



Amanda Pipkin, ***Rape in the Republic, 1609-1725: Formulating Dutch Identity*** (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013, 271 pp., ISBN 978 90 0425 665 1).

The cover illustration of Amanda Pipkin's monograph is well chosen and well known to scholars of the Eighty Years' War. It shows a young lady in distress threatened by a Spanish soldier with a dagger, who is already laying hands on her. The image is taken from the title page of Joannes Gijssius' *Oorsprong en Voortgang der Nederlandtscher Beroerten ende Ellendicheden*, an anti-Spanish propaganda text published in 1616. Chapter 2 of Pipkin's book, *Patriotic Propaganda*, sets out to assess this and similar images depicting women under sexual assault. 'Rape was fundamental to the cultural construction of Dutch national identity during the first half of the seventeenth century, and it served as a subtle means of voicing opposition during the second half' (3) is the rather grant thesis of the study. This is discussed in four thematic chapters addressing the issue through the analysis of protestant prints, plays and advice books (chapters 2 and 3), catholic advice literature for spiritual virgins (chapter 4) and protestant women's writings (chapter 5). The argumentation of the book is based on the analysis of early modern gender relations, the family and social order in post-Reformation society as set out by authors such as Merry Wiesner-Hanks (who sometimes appears as Weisner-Hanks) and Judith Hokke. Through the prism of the textual and artistic discussions of rape Pipkin analyses the various interpretations of sexual violence in the seventeenth century.

Rape could be seen as an assault on Dutch society, as a self-inflicted injury, which happened to women because of their inappropriate behaviour, or as a repairable male misdemeanour through a regrettable, but understandable lack of self-control. For the latter two interpretations status in society played a crucial role when deciding whether rape was permissible under particular circumstances (usually reserved to members of the upper echelons of society) or should be punished as a sinful crime (in the case of members of the lower status groups). Following from the introduction (which also addresses contemporary meanings of rape and their legal and social consequences), the two subsequent chapters analyse how a discussion of rape in the texts of, amongst others, Joost van den Vondel and Jacob Cats reaffirmed the established social order in a patriarchal society, whose norms had been threatened by the violence and turmoil of the Eighty Years' War.

Much has been written in recent years about the presentation of rape as a metaphor for the assault and the plundering of cities and towns in war (See for instance, the seminal study of Hans Peter Dürr, *Obszönität und Gewalt* (Frankfurt am Main 1995)). Research has been particularly fruitful for the study of the experience, propaganda and memory of the Thirty Years' War for which the best example is certainly the rather aptly named 'Magdeburgische Hochzeit' of 20 May 1631. Images and accounts of the metaphorical 'marriage' between the young (protestant) virgin Magdeburg and her old, violent suitor, the catholic general Tilly, focused on the inversion of the social order by this inappropriate and ill-conceived match. Offering to marry one's rape victim to repent and to restore order was apparently also part of the reaction to the violent events in Magdeburg as was the comparison of Magdeburg's women (and the metaphorical city) to the classical figure of Lucretia who preferred suicide to the shame (not just her own, but of her whole family) of being raped. These contemporary comments on the events in Magdeburg can be used to complement similar arguments and narratives in the Dutch plays that Ripkin presents, thus demonstrating the international interpretative repertoire used in early modern society to both describe or, rather, circumscribe the graphic details of sexual violence which are mostly absent in contemporary accounts. The confessionalization of violence, which Pipkin highlights in her interpretation of anti-Spanish and therefore anti-catholic stereotyping, remained an afterthought in depictions of Magdeburg (See, for instance, Michael Kaiser, 'Die "Magdeburgische Hochzeit" von 1631. Gewaltphänomene im Dreissigjährigen Krieg. Historisches Ereignis, Historische Tradition und Deutungen', in: Eva Labouvie (ed.), *Leben in der Stadt. Eine Kultur- und Geschlechtergeschichte Magdeburgs* (Köln, Böhlau 2004) 195-214).

While essentially confirming existing gender roles, it is Pipkin's aim to also trace the voices of dissent, which she finds in women writers of the second half of the seventeenth century presented in chapter 5. Women such as Johanna Coomans and Catharina Questiers, whose texts were popular and whose literary activities were widely supported as a sign of a civilized society, were able to subtly shift the goal posts against blaming women for their own rape and also to express the trauma of sexual assault often ignored or downplayed by their male contemporaries.

Chapter 4, Catholic Advice, sits somewhat uneasy in this book. 'Formulating Dutch Identity', thus the subtitle, is not the aim of the advice books for spiritual virgins operating more or less discreetly in the Dutch Republic in support of the Holland Mission. Much of this advice was given to strengthen these women's resolve in adverse and dangerous circumstances. The texts were written to fortify their morale and their lifestyle, which was regarded as not compatible with their (protestant) surroundings. In these circumstances, the distinction between advice against rape and against seduction is sometimes a bit vague. It has become increasingly evident in recent research that catholics maintained a lively community in the Dutch Republic well after the end of the Eighty Years' War. While Pipkin rightly emphasizes the role of these women as important agents in the Holland Mission, the link between the books and their activities in the

Netherlands remains somewhat elusive. The merit of this chapter, however, is its careful analysis of a wealth of texts, which might be less known to non-Dutch readers.

Why the chronological remit of the study is extended to 1725 also remains somewhat unclear. Among the sources that Pipkin investigates, only one, the political poetry by Katherina Lescailje, was actually published (posthumously) in the eighteenth century. Pipkin's attempts to harness the message of the texts that she describes, to other sources such as ego-documents or more general information on the social and economic position of men and women in the Dutch Republic sometimes remain too tentative (see, for instance, page 99, footnote 64 and pages 130-131). The chapters work best as stand-alone, self-contained articles with their separate, carefully analysed set of close readings of primary sources. This is also evident in the conclusion where the author reflects on the goal of this book, which 'has been to illuminate some of the ways in which rape served social, political and religious goals while simultaneously suggesting how ideas about rape impacted individual men and women' (236). She has achieved this aim.

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