

ELENA MUSIANI

## SHAPING A “NEW SOCIAL HUMAN SUBJECT”: WOMEN’S SOLIDARITY NETWORKS IN EUROPE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

### 1. *Introduction: New practices in chronologising revolutions*

«We are Saint- Simonians» – read the first issue of *La Femme libre*, published in 1832. The journal, «written and published by women», continued by affirming «our aim is association» planned for providing women «of all ranks, religions, opinions» with «social regeneration work»<sup>1</sup>.

This quote provides the starting point from which to outline how this essay intends to develop the theme of “women’s solidarity” in the first half of the 19th century. There are two main issues: the first is that of the delineation of the term itself, “solidarity”, to be understood in this case both as the construction of networks that gradually led to the formation of a political movement of women in a transnational perspective, and as the development of ideas and social practices.

Thus continued the text in *La Femme libre*:

At a time when peoples are struggling in the name of Liberty, and when the proletariat is demanding its liberation, are we, women, going to remain passive before this great movement of social emancipation that is taking place before our eyes? Is our condition so happy that we have no demands to make? To the present day, women have been exploited and subjugated. This tyranny, this exploitation, must stop. We are born as free as men, and one half of humankind cannot be, unjustly, enslaved to the other<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Appel aux femmes”, *La Femme libre. Apostolat des femmes*, (1832), n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

The second decisive aspect to underline is chronology: a chronology that, although limited to the first half of the 19th century, should in my opinion be interpreted as an interval ‘between revolutions’: those of 1789 and 1848. While the Enlightenment and the Revolution of 1789 had certainly contributed to putting the individual back at the centre, the liberal tradition was soon opposed by projects that added the collective dimension to the individual and proposed new models for reorganising society that the great principles of 1789 had fragmented and “pulverized” (see Moses 1993; Planté 1983; Ead. 2019).

The magazine was short-lived: founded in the summer of 1832, *La Femme libre* was in print for only two years until April 1834, during which time it published 31 issues. And yet, its story can also be read in the “long” season of contemporary revolutions, which witnessed the simultaneous progress of a women’s political and social movement (see Ferrando, Kolly 2015).

There is another interesting point to highlight: the importance of the press as a means of individual and collective affirmation. The first issue of the magazine proposed the creation of a union that was to be neither hierarchical nor authoritarian. A solidarity aimed at serving all women, in a horizontal union designed to combat the exclusion of the female sex from political and democratic processes.

Finally, the theme of this first collective expression also highlights the emergence of transnational networks: the intertwining of Saint-Simonianism, Fourierism and Owenism was evident during this period, even when viewed from a gender perspective.

From the first experiments in France in the 1830s, to dialogue with Owenism in Great Britain, to the creation of the first mutual aid societies, there was, in that first half of the century, a constant entanglement of the political and the social.

The keywords were expressions of individual rights advanced and claimed in the aftermath of the revolutions of modernity. And yet these early experiences of solidarity sought at the same time to forge unity in plurality, attempting to initiate new and different interpretations of the concept and idea of freedom.

*Liberté* had, moreover, been the central idea orienting revolutionaries since 1789, but it had yet to become reality (Agulhon 1980; *La liberté guidant les peuples* 2013).

## 2. "A Light from the Darkness." Following the July Days, 1830

The first issue of *La Femme libre* came out, as mentioned, in 1832. France had just gone through another revolution that had led to the definitive fall of the restored Bourbon monarchy. The revolution brought a "bourgeois" king, Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, to the throne, and launched a new political, economic, and social project, at the head of which was a ruling class of a clearly liberal stamp (see Pinkney 1988; Charléty 2018).

In the July Days of 1830, women had been active and present at the Parisian barricades – their names lost among the masses of revolutionaries – and yet the new Constitutional Charter still saw them denied fundamental civil and political rights. However, the *Charte* did not prevent freedom of the press or of association and it was in that climate, thanks also to the evolution of a Saint-Simonian doctrine, that original voices interpreted the ideas of social and collective emancipation, in particular through the pages of their newspaper *La Femme libre*, which opened with that "Appel aux Femmes".

The foundations of the Saint-Simonian doctrine, the writings of Comte de Saint-Simon, were the idea of progress that, at the heart of industrial society, would improve the condition of the working class. This envisaged the abolition not of private property but of the inheritance of goods, with calls for forms of collectivisation and a substantial agreement between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It was a project that envisaged the foundation of a new social bond destined to take on the features of a "new Christianity". A new social doctrine, based on practised experiences of solidarity, common to all human beings. A new social order aimed at progress, albeit not egalitarian, the Saint-Simonian project was in fact elitist, even if it was marked by a modern hierarchy at the top of which was the class of *savants*, followed by that of the entrepreneurs, who would act as guides for the lower classes. On this basis, Saint-

Simon's disciples established a new church and the Saint-Simonian "family" was founded on the essential bond of the love of one's neighbour. Proletarians would have the means to educate themselves and come together in forms that provided for cooperation between classes and between the sexes, according to the fundamental principle of the doctrine: "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work" (see Reybaud 1979; Picon 2002; *Le siècle des saint-simoniens* 2006).

Within this conception of societal reorganization, emancipation of "the woman" had a no lesser role. Strictly used in the singular, this too was to be defined in terms of association to be managed according to the principle of capacity. The Saint-Simonian individual was a social individual with the duty to find a way to organize a new society based on the competences of the individual, starting from the utility principle. Without attributing a specific role to women in his doctrine and dedicating only a few fragmented passages to women, Saint-Simon opened up – it could be said – to the possibility of developing emancipation ideas (Albistur, Armogathe 1977).

Man and woman are THE BEING created by God; the man and the woman are THE INDIVIDUAL in social terms. There exist two types of union: those between individuals who sanctify and those between individuals who are sanctified. As in Christianity, there exists ORDER and MARRIAGE, or rather, there exists union with a SOCIAL aim and union with an aim to build a family<sup>3</sup>.

