

prominent female smokers. Instead, the typical addict is now popularly imagined as a young, working-class, single mother living on state benefits. The open door to liberation that smoking seemed to offer is resolutely shut. It is the reason why, over the last two to three decades, smoking has re-emerged as a “feminist issue”. And it is the reason why so many historians, sociologists, literary critics and public health officials remain transfixed by the history of women and smoking.

Rosemary Elliot ably navigates her way through this history. Drawing on research for her doctoral thesis, she seeks to complicate any straightforward narrative of emancipation through smoking. Using tobacco industry publications, literary sources, medical reports, oral testimonies and interview data, she argues that there was never any one meaning for women’s smoking. Rather, smoking could mean different things to different women, and it is only by examining “the circumstances of women’s lives” and “the need to smoke as an individual and social expression” (p. 3) that we will ever come close to understanding the phenomenon as a medical or health policy issue.

Much of the ground covered by Elliot is familiar. In the overview provided in the first half of the book of “the lady smoker”, smoking in the First World War, the take-off of the habit in the 1920s amongst flappers and starlets and the eventual triumph of the cigarette in the 1940s among nearly half the female population, there is much that has been documented before.

Where the book strives for greater originality—and, indeed, where the tone changes and the author seems most excited by her subject—is in its pursuit of the female smoker throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Here, Elliot examines the smoking and health controversies, the response of the government public health programmes and the continued social contexts through which women practised the habit of, and later addiction to, smoking. She argues that the reason why female smoking rates have not declined nearly as much as those for men

(and, among certain social groups, have resolutely refused to budge) is due to the “feminisation of the cigarette” (p. 4). Public health policies, by ignoring women smokers in their campaigns, and tobacco companies, by adapting the cigarette, inadvertently attributed to the cigarette more feminine qualities, especially through the use of filters, lower tar contents and less intensive inhalation practise (all factors which provided smoking with a lower, much less masculine risk). Moreover, women continued to adapt smoking to their social lives, as they always have done, but now that the cigarette itself had been feminized, the social dimension of women’s smoking became even more acceptable.

It is not always clear what the book brings to the debate on women’s smoking that is entirely novel. If Elliot builds on the work of other historians, she also extends much of the pioneering work conducted by feminist public health researchers in the 1980s and 1990s. In her focus on “feminization” she is to be credited, though even this suggests that, to understand these changes, a more detailed examination of gender rather than just women would have been more fruitful. However, the book does provide the most extensive treatment of the issue’s history so far in the United Kingdom and for these reasons it will be an important reference point.

**Matthew Hilton,**  
University of Birmingham

**Katharine A Craik,** *Reading sensations in early modern England*, Early Modern Literature in History, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. xi, 200, £45.00, \$69.95 (hardback 978-1-4039-2192-5).

At 138 pages before notes and bibliography, *Reading sensations in early modern England* is a slim volume, but a valuable one. In six taut chapters, Katharine A Craik adds much to our understanding of gentlemanly reading practices in early modern England, explaining how these experiences (like so many during

the time) were caught up in both acts of self-fashioning and questions of embodiment. Craik's study builds strongly upon recent work in early modern literary studies concerned with the humoral body, including that of Gail Kern Paster and Michael Schoenfeldt. She responds nimbly to the central claims of both scholars, exploring at once how the porous boundaries of the body were susceptible to outside influences—such as diet, environment, and, in this case, reading material—and also how contemporary ideas about gentlemanly behaviour required aspirational men to regulate carefully their physiological and emotional responses to such influences.

In her first chapter, Craik provides an overview of early modern theories of the passions, using texts such as Thomas Wright's *The passions of the mind in general* (1606) to trace “the overlapping histories of reading, bodily sensation and gentlemanly conduct” during this period (p. 12). Arguing that acts of reading were both private experiences and “performative activities” (p. 13), she explores the ways in which reading material could alter the physical makeup of the reader (through the humours via the passions) as well as the ways in which gentlemen readers were expected outwardly to demonstrate moral and physical mettle through their responses to texts.

In chapter two Craik elaborates on the relationship between the general reader and the literary text, examining how contemporary works of rhetorical and literary theory depicted poetry itself as having certain humours and temperaments. Through the interaction between the complexion of the reader and that of the text, positive (but potentially dangerous) reading experiences shaped not just the reader's imagination but rather “the entire psychophysical self” (p. 51).

