

Emily S. Rosenberg, Shanon Fitzpatrick. *Body and Nation: The Global Realm of U.S. Body Politics in the Twentieth Century.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. 344 S., 16 Abb. ISBN 978-0-8223-5675-2.



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In 1954 Sammy Lee, a Korean American diver and three-time Olympic gold medalist, toured throughout Vietnam and displayed his athletic skills from the platform and the springboard at shows before local audiences. Lee was part of a goodwill tour organized by the U.S. State Department whose staff considered minority athletes to be valuable examples of progress toward racial integration within the United States. At that point in time Lee and many other U.S. athletes of color were diplomatic ambassadors in an effort to shore up America's prestige in decolonizing areas around the world. In Asia, their trained and able bodies were not only supposed, as historian Mary Ting Yi Lui puts it, to signify a "new postwar vision of an integrated body politic," at the same time they also should exemplify "the American nation's postwar health and vigor, as demonstrated by their physical prowess and competitive success" (p. 210).

But despite the fact that Lee's shows in Vietnam and other locations were successful at first glance – they drew large audiences and Lee's muscular body aroused interest in Asian newspapers

– the presence and performances of Asian American athletes in the region were far from being unambiguous. As Lui argues convincingly, the presence of these bodies were open for a range of interpretations among the populations in Vietnam and elsewhere. Writing and talking about these racialized bodies became part of diverse narratives, some stressing the postwar racial liberalist discourse desired by U.S. officials while others advocated anticolonial resistance and a strong Vietnamese nationalism, arguing that Lee's body precisely demonstrated what independent Asians could accomplish in future.

Lui's essay is prototypical for the papers assembled in this fine anthology edited by Emily S. Rosenberg and Shanon Fitzpatrick. It collects twelve essays "bringing together scholarship on the body with historical research on U.S. international and transnational relationships. It interrogates the connections among the body, the nation, and the world in twentieth-century U.S. history" (p. 1). For accomplishing this effort the authors deal with a variety of topics, ranging from American travelling circuses of the early 1900s to many

different sorts of war-produced military and civilian bodies to adopted babies of the Cold War years.

In their intriguing introduction the editors first of all express their desire to establish a productive linkage between what is now an already more than 30 years old tradition of American (Cultural) Studies scholarship on bodies as sites of meaning production and loci of power relations on the one hand and the more recently flourishing field of transnational history on the other hand. They moreover argue in favor of three core clusters that in their opinion could prove valuable for future research because they offer manifold opportunities to elaborate upon the importance of studying actual bodies in relation to nations and foreign politics. These three clusters – population migration and mixing; national security discourses; and mass-mediated cultural circulations – also constitute threads of argumentation running through most of the essays in the collection.

Several articles touch upon matters of ‘bodies in contact’ as a result of U.S. political, economic, and cultural expansion, identifying “various techniques of exclusion, regulation, and containment deployed by the modern American state in order to manage the instabilities of population migration and delineate the nation” (p. 7). Nevertheless, the contributors are also sensitive to the many ambivalences that went along with such practices of regulation and containment. They also underscore the agencies of a wide range of historical actors often seeking to undermine, challenge, or resist the many political, scientific, or cultural attempts to control bodies along stable parameters of race, gender or national belonging. Next to the essay by Lui on the sporting body of Sammy Lee, other contributions lead into that direction as well: Janet Davis illustrates how American traveling circuses were showcases of national efficiency and fitness displaying racial and gender taxonomies but at the same time also places that staged the possibilities for transgressing these pa-

rameters. Essays by Natalia Molina and Kristina Shull deal with Mexican and Cuban immigration, respectively. Carefully contextualizing and historicizing their research, they demonstrate how discourses of integration could rest upon notions of ‘emergency’ that focused on the bodies of immigrants and in doing so were able to distinguish between ‘wanted’ and ‘unwanted’ newcomers to the nation.

Wars, crises of national security and the ways they became part of body politics are also addressed frequently throughout the volume. Especially the often charged relationship between notions of masculinity and nationhood figures prominently, e.g. in essays by Annessa Stagner on ‘shell-shocked’ soldiers during and after World War I, or in Frank Costigliola’s that discusses the public appearances of President Franklin Roosevelt as gender performances strongly related to the emergencies of the Great Depression and World War II. Two articles focus on cases in which U.S. soldiers had sexual contacts with women in occupied countries: Paul Kramer discusses the regulation of prostitution during the Philippine-American War and outlines nicely how this became part of much larger debates about the character of American imperialism in general, and Gayle Plummer analyses ‘brown babies,’ the children of German women and African American soldiers that were intensively discussed on either side of the Atlantic Ocean as both promise and danger to postwar notions of citizenship. Marilyn Young looks at the wars in Korea and Vietnam and explores the consequences of ‘body count’ as a metric of assessing progress in defeating an enemy.

A third cluster highly visible throughout the contributions to this anthology revolves around questions about how bodies were represented in transnational popular culture. Here especially, because of the highly heterogeneous character of U.S. mass culture, representations that marginalized ‘strange,’ ‘queer,’ or ‘unfit’ bodies appeared

side by side with others who celebrated precisely those aspects of diversity and multiculturalism which the mainstream at first attacked. As the editors underline, “mass-mediated representations of American bodies helped to associate the United States with a ‘look’ of modernity increasingly characterized by motion, hybridity, and performance rather than by stasis, race, and essence” (p. 11). Following that train of thought, Shanon Fitzpatrick looks at the globally marketed periodicals by fitness enthusiast Bernarr Macfadden and how they triggered a transnational physical culture in the early twentieth century, and Shirley Jennifer Lim analyzes a ‘transnational racial modernity’ with the help of the 1930s Chinese American film star, Anna May Wong. Emily Rosenberg’s essay on the ‘American Look’ underscores that Cold War body politics were by far not only about hard, anti-Communist male bodies but that they also operated with images of female attractiveness and style designed to soften the appeal of the United States abroad.

In a concluding epilogue, Rosenberg and Fitzpatrick reflect upon ‘disappearing bodies.’ Next to discussing the fact that U.S. officials banned images of Japanese atom bomb victims from public display during the late 1940s and 1950s, this essay picks up the central idea of the whole volume when it states that “we consider the ‘disappearance’ of othered, foreign bodies whose fates, if fully seen and acknowledged, might challenge not only prevailing national security policy but also cherished notions about America’s ‘benevolent supremacy’” (p. 265). Rosenberg, Fitzpatrick and the other authors of this collection argue in favor of actively establishing a linkage between histories of the body and transnational history, they suggest a historical scholarship sensitive to the visibility of actual bodies within a field of research in which they still ‘disappear’ too often. Not every essay accomplishes this task as well as others but on whole the volume succeeds well in

pushing forward the idea of linking body and nation.

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