

Strong, Beautiful and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935–1960. By Charlotte Macdonald. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2011. 240pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN: 9781927131404.

IN STRONG, BEAUTIFUL AND MODERN Charlotte Macdonald documents the converging histories of the modern body and the mid-century British World, from the perspective of national fitness campaigns. It is a complex, nuanced book, showcasing rich research. Macdonald presents a series of case studies reflecting the spread of national fitness campaigns in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, focusing on the late interwar period extending through to the 1960s. The 1930s and 1940s were the decades in which unprecedented attention was placed upon the physical fitness of adult women and men across the British World. It is also the period in which governments were most inclined to take an interest in the leisure and recreational activities of their citizens. Contributing to the ‘new imperial history’, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern* argues that national fitness campaigns such as these are best understood through imperial lenses.

The first four chapters in *Strong, Beautiful and Modern* are ordered chronologically, documenting the development of national fitness schemes across Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada respectively. In 1938 King George VI launched a national fitness campaign in London, and Macdonald positions the British launch as formative, leading to the adoption of similar schemes across the British World. Macdonald also presents regional variations in each of the deeply informative case studies. In chapter two, Macdonald turns to New Zealand legislation concerning physical welfare and recreation, locating this as both part of the movement spreading across the British World, and also regionally distinctive in that it was supported by a growing interest in labour reform and the welfare state, for example. The order of the first four chapters suggests the dispersal of ideas across a global community centred on London. It is this British World that Macdonald identifies as a determining factor in the rise of national fitness campaigns across the four centres. However, the argument Macdonald puts forward for imperial frames of reference is multi-layered. Macdonald demonstrates that the British World was united by the mobility of ideas, and also by a shared body culture shaped by the relationship between nation-states and citizens, in this case, shaped by the British proclivity for games-playing. This is drawn out in the book’s final chapter, ‘Healthy Bodies, State and Modernity: A Twentieth-century Dilemma’.

An impressive aspect of Macdonald’s book lies in its reassessment of national fitness movements in the British World as a means to better understand ‘sporting citizenship’, as presented in the final chapter. Macdonald claims that sporting citizenship took on particular significance for the British World due to the Britishness of games-playing. Macdonald also demonstrates that in the context of the 1930s and 1940s, the active body was positioned as the icon of modernity. In turn, during the 1930s and 1940s in particular, the phenomenon of national fitness was centred on the relationship between the modern individual and the nation-state in a quintessentially British frame of reference: sport and fitness. In taking a broader frame of reference in her research, Macdonald is thus able to supplant previous narratives of failed individual national fitness schemes, with an exposition of citizenship and Britishness in the shape of fitness, where the comparatively short-lived schemes become one moment in a much larger trajectory of negotiations around citizenship globally. This struck me as a particularly useful shift.

Macdonald also depicts national fitness campaigns as reliant on modern media of mass communication. On the one hand, the modern body active in the British World was reliant on modern technologies for its growing popularity, while on the other, the content spread via modern technologies reinforced the Britishness of keeping fit because it was often disseminated from Britain. As Macdonald notes, films with sound made ‘long-standing ties of empire’ modern in the 1930s by bringing new vibrancy to depictions of British culture on the screen (p.156). It is possible to see from Macdonald’s research that film, radio and photojournalism made national fitness campaigns possible. Public radio broadcasts facilitated the stretching and bending of private bodies in suburban houses, while photojournalism turned the fit body into an everyday commodity. Macdonald suggests that a post-war distaste for Nazi-style ‘national fitness’ contributed to the demise of government-driven initiatives for fitness, but I was left wondering if changes in mass media, so integral to the success of the movement across the British World, might also have contributed to the demise of the movement in some way.

Strong, Beautiful and Modern is an engaging book covering an immense terrain, both conceptually and geographically. It is core reading for anyone interested in mid-century imperial culture, the history of British modernity, or sport and fitness in white settler nation-states.

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Asians and the New Multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand. Edited by Gautam Ghosh and Jacqueline Leckie. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2015. 312pp. NZ price: \$40.00. ISBN: 9781877578236.

THIS EDITED COLLECTION by Gautam Ghosh and Jacqueline Leckie is based on a symposium held at the University of Otago in Dunedin on ‘Interrogating Multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand: An Asian Studies Perspective’. The symposium and the subsequent edited collection place emphasis on the word ‘interrogating’, as several of the chapters explore what is even meant by ‘multiculturalism’ and primarily come to the conclusion that it has several meanings dependent on the context in which it is used: several ‘isms’ so to speak. The fundamental question that the book seeks to explore is how multiculturalism can be reconciled with the well-established official bicultural model in Aotearoa New Zealand: in other words, that between Māori and Pākehā, and the chapters included in the collection take different positions on this key question. However, it is probably one of the most significant questions facing Aotearoa New Zealand society today, especially with the ever-increasing number of New Zealanders of Asian descent. Where do New Zealanders of Asian descent fit into this bicultural model? Do they even fit in at all? Another layer of complexity is of course the large numbers of New Zealanders of Pasifika descent. Where do they also fit into the existing bicultural model?

I will focus this review on two chapters relevant to the broader themes of the book: Paul Spoonley’s “‘I MADE A SPACE FOR YOU’: Renegotiating National