VIOLENCE IN THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL WORLDS

EDITED BY

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When discussing the Middle Ages, it is easy to think of war and violence, always carried out by knights, warmongering kings or outlaws. This is because the film and book industries and even historiographical publications have focused mainly on reconstructing a world in which men dominated violence and women were thought of as mere victims of that violence.

The objective of this essay is to briefly look into the complex relationship between women and violence in the Late Middle Ages in Galicia (North-western Spain) by taking a close look at the variety of situations women found themselves in and conceding that they were not only victims, but that they also exerted verbal and physical violence, and controlled other people’s lives.

Late Medieval Galicia was marked by the confluence of economic crisis, abuse from the feudal lords and a high level of social conflict which created a notable level of social insecurity. In this setting we cannot forget the “Revolta Irmandiña” (1466-1469), during which many fortresses were destroyed and violence became ingrained in everyday life, something which, on the other hand, can be inherent to any society.

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