

(p.144), which was to shape the outcome of virtually every liaison between a local woman and an American during the war.

It is these intimate encounters that are at the heart of every chapter. Some authors focus on only one person, and others on whole groups, but the common threads of desire, love, separation and racial politics — both on the islands and in the US — are powerfully present. The inevitable departures of American fathers have varying effects in different cultures. In Samoa, Saui'a Louise Mataia-Milo describes separation as 'upsetting the finely tuned reciprocal roles inherent in the formal relationship of marriage' (p.45) and inevitably leading to 'a large vocabulary of scorn' (p.67) directed at illegitimate mixed-race children. Even in heterogeneous societies such as Fiji, the 'extreme emptiness' described by the *Kai Merika* children speaks to the intergenerational pain of the intimate legacy of the American occupation (p.193). In other societies, such as those of the Cook Islands, long histories of mixed-race children meant that family and community structures existed to integrate those children smoothly.

The rare examples of Pasifika women able to marry their American lovers and travel to the US with them, such as New Caledonian *métisse* woman Isabelle Pezron, did not usually end happily. Gaining permission to marry from the US military was the first difficult step and often depended on the racial laws in the man's home state. The book lays out the painful choices women made even as they looked forward to life in America: leaving parents and family, and sometimes older children. And life in 1950s America was not as they hoped, plagued as it was by racial discrimination and cultural isolation.

In addition to the remarkable stories, what will resonate for other researchers is the serendipity and sheer hard graft of this project. There are good reasons for silence on this topic in some cultures and families, and the stories of illegitimate births, separation of lovers, long-held hopes of reunion and the various racial policies that made such reunions virtually impossible, are all difficult histories. It is a major achievement to have brought so many of these histories to light in this project in sensitive and empowering ways that are enriching for the participants and for readers.

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Real Modern: Everyday New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s. By Bronwyn Labrum. Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2015. 432pp. NZ price: \$75. ISBN: 9780994104175.

BRONWYN LABRUM'S *Real Modern* has probably been gracing your bookshelves or coffee table for a while now, as it was published in 2015. As well as being an Ockham New Zealand Book Awards finalist in 2016 (for Illustrated Non-Fiction), the book was nominated for several Publishers Association of New Zealand awards for its cover design and typography. It is a gloriously visual book, with more than 500 colour and black-and-white images. The book's colour scheme is very 1950s, with mint, watermelon and golden yellow tones, reminiscent of Crown Lynn colour glaze coffee services.

Labrum describes the book as a 'kind of compendium of daily life through objects', which explores the 'many and varied objects ordinary people had in their

daily lives' (pp.9, 18). She finds the beauty in commonplace objects and aims to put objects which are often isolated on collection store shelves back into the context of how they were used. These objects are diverse — from her own kitten-adorned Crown Lynn saucer, to NAMCO office chairs; from the crepe paper used to make children's fancy dress costumes, to a miner's lambie, these items are familiar, nostalgic and sometimes timeless.

The book is arranged thematically and there are ten chapters, with titles like 'Clean and Fresh', 'Daily Dressing', 'Working Worlds', 'Going Shopping', 'Fun and Games' and 'Out on the Town'. Each chapter begins with an overview, recounting the economic, political, legal and social history of each topic. A breakout section in each chapter allows for full-page spreads where focus objects are explored in depth.

The school days chapter is a delight. Labrum explores the physicality of the cloakroom, classrooms and the school hall, taking me right back to the stringy wool of the mats on my primary school classroom floor. Thankfully I am too young to have experienced corporal punishment at school, but the strap is discussed as a school object. I'm sure it's more powerful in the memories of many of us than the exercise books and jungle gyms also mentioned. She also looks at the ways kids subverted the objects that were integral to school life: she discusses New Zealand's school milk programme, but also writes about how children made 'milk bombs' and used the cardboard tops of school milk bottles to make pompoms.

Not surprisingly, considering Labrum's background, this is a fantastic gender history of New Zealand daily life. She discusses gender roles, gendered spaces and activities and the objects used in them. She acknowledges that *Real Modern* is not a comprehensive history of daily life and that the book is skewed towards urban middle-class Pākehā experience. However, some rural experiences are recounted, most strongly in relation to shopping and clothing. While the book has been described as nostalgic by some, it also looks at the downsides of all this consumerism and the acquisition of 'stuff'. Labrum notes the large amount of debt (particularly laybys and store accounts) required to fund the purchase of these goods.

As you would expect, the book is indexed and thoroughly sourced. The objects pictured within come from a variety of museum and private collections, with an emphasis on Te Papa's collection and the Alexander Turnbull Library's pictorial collections. Oral histories are frequently quoted, providing specific stories and examples of use.

While the book is richly illustrated, many of these illustrations are black and white period photographs, rather than images of the objects discussed. Photographs are, of course, objects in themselves, but I wanted to see more of the three-dimensional objects Labrum writes about. Although she explains in her introduction that she uses photographs in order to show how the object was used, I would have loved to have seen some of the woollen rugs clasped by the rugby-goers (pictured p.304) or an actual Speedee jug.

That aside, *Real Modern* is a wonderfully illustrated book of New Zealand material culture, guaranteed to remind readers of houses they have lived in, crockery they have eaten off and wallpaper they have either admired or abhorred. It goes beyond a glossy coffee table due to the lively selection of objects and the essays which are filled with nuggets of information and Kiwi voices.

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