



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

JUSTIFYING INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

23 April 2025, online (Google Meet)

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<https://meet.google.com/mxy-pwmn-itr>

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS



Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment
Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije, družbe, kulture in okolja

ČENTUR & YORK 2025



This symposium is part of the bilateral project BI-VB/23-25-001 *Justifying Interpersonal Violence in Early Modern Europe*, co-funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), and the research programme P6-0435 (A) *Practices of Conflict Resolution Between Customary and Statutory Law in the Area of Today's Slovenia and Its Neighbouring Lands*, also co-funded by ARIS.

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Conference Organisation Committee: Žiga Oman (chair), Stuart Carroll, Darko Darovec, Angelika Ergaver

Organiser: Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and the Environment

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Cover picture: *Interior with Women Thrashing a Man* (“*Peasants Fighting*”), Jan Steen, ca. 1670–73.



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for Research, Development and Strategies
of Society, Culture and Environment

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 23 April 2025, 12.00 to 14.15 CET

12.00-12.05

Welcoming addresses (Žiga Oman, Darko Darovec)

12.05-12.45

European Comparisons (Panel chair: Darko Darovec)

- Žiga Oman (Institute IRRIS) & Stuart Carroll (University of York)

Narrating Elite Violence in the Early Modern Habsburg Erblande: Inner Austrian Duchies in the Imperial Context

- Sian Hibbert (University of York) & Veronika Kos (Institute IRRIS)

Women and Interpersonal Violence in Early Modern Europe: A Comparative Study of Languedoc and Ljubljana (1680–1720)

12.45-13.00

Coffee break

13.00-14.00

The Italian Perspective (chair: Sian Hibbert)

- Andrew Vidali (Trinity College Dublin)

Justifying the New Protagonists of Civic Peace: Signori alla Pace and Pacifici in Sixteenth-Century Italy

- Amanda Madden (George Mason University)

The Nexus of Gender, Honor, and Interpersonal Violence in the Venetian Republic 1550–1700

- Umberto Cecchinato (University of Trento)

Justifying Violence Through Dance in the Renaissance Republic of Venice

14.00-14.15

Closing remarks (Stuart Carroll)

SYMPOSIUM OUTLINE

JUSTIFYING INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

23 April 2025, online

European modernity is traditionally understood as a time of the eradication of feud and of steadily falling levels of interpersonal violence. However, recent research suggests that this process was neither swift nor uniform. In fact, at various times in the period of 1500–1800, levels of interpersonal violence soared throughout Western and Central Europe and in dispute settlement violent retribution retained a level of social legitimacy that long outweighed normative prohibitions. This can, for instance, be observed through the ubiquity of pardons and letters of safe conduct granted by sovereigns and other authorities for homicide, feuding, banditry, grave wounds etc. This symposium will look at social views on violence in early modern Western, Central and Mediterranean Europe, particularly on how it was justified in courts of law, and how this responded to coeval changes in criminal law, systems of government (e.g. Absolutism), thought and feeling, as well as how these processes were mitigated by class and gender.

ABSTRACTS

NARRATING ELITE VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY MODERN HABSBURG *ERBLANDE*: INNER AUSTRIAN DUCHIES IN THE IMPERIAL CONTEXT

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The dominant historiography of the early modern Habsburg Hereditary Lands or *Erblande* maintains that its nobility had largely abandoned the use of violence in its disputes in favour of litigation well within a century following the 1495 Imperial ban on feud, which echoes prevailing claims in German history. In this context, later cases of noble violence are generally disregarded as steadily diminishing remnants of uncivilised manners or individual violent proclivities. These accounts have recently been questioned by growing evidence that feuding survived well after 1500 in both the Holy Roman Empire in general and in the *Erblande* in particular. This paper looks at how the resort to violence among the elite was narrated in the Inner Austrian duchies and sets the findings into the broader Imperial context. It argues that the ‘pacification’ of the elite in the 1600s was more of a consequence of a semantic shift in justifying or denouncing violence in law courts than of a demise of feuding, as nobles adapted to judicial reform.