In the final four chapters, Craik delves more specifically into particular literary genres and their concomitant emotional responses, paying close attention to how contemporary writers negotiated the delicate balance between constructive and corrupting reading experiences. In chapter three she investigates Sir Philip Sidney's unconventional argument

that poetry, rather than history, was the ideal reading material for soldiers, since it encouraged virtuous choler that would inspire them on the battlefield. Chapter four examines the aims of elegy and John Donne's conclusion in *The anniversaries* (1611–12) and *Devotions* (1624) that the writing and reading of funerary verses in fact only exacerbated sadness and despair, while chapter five offers an engaging analysis of how Thomas Coryat's *Crudities* (1611) uniquely developed the familiar trope of “bibliophagia” (the consumption and digestion of books) into an argument for the value of reading for pleasure.

In chapter six Craik considers the emerging genre of pornography, arguing that such literature was defined less through its erotic content and more through the unsettling physiological changes it could work in its readers. Intriguingly, such worrisome effects did not necessarily include sexual arousal, but rather were more linked to bewildering “sensations such as rapture, transport, and the disorientation caused by losing oneself in fiction” (p. 138). Indeed, in each of the examples of reading Craik explores, it seems that the possibility of losing mastery and control over one's passions, humours, and—ultimately—oneself was the gravest danger of all. Such reading experiences threatened early modern ideas about the proper conduct and comportment of the gentleman, suggesting that emotional and physiological self-governance might be beyond the capabilities, as well as the desires, of even the most distinguished men.

Readers coming to *Reading sensations* with a firmly historical point-of-view may find themselves wishing for more contextual information, such as a survey of library holdings among the gentlemen Craik writes about or a broader discussion of literacy during the period. Craik does not get into much specific detail about the production and reception of the texts she examines, but such omissions cannot really be deemed a fault as they are beyond the scope of her project. At heart a literary study, her book excels when

offering close, interpretative readings of the texts she has chosen to discuss, and its clear argument and elegant execution make it a rewarding read.

**Erin Sullivan,**

The Wellcome Trust Centre for the  
History of Medicine at UCL

**Andrew Mangham,** *Violent women and sensation fiction: crime, medicine and Victorian popular culture*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. ix, 247, £50.00 (hardback 978-0-230-54521-2).

Analysis of the impact of gender upon perceptions of anti-social behaviour has long been a topic of interest not only to historians of medicine, but also to those exploring the wider relations between gender, culture and society. The concept of the mad Victorian woman, the treatment of her condition and her apparent removal from mainstream society has proved to be of captivating interest. Andrew Mangham's choice of topic might therefore seem unusual considering its location within such a richly explored and well-analysed field, and his claims that concepts of violent femininity were central to nineteenth-century culture do not initially appear potentially novel.

However, the strength and originality of Mangham's study lies in his successful use of an inter-disciplinary approach whilst dealing with a diverse range of intellectual areas of inquiry. While many historians of medicine, in their search for knowledge, are often reluctant to remove their gaze from traditional resources such as medical journals and hospital records, often producing somewhat dry accounts of concepts of health and disease, he successfully reconciles the connections between our standard sources with new ones typically shunned by more snobbish historians of medicine, such as popular sensation fiction.

In *Violent women and sensation fiction*, it is argued that legal events in the Victorian courtroom, medical theories of female

insanity, and fictional popular narratives had a massive impact on one another. Mangan's decision to add the dimension of legal history to the more customary, and much-explored, combination of science and literature suggests fresh possibilities for those seeking new avenues of exploration within the history of medicine. However, instead of simply exploring previously unnoticed connections between the three spheres, he goes further by showing how particular medico-legal issues of the mid-Victorian period were in fact crucial to understanding the novels of authors such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Henry Wood and Wilkie Collins.

Mangan's choice of popular fiction is also effective, as is his argument that as these novels reached a wide Victorian audience it is difficult to understand why these resources have not been fully scrutinized academically. Fiction such as Wilkie Collins's *The woman in white* spearheaded a popular genre of sensation fiction that portrayed women in the throes of acts of criminal insanity. Furthermore, these literary works are inevitably firmly linked to other aspects of the larger culture within which they were embedded, including those not obviously directly related to literature.

The content itself proves of morbid interest, as the author goes through a repertoire of sinister crimes committed by a variety of violent Victorian women of different ages, ranging from pyromania, teenage cannibalism, road murders, crimes of passion and vampirism. These representations were all bound by the common thread of the popular image of the mid-Victorian female as prone to mental problems—an image which works with fluidity across generic and disciplinary boundaries. Mangham adds to our knowledge of female insanity by exploring how these fields were linked, and where and how they operated.

Crucially, this book does not present itself as a vague account of cultural history. Mangham outlines in detail the real events and theories that inspired a variety of sensation novels. He chooses the mid-Victorian period,