



Strathprints Institutional Repository

Pattinson, J.S. (2008) *Review of Women and Violent Crime in Enlightenment Scotland*. [Review]

Strathprints is designed to allow users to access the research output of the University of Strathclyde. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. You may not engage in further distribution of the material for any profitmaking activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute both the url (<http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/>) and the content of this paper for research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge.

Any correspondence concerning this service should be sent to Strathprints administrator: <mailto:strathprints@strath.ac.uk>

or gender history who gratefully collect handy and useful reference volumes should waste no time acquiring this one.

Yale University

LISA L. FORD
DOI: 10.3366/E0036924108000309

Women and Violent Crime in Enlightenment Scotland.

By Anne-Marie Kilday. Pp. x, 183.

ISBN: 9780861932870.

Woodbridge: The Boydell Press. 2007. £50.00.

Female serial killers, women suicide bombers and the increasing number, and escalating violence, of girl gangs in the late twentieth century force us to question powerful cultural stereotypes that women are inherently non-aggressive. Women are more commonly cast as the victim of violent behaviour, not the aggressor, and yet female violence, which is still regarded as an aberration, is not a recent phenomenon as Kilday's book on lowland women's violent criminality between 1750 and 1815 makes clear. Using the records of the Scottish Justiciary Court, which indicted the most violent offenders and a disproportionate number of female criminals, Kilday argues that in contrast to popular belief, women's violent behaviour was not marginal. Of the 1990 Scots who were brought before this supreme court indicted for violent offences in the sixty-five year period, 696 were women. Their involvement in violent homicide, infanticide, assault, popular disturbances, such as food riots and anti-patronage riots, and robbery are examined, along with the judicial response. Each chapter provides the legal context and is followed by defining characteristics of the women indicted. Statistics are used liberally to provide compelling evidence that lowland women were more belligerent than popular understandings of women as the 'fair' or 'gentle' sex would have us believe. In addition to the inclusion of quantitative data, individual cases for each crime are described. We hear about the gory antics of Isobel McLean who attacked her husband and 'cutt off his private member to the great effusion of his blood' (p.48), midwife Jean Inglis' disembowelling of a woman in labour with a broken bottle and Catherine MacDonald's spade attack on her newborn baby whose mangled corpse was fed to a dog.

Evidence from the Justiciary Court leads Kilday to suggest that the levels of violence employed by lowland women were unmatched in their brutality and ferocity. Those who committed infanticide did so in a very brutal and bloody way, much more than their English and Irish sisters, who rarely used violence and seldom shed blood. Female robbers participated actively, dispensing violence liberally and with evident pleasure, rather than playing subsidiary roles, acting as decoys for male associates as research has shown for Surrey, Essex and Cheshire. Lowland women were indicted for attacking men as well as women, which was uncommon, and during food riots they were violent towards people and not just property as studies of England and France have shown. Kilday also demonstrates that the judicial response to the unique excessiveness of lowland women's violent criminality was much harsher than experienced by women in other areas. Scottish women were much more likely to be convicted and hanged and their corpses publicly dissected and anatomised. It is this comparative analysis emphasising regional specificities that is a key strength of Kilday's book.

Such findings lead Kilday to assert that indicted lowland women were more aggressive than their European counterparts. They seemingly rejected feminine ideals and normalised the violence they witnessed around them. She suggests that possible explanations for the belligerence of Scottish women was their greater access to the public sphere, more frequent interaction with men and Calvinist teachings of pre-destination, which may have led some women to believe that they were already damned. And yet having asserted throughout that lowland women were more violent than other European women, her final four pages undertake a 'U-turn'. The assertive voice Kilday speaks with throughout is suddenly tempered with the repeated inclusion of the word 'perhaps'. Applying Norbert Elias' concept of the 'civilising process', she puts forward an alternative suggestion: 'instead of it being the case that lowland women were distinctively more violent than women elsewhere... perhaps it dawned upon Scotland's ruler that in order to promote and emphasise the "enlightened" nature of the Scottish nation after 1750, the lingering "dark side" of the pre-Enlightenment had to be publicly exposed and eradicated' (p. 154). Thus the apparent excess of lowland women's violence was more a result of the publicity generated by being brought in front of the Justiciary Court rather than a lesser court. More elaboration of this was needed to make a convincing argument. As it stands, this reads as an awkward adjunct to the central thesis.

The questions raised in the introduction which 'will be addressed throughout this study, but they will be particularly significant for its conclusions' (pp. 4–5) are barely referred to again and the book reads somewhat repetitively at times, with chapter conclusions largely repeating what has only just been stated. Nevertheless, Kilday's research is a welcome contribution to the burgeoning historiography on women and crime illustrating that lowland women who acted belligerently were perceived as doubly deviant, breaking natural laws as well as legal ones and were punished accordingly.

University of Strathclyde

JULIETTE PATTINSON
DOI: 10.3366/E0036924108000310

The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice, 1770–1840.

By Andrew R. Holmes. Pp. xv, 374.

ISBN: 0 19 928865 8.

Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006. £55.00.

The historiography of Irish Presbyterianism, like that of other churches, has been dominated both by functionalist critiques, subordinating issues of faith to wider explanatory frameworks, and by local celebratory approaches. Irish Presbyterians have generated their own extensive literature, much of it produced in glorification of individual congregations or ministers (Holmes comments on the Presbyterian passion for parish history), but also with a leavening of more widely researched and scholarly work (undertaken by the likes of John Barkley and Finlay Holmes). Another body of research, often originating from beyond the Presbyterian communion, has sought to link the development of the church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to wider political issues. One leitmotif of this scholarship was defined by A. T. Q. Stewart in 1956, when he launched the task of explaining the transition of the Presbyterian community from its apparent radicalism in the 1790s and the United Irish movement through to the evident conservatism of the 1890s and Ulster Unionism. Others, particularly in the light of the 'long war' in Northern Ireland after 1969, or in the light of Marxian approaches to Irish historiography