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## Review of Margarita Torremocha Hernández, *Cárcel de mujeres en el antiguo régimen: Teoría y realidad penitenciaria de las galeras*

Elena Del Rio Parra  
*Georgia State University*, Rio@gsu.edu

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scholars and students who are interested in questions of masculinity from a historical, social, and cultural perspective.

**José R. Cartagena-Calderón**  
**Pomona College**

**Torremocha Hernández, Margarita. *Cárcel de mujeres en el antiguo régimen: Teoría y realidad penitenciaria de las galeras*. Madrid: Dykinson, 2019. 307 pp.**

Prof. Margarita Torremocha Hernández's ample knowledge on penitential and women's legal matters during the Spanish modernity (seventeenth and eighteenth century) has translated into her latest monograph on women's prisons during the Spanish "Old Regime". She is the author of works on other environments, such as brothels (*mancebías*), convents, *casas de recogidas*, and lesser-known spaces within the social system (*De la mancebía a la clausura. La casa de recogidas de Magdalena de San Jerónimo y el convento de San Felipe de la Penitencia*). She has authored articles and book chapters on student life and campus regulations, laws pertaining matchmaking and honor, and charity houses.

From the very title, professor Torremocha Hernández successfully aims at pinpointing aspects in which the establishment of the law does not quite match its application, a situation not infrequent even nowadays but very visible in a setting like the vast territories of the Spanish empire, which covered much of the known world. She cleverly narrows the scope of her analysis to the state of the women's "galleys" (a suitable word, since females could not serve time in actual ships like men did), swiftly covering a range of ordinances through which the establishment and management of such spaces were defined by pioneer Magdalena de San Jerónimo in 1608. Later these would be upheld by Antonio González Yebra (1784), and Luis Marcelino Pereyra (1796). The first four chapters of *Cárcel de mujeres en el antiguo régimen* give the reader a clear rundown of how these and other Spanish intellectuals thought, organized, and planned the connection between theory and the context within the different reclusion models. The fifth chapter dives into daily life in jail, including not only regulations but also the types of prisoners, caretakers, food and clothing, labor, prayer, and other daily activities. The last section of this book takes the Galera de la Chancillería de Valladolid almost as a case-study; one might think regional data could be anecdotal, but in fact Valladolid was the major legal hub for the administration of justice in Spain. Hence it makes for an ideal representation of the state of the matter. The analysis is soundly backed up by theoretical documentation throughout, and a myriad of valuable testimonial primary sources, with some key elements having been reproduced in a brief appendix.

Neither law books nor prison accounts allow us to know what “really” took place within these liminal spaces, as professor Torremocha herself acknowledges, but the hinge-like structure of this book allows for the reader to, at least, infer where the gap between norm and practice lies. Laws are a neat, theoretical representation of how different generations approach this problem, whereas accounts on prisons usually offer, together with detailed descriptions of unsanitary conditions and sordid practices, an assortment of non-daily cases that record extreme situations like the ones found on chapters six and seven. *Cárcel de mujeres en el antiguo régimen* traces the path of architectural spaces, locations, visitation rights, meal regimes and providers (incidentally, the term “*paniaguado*” coincides with Isabel Paniagua, who was in charge of feeding the poorest inmates in the Galera de la Chancillería de Valladolid for over twenty years), financing of expenses, theft by personnel, sanitary conditions and ailments, handling by watchmen, paperwork involved, types of inmates, and attire allowed. The book also examines the price of securing posts (*oficios*) such as warden who, in return, charged prisoners a fee for his services. This book places a particular emphasis on the inmates’ complaints whenever records are available, highlighting the grievances gathered and transmitted through prison wards in the spirit of reformation carried by a “New Regime” where, for instance, workshops would be called “laboratories” and food was treated as bartering currency.

When reading this monograph, one cannot help but think about Francisco de Goya’s, José Guadalupe Posada’s, and José Gutiérrez Solana’s dark depictions of male and female incarceration on both sides of the Atlantic, but also its amusing representation in a movie like *Ladies They Talk About* (1933), where a truck shot travels through the cells of female inmates to show a varied microcosm. They all remind us that jail—a dystopian gallery—serves as a great frame for any work of fiction, perhaps carrying on an inherent pedagogic byproduct, of the many miseries of the penal system, which this monograph breaks down to reveal as a number of interacting forces working against each other. From sociology, to finance, medicine, nutrition, and charity, *Cárcel de mujeres en el antiguo régimen* goes way beyond the anecdotal to expose the paradox of human nature as problem creator and problem solver.

**Elena del Río Parra**  
**Georgia State University**