A woman who joined the Saint-Simonian family became a part of it and was certain to have a defined, though not a leading, role. However, she would increasingly become a messianic figure. To women, Enfantin entrusted the task of contributing to the organisation of society but, to do so, she could not overstep certain limits and above all not question male authority. Saint-Simonianism proposed a moral emancipation of women

---

<sup>3</sup> «L'homme et la femme, voilà l'ÊTRE que Dieu a créé; l'homme et la femme, voilà l'INDIVIDU social. Il y a deux espèces d'unions, celles des individus qui sanctifient, celles des individus qui sont sanctifiés. Il y a, comme dans le christianisme, l'ORDRE et le MARIAGE, c'est-à-dire l'union dans un but SOCIAL et l'union dans un but de FAMILLE» (P. Enfantin, *Lettre à Charles Duveyrier*, Août 1829, in Bulciolu (1980 : 48).

but in the doctrine of Charles Fourier emancipation of women assumed a character of social progress. For Fourier, society would not have been able to progress unless women were emancipated both in their private and working lives (see Pilbeam 2000). However, from the perspective of the development of the idea of association, the context of the early doctrines, whose aim was society's progress, allowed women to progressively build a defined role within society.

In this chronology, centred on the theme of solidarity, Saint-Simonianism certainly represented a central moment in the evolution from the individual to the collective and became a powerhouse of ideas that would assume the features of a political movement in the second half of the century. The 1830 Revolution also played its part in this and helped to bring together the people and the doctrines, and drive the social movement. The social question was, moreover, central also when taking into account the voices of the leading figures of this experience.

The ground trembles beneath our feet; everything shakes, everything collapses around us; religious and political institutions look like old buildings whose foundations are crumbling beneath them. We are in a century of light but darkness reigns: everywhere is disorder and confusion; everyone is fumbling around in the dark anxiously asking themselves: where are we? Where are we going? From the ruins, from the heart of darkness, comes a ray of light, Saint-Simonianism appears.<sup>4</sup>

In this world that was undergoing constant transformation – «tout se transforme autour de nous», wrote Jeanne Deroin – initial women's voices were of women searching for their own social identity. And if the barricades – at least in those July Days – were a domain as yet prevalently male, women's writing, on the other hand, was on the rise. Addresses, petitions, ap-

---

<sup>4</sup> «Le sol tremble sous nos pas; tout chancelle tout s'écroule autour de nous; toutes les institutions religieuses et politiques ressemblent à de vieux édifices minés par la base. Nous sommes dans un siècle de lumière et l'obscurité règne; tout est désordre et confusion, chacun marche à tâtons et se demande avec anxiété, ou sommes nous? Ou allons nous? Du milieu des débris, du sein des ténèbres, s'échappe un rayon de Lumière; le Saint-Simonisme apparaît!» [*Profession de Foi de Melle Jenny De Roin (Jeanne Deroin)*, in *De la liberté des femmes. Lettres au Globe (1831-1832)*: 116].

peals ... were all forms of expression that also enabled women to engage in society and politics, and their engagement was testimony to a growing desire to participate in the building of a new social order (See Riot-Sarcey 1992; Ferruta 2007).

The decade that followed thus represented a moment in which an attempt was made to understand and analyse a society whose economic and social components were rapidly changing. In Paris in 1831, it was the two key figures of Saint-Simonianism, Claire Bazard and Henri Fournel, who launched the *Degré des Industriels*. This was a militant, highly hierarchical organisation, whose main objective was to «convert workers to the Saint-Simonian religion and help workers create their own associations according to Saint-Simonian ideology» (Démier 2004). The idea was to bring material aid to the working-class population, which was in difficulty and, at the same time, to rebuild society by addressing the damage done to the labour market by liberalism. It was within society that a “couple” – an exemplary unit of the Saint-Simonian family – would launch an enquiry into the capitalist world of work in the aftermath of the July revolution, an enquiry driven by the desire to bring the working class into the mainstream of the doctrine.

The environment in which Bazard and Fournel worked was made up of an urban middle class and artisans, who were ideal “tools” for the spread of propaganda. The Saint-Simonian inquiry was, however, limited: it strove to search for individuals, psychological profiles, and singular personalities that – moving beyond their condition as workers – could embody those moral qualities that would render them “worthy” of Saint-Simonian association. It was an association of a particular nature since class identity was not to be at its core but rather was to be representative of the “man-woman” couple, of that “family”, the foundation of Saint-Simonian society (Démier 2004).

As a starting point, I propose Brion and Lenz. Both are married and very moral. The former: his wife is now very happy with him; he spreads the doctrine. The latter: tireless disseminator, and once very lively, his wife is now of poor health: both are Saint-Simonians.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> «J’ai à vous proposer pour le degré d’initiation, Brion et Lenz, tous deux mariés et très moraux; le premier: sa femme est maintenant très heureuse avec lui, il

Notwithstanding, the association remained central to the Saint-Simonian religion: «It would be necessary to establish the association as soon as possible so that the half-hearted might be completely transformed by living the lives of those who have understood us well», maintained Eugénie Niboyet in the *Globe* (29 October 1831).

And yet, even from this experience, some of the contradictions destined to undermine Saint-Simonianism began to emerge, even in the social sphere, thus highlighting the doctrine's limited impact on the working class. The strong hierarchical structure, the evolution towards industrialism and the struggle in favour of a project for the moralisation of the working class translated into projects that did not take long to evolve into forms of charity, or philanthropism. These ended up re-proposing, even in relations between the sexes, the paternalistic traits of a society in which the "ladies of the doctrine" in fact set out to educate the subordinate classes.

These aspects highlighted a form of solidarity that maintained a traditional structure, while women's relational networks were a mark of progress. If in fact some of the central figures of Saint-Simonianism, the first being Claire Bazard, ended up distancing themselves from the movement, others developed new forms of solidarism destined to take on a transnational dimension.

Exemplary then is the choice of the group of women workers who launched *La Femme libre* in 1832. The authors, who signed themselves «women of the people», were in fact all from the working class and petty bourgeoisie. The evolution of the publication, the first to take on the character of a women's intellectual space, is significant for understanding the transition to a specific women's line of thinking within Saint-Simonianism. First published in August 1832 under the title *La Femme libre*, from issue 3 it became *La femme de l'Avenir* and then *La Femme nouvelle*. Even more significant was the subtitle, which

---

propage la doctrine; le second: propagateur infatigable, une fois très vive, la femme est toujours malade; elles sont toutes deux saint-simoniennes» (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Fonds Enfantin, b. 7815/39, Lettre de Clouet à Monsieur Holstein, 10 septembre 1831).

was changed from *Apostolat des femmes* – in line with Enfantin's doctrine – to *Tribune des femmes* in the last issues.