**WOMEN AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LANGUEDOC AND LJUBLJANA (1680–1720)**

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This paper presents a comparative analysis of women's roles in incidents of interpersonal violence and dispute settlement in early modern Languedoc and Ljubljana, focusing on the period 1680–1720. Predicated on legal sources, criminal cases from the parlement of Toulouse and town council records from Ljubljana, the paper uses case studies from the two courts to challenge the conventional historiographical view of women as passive participants in violent conflict. Despite the methodological challenges inherent in comparing criminal proceedings from two different legal systems, this paper highlights women's active involvement in violent conflict, thus revealing their agency within patriarchal social structures. By re-examining women's roles in early modern disputes, this paper argues for a more nuanced understanding of women's experiences and motivations in their use of verbal and physical violence.



**JUSTIFYING THE NEW PROTAGONISTS OF CIVIC PEACE:
SIGNORI ALLA PACE AND *PACIFICI* IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY**

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Between the 1540s and 1560s, two Italian states appeared to feel an urgent need to establish new civic bodies aimed at ensuring peace and public order. This was the case in both the Venetian mainland and the Papal States, where large cities as well as small communities created bodies of peacemakers; often – but not always – local political elites coordinated this institutionalization with central authorities, either at their own initiative or at the prompting of the latter. This paper will first examine these figures, highlighting their distinctive characteristics and differences between the Venetian and Papal peacemakers, and briefly trace their development through the centuries. Secondly, it will demonstrate how the reasons offered by Italian ruling classes for establishing them can actually be linked to the broader peace-making crisis that affected Europe and was triggered by the Reformation. Within this framework, such peacekeepers can be interpreted as part of the Italian response to it.



THE NEXUS OF GENDER, HONOR, AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC 1550-1700

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In July 1578, in the small village of Pigozzo northeast of Verona, Madonna Anzola Nogara was found dead in her doorway, the victim of multiple wounds. According to testimony presented before the *Giudice di Maleficio* in Verona, Anzola had provoked her attacker with *parole ingiuriose*—verbal insults that targeted his masculinity and, crucially, his honor. Her death, while singular in its details, echoes across the criminal records of the Venetian Republic, where honor consistently appears as a powerful rationale for interpersonal violence. In some cases, it emerges as an explicitly stated motive; in others, it underpins acts of aggression tied to adultery, sexual violation, or public insult. Even the insult of a foreign ambassador outside the ducal palace could be framed as an affront to both personal and collective honor, justifying retaliation on behalf of the *patria*. Honor, in this context, was not merely a cultural ideal but a socially legible justification for violence—embedded in legal processes, community expectation, and state response. Yet, as cases involving both gender and honor demonstrate, such justifications were far from straightforward. The murder of Madonna Anzola, and others like it, invite closer scrutiny of how categories of gender, social status, and political factors intersect to produce—and sometimes obscure—the legitimacy of violent acts. This paper examines a selection of cases from the *Giudice di Maleficio* alongside the sentences and proclamations of the Council of Ten, reconsidering how gendered conceptions of honor operated within, and were shaped by, the expanding apparatus of state justice in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



JUSTIFYING VIOLENCE THROUGH DANCE IN THE RENAISSANCE REPUBLIC OF VENICE

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Renaissance dance has often been described as one of the driving forces of civilisation. Thanks to the strict formality that governed dances, dancers learned to discipline their instincts and emotions, and to increase their awareness of the other person. For those who support Norbert Elias's theory of the process of civilisation, dance can be seen as one of the practices that facilitated the progressive abandonment of violence as a means of resolving interpersonal relationships. Through the analysis of various court records from the Veneto region, this paper will test this theory and show that the complex rules of dance actually allowed two opponents to justify the start of a violent fight and to conceal their previous enmity, both on a legal and on a moral/emotional level.

