

Anne Greenfield, ed., *Interpreting Sexual Violence, 1660-1800*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013. Pp. 220. £60. ISBN 9781848934399.

The study of sexual violence is undergoing a period of introspection as to whether it is a study of sexualities, or a study of violent crime. In exploring this issue, scholars must tackle questions of the relationship between representations of sexual violence and readers' and audiences' reactions to such representations. How far can we infer from the plethora of representations of sexual violence found in seventeenth and eighteenth-century culture deeper indications of contemporary sexualities? This is the question with which Anne Greenfield's edited volume grapples.

The volume is undoubtedly ambitious in its scope, containing fourteen chapters from specialists from a variety of fields, and seeking not merely to explore rape, but to analyse representations of sexual violence as defined by modern parameters. The final result is uneven, although it does raise important questions about the future of studies of sexual violence for this period, and indeed the relationships between historical and literary studies. Particularly strong chapters are provided by Katie Barclay and Lena Olsson, which draw on a great variety of literary and legal sources to explore the blurred boundaries between rape and seduction which existed within eighteenth-century courtship rituals and the difficulties for conscious women to actively resist rape and be believed. Aparna Gollapundi's study of representations of sodomy within the Old Bailey Proceedings, and in particular the ways in which a focus on the violated body of the adolescent boy dominated these proceedings, expertly explores a previously understudied aspect of sexual violence in this period, and one which contains many useful contributions to more traditional conceptions of the subject. Dawn A. Nawrot's chapter on the complicity of female friends in assisting in rapes in *Tom Jones* and *Roxana* complicates traditional narratives of women as eternal passive victims and suggests important connections with eighteenth-century attitudes towards friendship. The volume is however held back by a slight confusion of aims. Both Loring Pfeiffer and Jennifer L. Airey's chapters on the means in which sexual violence was used as a discursive trope in political discourse are compelling and well-researched, yet the aims of such work are categorically different from those of the chapters listed above, looking at violence as a literary trope rather than a societal actuality – although Airey does make some attempts to infer wider public attitudes towards rape in her study.

While some chapters aim to use the historical context of legal and popular understandings of sexual violence to elucidate readings of contemporary works, others use contemporary works to add to historical understandings of sexual violence, while still more choose a purely literary focus, re-interpreting representations of sexual violence within particular works. While each is done successfully, the overall effect is confused, as can sometimes be the case when historians and literary scholars come together. There is also some confusion emanating from the editor's choice of the broad term 'sexual violence', which in most chapters is interpreted as rape, while in others appears to be viewed as any kind of expression of sexuality whatsoever. Such confusion perhaps emerges from undue reliance on studies which categorise rape as mere extensions of male sexuality. This issue is admirably tackled by the editor herself in her chapter 'The Titillation of Dramatic Rape', but a tendency in the wider volume to assume that all eighteenth-century males were programmed to desire to commit rape sometimes renders conclusions a little unsteady and hinders successful readings of some texts.

Yet despite the unevenness, Greenfield is to be congratulated for the ambitious scope of the volume and for drawing together scholars of a variety of different fields. It is clear that the language and imagery of sexual violence, and in particular of rape, permeated seventeenth- and eighteenth-century culture, and that such a culture had a complex

relationship with actual lived experience and sexualities. While this volume perhaps suffers from the confusion of aims that is sometimes the product of interdisciplinary work, it also demonstrates the fruitfulness of interdisciplinarity in covering such a wide range of genres and sources. If the book does not quite deliver on its aim of exploring sexual violence beyond the traditional eighteenth century definition of rape, it does suggest that a range of behaviours that could be viewed as sexually violent did exist in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society and culture and are worthy of further study.

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