What is also interesting is the provenance of the authors – all “women of the people” or “proletarian women” as they signed themselves – and eager to claim their independence once the newspaper would be able to finance itself solely through the wages of the seamstresses or subscriptions. A social characterisation that also emerges from the chosen themes was the core issue of women's emancipation, which was prioritized over that of the class issue even though the latter was also considered necessary. Inspired by the Saint-Simonian interpretation of the concept of oppression, *La Femme libre* identified the “liberation of women from the tyranny of men” as a fundamental aim. Starting from the private sphere and its critique of marriage, *La Femme libre* moved on to address other issues denouncing inequalities in terms of education and economic treatment. What was pursued by the women who gathered in the editorial office was a universal and interclass cause: the struggle in favour of all oppressed communities, but at the same time also the assertion of a specific demand, and the Saint-Simonian women rose up against the exploitation they suffered as women:

For too long men have advised us, directed us, dominated us: it is up to us now to proceed push for in the wheel of progress without protection. It is up to us to work for our freedom, relying only on our own strength, without recourse to our masters<sup>6</sup>.

Another fundamental aspect of the journal was the affirmation from the very first issue of a “right to plurality”, witnessed not only by the change of title, but also by the writing in “collective” terms: they speak of “sisters” and “we”. A solidarity and plural thought which was accompanied by the affirmation of a difference, of a *non-mixité* also supported by the choice to publish only articles written by women, according to a desire for emancipation valid within the movement but also in society itself. What eventually emerged from the magazine's texts were the characteristics of a women's association or an association within which women could build networks to shape collective ac-

---

<sup>6</sup> “La Femme nouvelle”, in *Tribune des femmes*, vol. 2, (1833), p. 58.



tion, aimed at bringing together “privileged” women and those of the “people”. The newspaper thus ended up adopting the character of a female “associative space”, capable of freeing both the speech and the expression of a plurality of women who opposed the idea, prevalent in common thinking, of a female sex whose uniqueness and typicality ended up fuelling exclusion from political and social action.

Although *La Femme libre* ceased publication in 1834, it remains a precious testimony not only of a different campaign method, but also of the influence that Saint-Simonianism had on other utopian socialist movements. In 1833, Désiré Vêret travelled to England where she met Anna Wheeler who had an *Appel aux femmes* published in *The Crisis* newspaper – founded by Robert Owen and Robert Dale in 1832 – to which she added her comments. Across the Channel, Vêret updated the readers of *La Femme libre* on the evolution of English socialism (see Si-méon 2023). The ideas of Anna Wheeler and William Thompson, with whom Wheeler wrote the essay *Appeal of One Half the Human Race*, were rooted in the philosophers of the Enlightenment and in English liberal radicalism. They put forward the most advanced proposals in terms of egalitarianism and civil and political rights, as well as equality between the sexes, and it is possible to identify a real interconnection between their ideas on social organisation.

While Mr. Owen was in Scotland, at New Lanark, practically experimenting on the principles of the new Social System of Mutual Co-operation, a French writer, M. Charles Fourier (with whose eccentricities of speculation we are not here concerned) was studying the same subject at Lyons. As the result of the observations and meditations of 30 years, he has published in Paris two large volumes, which he calls a "Treatise of Industrial Association." In the great leading features of the Co-operation of large numbers for the production of wealth and social happiness, and the improved, and industrious, and equal education of all the children, Fourier agrees with Mr. Owen. But inequality of distribution is a leading feature of Fourier's system of Co-operation; while equality of distribution of wealth, as of all the means of happiness, seems to be the ultimate object of Owen's. Under the systems of both, under all systems of just Co-operation, not only will equal protection of Institutions be granted to women with men, but equal means

of happiness from all sources will be insured to them (Thompson 1825: 204-205).

It could be argued then that the *La Femme libre* project represented perhaps the most radical part of the Saint-Simonian movement, whose influence was destined to continue in years to come, developing different forms, projects and destinies. Some of the protagonists made tragic choices, others continued their work as writers, as educators, while still others decided to share the working-class condition.

As for the developing social discourse, it is interesting to follow some of the trajectories of certain women who established friendly societies. Suzanne Volquin was “daughter of the people” and had followed “le Père Enfantin” to Egypt in 1834, and in 1838 she founded a friendly society for mothers. Meanwhile, Eugénie Niboyet, together with Alphonse de Lamartine, was involved in the *Société pour la morale chrétienne*.

Even more interesting is the case of Flora Tristan. Daughter of a rich Peruvian nobleman, who married a French woman in Spain, she had felt “foreign” from birth since France never recognized her parents’ marriage. This precarious situation forced her to earn a living but which at the same made her more sensitive not only to the injustices against the condition of the working class but also against women (see Desanti 1972; Michaud 1985; Krulic 2021). Although she defined herself as being «neither Saint-Simonian, nor Fourierist» (Tristan 1842), she developed a political and social ideas where the concept of association was a central element. In 1835, upon returning from a trip to Peru in search of her paternal family, she gave the press a brochure entitled *Nécessité de faire un bon accueil aux femmes étrangères* (Tristan 1835) in which she anticipated some central themes of her thinking and writing: the condition of the more needy classes and the need for association as the best means to help society progress. In her writing, Flora addressed what she defined «a class that forms one half of humankind» and, in her desire for human improvement and progress, she proposed to commit herself specifically to the fate of «foreign women» (Tristan 1835: 3) The solution Tristan proposed was that of creating a friendly society that would be called *Société pour les femmes étrangères*.

We shall start then with a firm hand and raise the banner of mutual aid; we shall found a society, fully hospitable, and ease the pain of some of those individuals who suffer and who will bless us for lifting them out of poverty. Our example shall be followed, our voice shall be echoed in all generous souls; of this we have no doubt. Then our hearts shall feel that pure divine joy only philanthropy and virtue can bring.<sup>7</sup>

With this text, Tristan aligned herself with the interpretation of the female condition as a “social mission” in line with the legacy of the French Revolution and with the cultural and literary climate of French Romanticism and successive developments of Saint-Simonian and Fourierist theory. A thought that emerged with greater force in the brochure entitled *L'Union ouvrière*, (Tristan 1843) published in 1843, aimed at improving the condition of the working class.

