

FEDERICA RASSU\*

## INTRODUCTION

The examination of the legal status of women in a globalised legal order undergoing profound transformation – shaped by contradictory economic, social and political processes in which opposing trends concerning the affirmation or denial of rights coexist – was at the heart of the discussions held during the 20th Roma Tre-Poitiers Study Days, entitled “Women”. This annual event marked the continuation of a collaborative endeavour initiated in 2001, which has made it possible to develop a historical and comparative analysis of the major concepts of law, alongside reflections on comparative legal methodology. The theme “Women” in particular fostered renewed reflection on a range of issues that had seemed relegated to the margins of public and legal debate, but which have once again moved to the forefront of political and legal discussion, in connection with the condition of women – traditionally situated at the intersection of the public and private spheres. In this context, the Poitiers – Roma Tre Study Days once again constituted a pluralistic forum for dialogue, aimed at capturing the most recent theoretical and legal developments, with particular emphasis on the diversity of national and European legal traditions, considered both within their specific legal contexts and from a comparative and forward-looking perspective. Accordingly, the key issues relating to the legal status of women were examined through alternating contributions in French, Italian and European law.

The three selected contributions reflect the diversity of these perspectives. First, **Barbara Cortese** analyses the social and legal status of women in ancient Rome, demonstrating that their inferior position did not stem from an immutable “nature”, but rather from political and legal choices that subsequently shaped cultural norms. Her contribution clearly highlights the heterogeneity of Roman society, showing that the status of women varied according to historical periods, imperial policies, and above all the social, familial and legal position of each individual woman. It is therefore impossible to speak of a single, uniform “Roman woman”, particularly given that the Roman world was entirely unfamiliar with the modern concept of gender. Secondly, **Aurélie Viot-Landais** explores the issue of gender equality in French civil service law, focusing on

---

\* Maître de conférences en Droit Public - Faculté de Droit et de Sciences sociales de l'Université de Poitiers; Vice doyenne aux Relations internationales; Membre de l'Institut de Droit Public (IDP-UR 14145) - Co-responsable axe de recherche Les ordres juridiques.

the authenticity and effectiveness of the French parity framework, as well as its compatibility with the French model of the civil service. While clearly distinguishing parity from the mere principle of equality, the author rightly emphasises that, despite the significant feminisation of the workforce and the formal guarantee of equality under the law, women remain under-represented in positions of power. The corrective measures introduced to address these persistent inequalities have not resolved the underlying difficulties, which are compounded by an enduring tension between parity and the French civil service model, traditionally based on neutrality, merit, and the rejection of any representational logic. Finally, **Céline Lagéot** examines whether the European Court of Human Rights takes into account differing feminist interpretations when adjudicating cases involving violence against women. Her analysis unfolds in three stages, demonstrating that the Court adopts a particularly firm stance with respect to the most serious violations of women's integrity, thereby satisfying all strands of feminist thought through its condemnation of the gravest infringements of women's physical or psychological integrity. While this case law gives rise to greater reservations among feminists with regard to the issue of abortion, the author suggests that the Court's approach to domestic violence may nevertheless provide common ground for all feminist perspectives, united around the principle of human dignity.