

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.

Christopher Marlow,
University of Lincoln

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

argument builds on and is complementary to earlier readings. However, the book also benefits from use of texts less familiar in this context, such as Samuel Smiles' *Self-help* and the work of Frederick Treves, doctor to Joseph Merrick. It is these chapters which are most original and of most value to the student well-versed in the cultural history of the late nineteenth century.

Victorian demons is a valuable contribution to studies arguing that masculinity is not a self-evident and unproblematic concept. Despite the endeavours of James Eli Adams and others, the volume of historical work on gender is still disproportionately weighted in favour of consideration of female roles. However, any history which purports to deal solely with femininity or masculinity sets up a solely academic division. Historically, cultural constructions of gender are always formed in tandem, with developments in one resulting from and influencing shifts in conceptions of the other. There is an urgent need for more work which breaks down this artificial division. Smith acknowledges that there are excellent accounts by Judith Walkowitz and Bram Dijkstra on the pathologization of femininity at the *fin de siècle*, and demonstrates that similar models of disease and degeneration were applied to the respectable bourgeois male. However, occasionally the near-exclusive focus on masculinity undermines his argument. This is most obvious in the chapter on syphilis, where Smith argues that medical texts were highly politicized readings of the disease that attempted to conceal the dangers of the apparently normative male sexual conduct. Here a lengthier consideration of the instabilities, contradictions, and class-based constructions of female sexuality revealed by debates around the Contagious Diseases Acts is necessary to add context and coherence to Smith's reading of the medical literature.

As Smith acknowledges, this book is an ambitious undertaking which sits at the crossroads of many other fields of study: gender, the *fin de siècle*, Gothic literature, and the cultural history of medicine. But if the structure of the book sometimes appears to reflect the

fragmentation of knowledges that it describes, then it also effectively reconstructs the emotional tone of the age. The main criticism is that only in the chapter on the Whitechapel murders is the ambiguous status of medicine itself at the *fin de siècle* really considered. Smith acknowledges medicine's enormous power, but does not adequately convey the insecurities of a profession which had only recently legally consolidated its gains and was not only viewed with suspicion by the public, but continually had to safeguard itself against "external" threats such as the attempts of women to gain access to its environs. Although Smith effectively deconstructs the myth of a unified and complacent Victorian masculinity throughout, the extent to which the (predominantly masculine) medical profession turned a reflective and troubled gaze at itself is left largely unexplored. Nevertheless, *Victorian demons* is a worthwhile contribution to a growing literature examining the centrality of themes relating to gender and pathology which were deployed and re-constructed over diverse cultural texts and historical episodes.

Tracey Loughran,

Queen Mary, University of London

Pamela A Gilbert, *Mapping the Victorian social body*, Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century, State University of New York Press, 2004, pp. xxii, 245, illus., US\$65.00 (hardback 0-7914-6025-8), US\$21.95 (paperback 0-7914-6026-6).

Today, historians who work with maps no longer think of them solely as devices for finding one's way around. Maps, like books or pictures or much else for that matter, constitute a medium of persuasion. They are rhetorical instruments, tools of inclusion and exclusion, pamphlets of promise and denial. Some early maps of North America minimized the presence of native peoples and showed the land as domesticated in order to encourage settlers. But positivist modes of analysis of maps as transparent documents still linger and, ironically, maps now sometimes