I have just proposed to you a general union between working men and women, with no distinctions between trades, who live in the same kingdom; a union that has the aim of bringing together the working class and creating establishments evenly spread throughout France.<sup>8</sup>

Specifically, the «establishments» would have to provide education for children «from 6 to 18» and to welcome, as in the friendly society tradition, the infirm and the elderly. The goal would be the construction of a «Palais de l'union ouvrière» that would serve to «honour work as it deserves and reward the workers who honour the nation» (Tristan 1843: 8).

---

<sup>7</sup> «Commençons donc, d'une main ferme, à lever l'étendard du secours mutuel; érigeons une société, toute sainte, tout hospitalière, et soulageons une partie de ces êtres qui souffrent, et qui nous béniront pour les avoir tirés du malheur. Notre exemple sera suivi, notre voix aura un écho dans toutes les âmes généreuses; nous n'en doutons pas. Alors notre cœur goûtera cette joie pure, divine, que la philanthropie et la vertu peuvent seules faire connaître» (Tristan 1835: 16).

<sup>8</sup> «Je viens de vous proposer une union général entre les ouvriers et les ouvrières, sans distinction de métiers, habitant le même royaume; union qui aurait pour but de constituer la classe ouvrière et d'élever plusieurs établissements répartis également dans toute la France» (Tristan 1843: 5-6).

To fund the undertaking, Tristan launched a fundraising campaign aimed «at all those people of intelligence and dedication», signed by socialist and liberal progressive men and women (ivi: XVIII). To spread the word, she decided to do a *Tour de France* since, to quote her own words, a project albeit «magnificent» that had stayed only «on paper» would be destined to remain a «dead letter». What was needed then was to go out in person «from city to city, from one end of France to the other to speak to the workers that cannot read or write or do not have the time» (ivi: 9). Yet, despite Tristan's efforts, it was an experience destined to remain unheard – perhaps, too, for his premature death.

The evolution of Saint-Simonianism towards productivism contributed instead to “distancing” it from the needs of the working class. And despite the formation of a critical tendency, which did not hesitate to denounce the danger of a moralistic and conservative drift, those in charge of the doctrine remained deaf to Saint-Simonian appeals, refusing any concurrence with those who saw the need to renew in line with the revolutionary and republican heritage.

However, it was precisely in the sphere of social reform that the great change and social revolution of 1848 took shape. Between 20 March and 18 June 1848 another *Voix des femmes* “made itself heard”, presenting itself as a «socialist and political newspaper, organ of the interests of all»<sup>9</sup> and in which the names of some of the women “brought up” under Saint-Simonianism (or Fourierism) were to be found. And yet the newspaper was new: new in its themes and in its ideological framework.

Although the newspaper appeared in a society still steeped in Saint-Simonian philosophy, where the central nucleus remained the family and which still referred to the principles of '89, it addressed a «social individual, man and woman, different in nature, but united by the same purpose»<sup>10</sup>. The traits of a new solidarism emerged, which broke with philanthropic paternalism and which saw the “total and complete” emancipation of

---

<sup>9</sup> «La voix des femmes», 28 April 1848.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

the working class and women as the only possibility to definitively enter modernity (see Riot-Sarcey 1994).

A solidarism that found an even more concrete form came in the project of Jeanne-Marie Poinard. Better known as Jenny d'Héricourt, a governess and midwife trained in Cabetist ideas, she founded the *Société pour l'émancipation des femmes* at the outbreak of the 1848 revolution. The idea was born of a desire to support the demands of Parisian women workers and their desire for "material independence", which was not being met by the *Ateliers nationaux*. These had only been open to women since April 1848 but were run by men.

Against this backdrop, in March 1848 Désirée Gay – one of the editors of *La Politique des femmes* – appealed to Louis Blanc to help working women while at the same time calling for the nomination of delegates in the *Commission du travail*. It was hoped that they could provide and organize women's work and create "national restaurants and laundries" where affordable food and services could be found. The idea of freedom deriving from material and moral independence constituted, moreover, the political issue expressed in the *Manifeste* of the *Société pour l'émancipation des femmes* where, without questioning the division of roles, a real break occurred in the rethinking of the principles of 1789, prefiguring a radical transformation of family structures.

This particular moment of freedom of expression of women's opinions was, however, short-lived: the victory of the moderates in the elections for the National Assembly on 23 and 24 April 1848 and the first policy decisions restricting the dream of a social revolution ignited the powder kegs and the Parisian streets were once again filled with barricades. The bourgeois republic responded firmly, leading to numerous arrests and trials. The months of the Cavaignac government, which served to write the republican constitution, saw France plunge back into the harshest of reactionary times with the main victims being freedoms: clubs were banned, as were the most radical newspapers.

This did not stop women's attempts to follow in the footsteps of the principles of the revolutions and to make their voice heard. When the *La voix des femmes* closed, Jeanne Deroin de-

cided to create a new publication with the title *La politique des femmes*, which would soon become *L'Opinion des femmes*" (Ranvier 1908). Gay, instead, followed in the tracks of supportive association and in the summer of 1849 she worked to realize the project *Association des travailleurs de toutes les Professions et de tous les Pays*. Inspired by Saint-Simon's and Fourier's ideas, the association's goal was to create a community "of a civil and business nature" where all members would be "jointly responsible". Moreover, the Statute read,

Equality shall truly reign on earth when goodwill shall be its inseparable partner. Only when the Association itself, like a mother, shall take care of the education of members' children will they become equal, brothers, and sisters. It is necessary that each one, independent of their function, of their profession, their sex, should have an equal say in the decision-making process concerning social issues and redistribution. Only then will we be associates and equal<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover, within this partnership, men and women enjoyed the same rights.

The aim of the Association is to guarantee to all members the physical and moral wellbeing and enable them to enjoy fully the fruits of their work. The strengths of the Association lie in the industriousness and talent of its members. And it will grow as more individuals from different professions or certain public functions join<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> «L'égalité ne régnera véritablement sur la terre que lorsque la fraternité sera son inséparable compagne. Ce n'est que lorsque l'Association elle-même, comme une mère commune, se chargera de l'éducation des enfants de ses Membres, ce n'est qu'alors que nous deviendrons égaux et frères. Il faut encore que chacun, quelle que soit sa fonction, quelle que soit sa profession, quel que soit son sexe, ait les mêmes droits dans la décision des affaires sociales et dans la répartition. Ce n'est qu'ainsi que nous serons associés et égaux » (*Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Statuts de l'Association des travailleurs de toutes les professions et de tous les pays. Fondé le 19 Juillet 1849, à Châtillon, per Montrouge, département de la Seine* : 4).

