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Review of *A New Naval History* by Quentin Colville and James Daley (eds.)

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conventional military history, mainly because it challenges the idea that military history is solely about weaponry, armaments and mass tactics. By focusing on the individual and using literature, manuscripts and drama, the authors are able to provide a thought-provoking book on military identity that is novel, insightful and well-researched.

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Quintin Colville & James Davey (eds.), *A New Naval History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019. Notes. Index, Illustrations. 250pp. ISBN 978-1526113801 (hardback). Price £80.

Quintin Colville and James Davey bring to naval audiences an anthology of essays that can be categorised as cultural and social history of the Royal Navy. As such, this book will be of primary interest to a British audience. However, given the quality of the essays contained herein, one hopes a work of similar scope might be considered for other navies in history, especially the US Navy.

The first five essays deal with “sociocultural analyses of naval communities” stretching from mid-1700s to the 20th century. (8) The final five essays deal with “the public presentation of naval subject matter through a variety of representational forms.” (11) These topics tend toward the latest trends in historical investigation and employ the language of scholarship and academia. The introduction by Colville and Davey provides a useful historiographical discussion about the evolution of naval history from battles, leaders, and operational matters to the social and cultural issues examined in this book. It then provides chapter summations.

Evan Wilson’s opening essay “Particular skills” examines those often-forgotten members of the wardrooms of the Royal Navy, the warrant officers who dealt with pay, medical, chaplains, and the ship masters. Wilson highlights how these officers came from similar social backgrounds as the executive (or line) officers—the middle classes.(31) Elaine Chalus’s essay is among the more interesting reads in the collection because it is essentially a very-well written microhistory based on the letters of a wife to her seafaring husband.

The third entry in the first section jumps ahead several generations to the Edwardian fleet of the early 20 century and looks at the topic of homosexuality (sodomy) in the fleet. Mary Conley finds that although work on her topic is not new (“forty years,”

BOOK REVIEWS

70) but the approach here is well done and addresses issues of consent and coercion involving in the Edwardian Navy, principally by examining court martial records.

The fourth essay seems somewhat out of place, since it would go better in the final section on “representations,” dealing with photography of naval personnel in the late nineteenth century. Cindy McReery’s study has a clever twist, in that it looks more at the impact of photography of naval personnel on broader communities “because they mattered” to those same collectives. (90) This chapter is augmented by a fascinating collection of photographs from the period examined. The final entry for the first section, by Daniel Owen Spence, examines the intersection of naval recruitment with themes of race and colonialism in the period 1931-41. The essay hinges on prevailing ideas of race, specifically that “martial races” – including “‘seafaring race’ theory” – affected recruiting, although they may more have been colonial constructs based on loyalty rather than any particular affinity for naval service. (114)

The second section of the book, entitled “Representations of the Royal Navy” contains five essays that approach the topic of how the Royal Navy was “pitched”. The topics range from a memorialisation of an 18th century mariner-hero (George Anson) to 20th century themes that border on public affairs examinations. However, it is here that the iconic figure of Admiral Horatio Nelson appears. Cicely Robinson discusses representations of Horatio Nelson in the national gallery via paintings and statues.

The reviewer felt an opportunity was missed in the limited scope of the book by not offering contemporary representations of the Royal Navy today, for example on the bi-centennial of Trafalgar that the entire nation celebrated in 2005. Marc Bloch once wrote, “The good historian knows that wherever he catches the scent of human flesh, there his quarry lies.” The historians of *A New Naval History* have again proved that aphorism true in their wide-ranging and scholarly hunt captured here. Well done.

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