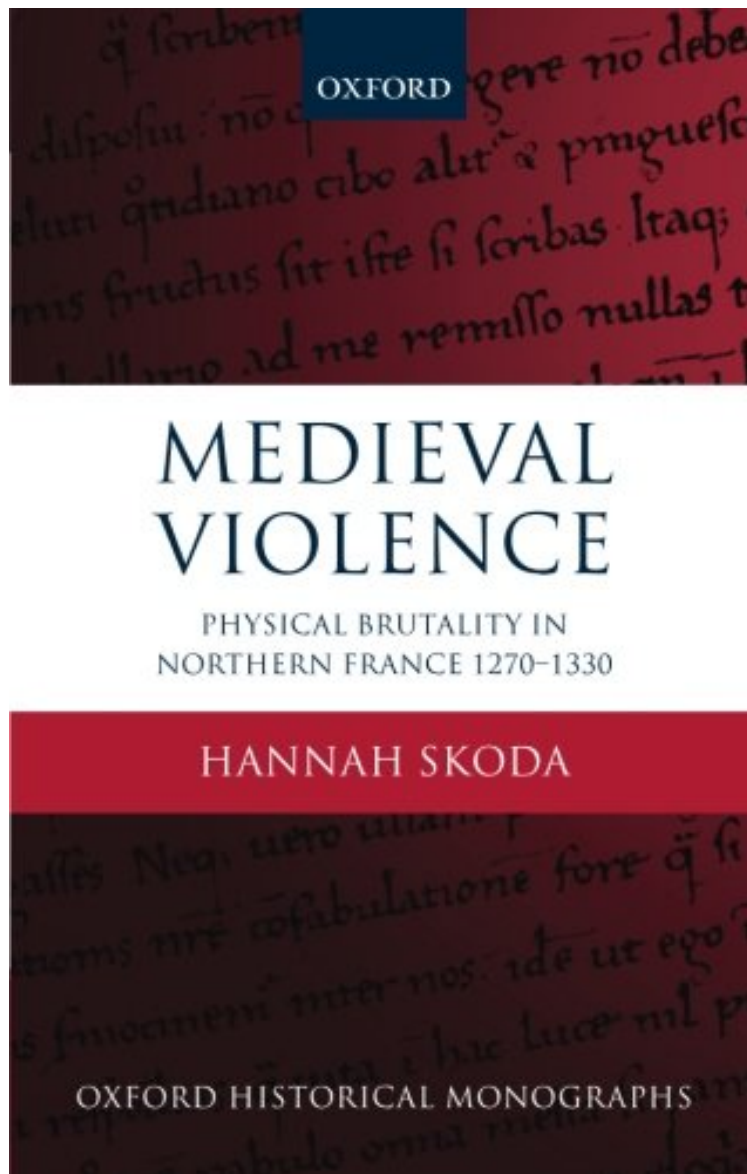


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Medieval Violence: Physical Brutality in Northern France, 1270-1330 (Oxford Historical Monographs)

Hannah Skoda

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Medieval Violence: Physical Brutality in Northern France, 1270-1330 (Oxford Historical Monographs):

Medieval Violence provides a detailed analysis of the practice of medieval brutality, focusing on a thriving region of northern France in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. It examines how violence was conceptualised in this period, and uses this framework to investigate street violence, tavern brawls, urban rebellions, student misbehaviour, and domestic violence. The interactions between these various forms of violence are examined in order to demonstrate the complex and communicative nature of medieval brutality. What is often dismissed as dysfunctional behaviour is shown to have been highly strategic and socially integral. Violence was a performance, dependent upon the spaces in which it took place. Indeed, brutality was contingent upon social and cultural structures. At the same time, the common stereotype of the thoughtlessly brutal Middle Ages is challenged, as attitudes towards violence are revealed to have been complex, troubled, and ambivalent. Whether violence could function effectively as a form of communication which could order and harmonise society, or whether it inevitably degenerated into chaotic disorder where meaning was multivalent and incomprehensible, remained a matter of ongoing debate in a variety of contexts. Using a variety of source material, including legal records, popular literature, and sermons, Hannah Skoda explores experiences of, and attitudes towards, violence, and highlights profound contemporary ambiguity concerning its nature and legitimacy.

"Skoda's overview of the medieval theory and norms with regard to aggression and its punishment, on the one hand, and the concrete violations of these customs and the penalties imposed upon the perpetrators, on the other, is one of the most complete summaries of the use of violence in medieval France available. It rightly stresses the fact that the vengeful acts of citizens were not meaningless or aberrant irregularities, but phenomena at the heart of urban life." -- Jelle Haemers, *The American Historical* 02/05/2014 "Skoda must be applauded for the strength and coverage of her analysis of gender and medieval violence and her successful approach to integrating archival and literary sources." -- Zrinka Stahuljak, *French Studies* 02/05/2014 "Skoda not only fills an important lacuna but also articulates, in a highly nuanced manner, how violence functioned as a popular form of communication and was integral to premodern communities sense of self. Interdisciplinarity was a prerequisite for this book, and Skoda's is an accomplished one. She has gone where earlier social and criminal historians were reluctant to venture... The result is a thought-provoking cultural history of premodern and mainly urban violence that will be read with great profit, especially by social and urban historians, and by students of violence in general." -- Guy Geltner, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 27/06/2014 About the Author Hannah Skoda is Tutorial Fellow in History at St John's College, Oxford. She has published on the subject of concepts of the law in medieval France, co-editing an interdisciplinary volume on legalism with the anthropologist, Paul Dresch, and she is currently embarking on research into the misbehaviour of students in fifteenth-century Oxford, Paris and Heidelberg. Other publications have ranged from Dante to the experience of disability in the Middle Ages. She is particularly interested in the relationship between constructions of deviance, and the ways in which those thus labelled react to these stereotypes.