<sup>12</sup> «Le but de l'Association est de procurer à tous ses Membres le bien-être physique et moral, et de les faire jouir intégralement des fruits de leur travail. Les moyens de l'Association consistent dans la mise en œuvre de l'industrie et des talents de ses Membres, à mesure qu'elle s'agrége des individus capables d'exercer les différentes professions ou certaines fonctions publiques» (*Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Statuts de l'Association des travailleurs de toutes les*

This was an association that brought together the principles of equality and solidarity, the heirs of the 1789 revolution and early socialist thinking, with the added ideal of universalism. The Association put forward demands for social and economic progress, and such demands would become a feature of future associations. It was in these years “between the revolutions”, a time of political and social crisis, that the foundations were laid for the building of networks of relations and activism which were destined to cross national borders and for the building a women’s political movement (see Guerra, Musiani 2025).

### *3. The Italian peninsular: an example late in coming*

Despite starting later compared to other European nations, in the story of *associazionismo* the Italian peninsular represents an interesting example. Of course, here too the ideas and thinking of Saint-Simonianism, which were filtered and transmitted also through the Mazzinian tradition, played a key role. It was from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in a now largely unified Italy, that democratic associations developed new forms of activism, and alongside the old models of association appeared new forms of solidarity and emancipation (see Cherubini 1991; *Le società di mutuo soccorso italiane e i loro archivi* 1999).

Alongside the now consolidated friendly societies appeared groups in other forms: worker action groups, leagues, local trade union organizations (*Camere del Lavoro*), syndicates and cooperatives. The last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, saw a rise in democratic *associazionismo*: that is new associations pushing for worker solidarity and emancipation established alongside older organizations.

Words too changed, or rather multiplied: and alongside “fraternity”, “philanthropy”, “care”, “assistance”, and “charity”, appeared “emancipation”, “claim”, “class struggle” and “cooperation” (see Tarozzi 1980).

---

*professions et de tous les pays. Fondé le 19 Julliet 1849, à Châtillon, per Montrouge, département de la Seine: 8).*

*Associazionismo* increasingly came to mean not only solidarity but also the capacity to intervene in support of members' needs in the knowledge, of which working men and women were becoming increasingly aware, that they were gaining control over their working lives. In all these institutions, women appeared to be in the minority but recent research shows that women were capable of looking after their own social, economic and political development, and were so precisely for their increasingly active participation within these new groups. Even as early as the second half of the nineteenth century there were women of a certain stature who set up women's friendly societies and women who would later become important players in the trade unions (see Ravà 1888).

Of all these different organisations, only one in fact had a low level of female membership, and I am referring here to the cooperatives. This was because membership was mandatory and only one person per family could become a member, and obviously this would be the head of the household.

The opposite was true of the participation of women in friendly societies. In Italy, men's friendly societies had begun to develop as early as the 1840s, and the second half of the century saw the creation of women's friendly societies. These initially developed as branches of their respective male organizations but would become increasingly independent. Albeit later than the major European states where friendly societies had been established (Great Britain and France), in Italy working men and women began to organize themselves (Gosden 1963). Their aim was to address problems arising from the development of a production system that, in the absence of direct state intervention or social legislation, tended to increase workers' unease and insecurity. In Italy then, the birth of *mutualismo* fitted into an economic context that, even for most of the nineteenth century, remained largely based on agriculture, and only in the immediate post-unification years would there be the first signs of proto-industrialization. It must be said, moreover, that friendly societies maintained their characteristic as worker assistance providers over time, and this made it difficult for them to assimilate with associations of a pre-union type because it was not in the nature of friendly societies to defend class inter-



ests. The decision to introduce these types of associations into our research derives from their work for emancipation. Initially, their interventions in support of women involved in providing assistance for mothers, and organizing sewing and knitting courses to help women gradually achieve a certain economic independence.

In this instance, it would be interesting to look briefly at the development of friendly societies in Bologna, which can be seen as forerunners. Here, on 9 April 1860, from an idea promoted by Livio Zambeccari, the *Società Operaia Maschile* was founded. This was the first “general” society of its kind, whose members included workers belonging to various crafts and trades. Its main aim was to «encourage fraternity and mutual aid among members, promote their education, morality and wellbeing so that they can cooperate happily towards the common good»<sup>13</sup>. Besides providing mutual aid, credit, welfare and assistance for workers, from the mid-1860s the Society began to promote the early forms of popular education. The Society set up an education committee whose aim was to work towards «the cultural and moral elevation of the workers» by providing courses and lectures for adult workers held by illustrious professors of the University of Bologna. The idea was to «remove the people from the herd-like conditions in which they have so far been kept». And, in reply to an invitation to teach, a professor of the University of Bologna wrote: «Knowledge leads straight to liberty, in serfdom lies ignorance»<sup>14</sup>.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the start of the creation of women's societies throughout the country. Created initially as sections of their corresponding men's societies, they would later become autonomous. The work of these societies focused on providing assistance to mothers but also organized sewing and knitting courses aimed towards progressive economic emancipation. The women's section of the *Società Operaia di Bologna*, for example, was created in 1875 with an

---

<sup>13</sup> Museo del Risorgimento di Bologna (MRBo), Archivio della Società Operaia di Bologna, *Statuto della Società Operaia di Bologna, deliberato dall'apposita commissione il 3 giugno 1860 e approvato dall'Assemblea generale il 10 dicembre*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

initial membership of 105 members – a number destined to increase over time – and whose aim was principally to introduce poverty and sickness benefits. From 1880, the *Sezione Femminile* drew up its own autonomous statute and became the *Società Operaia Femminile*, with its own administration and budget (Ravà 1888: 43).

