Rape in the Republic, 1609–1725: Formulating Dutch Identity. Amanda Pipkin. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 172. Leiden: Brill, 2013. xvi + 272 pp. $156.

Rape in the Republic is an ambitious work. Not only does the author aim "to expose the fact that rape functioned to reinforce the Dutch state," thus shedding light on Dutch patriotism, patriarchy, and the (Counter-)Reformation; she also hopes that her exploration of early modern rape discourse will help to eradicate rape in the future. Pipkin researches rape discourses in the early Dutch Republic by analyzing plays (especially by Joost van den Vondel), Protestant morality (especially Jacob Cats), Catholic advice books, and women's writing. The general thesis is that in most of these texts, rape functioned as an imagological device, creating an antithesis between the rapacious and tyrannical Spaniard and the ideal Dutch men who protected their wives and daughters. The hidden agenda behind this antithetical depiction of rape was to establish a vigorous social hierarchy in favor of the wealthy and powerful male elite.

Although the book presents a highly interesting and seldom explored research topic, its general thesis is unconvincing. The postulated nationalistic patriotism that Pipkin reads into these texts seems nineteenth century in nature, with women and men extolling "their love of the fatherland and the House of Orange." Depicting the hybrid Dutch Republic as a "new nation" of "Christian, freedom-loving, tolerant, family-protecting men" (82) with a "budding Dutch consciousness" (41) is anachronistic, as is Pipkin's

thinly disguised outrage about the inequality with which especially lower-class women were treated.

Was there a specific Dutch way of dealing with rape? Many of the supposedly Dutch images and texts depicting Spanish tyrannical, rapist fury were part of the international Black Legend, or were derived from the French anti-Catholic pamphlet wave after the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre. Pipkin also fails to take into account recent (Dutch-language) scholarship. Instead of addressing recent textbooks on the history of Dutch literature and culture (K. Porteman and M. B. Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1560–1700* [2008]; W. Frijhoff and M. Spies, *1650: Bevochten eendracht* [2000]), the lively debates about the politics and the religious nature of Vondel's plays (e.g., F. W. A. Korsten, *Sovereignty as Inviolability: Vondel's Theatrical Explorations in the Dutch Republic* [2009]), or recent text editions and biographies, Pipkin often relies on outdated scholarship, thus repeating worn-out myths (e.g., about the Muiderkring) or creating new ones, e.g., her promotion of the Anabaptist (later Catholic) immigrant Joost van den Vondel (a bankrupted haberdasher and pawnshop clerk) to "a member of the well-educated, merchant elite," who therefore "had sufficient reason to promote loyalty to the state simply to preserve his powerful position in it."

There are various urgent perspectives and questions that are relevant to this topic. Why was rape hardly ever reported in the Netherlands — or was it? Is there a connection between economic developments and anxieties about women's autonomy and purity? Kloek's recent cultural history of the Dutch housewife seems to challenge Pipkin's presupposition that the Dutch Republic was a fundamentally patriarchic society; already in the Golden Age the Dutch Republic was famed for the exceptional power and freedom it granted women (E. Kloek, *Vrouw des huizes. Een cultuurgeschiedenis van de Hollandse huisvrouw* [2009]). Rape discourse could have been triggered by economic decline, as it was a cause to rethink Dutch women's freedoms and their position within the household, which triggered debates about the sexual threats inherent in public space.

One of the interesting points Pipkin's book brings up is the realization that so few texts actually stage rape explicitly. It requires considerable ingenuity on her part to interpret details such as torn-up cloths, loose hair, or distressed girls as signs of rape. In many cases, this seems debatable, as so many of these signs seem to be more indicative of ill-considered adventurousness and consent of the women than of rape. The boundary between youthful amorous explorations and forced sex is fuzzier than she supposes. It makes it all the more regrettable that Pipkin overlooked texts that do stage rape scenes in detail: erotic and pornographic novels. These novels test Pipkin's claims that the rape scenes were used for the construction of Dutch identity. Rape in these novels can be evoked to heighten sexual tension, address matters of transgression (for instance in cases of travesty), or just to evoke laughter.

Rape in the Republic addresses a topic that is in urgent need of research. However, the context of national identity formation seems to obstruct a thorough analysis of the

complexity of this cultural phenomenon within the context of Dutch and European early modern society.

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https://doi.org/10.1086/685175 Published online by Cambridge University Press