

CSSH NOTES

Ballantyne, Tony. 2014. *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body*. Durham: Duke University Press.

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At the core of this book is a clear, direct argument: Māori had considerable control over Christian missions from the time of their formal establishment in New Zealand in 1814 through the 1830s. During this period, evangelists from the Church Missionary Society struggled to gain a degree of economic independence and therefore fuller control over the mission. Even when they succeeded in this, however, it was Māori converts “who were the most potent and potentially authoritative critics of established cultural codes and social norms” (p. 206). Ballantyne’s recognition of Māori agency in early New Zealand mission history is joined with his acknowledgment that British military force and commercial interests “heavily constrained” what Māori could do over the long term (214). This book, in short, is a fine balancing act. Diverse characters crowd the historical stage—Māori chiefs and European missionaries, Māori slaves and early converts, European sailors and convicts, and others—and all contribute to the remarkable history, kaleidoscopic up close, that resolves into a clear but still complex pattern.

The mass of historical data that Ballantyne has gathered is meant to illustrate the “entanglements” between Māori and British, especially entanglements that developed through the materiality of bodies: bodies at labor, bodies at war, bodies having sex, bodies getting sick and dying. Each chapter focuses on particular aspects of these entangled embodiments. After the overviews of the introduction and chapter one, chapter two focuses on the establishment of mission stations and the influence Māori exercised there. Chapter three turns to the inculcation of new forms of labor and time-discipline. Chapters four and five form a salty pair focused respectively on sex and death. Finally, chapter six addresses the changing representations of Māori in British literature. Earlier images of hypermasculine warrior-chiefs were replaced with ones of a weakened, imperiled race, as “the formal colonization of New Zealand was ultimately sanctioned by a treaty that framed the alienation of sovereignty as an act of protection, designed to defend the interests of an enfeebled people” (249).

A slippage comes between the book’s subtitle (“Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body”); see also p. 252) and the declaration that the book has

a “general concern with ‘bodies in question’” (176). The phrase “bodies in question” is the more accurate representation of the book’s content; it is unclear what any singular, definitive “Question of the Body” is meant to be. It is clear, however, that bodies of all types were thrown into relationships that opened up new questions about politics, ritual, and morality and were then reshaped, moving and mixing with other bodies, taking on new adornments, and acquiring novel symbolic dimensions.

Ballantyne’s writing style is calm and sober, which is for the best given the dizzying nature of some of the events he recounts. Consider the kind of year 1816 was for the missionary Thomas Kendall. First he flew into a rage when a borrowed flour sieve was not returned by the wife of a convict laborer, a blacksmith named Walter Hall, so Kendall yanked the door of the smithy off its hinges and stabbed Hall several times with a chisel. Hall, for his part, fired pistols at the evangelist, whose jacket caught fire; the other bullet lightly wounded Hall’s own wife. A few months later, Kendall got into “a spectacular fist-fight” (109) with another convict laborer who had impregnated his (Kendall’s) wife (see 109–10, 139). Beyond that memorable year, Kendall had his own affair with Tungaroa, the sister of the wife of the Māori leader who had helped establish the CMS in New Zealand, and he participated energetically in the musket trade (see 138–39, 111–12). Not all characters are as colorful as Kendall, of course—he was eventually kicked out of the mission for his colorfulness—but these stories usefully upend any expectations readers might have had about piety and rectitude on the mission frontier.

My only criticism of the book is Ballantyne’s use of the term “mana,” the Oceanic term which has become a classic of anthropological, historical, and religious studies literature. If power relations are “fluid and often mercurial” and “the body ... is the most fundamental and fluid of signifiers” (16, 9), as he writes, then mana must logically be “fluid” as well. Yet Ballantyne’s analysis positions it as an ahistorical concept, something that just *is*. In his many references to mana, he acknowledges that mana can be enhanced or diminished, can wax and wane depending, for example, on one’s prosperity and success in war, but he does not confront the question lurking in all this murky fluidity: what did Christianity do to Māori mana in terms of appropriation, transfiguration, re-evaluation? How was mana represented (or, perhaps, not represented) in translated biblical accounts of creation, life, miracles, healing, speaking prophetically? Was the idea of mana itself, as far as we can tell, the same thing in the 1830s that it had been in the late eighteenth century? In short: rather than ground the argument *in* mana, was mana not one of the things that was most at stake, a category susceptible to especially consequential transformation?

This criticism aside, I recommend *Entanglements of Empire* to scholars interested in the history of the British Empire, Oceania, and Christian missions. Well balanced, carefully articulated, and always insightful, it is likely to

become a definitive work on the complexities of Protestant mission efforts in the region and beyond.

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Corinna Wagner, *Pathological Bodies: Medicine and Political Culture*. Berkeley: University California Press, 2013, 315 pp., \$39.95 pb.

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This book explores the knotty interrelation between medicine and political culture. Relying on Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power that brings an increasing number of individuals under its scrutiny, Wagner presents a sophisticated analysis of British political culture in the late eighteenth century by exploring the connection between new understandings of the body and public discussions about who is fit for political power. To determine who was suitable and unsuitable for the world of politics, both specialists and ordinary observers often focused their attentions on the medical conditions, body parts, or unsavory habits of public figures, dissecting both literally and metaphorically their anatomy and private life. This approach will be familiar to cultural historians of medicine, but Wagner's book is notable for its method of treating medical discourse as protean and contradictory in its varied political uses.

Wagner charts how different individuals or groups became the targets of political pamphlets, philosophical treatises, novels, cartoons, biographies, and memoirs that incorporated medical knowledge for political ends. She brings together a remarkable variety of examples, including the hypersexualized portrayal of Marie Antoinette, the sensationalized death of Mary Wollstonecraft, the dubious hygiene of Thomas Paine, and the gout of George VI, as well as debates about breastfeeding mothers and the link between national identity and food consumption. Each chapter shows how perceptions of public figures were shaped by discourses of normality and deviance and, most important, that their political trustworthiness was defined through an amalgamation of the medical and the political.

Wagner is at her best in disentangling how gender and sexuality were used in cultural texts to justify the exclusion of women and men from political life. Political pornography that portrayed Marie Antoinette's clitoris and sexual appetite as pathological provided British reactionaries with fodder to argue for restricting women from politics. Images of single-breasted French Amazons and Frenchmen raping Frenchmen elicited anxieties about republicanism and national degeneration. The gory biography detailing the death of women's rights advocate Mary Wollstonecraft diminished the influence of her proto-feminist writings for decades. Through these and other case studies Wagner