Another area in which women's friendly societies were active was in providing assistance to working women, those women who were not able look after their children during the day and for whom nursery schools were established (see Musiani 2011). An example of such work is that carried out by the *Società Artigiana Femminile* of Bologna, which was established in 1875 as part of the *Società Artigiana* of Bologna founded in 1864. It became independent in 1880, and elected Marquis Gioacchino Napoleone Pepoli as president and Countess Adele Bingham Gregorini its director. In particular, the *Società Artigiana Femminile* worked in support of working women, work which was begun some years before by Bolognese noblewomen to create modern nursery schools along European lines. In fact, the *Società Artigiana* established a nursery for infants in 1881, whose purpose was to «look after and care for infants during those hours of the day in which their mothers worked away from home»<sup>15</sup>. In the same period, the *Società Operaia* set up a kindergarten inspired by the theories of the German educator Friedrich Froebel (Maragi 1970; Tarozzi 1977). A pioneer of women's friendly societies and early forms of childcare and education for members was Ernesta Galletti Stoppa from the Romagna region.

In this case, biographical profiles help to reconstruct the different paths along which new forms of solidarity were built.

Born in Mezzano (Trentino) on 2 December 1850 to a family of shopkeepers, Ernesta Galletti moved to Lugo where, in 1875, she married Valentino Stoppa, a tailor who had been a volunteer among the ranks of Garibaldi's army (see Bandini 2000; *Ernesta Galletti Stoppa il pensiero e l'innovazione di una lughese illustre* 2013; Pironi 2013). A Mazzini supporter, from 1870 she took active part in the constitution of the *Società di Mutuo Soc-*

---

<sup>15</sup> *Statuto per l'asilo dei bambini lattanti* (1881: 5).

*corso Femminile* in Lugo with the firm conviction that «it was not possible that only men could enjoy the benefits of friendly societies and that they never thought to allow women to participate in and enjoy the benefits of friendly societies». And this after numerous political and legal changes, the creation of new industries where their labour was so greatly sought after that they competed directly with men, but who were low paid particularly in large manufacturing industries. The Society was officially founded on 8 September 1872 with 68 members, and initially Ernesta Stoppa carried out secretarial duties to then become President. The Society aimed to provide sickness and old-age benefits to members' families, but it was in later years that one of its most innovative programmes was launched: that which aimed at educating its members. In 1877, Ernesta obtained her teaching diploma to teach at primary school level and cultivated the idea of creating a private institute of female education within the Society. In spite of the difficulties encountered on an administrative level and with public opinion, in 1881 she managed to establish the *Istituto femminile Stoppa* with its own kindergarten. This was a true schooling system starting with infants' school where children enter at two and a half years of age, through to upper elementary where they leave as young ladies.

A further two years of finishing school was added for those girls who wished to continue their studies (improve themselves or be admitted to teaching schools in order to become teachers). The school came up against stiff opposition at various times and from various directions, but Ernesta Stoppa remained steadfast in her work, to the extent that she won recognition from the Ministry of Public Education which awarded her with various prizes, and to the extent that in the later years of the century she was seen as an institutional reference point of the Froebelian approach-based education system.

Education, and more precisely popular education, were therefore central themes of friendly societies, together with that of women's vocational training. And, this too, deserves a closer look.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the start of vocational training courses for women. In 1862, for example,

Elisa Lemonnier established the *Société pour l'enseignement professionnel des femmes* in France. From the 1860s onward, these courses multiplied, and specific didactical literature was developed (Prost 2004).

In 1895, the *Società operaia femminile*, female counterpart of the *Società Operaia Maschile*, established the first vocational school of arts and crafts in Bologna, *Scuola professionale Regina Margherita*, later renamed *Istituto Elisabetta Sirani* (Dalla Casa 1987-88).

The school was born as a result of the “outbreak” of a debate that engaged leading intellectual figures of the city and the first women graduates. The focus of debate was the question of women having the same right as boys to secondary education. Female emancipation was supported by the *Lega per l'istruzione del popolo* (League for the Education of the People), whose thinking was that women had the right to an education that was not “a mere ornament” but one which could, or rather had to, provide women with a genuine education, either vocational or university.

The League was born in 1871 of an initiative of some friendly societies with the purpose of “educating and moralizing the people and instructing them on both private and public life”. Alongside such initiatives as lessons, lectures, conferences and popular libraries, the League – whose first president was Giosue Carducci – began organizing regular courses in bookkeeping and law, as well as a professional design school for workers. From here was born the idea to create a true vocational school for women based on the type of school that had been established in the same period in Genoa, Milan and Turin. In reality, the League, whose activities concluded in 1886, succeeded solely in its attempt to give life to a number of professional courses in design, bookkeeping and French.

The debate took on a new energy in the 1890s when, in November 1890, in Bologna, an information committee was created to improve the woman's condition. Although it lasted only three years, the Committee carried out intensive political, social and cultural work. It was made up of men from Bologna's liberal class and certain female figures including Gualberta Alaide Beccari, founder of the magazine *La Donna* – the first magazine

written by women for women – and Giuseppina Cattani, one of the first women to graduate from the University of Bologna (see Biadene 1979; Pisa 1982; Musiani 2011).

The Committee's aim was to get public opinion on the side of women, and do everything possible in order to bring real change. They claimed that women's education had to be improved in the most rational and scientific sense. They demanded that women be given a proper, sound education making them capable of exercising a far more beneficial influence in the family and particularly over their children and enabling them to fulfil a life of their own in which, with their special nature, they might achieve the fullness of their dignity and full social and political rights.

This initiative was first supported by the democratic and radical citizenry of the Mazzini *élite*, and women played a primary role by taking on management tasks and relegating their male colleagues to purely representational positions. Furthermore, they contributed to reviving the theme of professional training for women. Thanks to the work of the *Società operaia femminile di Bologna* and the *Società degli insegnanti*, as well as the *Società della regina Margherita*, on 16 September 1895, the *Scuola provinciale femminile d'arti e mestieri* was finally opened. Its «eighty-five pupils were divided into various classes which included cloth cutting, household linen production, dressmaking, children's clothing, millinery, embroidery, knitwear, artificial flowers, ironing, cooking, and chinaware decoration» (Dalla Casa 1987-88: 160).

These experiences show how, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, changes were coming about in the forms of women's friendly societies and in prospects for emancipation. Alongside the early forms of feminism, it is necessary to examine the early movements that developed from within friendly societies and workers' movements, but which, for a long time, had been "omitted" from female biographical research.

