

stimulating section of the book is Borrie's exploration of population thought and theory in the two societies in the period 1900-1945. He writes in considerable depth and with rich contemporary references about the concerns of government officials, especially in Australia, at the level of the national population, and catalogues the numerous attempts of geographers, economists and other 'experts' to define the optimum level of Australia's population. In this chapter Borrie highlights a rich discourse which certainly deserves renewed interest from social historians.

Despite its strengths, a number of reservations must be expressed about this book. First, the secondary sources upon which Borrie draws are, in many parts of the book, quite dated, and important new scholarship is overlooked. To cite one example, Borrie describes Robert Hughes's *The Fatal Shore* (1987) as the most recent major study of convict society in New South Wales, the bibliography suggesting a lack of familiarity with the more recent scholarship of Steven Nicholas et al, or David Neal. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case, and similar deficiencies affect those chapters which deal with New Zealand.

Second, Borrie's handling of the concept of ethnicity leaves much to be desired. He writes (p.243): 'In terms of ethnicity, the situation at the time of the census . . . was that about eight out of ten of the population were Australian-born, one in every ten was born in the British Isles, and that most of the rest were foreign-born Europeans'. While the meaning of ethnicity is itself the subject of much scholarly debate, the simple equation of place of birth and ethnicity is an outmoded one. So, too, the author's question 'Is a "naturalised Australian" an "ethnic" or an "Australian"' (p.275) demonstrates an important confusion of different concepts and ideas. It is noteworthy in this regard that, in a study containing such voluminous detail, the results of the self-evaluating question on ethnicity in the 1986 Australian census are not included.

The European Peopling of Australasia is a book which some readers will find dated in its belief in the possibility of demarcation between demographic history and social and economic history. However, it is nevertheless a valuable book, rich in detail, which emphasizes a vital dimension of the interrelationship between Australia and New Zealand and highlights the tremendous opportunities for studies adopting a trans-Tasman perspective.

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A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand. By Charlotte Macdonald. Allen & Unwin and the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1990, 283 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-04-658258-4.

UNTIL RECENTLY, as Charlotte Macdonald says in her introduction, the field of women's history has been a 'largely uncharted one in New Zealand'. Her project is to use as a starting point for mapping the history of Pakeha women an analysis of the group of immigrants poorer and more vulnerable than any other: the single women. Her focus is on women recruited to the provinces of Otago and Canterbury during the 1850s and 1860s when immigration was a matter for provincial governments. Of the 12,000 single women who arrived in New Zealand during these decades, most landed in the southern colonies:

'At least 8,000 single women disembarked at Port Chalmers, Lyttelton and Timaru'.

Macdonald calls her book a 'collective biography', and it is on this level that the study is most successful. There is as well an intention to portray in detail three women as individual cases, but in the end their images remain a blur. The group, on the other hand, is brought into focus. A painstaking investigation of surviving government records enables Macdonald to produce the statistical tables and maps which make her study valuable.

Included within the text are tables relevant to each stage of the group's experience from recruitment to the end of their childbearing years. The context is established with a table giving the net migration to New Zealand by sex between 1853 and 1880. Then the particular group of women is analysed. Tables set out their national and regional origins; their occupations prior to arrival; the social context in which they undertook the voyage; their ages at embarkation; the names and causes of death of those who died on the voyage. Once the narrative has taken them to New Zealand, tables chart their marital fortunes, setting out their ages at marriage; differences in age between the women and their husbands; differences in class between the spouses. The latter turns out to be very little: 'The evidence does not show that this group of women married men of significantly higher social status'. So much for the romantic story of the ambitious young woman who takes off for the colonies to better herself, and succeeds by marrying the sort of man to whom she could never be wife at Home.

It is in the re-examining of authorized cultural narratives that Macdonald's work is most interesting. With her eyes fixed squarely on the documents from a range of sources — private family papers as well as records in the public domain — she reads for gaps in cultural expectation. She is alert to the creation of the expectations in the first place, as the title of her book makes clear. The settlers were prepared to assist single women to migrate to a colony where sexual imbalance reversed that of the British Isles during this part of the nineteenth century. They needed wives who would 'produce the next generation — a generation which would be New Zealand-born'. They also needed women to work for already established wives, women 'who were prepared to cook, sew, make butter and cheese, clean and look after young children'. Female servants were crucial if a middle class was to evolve from pioneer conditions.

