



# The Gropes

*Tom Sharpe*

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*It is one of the more surprising facts about Old England that one can still find families living in the same houses their ancestors built centuries before and on land that has belonged to them since before the Norman Conquest. The Gropes of Grope Hall are one such family....*

A brilliantly funny novel about what happens when the women take charge. The Gropes are an old English family based in Northumberland, separated from the rest of society and as eccentric as they come. It is a line dominated by strong-willed and oversexed women, determined to produce more female heirs regardless of whether their desired partners are willing ...

At the dawn of the new millenium, timid and gormless teenager Esmond is abducted and lured to Grope Hall by a descendant of the Gropes. Young Esmond is powerless to escape, and his kidnap sets in motion a stream of farcical events that will have readers laughing out loud.

Tom Sharpe's trademark humour abounds in this new novel, marking him out once again as an outstanding and unique British storyteller.

## The Gropes Details

Date : Published September 3rd 2009 by Hutchinson (first published January 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9780091930905

Author : Tom Sharpe

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# From Reader Review The Gropes for online ebook

## Steve Branca says

Un des derniers de bouquin de Tom Sharpe et cela se (re)ssent, l'humour et le burlesque sont 3 tons en dessous des autres ouvrages, la trame est décousue, sans queue ni tete, et la fin carrement baclée. Dommage de finir comme cela.

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## Ana Ahyallah says

Es como una película de humor absurdo hecha libro. Los personajes son ridículos, la historia es divertida aunque WTF, la gente se resbala y se cae al suelo... Lo que pasa es que no me ha hecho gracia.

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## Angharad says

I keep thinking about this book, so I felt compelled to write a review (by the way, continuing to think about a book after you've read it is not necessarily the sign of a good book).

I think it's already pretty evident that I did not enjoy this book. As I'm at work, here are a few bullet points why.

1) The characters were completely unlikeable. They were not humourous, and I could only sympathise with one of them. I think his name was Horace - I actually can't remember. So while I could sort of sympathise with him, he did not leave much of an impression. (I'm generally pretty good at remembering names). Oh I did also like that gardener bloke, mainly I think because he seemed to have a brain that worked. But not enough to leave the house of mental crazy.

2) The plot was utterly and completely ridiculous. I am quite happy to suspend my disbelief, but there are limits. I understand that it was supposed to be a farce and satirical, but there are farces and there are farces. This was the latter.

3) It was supposed to be funny and satirical. It was not funny and satirical. I did not laugh once. I had high hopes, we have quite a few Tom Sharpe books at home, and while I sort of expected it to be of its time (i.e. slightly 80s - though a lot of 80s humour is brilliant. And yes, I know the book was published in 2009) I thought I would still be able to laugh. I wasn't.

4) The kidnapped male in the story was 17. SEVENTEEN! Yes, he's legal to do a lot of things, but in many others way (like marrying without requiring parents permission) he's not. Yes, I know the marriage is null and void anyway as she was already married, but that is beside the point. He was abducted and then brainwashed into believing that this was ok. That's a little too Stockholm Syndrome for my liking.

5) Is it not a little outdated to portray all the police as incompetent, with no emotional intelligence? The police make mistakes, they're not perfect, I would never say that they are, but the police are overworked,

overstretched, poorly funded organisations, who are not the police of the 1970s and 1980s. They have progressed.

6) I like the idea that this was a book about women. (I'm sorry, I'm about to go English Literature at you, and very uncharacteristically so). Strong women in books is a good thing. I like the idea that women can control their own destiny, that they can decide who to marry, if indeed they want to marry. These women of this family, yes they were strong - but were they really? Every man that they married was one or more of the following:

- a) had no brain and too weak to stand up for his own rights and opinions
- b) was essentially raped to produce the children required
- c) was discarded like rubbish when he didn't help produce the 'correct' child

Now, none of these things sound like a progression of women's rights to me.

a) If you have to marry a weak man who has no self respect, or brain, or ability to express his opinions that does not make you a strong woman. That makes you someone who is callous enough to only take advantage of those weaker than you. Yes, you can argue that men have been doing that to women throughout history, but it is not a sign of progression to reverse the roles like that. It's a sign of an inability to move on and become equal.

b) Sexual assault is not acceptable at any time against any one, regardless of gender. Your desperate need to have a daughter is no excuse to justify sleeping with a man who has been drugged. That is date rape.

c) Some men do discard their wives when a younger model comes along. Some men are misogynistic. Some men are complete bastards who have no respect for their wives/girlfriends/partners. Some men (Henry VIII I'm looking at you) did discard their wives if they couldn't produce the 'correctly' gendered child. However, just because history predominantly shows us that men did this (and I imagine there were a fair few women too), this does not mean that it is funny when reversed, or indeed something that should be celebrated in any way. See point a) for views on progression and how this is not it.

