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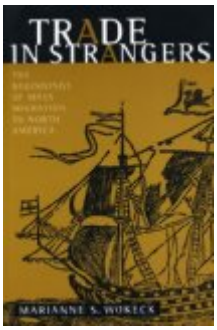

Marianne Wokeck. *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999. xxx + 319 pp. ISBN 978-0-271-01832-4.

Reviewed by Carla Gerona

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1754 was a bad year for German immigrants due to shipborne illnesses that caused many deaths, but this did not stop German-American newspaperman Christopher Sauer from noting that "Pennsylvania has been granted special blessings, when every year 8, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20 to 28 ships [of German immigrants] arrive in Philadelphia late in the fall." (quoted, p. 150) Sauer further noted that the ships would quickly empty as migrants found ready employment. Sauer's positive report, which circulated amongst German migrants, both described and contributed to the flow of over 100,000 German-speaking people to America in the eighteenth century. This population movement is the central subject of Marianne Wokeck's *Trade in Strangers: The Beginning of Mass Migration to North America*.

Wokeck's book is based on an impressive range of English, German, Dutch and Irish sources. Using immigrant letters, newspapers, passenger lists, shipping contracts, merchant records, promotional literature, emigration lists, and migration laws, Wokeck plots the contours of an extensive outflow of people that most often began in the Rhine lands and ended in Philadelphia. Wokeck's central argument is that the shipping industry, labor markets, and ethnic networks all helped to create a specialized business that relocated large numbers of Europeans to Pennsylvania. Adopting a "push" and "pull" approach from migration studies, Wokeck explores the conditions in Germany, on the voyage across the Atlantic, and in America that helped regulate the flow. The book concludes with a look at eighteenth-century Irish immigration and posits that this migration was significantly smaller than previous estimates suggest. The Irish comparison also enables Wokeck to frame her study in terms of a larger American story. Trade in Strangers_ thus posits that the eighteenth-century movement of Germans "became the prototype for the later flows that made America a society that was constantly being fed by immigrants." The colonial German migration set precedents for the "seemingly endless future waves of mass transoceanic immigration that decisively shaped American history, and indeed the history of the entire New World, on into the present." (both quotes, p. 222)

Carefully organized, *Trade in Strangers* begins with an examination of the massive German outflow of people, not just to America, but to other parts of Europe as well. Many factors contributed to this "push" of German emigrants. The Rhine Valley consisted of a patchwork of principalities, each with its own Lord and official religion, that often repressed people with feudal laws. When famine, wars, and inept administration stretched the resources of an area, farmers and tradespeople shouldered the burden through excessive taxation, compulsive labor, and military service. Due to seventeenth-century dislocations, people along the Rhine were already on the move and readily left when new opportunities presented themselves. When "pull" factors such as recruitment from foreign governments, promotional literature, reports from earlier migrants, and agent recruiting were added to the mix, the Rhine lands often provided a steady supply of people willing to gamble on a better life elsewhere. Letters to Germany, Wokeck argues, especially emphasized the qualities of a "free country" that lured Germans to the British colonies.

Primarily drawing on evidence from ship lists, especially the passenger lists collected by Pennsylvania authorities, Wokeck identifies three distinct waves of immigrants. The first phase from 1683 to the mid 1720s was slow-going and consisted primarily of religious dissenters. Migration peaked during the second phase from 1727 to the mid 1700s when many Germans took advantage of economic opportunities in America. During the third phase, which lasted from the end of the Seven Years' War to the beginning of the American Revolution, many ships continued to enter Pennsylvania's ports, but fewer passengers filled their decks. Settlers during the earlier years came to the colonies with better financial resources and traveled in family groups. But as immigration peaked, more single men and women went to the colonies, holding few assets beyond their ability to labor.

Wokeck looks closely at the people who fueled the migration --especially the merchants who organized, and usually profited from, the movement as well as the emigrants who provided the bodies and, in one way or another, paid for the transportation. Enterprising merchants weighed down return ships to America with German migrants instead of the less profitable ballast. Initially casual and opportunistic, some merchants developed a regular business in relocating Germans. Wokeck attentively details the extensive networks of merchants and boatmen along the Rhine, in Rotterdam, in London, and in Philadelphia who provided information, outfitted boats, and facilitated border crossings. The procedure for ticket payment became increasingly complex over time as merchants extended credit, charged interest, and contracted indentures. Although Wokeck does not systematically calculate the profitability of the trade, it is clear that many merchants did well or at least minimized their losses on these voyages; they even charged relatives for the complete passage of family members who had died midstream. Wokeck argues that especially during peak migration periods the tightly-packed ships surpassed the crowding on slavers. The experience of relocation for migrants ultimately depended most on individual resources and resourcefulness as well as the moment in which they decided to travel and the contacts who could help them in America and along the way.

Trade in Strangers provides a thorough account of the routes that German-speaking people took to Philadelphia in the eighteenth-century. Its larger claim to represent an early prototype for later population movements may be more problematic. Wokeck's argument that this was the first modern migration to British America is built around four central themes. First, merchants systematically exploited voluntary migration for profit. Second, the earliest pioneers helped (and also exploited) later streams of immigrants. Third, the migration shifted from family groups to young individuals. And fourth, the Irish migration of the

late-eighteenth century "mostly repeated the dynamics established for the Germans." (p. 167) Wokeck's case would have been made stronger had she paid more attention to other seventeenth-, eighteenth-, or nineteenth-century migrations. For example, how does the German migration compare with Puritan, other British, and French migrations? Did the merchants Wokeck studies ever transport British or African people? And if the dynamics of family migration always shifted in the way that Wokeck suggests, what becomes of Ronald Takaki's voluntary Chinese laborers who, far from migrating as families, "lived in a virtually womanless group"?[1] Wokeck does provide a comparison with Irish immigrants in the late eighteenth century. But rather than establishing the German migration as a pattern that later groups followed, Wokeck's own conclusions seem to suggest that the Irish actually had a different and in some ways easier experience, due to closer and more regular trade and communication networks.

Perhaps because Wokeck is intent on showing a balanced portrayal that considers Europe, the Atlantic, and America, or perhaps because her work primarily sketches economic and demographic factors, Wokeck minimizes one important theme in migration studies that may better link German movements to other diasporas -- such as Irish ones or even those of African slaves. Although Wokeck certainly alludes to difficulties immigrants encountered when they disembarked, she does not fully explore the nativist values (Benjamin Franklin provides the most notable example) that certainly affected German options. More extensive work might be done on quarantined ships, destitute Germans, the development of German aid societies, and the many migrants who died before reaching America's shores. Indeed, the negative treatment of "strangers" may mark the modern American immigration experience as much as any of the factors that Wokeck identified.

Trade in Strangers offers an extensive appendix, "German Immigrant Voyages, 1663 -- 1775" and many other useful graphs and tables. Unfortunately, especially for the chapter that discusses ship space, the book lacks illustrations. Despite the reservations, Wokeck's book provides a valuable and important piece in the larger puzzle depicting movements across the Atlantic and will be of interest to historians of migration as well as historians of the early modern world who study Pennsylvania, German communities, Irish communities, or merchant practices.

Notes

[1]. Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), p. 209.

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