Women’s Criminality in Europe, 1600–1914

Bringing together the most current research on the relationship between crime and gender in the West between 1600 and 1914, this authoritative volume places female criminality within its everyday context. It reveals how their socio-economic and cultural contexts provided women with ‘agency’ against a range of European backdrops, despite a fundamentally patriarchal criminal justice system, and includes in-depth analysis of original sources to show how changing living standards, employment, schooling and welfare arrangements had a direct impact on the quality of life of working-class women, their risk of becoming involved in crime and the likelihood of being prosecuted for it. Rather than treating women’s criminality as always exceptional, this study draws out the similarities between female and male criminality, demonstrating how an understanding of specific cultural and socio-economic contexts is essential to explain female criminality, both why their criminal patterns changed and how their crimes were represented by contemporaries.

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