

Suffered, Exercised, and Manipulated Rights

Women's Experiences from the Napoleonic Era to the *Belle Époque*

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Historiography has showed that in modern and contemporary Western societies women have been subjected to discriminatory legal systems designed by men (Gerhard 2016; Bartoloni 2021). From the French Revolution to the late 19th century, feminist and women's groups aimed to change the established order and take part in the legislative process by protesting against, opposing, and cooperating with political and institutional actors. Their ultimate goal was to claim the equality of rights that had previously been denied to the female sex. If it is well known that the 19th century emerges as a crucial period to investigate changes in the condition of women and their relationship with different legal systems, recent scholarship is pointing at new directions reassessing the role of women in the context of legislative continuities and

ruptures. In particular, the concept of agency prompts us to focus on the female perspective by considering not just practices of «resistance to male authority or patriarchal patterns», but also the ability to turn established social boundaries to women's advantage. In other words, it leads to explore «the variety of everyday interactions in which women accommodated, negotiated or manipulated social rules and gender roles» (Montenach - Simonton 2013, 5).

In the realm of civil law, it would be relevant to examine the following themes: 1) How women mobilized the principles of divorce and equal inheritance introduced by the 1804 Napoleonic Code, the influence of which extended to Latin America, Japan, and Africa; 2) Women's relation to the institution of marital authorization, repealed in Great Britain as early as 1882; 3) How more advanced legal systems, such as the 1811 Austrian Universal Civil Code and those in force in



Scandinavian countries, affected women's lives; and 4) The influence of "coverture" on women's personal and economic choices which in the United Kingdom and North America gave husbands the right to their wife's properties.

In the field of criminal justice, historiography has outlined how the concept of rape evolved (Noce 2009) and the crime of ill-treatment in the family was introduced (Cavina 2011). However, more research on these crimes is welcome. The decrease in female criminality in Europe after 1850 (van der Heijden – Pluskota - Muurling 2020), the role played by the press in attributing certain types of crimes to women, and women's involvement in the construction of forensic science could also be explored through comparative approaches.

This special issue of *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea* invites contributions that examine the complex relationship between women and justice from the Napoleonic era to the *Belle Époque* (1799-1914), in any geographical context around the world. Potential topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Women's recourse to civil and/or criminal courts (reasons and circumstances)
- Women's interactions with 19th-century regulations, traditional and recent legal systems
- Dynamics of female criminality
- Intersection of gender, crime, immigration, and ethnicity
- Role played by the media in constructing gendered perceptions of crime
- Women's experiences with justice in literary sources
- Women in/and the forensic science.

HOW TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

Authors can submit abstracts and articles in Italian, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese (articles in Portuguese will be translated into Italian by the editors). All articles will undergo anonymous double-blind peer-review. The article's length should be between 35,000 and 55,000 characters, including spaces, and should follow our editorial rules and instructions for authors, which you can access at this link: <https://www.studistorici.com/en/instructions-to-authors/editorial-and-bibliographical-guidelines/>.

Please send your abstract (no more than 1500 characters, including spaces) to: redazione.diacronie@studistorici.com by **September 23, 2024**. We will notify you of your proposal's acceptance or rejection by **October 14, 2024**. The deadline for submitting your article is **March 10, 2025**. We expect to publish the journal issue in **September 2025**.

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