of the issues that Hatch studies. Whence, one wonders, this absence?

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Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand, a personal excursion. By Patrick O'Farrell. NSW University Press, 1990. 309pp. NZ price: \$70.00.

'I AM WELL AWARE that some believe the Irish beyond any human criticism and unlikely to deserve divine.' So begins Patrick O'Farrell in his splendid study of the farthest-flung Gaels and their colonial-born children. The devotees of a flawless Ireland will find much to offend them in its 300 pages, not least O'Farrell's balanced arguments and formidable accuracy. The author of major works on the Australian Catholic Church and the Irish in Australia, he has developed ('personalised') some of his earlier themes in this story of his immigrant Irish family group. Set largely in South Canterbury and Greymouth, it is a tale