But these assisted immigrants must be more than good workers; they must be good women. In the final chapter of the study, Macdonald looks at the paradox within which the single women were constructed. Confined within a rigid binary of good or bad, these women were read as a site of cultural anxiety. Ambivalent attitudes towards female sexuality were played out in a colonial context and a harsh judgement was made: an unmarried woman prepared to leave her family and sail into the southern seas as a stranger in a strange land was not behaving as the protected female bearing the approved stamp, 'respectable'. The colonists who needed these women, who were prepared to pay for their recruitment and to give them wages upon arrival, were at the same time suspicious of their virtue. They subjected the women to draconian measures to keep them pure on the voyage out, but the purity had to be checked over and over because vigilant though the organizers were, individual women persistently broke loose and turned prostitute.

The fear that a colony might be infected by imported women (as its livestock might be by similarly diseased animals) led eventually to the Contagious Diseases Act of 1869. The case Macdonald makes for reading events in this way is carefully supported by a variety of evidence, and is persuasive. Occasionally she is less rigorous and inclined to generalize beyond her evidence, as in the conclusion when she claims in sweeping gesture: 'Colonies were generally not attractive places for women, especially single women'. For the most part, however, the analysis impresses as providing for the reader precisely that ground-work needed if more interpretative studies are to follow so that the history of women in

New Zealand might be written from the perspective of their experience, whatever the current cultural readings of that experience may be.

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Immigration to New Zealand. 1854-1938. By W.D. Borrie. Demography Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991. 198 pp. Australian price: \$17.50. ISBN 0-7315-1305-3.

IT IS SURPRISING to me that a monograph written more than half a century ago, essentially unrevised, and without editorial introduction, should be published and presented to the inquiring world as a piece of modern scholarship. That this has occurred is a tribute to the career of W.D. Borrie, founder and former head of the Demography Program at ANU.

Borrie's *Immigration to New Zealand* is primarily a descriptive work detailing governmental policies and individual and group initiatives which attempted to direct and regulate immigration flows and settlement patterns from the beginning of effective representative government until the eve of the Second World War. He links the formation of immigration policy to factors seen as fundamental to New Zealand's national and economic development: 'provincial rivalry', the New Zealand Wars, gold, the international market for wool, policies favouring close settlement, and problems of unemployment and labour shortage. Personalities rather than pressure groups loom large in his discussion, while chronology and legislative change as opposed to thematic concerns or explicitly stated lines of enquiry provide the structural framework.

In its detail this work anticipates later studies, for example, Rollo Arnold's research on the role of English agricultural trade unions in emigration promotion in the 1870s. However, because it makes no attempt to ask questions, or to interrogate and prioritize explanations — often taken at face value from the official sources — Borrie's study fails to add anything substantial by way of interpretative value to New Zealand history. It is curiously dated too, in several ways. For example, the use of language is frequently redolent of the rhetoric (and by implication the assumptions) of nineteenth-century record keepers: immigrants are referred to in terms of 'quality', with many a vague reference to 'inferior' and 'superior' types (pp. 46, 77, 90, 134, 137); Maori are 'tribesmen' and 'hostile natives' against whom European boundaries had to be maintained (p.21); meanwhile governments and policy makers receive approval and opprobrium variously for 'excesses', for plans 'admirably conceived' or carried through with 'commendable enthusiasm' or 'commendable caution' (pp. 26, 30, 37, 95).

A more interesting aspect of this work's contemporaneity is that it was written in (and perhaps inspired by) an era of 'population scare'. By the 1930s new sophisticated demographic measures such as the 'net reproduction rate' (NRR), which Borrie cites but does not explain,¹ suggested that West European populations and their derivatives were

1 Intuitively, the NRR is a measure of the average number of daughters born to women of reproductive age in a given population, making allowance for mortality. If the NRR falls below unity, this is indicative of a population losing the potential to reproduce itself.