



Gender and Justice: Violence, Intimacy, and Community in Fin-de-Siècle Paris (The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science)

Eliza Earle Ferguson

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Historian Eliza Earle Ferguson's meticulously researched study of domestic violence among the working class in France uncovers the intimate details of daily life and the complex workings of court proceedings in fin-de-siècle Paris.

With detective-like methods, Ferguson pores through hundreds of court records to understand why so many perpetrators of violent crime were fully acquitted. She finds that court verdicts depended on community standards for violence between couples. Her search uncovers voluminous testimony from witnesses, defendants, and victims documenting the conflicts and connections among men and women who struggled to balance love, desire, and economic need in their relationships.

Ferguson's detailed analysis of these cases enables her to reconstruct the social, cultural, and legal conditions in which they took place. Her ethnographic approach offers unprecedented insight into the daily lives of nineteenth-century Parisians, revealing how they chose their partners, what they fought about, and what drove them to violence. In their battles over money and sex, couples were in effect testing, stretching, and enforcing gender roles.

Gender and Justice will interest social and legal historians for its explanation of how the working class of fin-de-siècle Paris went about their lives and navigated the judicial system. Gender studies scholars will find Ferguson's analysis of the construction of gender particularly trenchant.

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