At the height of the expansion of friendly societies in the 1880s, changes occurring in the workplace made it necessary to make new choices, including that of establishing trades organizations and resistance funds to help workers in their fight against anti-labour policies adopted by employers. The idea to

set up resistance spread widely among workers and socialist groups, and the aim was to create associations structured along the lines of friendly societies but which were adapted to cope with the consequences of the industrialization process. This meant that these groups not only provided assistance, but adopted methods of defence and attack. The distinguishing aspect of the worker action groups was the fact that they represented for the first time a mass phenomenon which spread through both the major industrial areas and the countryside. Major transformations to the economy, which from being prevalently agricultural moved towards industrialization, brought about changes to society and the workplace. The increasing proletarianisation of the urban class, together with analogous change in the countryside, accelerated the development of the worker movement and created the conditions for the deployment of out and out forms of organized struggle.

In that transitional phase which brought the nineteenth century to a close, and ushered in Giolitti's Italy, was deep economic and social change, which impacted even on female employment and led to the growth in demand for greater forms of civil and political participation. Female employment, in both the countryside and the broad and varied area of domestic work, was in the main little valued socially but became a central issue in campaigns fighting for workers' rights and in the wave of strikes taking place in the early years of the twentieth century.

While highlighting the fact that Italy lagged behind in social issues, a comparative study of these two models allows us to identify certain features of a common discourse. The ideas, but more so the practices, particularly those that enabled the development of networks of international relations, contributed indeed to the growth of a women's political movement. And this movement, from the very beginning, fought for the development of a society founded on the bonds of solidarity.

The first experiences that arose within the context of Saint-Simonism thus contributed to the initiation of practices of solidarity that were destined to continue, albeit along different timelines, throughout the long 19th century.

Different biographies, experiences, political and social developments, determined in part by the different national contexts in which they arose, can nevertheless be interpreted as a dense political and social framework that was essential to the shaping of a modern gender identity.

The intertwining of individual emancipation and the drive towards the construction of a new collective bond characterised the first half of the century, triggering a genealogy of female and feminist activism practices on a political and social level.

### *List of references*

- AGULHON MAURICE, 1980, "1830 dans l'Histoire du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle français", *Romantisme*, n. 28-29, pp. 15-28.
- ALBISTUR MAÏTE, ARMOGATHE DANIEL, 1977, *Histoire du féminisme français*, Paris: Des Femmes.
- APRILE SYLVIE, JEAN-CLAUDE CARON, EMMANUEL FUREIX (sous la direction de), 2013, *La liberté guidant les peuples. Les Révolutions de 1830 en Europe*, Seyssel: Champ-Vallon.
- ARIOTI ELISABETTA (a cura di), 1999, *Le società di mutuo soccorso italiane e i loro archivi: atti del seminario di studio, Spoleto, 8-10 novembre 1995*, Roma: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici.
- BANDINI PAOLA, 2000, *Ernesta Stoppa*, in Claudia Bassi Angelini (a cura di), *Donne nella storia nel territorio di Ravenna, Faenza e Lugo dal Medio Evo al XX secolo*, Ravenna: Longo.
- BIADENE GIOVANNI, 1979, "Solidarietà e amicizia: il gruppo de "La Donna" (1870-1880)", *Nuova DWF*, 10-11, pp. 48-79.
- BULCIOLU MARIA TERESA (a cura di), 1980, *L'école saintsimonienne et la femme. Notes et documents pour une histoire du rôle de la femme dans la société saintsimonienne. 1828-1833*, Pisa: Goliardica.
- CHARLÉTY SÉBASTIEN, 2018, *Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet 1830-1848*, Paris: Perrin.
- CHERUBINI ARNALDO, 1991, *Beneficenza e solidarietà: assistenza pubblica e mutualismo operaio 1860-1900*, Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- COILLY NATHALIE et RÉGNIER PHILIPPE (sous la direction de), 2006, *Le siècle des saint-simoniens du Nouveau Christianisme au canal de Suez*, Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France.
- DALLA CASA BRUNELLA, 1987-88, "Associazionismo borghese ed emancipazione femminile a Bologna: il Comitato di propaganda per il miglioramento delle condizioni della donna (1890-1893)", *Bollettino del Museo del Risorgimento*, anno XXXII-XXXIII, pp. 145-165.

- \_\_\_\_\_, (a cura di), 1996, *Donne scuola lavoro: dalla Scuola professionale Regina Margherita agli istituti Elisabetta Sirani di Bologna: 1895-1995*, Imola: Cooperativa P. Galeati.
- De la liberté des femmes. Lettres au Globe (1831-1832)*. Textes recueillis et présentés par Michèle Riot-Sarcey, 1992, Paris: côté-femmes.
- DÉMIER FRANCIS, 2004, "Les saint-simoniens à la rencontre des ouvriers parisiens au tournant des années 1830", in Pierre Musso (sous la direction de), *L'actualité du saint-simonisme. Colloque de Cerisy*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 115-129.
- DERRÉ JEAN-RENÉ (sous la direction de), *Regards sur le Saint-Simonisme et les Saint-Simoniens*, Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, pp. 73-112.
- DESANTI DOMINIQUE, 1972, *Flora Tristan*, Paris: Hachette.
- FERRANDO STEFANIA, KOLLY BÉRENGÈRE, 2015, *Le premier journal féministe. L'écriture comme pratique politique. La Femme libre de Jeanne-Désirée et Marie-Reine*, in Thomas Bouchet, Vincent Bourdeau, Edward Castleton, Ludovic Frobert and François Jarrige (sous la direction de), *Quand les socialistes inventaient l'avenir. Presse, théories et expériences, 1825-1860*, Paris, La Découverte, pp. 104-112.
- FERRUTA PAOLA, 2007, "L'Utopie féministe saint-simonienne: perspectives de genre et vues architecturales autour de 1830", *Esercizi filosofici*, 2, pp. 222-239.
- GOSDEN PETER H. J. H., 1963, *Friendly societies in England 1815-1875*, Manchester: Manchester University press.
- GUERRA ELDA, MUSIANI ELENA, 2025, *Il movimento politico delle donne. Una storia internazionale. XIX-XX secolo*, Milano: Mondadori/Le Monnier (Quaderni di Storia).
- KRULIC BRIGITTE, 2021, *Flora Tristan*, Paris: Gallimard.
- MARAGI MARIO, 1970, *Storia della Società operaia di Bologna*, Imola: Cooperativa P. Galeati.
- MICHAUD STÉPHANE (sous la direction de), *Un fabuleux destin: Flora Tristan*, 1985, Dijon: éd. Universitaires de Dijon.
- MOSES CLAIRE G., 1993, "Uomini saint-simoniiani/donne saint-simoniane: la trasformazione del pensiero femminista in Francia negli anni Trenta dell'Ottocento", in Anna Rossi-Doria (a cura di), *Il primo femminismo (1791-1834)*, Milano: Unicopli, pp. 139-167.
- MUSIANI ELENA, 2011, "Educatrici di affetti e di valori. Esempi di pedagogia al femminile nella Bologna dell'Ottocento", in Antonella Cagnolati (a cura), *Madri sociali. Percorsi di genere tra educazione, politica e filantropia*, Roma: Anicia, pp. 69-83.
- PASINI LAURA (a cura di), 2013, *Ernesta Galletti Stoppa il pensiero e l'innovazione di una lughese illustre a 160 anni dalla sua nascita*, Atti della giornata di studi, Lugo 2 dicembre 2010, Faenza: Editrice Even.



