

or accomplishes an end, such as the pronouncement of wedding vows” (7). Fichtelberg carefully employs Austin’s ideas about how language works to emphasize agency; this book focuses on action, rather than representation. By juxtaposing Austin’s concept of performativity with a description of modernity adopted from Anthony Giddens, Fichtelberg provides a sophisticated, well-informed foundation for his readings of individual authors and genres. Fichtelberg’s close readings of texts are always lucid, persuasive, and detailed. It will be up to individual readers to decide whether these readings support the architecture of a sweeping historical argument that ambitiously seeks to connect over two hundred years of cultural history. It might have been safer for Fichtelberg to confine his study exclusively to literature of the Revolutionary and early national period, simplifying the question of historical change, but the books that last the longest tend to be those that take more risks.

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Toni Bowers. *Force or Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660–1760*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xvi+366pp. £60. ISBN 978-0-19-959213-5.

Like an earworm, Foucault’s catchy dictum “we must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power” ran through my head the entire time I was reading Bowers’s new, forceful critical work. On the one hand, the formulation is entirely applicable to the central argument of *Force or Fraud*: seduction stories in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are not so much about sex as they are about negotiating compromised forms of power for writers of tory sensibility in the wake of 1688. On the other hand, the dictum is completely misplaced since the power of Bowers’s explanatory thesis points directly away from Foucault’s modern concept of sex as speaking the deepest truths of our interiorized selves to an entirely different model of political subjectivity. In *Force or Fraud*, the sexual dynamics of seduction’s dominance and subordination are assumed, but the stability of the tale’s “topoi” precisely allows tory writers to use it to negotiate a political model of what Bowers names “collusive resistance—a paradoxical exercise of *resistance through submission*” (4). Seduction tales allegorize the “complex moral position” of remaining obedient to both a heredity monarchy and Anglicanism, of articulating a politics that was neither jacobite nor whig. Stories of false promises, innocence duped, complicit desires, and sexual betrayals are perfect veils under which to explore a subjectivity that combines virtue and complicity, obedience and resistance.

Bowers's archive is both fictional and historical, and before she turns her critical eye to seduction literature by Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Eliza Haywood, and Samuel Richardson, she relates gripping tales of historical seduction dramas, from the Exclusion Crisis to Lord Grey's trial for seducing his sister-in-law, Henrietta Berkeley, to the Monmouth Rebellion. In the first hundred pages, Bowers unravels the complicated history of post-Restoration Britain and, along with Steven Pincus's *1688* (2009), this section constitutes a serious new engagement with the political stakes of the period. Bowers convincingly demonstrates that non-literary discourses such as the philosophical debate on the doctrine of passive obedience, pamphlets around the Glorious Revolution, scandal satires, and the political theory of Filmer, Shaftesbury, and Locke primed readers to recognize the tory political resonances of Augustan seduction tales, and thus writers, under the guise of fiction, were able to air "some of the most troubling moral and ideological dilemmas of their day" (xv). By and around 1688, "the plot of seduction and betrayal was, so to speak, a language that everyone understood" (xiv).

The test of Bowers's thesis—that telling seduction stories stands in for negotiating forms of collusive resistance for tory prose fiction writers—will be the power of the explanatory frame to provide new and convincing readings of the literature. Does reading *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister*, *Rivella*, *Love in Excess*, or *Pamela* through the frame of old-tory and new-tory versions of passive obedience make those fictions come alive in ways they did not before? Are previous critical quagmires resolved under the clear light of fresh insight? The answer is a persuasive "yes." Bowers breathes new life into *Rivella*, which previously suffered under suffocating autobiographical interpretation, by putting aside tortured attempts to fit the life to the writing and instead reading the tensions in the text as emerging from "the paradox of compromised virtue" (194). Under this rubric, *Rivella*'s father's controlling behaviour is understood in terms of Manley's new toryism where a "wisely omnipotent patriarch who recognizes the irresistible force of love and uses his authority for his daughter's preservation" is a positive thing. Modern (whiggish) feminists who twist this work into a critique of tyranny misread the text's representation of *necessarily* living in a period where the clear line between consent and resistance, between virtue and obedience, is always already blurred.

I had many insightful "ah ha" moments reading this book, ideas that will enter my classroom to coax students beyond their often present-ist readings. For example, Melliora's rape fantasy in *Love in Excess* always sits uncomfortably with undergraduate women, understandably so, who are struggling to live by the "no means no" credo of contemporary sexual-assault education. Bowers analyzes Haywood's complicated characterization of Melliora as "a female sexual agent at once transgressive and

virtuous" (231) by explaining the seeming paradox through a "new-tory sensibility": "that virtue is not necessarily compromised by unavoidable complicity with transgressions against divine and social order ... was in 1719–1720 a statement with ideological insinuations" (237–38). The second "teaching moment" centres on students' distaste for and distrust of Pamela. What do we do when students refuse even to entertain Pamela as a virtuous character since they read her as already compromised by her desire and cite her confessed attraction and her not leaving Mr B.'s house as evidence of duplicity and connivance? Bowers's framework precisely challenges the either/or of "force or fraud" governing the response and argues that "we must learn to think differently" (260): "Like ... tory-oriented heirs to the 'Glorious Revolution,' who recognized the claims of the Stuarts but dared not acknowledge them, Pamela simultaneously *must* and *can't* obey Mr. B., the ungodly representative of God's authority over her" (260).

As with any powerful explanatory frame, it sometimes feels doctrinaire, foreclosing certain readings in the interests of tracing the singular line of a developing tory politics. Is the play between appearance and reality always to be understood as a "crucial feature of new-tory-oriented seduction fiction," or could it have larger epistemological roots (181)? Bowers is extremely careful to delimit her territory and to gesture towards alternative, equally plausible, interpretations. The few moments when I felt the "tory sensibility" argument was wielded with a slightly heavy hand were more than recompensed by the descriptive force of the fine and subtle distinctions that Bowers makes between tory positions. The historical difference between the old- and new-tory seduction narratives of Behn and Manley was sharply brought to light by her comparison of two examples of what is ostensibly the same tale: the story of a nun's broken vows (Behn's *The Nun, Or The Perjur'd Beauty* and Manley's *The Perjur'd Beauty*). Behn can be harsher on the vow-breaker since she did not have to live in a post-1688 world, but Manley, as a new-tory, is more finely attuned to extenuating circumstances and compromised vows.

This is a book one cannot accuse of thinness. Its bibliography contains, on my rough estimate, approximately 720 primary and secondary titles, an impressive marker of the critical weight that Bowers's reading of the period will hold for generations of scholars.

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