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EINLADUNG ZUM KOLLOQUIUM

Adrian Young
(Ohio)

Mutinous Laboratories: Race, empire, and the limits of knowledge making on Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands

Settled by the 18th-century mutineers of the British naval vessel *Bounty*, their Oceanian partners, and their descendants, Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands have long held a place of prominence in the Anglophone imaginary. Their inhabitants' supposedly "hybrid" nature, imagined as occupying an interstitial space between Britishness and Tahitianess, brought them a persistent and outsized interest across the 19th and 20th centuries. These two Pacific places emerged, particularly, as persistent sites of knowledge production, written about and visited not only by sailors and missionaries, but by eugenicists, anthropologists, and linguists eager to construe these islands as "natural laboratories" and "accidental experiments." However, there is nothing "natural" about the ways scientists and other investigators came to regard these insular spaces as laboratory-like. Rather, Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands became privileged sites of knowledge production through a long history of iterative encounter between their inhabitants and those who came to study them. As colonial and post-colonial spaces entangled in deep histories, these islands ultimately became sites not only of knowledge-gathering, but of obfuscation and derangement — in which scientists who sought to define the boundaries of categories like race and language instead found themselves questioning fundamental assumptions and practices of their own disciplines.

Adrian Young is assistant professor of Modern Europe and the World at Denison University, with a particular interest in the history of knowledge at the margins of the British colonial world. His book manuscript traces the history of Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands as long-term field sites and "natural laboratories" across the 19th and 20th centuries. He received B.A.s in history and international relations from The Ohio State University (2008), and an M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Princeton University (2011, 2016). Before coming to Denison in the fall of 2017, he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Humboldt University of Berlin and the Berlin Center for the History of Knowledge. He has recently published work in History and Anthropology as well as in an edited volume on Europe's Outremer.

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