- PICON ANTOIN, 2002, *Les saint-simoniens. Raison, imaginaire et utopie*, Paris: Belin.
- PILBEAM PAMELA, 2000, *French Socialists Before Marx. Workers, Women and the social question in France*, Teddington: Acumen.
- PINKNEY DAVID. H., 1988, *La Révolution de 1830 en France*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France
- PIRONI TIZIANA, 2013, *Ernesta Galletti Stoppa. una pioniera del rinnovamento scolastico in terra di Romagna*, in Elena Musiani (a cura di), *Non solo rivoluzione. modelli formativi e percorsi politici delle patriote italiane*, Roma: Aracne, pp. 123-146.
- PISA BEATRICE, 1982, *Venticinque anni di emancipazionismo femminile in Italia: Gualberta Alaide Beccari e la rivista "La Donna" 1868-1898*, Roma: FIAP.
- PLANTÉ CHRISTINE, 1983, *Les saint-simoniennes: ou la quête d'une identité impossible à travers l'écriture à la première personne*, Thèse, Paris.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2019, *Les féministes saint-simoniennes. Possibilités et limites d'un mouvement féministe en France au lendemain de 1830*, in PROST ANTOINE, 2004, *Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France*, t. IV, *L'école et la famille dans une société en mutation (depuis 1930)*, Paris: Perrin.
- RANVIER ADRIEN, 1908, "Une féministe de 1848: Jeanne Deroin", in *La révolution de 1848. Bulletin de la Société d'histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, n. 24, pp. 317-355.
- RAVÀ ARISTIDE, 1888, *Le associazioni di mutuo soccorso e cooperative nelle provincie dell'Emilia*, Bologna: Zanichelli.
- REYBAUD LOUIS, 1979, *Etudes sur les réformateurs ou socialistes contemporains modernes*, Paris: Genève, Ressources.
- RIOT-SARCEY MICHELLE, 1994, *La démocratie à l'épreuve des femmes. Trois figures critique du pouvoir 1830-1848*, Paris: Albin Michel.
- SIMÉON OPHÉLIE, 2023, "Vers une «association universelle» des femmes? Émancipation, circulations intellectuelles et réseaux franco-britannique dans la *Tribune des femmes* et *The Crisis* (1832-1834)", *Revue d'Histoire du XIXe siècle*, 66, pp. 21-38.
- Statuto per l'asilo dei bambini lattanti*, 1881, Bologna: Società Tipografica Azzoguidi.
- TAROZZI FIORENZA, 1975-1977, *La Società Operaia di Bologna: dal Mutuo Soccorso alla "resistenza" (1870-1885)*, in «Bollettino del Museo del Risorgimento», Bologna, anni XX-XXI-XXII, pp. 41-105.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1980, *L'associazionismo operaio dal mutuo soccorso alle lotte di classe*, in Aldo Berselli (a cura di), *Storia dell'Emilia Romagna*, vol. 3, Bologna: Bologna University Press, pp. 501-502.
- THOMPSON WILLIAM, 1825, *Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, To Retain Them in Politi-*

*cal, and Thence in Civil and Domestic, Slavery; In Reply to a Paragraph of Mr. Mill's Celebrated "Article on Government", London.*

*Tribune des femmes*, 1833, vol. 2, Paris: Johanneau Libraire.

TRISTAN FLORA, 1835, *Nécessité de faire un bon accueil aux femmes étrangères par Madame F. T.*, Paris: chez Delaunay.

\_\_\_\_\_, 1842, *Promenades dans Londres*, Paris: Raymond-Bocquet.

\_\_\_\_\_, 1843, *L'Union ouvrière par Mme Flora Tristan*, Paris: Prévot.

#### *Archive funds*

*Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Statuts de l'Association des travailleurs de toutes les professions et de tous les pays. Fondé le 19 Julliet 1849, à Châtillon, per Montrouge, département de la Seine.*

*Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Fonds Enfantin, b. 7815/39, Lettre de Clouet à Monsieur Holstein, 10 septembre 1831.*

*Museo del Risorgimento di Bologna (MRBo), Archivio della Società Operaia di Bologna, Statuto della Società Operaia di Bologna, deliberato dall'apposita commissione il 3 giugno 1860 e approvato dall'Assemblea generale il 10 dicembre.*

*Abstract*

SHAPING A “NEW SOCIAL HUMAN SUBJECT”: WOMEN’S SOLIDARITY NETWORKS IN EUROPE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

*Keywords:* Saint-Simonians; Feminism; *Associazionismo*; Solidarity; Freedom.

This essay aims to analyse the emergence of the first forms of women's associations, starting with the experience of Saint-Simonian women in France in the first half of the 19th century and their connections with experiences in Great Britain. It follows a chronology that begins with the revolutions of the contemporary era in order to examine the construction of networks of relationships over the long term, with particular attention to continuities and ruptures. It analyses a solidarity that arose from collective experiences such as the first magazines, in search of expressions of individuality that sought to build increasingly universal expressions and rights.

ELENA MUSIANI

Università degli Studi di Bologna

Dipartimento di Storia, Culture, Civiltà

Institut des Sciences Sociales du Politique,

Université Paris Nanterre

[elena.musiani2@unibo.it](mailto:elena.musiani2@unibo.it)

ORCID: 0000-0002-6523-8779

EISSN 2037-0520

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69087/STORIAEPOLITICA.XVII.3/Special.2025.03>