

century: although there is some evidence for its existence as an erotic preference and speciality in literary texts and in the paraphernalia confiscated during raids on brothels. Peakman argues for the influence of the flagellation scenes common within the salacious revelations of anti-Catholic polemic (derived from French anti-clerical literature, but given a specifically British twist). By the end of the eighteenth century highly formulaic “fladge” texts, detached from this particular framework of lecherous priests, naive novices and conniving mothers superior and set instead within a stylized but recognizable secular British context, were deploying various tropes already made familiar by studies of Victorian pornography.

There is a sub-textual suggestion of a move within pornographic texts from the relatively genial, if unthinkingly male in its preconceptions, bawdry of the early part of the century to increasing interest in relations of dominance and submission, abuse of power, and erotic pain. This therefore pushes Donald Thomas’s suggestion, in *A long time burning* (1969), of a shift in Victorian pornography into scenarios of “greater . . . unreality” and increased sadism, rather further back in time, to indicate that development was already well under way by the end of the eighteenth century.

This is one of several places where one might have liked a bit more contextualization and engagement with other recent works on the development of sexual attitudes and behaviour during the eighteenth century, for example the suggestions of Randolph Trumbach, in *Sex and the gender revolution. Volume one: heterosexuality and the third gender in Enlightenment London* (1998) and Tim Hitchcock in *English sexualities, 1700–1800* (1997), concerning increased male anxiety and growing emphasis on penetrative heterosexual sex. Sara Toulalan’s work on late-seventeenth-century erotica tends to push back the “origin story” even earlier than Peakman claims. It would also have been intriguing to relate changing tropes within pornography, and its increasing production and dissemination, to the rise of exactly contemporary fears around onanism. What was the dialectical relationship between the insistence that solitary

sex was dangerous, and the growing amount of “one-handed literature”?

In spite of these cavils, this is an extremely useful beginning exploration of a still under-investigated area: as Peakman makes clear, there are considerable problems of sources and methodology to be taken into account.

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Jane Kromm, *The art of frenzy: public madness in the visual culture of Europe, 1500–1850*, London and New York, Continuum, 2002, pp. xv, 283, £70.00 (hardback 0-8264-5641-3).

Working in the conviction that imagery articulates and shapes, as well as reflects, historical processes and perceptions, Jane Kromm has given us a conceptually high-pitched and correspondingly demanding survey of the ways in which mania or *furor* has been visualized in Europe (mostly England, France, and the Low Countries) from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Her selection of images bears witness to extraordinarily wide looking—no single reader will know them all—and she subjects them to acute and often entertaining visual analyses. Though not about the history of madness, nor of the mad, *The art of frenzy* is invulnerable to any charge (as Kromm summarizes those levelled against Michel Foucault) of a “casual handling of the relationship between motifs and actualities” (p. xii). Where necessary the book offers useful and untendentious accounts of social, legal, and institutional practice. Its writing style is tight, occasionally overwound (“This politically conscious factor in monomania’s reputation represented a subset of a broader mentality in which asylums and mental disorders were persistently regarded in terms of the 1789 revolution”, p. 240), but Kromm is an expert explainer, and she needs to be. An ambitious range means that her readers must be got up to speed on the politics of Greek colonies in ancient Italy and those of artists’ societies in later eighteenth-century London alike.

The phrase “public madness” in the title, perhaps puzzling initially, does not remain so for long. Kromm subjects public-ness to careful dissections in contexts ranging from Plato’s conception of mania as the disease of the body politic to art’s functioning in such public places as the courtyard of the Amsterdam Dolhuis and the associated problems of decency: the statue of naked female *Frenzy* “exceeds the bounds of social decorum even for an image of madness . . . and such impropriety discomposes a public sculpture’s didactic role” (p. 83). Remedies for such affronts to the public include the real sufferer’s removal into the cell and, eventually, to the institution, familiar solutions cast into a new light by decency’s demands, and by Kromm’s explanation of a central historical conception of mania, as opposed to melancholia, as “an absolute rejection of civilizing processes” (p. 25).

Explorations of public spaces and of the gender, goodwill, and visual experiences of viewing publics—that is, everyone from the putatively careless youths glancing at the didactic reliefs over the doors of Amsterdam institutions to the critics writing with “an intriguing combination of oversights and obsessive concerns” (p. 141) about Carle van Loo’s painting, exhibited 1759, of Mlle Clairon as Medea (they concentrated on picking holes in the depiction of *Jason*)—are central to the history of “visual culture”, which is not quite the same as the history of art. The latter is, traditionally, the study of the exceptional; but visual-cultural historians want to work with the hackneyed or typical too. At its best, as here, the approach permits some fascinating cross-connections—a disarray indicative of “impetuous movements” among other unfeminine habits links, for example, Rubens’ depiction of Marie de’Medici (grandmother of Charles II), Frans Hals’ of old *Malle Babbe*, and the anonymous English print (1676) of the virago *Mother Damnable*—as well as the reappraisal of such relatively familiar works as the Hals painting, and Hogarth’s revision, in 1763, of his scene of the Rake in Bedlam. The last includes a mad Britannia that Kromm demonstrates as only one of many such in English graphic satire of the 1760s and 1770s. Alongside a minor painting genre that features

mad, staring (female) eyes, the engraved Britannias are shown, with precision, to have enjoyed a complex relation to radical politics of the day. Though *The art of frenzy*’s final two chapters concern nineteenth-century France, and the volume concludes with J-M Charcot’s “attempt to circumvent the political dimensions and implications of mania’s recent history” (p. 269) at the Salpêtrière, its centre of gravity seems to be the party politics of eighteenth-century England, which involved universal accusations of madness, “with the notable exception of George III himself” (pp. 180–1), standing like the innocent in the middle of a custard-pie fight.

Imagery permits a delicacy of imputation, and interpretation, that texts are hard put to match. Consider, for example, the subtlety with which, as Kromm shows, Jacques Callot’s depiction of a possessed woman—here, as in some other instances, the quality of the reproduction is not up to that of the analysis—shades our reading by making her adopt a cruciform posture; or with which Rubens called attention to the peculiar vulnerability of the powerful but benighted madman, by thrusting the head of the victim forward into our space in what Kromm calls, efficiently, the “ostentatious kind of baroque foreshortening” (p. 73). Particularly given the breadth of Kromm’s range, and the sophistication of her critical skills in the face of all kinds of imagery, I was interested to conclude that it is from the best artists that we can learn the most about historical conceptions of madness and their development: Goya offers us more than Gillray; Rubens is much richer than Robert-Fleury.

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Steven King, *A Fylde country practice: medicine and society in Lancashire, c. 1760–1840*, Lancaster, Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, 2001, pp. xiv, 110, £10.95 (paperback 1-86220-117-X).

Just as general history has turned away from traditional descriptive and constitutional studies towards analytical, social and local history, so