I'm sure that Tom Sharpe meant the reversal of historical gender roles as a satirical look - an alternative to the themes running throughout history. Then again, he may not have, and just thought it was entertaining. I think if the characters and the plot hadn't been so preposterous it might have worked better. I understand the satire, I hope the satire was the point of the book otherwise this is terrible, I just didn't find it funny, and I think a little outdated.

The feeling I felt after finishing? That was one of the most pointless books I've ever read. Yes, it's not really my type of book - they include death and policemen and possibly a kidnapping too. Yes, this book had all those things, but not in the way that I like them.

The more I think about this book the more and more I dislike it. If I could bring myself to I would give it 2 stars for the understanding what it's trying to do. But I thought it was pants, and there are too many negatives to do that, so I'm afraid it only gets one.

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## Emily says

disappointing, unfortunately

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### **Cristina says**

La trama è interessante, almeno all'inizio. La narrazione storica del truculento matriarcato delle Gropes è simpatica e piuttosto divertente. L'inizio quindi era decisamente promettente.

Poi man mano che compaiono i veri protagonisti va tutto a rotoli e diventa una storia senza senso e senza divertimento, con continui cambi di scena e di identità che si trascinano stancamente fino a un finale scialbo.

Poi, ma perlamordiddio, il protagonista ha 17 anni, e si sposa la zia trentacinquenne, pure bigama, e nessuno, ma proprio nessuno fa una piega?

E questa sarebbe una commedia divertente?

Devo avere frainteso qualcosa...

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### **Angela says**

Not the best Tom Sharpe book ever written but a good chuckle all the same!

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### **Patrick Grau says**

Se lee en un periquete y te descojonas un montón.

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### **Michael Harry says**

So disappointing. Very obviously written to a now tired formula, there is little new here. Bullying women, timid husbands upper middle class goofyness and police stupidity... same old same old. Except the funny has gone. Tom Sharpe was once one of my favourite funny authors but this was very dull.

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### **Jon Mountjoy says**

It's a 4 star read - perhaps 3.5. But it's too short! If it were longer, it would get five. It's light, it's very funny, but the book feels as if it's half a book.

I'm currently reading Full Moon by P.G. Wodehouse - and it's similar in a fashion. Except that Full Moon is a full book too. Yes, it's light and fluffy and wonderfully funny, but it's also complete.

So, 4 stars. A good read, just not long enough!

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### **Cliff says**

In the days of the viking invasions of the British Isles a rather weedy Viking splits off from the rape and plunder being carried out by his confreres and journeys inland where he eventually comes across a Saxon maiden who is not particularly good looking and who has been passed over by previous raiders as not being worth their time. So Viking and Saxon seem made for each other and run off and eventually settle in a turf hut somewhere in wildest Northumberland. They start a lineage which lasts to the present day, always ruled over as a strict matriarchy with girl babies being favoured over males. After a quick run through of this history, the tales focuses on the family of the Wileys. Mrs Wiley's view of the world has been totally fashioned by the reading of Mills and Boon books. Her son is christened Esmond as that is the name of the hero in the book she is currently reading. I shall not give the plot away by explaining the link between these two threads of the narrative. Suffice it to say that farce is followed by more and bigger farce and so on. I wish I could say all eventually live happily ever after but some don't. You can find out for yourself by reading the book, but try not to irritate your nearest and dearest but continual outbursts of uncontrollable giggling. Tom Sharpe has not lost his touch over the years.

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### **Adrian Chapman says**

Not saying that all landed gentry live this way, but if they did life would be fun! A great read and alas I read it all too quick as I couldn't put it down.  
This book is one of Tom's that everyone must read!

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### **Gabriele Russo says**

I usually love Tom Sharpe, but was disappointed here.  
The funny situations are there, but they don't seem to lead anywhere.

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### **Rodrigo Hernández says**

Flojo, muy flojo, para lo que uno espera de Sharpe. Y el final un poco druño, la verdad

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### **Oscar says**

Worst ever from Tom Sharpe. A shadow of his old self. The final 40-50 pages are just embarrassing, and reminded me of the little essays I wrote at school. Did the author run out of time or energy and have to rush to finish the book?

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## **Adrian says**

This must be the most uninspired book by Tom Sharpe that I ever read. The plot is tenuous at best, and it ends in a fizzle unworthy of the writer of such gems as the Wilt series. Thankfully the story is rather short and I managed to complete it fairly quickly - no mean feat considering that I got bored of it relatively early and I trudged on simply because I hoped it would redeem itself in the end. Sadly, my hopes remained just that. Avoid.

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