

world] to utter confusion”; then she uses the phrase “utter confusion” as a drumbeat (108-127) damning the mentality of the inquisitors as if in their own words. But the idea of “confusion” is missing from the Latin text: “quia sic perimere possent totum mundum.” This means “That in this way they can destroy the whole world.” The translation is that of Montague Summers (1928), a fragile base for any cultural argument. I wonder that Biddick reproduces dead-language text at all, since she values it so cheap and must rely on such a blind guide for its meaning.

Any alert reader of *Left History* may suppose that this reviewer refuses the lessons of *The Shock of Medievalism* because I am an old-fashioned male academic, trained in an old fashion of medieval studies and recoiling defensively from the self-confident claim of the intellectual cathedra by a more recent comer, a woman who conjures with different names. It is true that my Toronto PhD is almost a decade senior to Biddick’s, and I have never suffered the sort of traumatic professional conversion that compelled me to repudiate my first research. But the contemptuous stereotype of a privileged, smug, reactionary academic sinner doesn’t apply. When Bonnie G. Smith in *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (1998; reviewed in *Left History* 7.1) lectures me even more severely on professional ethics, even using a critical vocabulary which she has to teach me as she goes along, I understand the argument, take the medicine and expect to be a more alert and more useful historian for it. The great difference is that Smith does not, and Biddick does, commit the fundamental category fault of locating “trauma,” “mourning,” “re-enactment” and other psychological facts and acts in an ethereal, timeless noosphere. Such categories make sense in the analysis of human individuals and, to a degree, in real human cultural groups. Translated to an abstract sphere of the poeticist’s creation they may persuade other poeticist critics, but “historians are mostly absent as contributors to critical literature on the state of medieval studies” (4) and the reason is plain: historians labour with the articulation of causes in a temporally mapped world of human beings, and they can’t perceive the causal push in the world of abstract poetics.

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Dana Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

Dana Nelson’s *National Manhood* traces ideals of citizenship in the United States chronologically through the early national and the antebellum periods (1780s-1850s). Nelson, a Professor of English at the University of Kentucky, is also known for the often-cited *The Word in Black and White: Reading Race in American Literature, 1638-1867* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

*National Manhood* includes Nelson's return to Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" with a new perspective, examining the story not for what it reveals about the operations of racism, but for what it diagnoses about "the practice of white manhood" (197). The Introduction and Chapter Five, "The Melancholy of White Manhood, or, Democracy's Privileged Spot," include discussion of Melville's story, in which the former slave Babo deprives *San Dominick* captain Don Benito Cereno of his most treasured relationship with Captain Alexandro Aranda, forcing Don Benito "to confront the denuded promise of white fraternity, its violence, its attenuated humanity" (199). American captain Amasa Delano's enactment of white manhood, with his shallow "geniality," is symptomatic of "the profound abbreviation of human identification that structures white brotherhood" (203).

In Nelson's conceptualization, "national manhood" is an ideology that has operated since the Constitutional era to link civic identity with the fraternal articulation of white manhood. Compellingly, her book explores how national manhood's appeal differs from its implementation, to emphasize the way that "white men's learning to identify with national manhood also entailed an uneven, lengthy, continuing process of social – and even democratic – disidentification" (xi). The identity of white manhood is abstracting in that it works "to relocate men's affiliating away from more locally conceived identities," becoming a "supraclass ideal of guaranteeing national unity" (ix). Notably in the early national period, "masculine aggression is symbolically reorganized under the banner of whiteness," so that aggression leads to the health and wealth of the nation. Nelson's book does not analyze the "local formulations" of white manhood, but rather emphasizes "its broader symbolic attachment to national identity and civic organization" (6).

One of this book's achievements is its way of articulating how white manhood brought men together into a community that "diverted their attention" from the post-Revolutionary War awareness of differences between them. Men who had worked together during the war were then "encountering fellowmen not as citizen but competitor" (6). But Nelson's book also succeeds in questioning all of the abstract and concrete meanings of the term "white man."

Chapter Two, "'That's Not My Wife, That's An Indian Squaw': Inindianation and National Manhood," examines the recodification of national manhood in individual men, such as Lewis and Clark, and the concept's inculcation as cultural logic. The chapter includes readings of Lewis and Clark's expedition, Nicholas Biddle's 1814 *A History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, John Neal's 1822 novel *Logan, A Family History*, as well as the words and actions of U.S. President Thomas Jefferson. The chapter title comes from the words of John Yates, who killed his family and denied his wife, and shows how white male power was negotiated in the early nation "through imaginary and actual relations to 'Indians'" (61). The term "Inindianation," which refers to the induction ceremony of the politically conservative group, the Fraternal Order of

Red Men, encapsulates Nelson's argument about how the "Indian" has served as a "repository for the burdens of national, professional, and class formations" (101). National manhood's "supplementary logic" of "Indians" aided in authorizing national expansion into new territories and in reterritorializing national stresses and economic inequality.

