A Tale of Two Countries
Rosalyn Trigger (University of Aberdeen)
A review of
Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), ISBN 978-0-299-22330-2, xiv + 249 pp.

In 2001, Kevin Kenny observed that to do justice to the global phenomenon of Irish migration meant that 'the story of the Irish in one part of the world can no longer be told without reference to the Irish elsewhere'.[1] Likewise, an expanding body of literature testifies to the growing interest in applying comparative methods to the study of overseas Irish communities.[2] In keeping with these developments, Ireland's New Worlds takes its readers on a comparative expedition through the economic and political histories of the Irish in Australia and the United States over the course of just over a century.

With the body of the text weighing in at under 200 pages, this book is not intended to provide a comprehensive or definitive comparison of Irish experiences in the United States and Australia. Instead, its scope is defined by Campbell's overarching goal which is to show that 'the economic and political contexts of Ireland's new worlds played a decisive role in shaping the distinctive experiences of immigrants in the United States and Australia'. In doing so, he seeks to demonstrate that 'explanations grounded in Irish migrants' origins, prior historical experiences, or cultural legacies, are in themselves inadequate explanations for their diverse adjustments to life abroad' (p.183). This is a book, in other words, that continues to wrestle with the ghosts of the past, taking up Donald Akenson's longstanding crusade against the perceived insularity of Irish-American scholarship, while simultaneously seeking to undermine Kerby Miller's argument – as outlined in Emigrants and Exiles (1985) – that the roots of the homesickness and alienation experienced by Irish immigrants in the United States can be traced to a 'traditional Irish Catholic world view' that encouraged Irish immigrants to see themselves as 'exiles' rather than as 'voluntary, ambitious emigrants' (Miller, p.556).

Five of the seven chapters in Ireland's New Worlds take up the story of the Irish in Australia and the United States chronologically, while chapters 3 and 4 focus on sub-national comparisons. The advantage of this approach is that it enables Campbell to demonstrate that diverse socioeconomic and ideological circumstances produced outcomes for Irish immigrants that varied through time, from country to country, as well as from place to place within a given country. Readers should be aware that versions of a

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[1] (Kevin Kenny, 'Author's response', http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/articles/kennyKevin.html, accessed 24 January 2008).

[2] Donald H. Akenson, The Irish Diaspora: A Primer, (Belfast, 1993); Donald H. Akenson, The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History, (Montreal and Kingston, 1984); Mike Cronin and Daryl Adair, The Wearing of the Green: A History of St. Patrick's Day, (London and New York, 2002); David N. Doyle, 'The Irish in Australia and the United States: Some Comparisons, 1800-1939', Irish Economic and Social History, 16 (1989), 73-94; William Jenkins, 'Identity, Place, and the Political Mobilization of Urban Minorities: Comparative Perspectives on Irish Catholics in Buffalo and Toronto 1880-1910', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 25 (2007), 160-186; William Jenkins, 'Deconstructing Diasporas: Networks and Identities among the Irish in Buffalo and Toronto, 1870-1910', Immigrants and Minorities, 23 (2005), 359-398; Kevin Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study', The Journal of American History, 90 (2003), 134-162; Donald M. MacRaild, 'Crossing Migrant Frontiers: Comparative Reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain and the United States during the Nineteenth Century', Immigrants and Minorities, 18 (1999), 40-70; Alan O'Day, 'Imagined Irish Communities: Networks of Social Communication of the Irish Diaspora in the United States and Britain in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', Immigrants and Minorities, 23 (2005), 399-424.

number of the chapters have previously been published as articles in the New Hibernia Review, Pacific Historical Review and Irish Historical Studies.

The first two chapters of the book explore the contrasting experiences of Irish immigrants in Australia and the United States during the period between 1815 and the American Civil War. Campbell argues that the economic and social transformation of the northeastern United States, the rise of Protestant evangelicalism, as well as the massive influx of more than one million Irish immigrants in the 1847-54 period, all undermined what had previously been a relatively optimistic outlook for the Irish in the American republic. American nativism and Irish-American nationalism thrived side by side. He contrasts this with the situation in Australia, where the combination of largely rural settlement and the absence of rapid urbanization enabled the Irish to blend much more easily into the colonial mainstream (p.59). In the following two chapters, Campbell uses sub-national comparisons of Minnesota and New South Wales (chapter 3) and of California and Eastern Australia (chapter 4) to demonstrate how similar demographic, economic, and social conditions produced a more benign environment for Irish immigrants than could be found in New England or the mid-Atlantic states. Campbell picks up the chronological thread once again in chapters 5 through 7, noting a certain degree of convergence between Australia and the United States in the mid-1860s as sweeping economic change in Australia helped to fuel the emergence of a 'volatile sectarian environment' similar to that in the United States (p.104). While this encouraged higher levels of politicisation, Campbell argues that Australia's colonial setting within the confines of the British Empire nevertheless ensured that Irish-Australian expressions of support for Irish nationalism were more muted than those of their U.S. counterparts.

Some readers may be left dissatisfied by Campbell's tendency to present sectarian tensions primarily as a product of the uncertainty and insecurity generated by economic upheaval. Thus, a worsening sectarian climate in Australia in the 1870s is largely attributed to the country being hit by its first major wave of manufacturing expansion (pp.126-7). Further research is clearly needed to provide a more nuanced account of the ways in which the international influence of Ultramontane Catholicism, Protestant evangelicalism, and the Orange Order interacted with local and national circumstances to generate sectarian tensions on the ground. A better understanding of local relations between Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics throughout the Irish diaspora, and of how this dynamic evolved through time, would also enrich debate. As Campbell acknowledges in his conclusion, the real benefits of sustained comparative explorations such as his own do not necessarily lie in their ability to provide 'hard and fast answers', but can instead be found in their capacity to raise new questions (p.183). As an engaging book, written in an accessible manner, there is little doubt that Ireland's New Worlds succeeds in doing just that.