

interpretations of empire, motherhood and eugenics to develop an argument in a brief 'Epilogue' that the struggle for imperial dominance and national efficiency affected not only England (the author's exclusion of the other peoples of the United Kingdom is perplexing), but also informed population debates in France and Germany during the closing decades of the nineteenth century and in the era which culminated in the rise of National Socialism. In discussing the divisions within the ranks of British feminists on the question of state regulation, the author suggests that campaigners divided along class versus gender lines, organizations such as the Women's Labour League being more sympathetic to legislative regulation than franchise-oriented bodies.

Illuminating the role of various feminist organizations in these debates, the study frequently obscures the influence of other agents and discursive engagements which were arguably more important to the progress of reform and regulation. Among these were industrial employers, insurance companies and Medical Officers of Health who served in the different districts, frequently collecting key statistics. The vital importance of the professional as well as the popular press lay in drawing attention to the scandal of industrial poisoning and not merely the rise of the "sensation" of workplace and social problems. This concern was mirrored in the new journalism serving the urban centres of the United States as well as Europe, suggesting a connection between the worlds of production and consumption, between workers' health and the welfare of the community.

Such an actual or imagined alliance of interests was critical to such innovations as the prohibition of the suction-shuttle in New England before 1914 and the absence of similar controls in Britain until the 1950s. Whereas American legislators were persuaded of the connections between sucking cotton threads and tuberculosis, their British counterparts refused to take such risks seriously. This comparison also illustrates some of the complexities of industrial politics in areas such as the Lancashire textile towns. The opposition of the employers to further regulation

appears to have been reinforced by the scepticism of their factory operatives whose piece-work rewards depended on rapid dexterity rather than the replacement of older shuttles by new automatic technology. While the discourse of danger highlighted in this book certainly figured in the debates on legislation and state enactments before 1914, there was a much wider discussion of costs and benefits in regard to work and employment which extended from the debating rooms of the Labour Party to the ranks of libertarian feminists in these years.

This is a useful text which recasts some familiar evidence and established themes in a fresh light by engaging with a wider literature on gender politics. The narratives outlined here also suggest the need for a much more detailed and extensive consideration of the ways in which masculinity and parenthood as well as femininity were constituted in relation to the industrial body, diseased and healthy. For the many meanings of productive life were revealed as new ideas and emergent social forces struggled to extend the range of choices available to the efficient state as well as its labour force.

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Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted subjects: madness and gender in Shakespeare and early modern culture*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2004, pp. xv, 244, illus., £12.50, US\$21.95 (paperback 0-8014-8924-5).

Michel Foucault has a lot to answer for. His *Madness and civilization: a history of insanity in the age of reason* (1976) famously proposed that until the epistemic change denoted by the "Great Confinement" of the mid-seventeenth-century, the notion that madness might have anything to do with "difference"—either between the mad and the sane, or between individual manifestations of madness itself—was simply not entertained. Carol Thomas Neely is the latest scholar to take issue with Foucault's conclusions, and, by paying attention to the literary, medical and cultural history of madness between

1576 and 1632, she demonstrates just how far wide of the mark Foucault actually was. As Neely writes, “this period manifests heterogeneity, regendering, and widespread change in the discourses of distraction” (p. 2), and although there are perhaps not many critics left who take Foucault at his word, it is satisfying finally to have some evidence with which to counter his assertions.

Since *Distractioned subjects* takes an avowedly eclectic and interdisciplinary approach to early modern madness, it would probably not be an appropriate first port of call for those seeking a comprehensive history of the manifestation and treatment of the condition in the period. However, as a work of literary and cultural criticism, it succeeds on a number of levels, and not least amongst the work’s achievements is its eminent readability. Neely’s prose engages, and her central argument, that the concept of madness undergoes constant redefinition as a result of its deployment in dramatic and medical discourses, is as easy to grasp as it is difficult to deny. The book is also valuable for the attention it devotes to the changing role of female patients in discourses of madness, and for its nuanced discussion of the condition in plays such as *The Spanish tragedy*, *King Lear*, and *Twelfth night*. Where these plays might once have been lumped indiscriminately together as dramatic representations of an all-encompassing state known simply as madness, Neely shows how they inform, and are informed by, early modern diagnoses and treatments of melancholy, lovesickness, and grief.

In a substantial final chapter, Neely turns her attention to the representation of Bedlamites on the seventeenth-century stage and, by analysing the five early modern plays in which performing mad persons appear, she suggests that these representations have very little to do with the historical Bethlem Hospital. She persuasively argues that these scenes were instead both a covert means of satirizing London professionals, and an opportunity for comic actors to give affected and extravagant performances. In disengaging theatrical bedlamites from historical “Bethlemites”, Neely pays attention to the unfortunate regularity with which literary critics

have been drawn to the analogy between the stage and the madhouse; however, historians do not escape censure either. Neely is sceptical about the sole piece of supposed documentary evidence for the presence of visitors paying to see performances at Bethlem: a 1610/11 entry in the accounts of Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, that notes a visit by the Earl’s young children to “the show of Bethlehem” (p. 201). She suggests that the children probably visited, not the hospital, but a Christmas pageant or puppet-show, and the chapter ends with a revealing account of the misuse to which this evidence, and the wider notion of performances at Bethlem, has been put by generations of historians.

The work refers throughout to early modern medical case studies, and its discussion of the ingenious and often successful treatments for mental distraction, its nuanced and convincing readings of the plays, and its lavish illustrations, suggest that the volume should prove as popular with students as it will with academics.

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Andrew Smith, *Victorian demons: medicine, masculinity and the Gothic at the fin-de-siècle*, Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. iv, 191, illus., £14.99 (paperback 0-7190-6357-4)

Andrew Smith’s *Victorian demons* examines constructions of masculinity in a range of medical, cultural and Gothic narratives. Smith convincingly argues that the pathologization of masculinity in these texts demonstrates the extent to which the *fin-de-siècle* sense of crisis was staged within the dominant masculinist culture. The books and topics considered include many staples of recent cultural history: sexuality, Max Nordau’s *Degeneration*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Dracula*, the Whitechapel murders, and Oscar Wilde. Smith’s debt to work by (among others) Daniel Pick and Kelly Hurley is frankly acknowledged. It is undoubtedly necessary for Smith to re-examine these familiar cultural episodes and narratives to demonstrate that his