National manhood involves a concatenation of relationships between race, nation, and gender, and so it is first articulated as a political ideal. Nelson interprets the essays of Benjamin Rush to show that the American man must "equalize the contradictory demands of self, family, market, and national interests in his own person" (13). National manhood calls the individual to act on behalf of national interests; Benjamin Rush stated that his goal was "to convert men into republican machines."

However, Chapter Four, "Gynecological Manhood: The Worries of Whiteness and the Disorders of Women," shows that professional collegiality and fraternity, "the homosocial recognition of 'equals,'" provide emotional satisfaction, while heterosexuality offers "the safe haven" (174). Especially fascinating are this chapter's readings of George Lippard's 1848 novel *The Quaker City* and of Doctor J. Marion Sims's career and autobiography, *The Story of My Life*. Nelson's writing displays how Sims's medical renown depended far less on the techniques he developed than "on the more abstract promise held out by his successful gynecological 'treatment' of white women's sexual disorders" (173).

The fifth chapter explores "The Melancholy of White Manhood, or Democracy's Privileged Spot," examining a variety of "fraternal expressions," in essays, fraternal order ritual, professional friendships, and fiction. Men's rituals of brotherhood required elaborate structures, and functional melancholy was the dynamic of national manhood. One of this book's guiding principles, repeatedly exemplified, is that "'fraternity' works best – perhaps works only – with absent or dead men" (202). Instances of reputations recuperated after men's deaths, such as Doctor Sims's (176) and Meriwether Lewis's (74), concretize the argument, as does the discussion of "presidentialism" and the hard and soft bodies of a U.S. president.

Nelson's afterword returns to the questions of "presidentialism," asking what this idealizing embodiment of national manhood in a president means for the practice of democracy in the United States. Nelson essentially believes that "presidentialism" is bad for democratic practices because it reroutes democracy's radical practices, channeling democratic energies into a mode where "patriotic identification arrests questions about local social, political and economic injustices" (224). This section is particularly resonant in light of George W. Bush's recent appointment as U.S. President. Nelson also analyzes popular conceptions of U.S. presidents in feature films such as *Air Force One* and *Contact*. The book leaves readers with an understanding not only of Nelson's arguments and its bases, but also ways in which her ideas may apply in

other contexts; it is a useful cultural studies text which many scholars have found valuable since its 1998 publication.

Worthy of special note is the work's interdisciplinarity, which is controlled, appropriate, and fascinating. Nelson observes that her book is a "narrative experiment" (25), employing "a focus that resists disciplinary categorizations" (24). Nelson states:

An important aspect of my argument is how the compartmentalization of knowledge in the early United States – disciplined in increasingly rigid professional arenas – contributed to the multiplex production of white manhoods under the umbrella of a national identity. For that reason, it has been essential to my project for intellectual and political reasons to cross disciplinary boundaries both in terms of primary material and theoretical apparatus (24).

Nelson's analysis proceeds, legibly marking its direction, among texts not often conjoined. The book's argument interweaves interpretation of political documents, literary texts, popular fiction, sermons, diaries, histories, news, and tracts. Literary scholars will appreciate the way in which Herman Melville's recognized masterpiece "Benito Cereno" emblemizes Nelson's argument, but ample attention is certainly rendered to non-canonical works and texts often deemed "extra-literary" or "non-literary."

Scholars will further appreciate the materials Nelson provides at the end of her book: sixty-six pages of clearly written and useful "Explanatory Notes," a twenty-five page "Bibliography," and a well-organized, nine-page "Index." These materials document the processes Nelson used and make it possible for readers to follow her line of argument by exploring further if they choose. The thorough explanatory notes should prove particularly thought-provoking for other scholars.

The only thing Nelson's book left me wanting was more analysis of early American fiction by women. Did women writers of fiction between the 1780s and the 1850s fail to address issues pertinent to Nelson's argument, or are the women's publications not considered relevant to Nelson's discussion of the formation of "national manhood"? Male writers constantly expounded on women's roles and on domestic ideology. Perhaps the matter will be taken up in future publications by Nelson, who skillfully edited and introduced valuable editions of Rebecca Rush's 1812 novel *Kelroy* (Oxford University Press, 1992) and Lydia Child's 1867 novel *A Romance of the Republic* (University Press of Kentucky, 1997).

Unquestionably, Dana Nelson's *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* is a tremendous achievement for gender studies as well as race theory, American studies, and literary studies.

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