



A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Ages

Georges Duby (Editor) , Michelle Perrot (Editor) , Arthur Goldhammer (Translator) , Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Editor)

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Drawing on myriad sources--from the faint traces left by the rocking of a cradle at the site of an early medieval home to an antique illustration of Eve's fall from grace--this second volume in the celebrated series offers new perspectives on women of the past. Twelve distinguished historians from many countries examine the image of women in the masculine mind, their social condition, and their daily experience from the demise of the Roman Empire to the genesis of the Italian Renaissance.

More than in any other era, a medieval woman's place in society was determined by men; her sexuality was perceived as disruptive and dangerous, her proper realm that of the home and cloister. The authors draw upon the writings of bishops and abbots, moralists and merchants, philosophers and legislators, to illuminate how men controlled women's lives. Sumptuary laws regulating feminine dress and ornament, pastoral letters admonishing women to keep silent and remain chaste, and learned treatises with their fantastic theories about women's physiology are fully explored in these pages. As adoration of the Virgin Mary reached full flower by the year 1200, ecclesiastics began to envision motherhood as a holy role; misogyny, however, flourished unrestrained in local proverbs, secular verses, and clerical thought throughout the period.

Were women's fates sealed by the dictates of church and society? The authors investigate legal, economic, and demographic aspects of family and communal life between the sixth and the fifteenth centuries and bring to light the fleeting moments in which women managed to seize some small measure of autonomy over their lives. The notion that courtly love empowered feudal women is discredited in this volume. The pattern of wear on a hearthstone, fingerprints on a terra-cotta pot, and artifacts from everyday life such as scissors, thimbles, spindles, and combs are used to reconstruct in superb detail the commonplace tasks that shaped women's existence inside and outside the home. As in antiquity, male fantasies and fears are evident in art. Yet a growing number of women rendered visions of their own gender in sumptuous tapestries and illuminations. The authors look at the surviving texts of female poets and mystics and document the stirrings of a quiet revolution throughout the West, as a few daring women began to preserve their thoughts in writing.

A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Ages Details

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From Reader Review A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Ages for online ebook

Werehare says

7/10

Lettura interessante, che risente dell'alternarsi di vari autori: mentre alcuni rendono molto piacevole l'argomento, altri sono meno bravi nel farlo e una in particolare, la penultima, è di una pesantezza letale. In generale un saggio che mi sembra ben documentato e utile per capire da dove arrivano molti preconcetti (purtroppo) attuali.

Gabrielle Dubois says

My review of this series below volume 4

Dora says

I started reading this book because of a presentation I have to give, but I ended up loving the book and reading it for fun :D it's a great read if you're interested in the subject! And you find out quite a few interesting facts :D But since there are several authors involved, a lot of things are repeated, but that doesn't bother me that much...i remembered it better that way :D hehe

Ned says

nice overview. Goldhammer is not the only editor despite the blurb

Tamara says

I found this book informative and up front about the limitations of their research. It is difficult to extrapolate life of the every day Medieval woman from records that showed the exceptions.

The one chapter I found exceedingly frustrating was on the writings of Medieval women. The author was so caught up in explaining how writings were frequently not in the voice of the woman writing because of male interlocutors that they forgot to put in the actual writing. I would have preferred to have more excerpts of the actual writings.
