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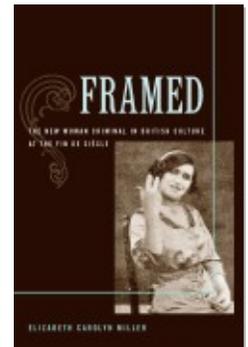
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INTRODUCTION

In 1901, R. W. Paul, one of Britain's first filmmakers, released *The Countryman and the Cinematograph*, a film that reflexively "explains" cinema just five years into this new narrative form. It depicts a countryman at the movies, who mistakes cinematic illusion for real-world phenomena: he attempts to dance with a lovely on-screen dancing girl (figure 1) and flees a filmic train seemingly moving in his direction (figure 2). Bewildered by these images, he tears down the film screen, only to find the projector and operator behind it.¹ Movies that mocked the ignorant or uninitiated film viewer were common at the turn of the century; they served as elementary primers on cinema spectatorship, disseminating a culture and ethics of audience behavior for a new form of narrative entertainment. *The Countryman* taught filmgoers that savvy spectatorship is a necessary condition of modern subjectivity, that only a "bumpkin" or "yokel" would be taken in by film's illusion, and that sophisticated film viewers are not distressed by what they see on screen. The message of the film is that to be a "modern" rather than a "primitive" subject, one must adjust to the shock of modern narrative forms.

At the same cultural moment, however, many critics were arguing that shocking fiction and film were not tests of one's poise, but symptoms of cultural degeneration, part of that "strange disease of modern life" that Matthew Arnold had diagnosed nearly fifty years earlier. In 1904, for example, Arnold Smith complained in the *Westminster Review* about the public fascination with "crime and criminals" in fiction: "The



Fig. 1. *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* (1901)

increasing mass of sensational literature which appears daily is a serious symptom of mental debility in the country at large. The cause of the demand for this fiction is not far to seek. It lies in the nerve-shattering conditions of modern life; in the ceaseless strain and sorrow which must be escaped from somehow . . . in the jaded state of the mind which craves a stimulus” (190).² Here, in echo of earlier reactions against sensation fiction and penny dreadfuls, shocking stories are a symptom of “modern life,” and modernity itself is a “ceaseless” and destructive juggernaut, not unlike a moving train.³ As *The Countryman* illustrates, however, popular sensationalism both produced and diffused shock; it sought new ways to affect audiences while simultaneously rewarding audience members who learned not to be moved. Popular sensationalism, as this film shows, often worked to naturalize change.

This book argues that crime narratives of the fin de siècle use the shocking figure of the female criminal to naturalize change: the fictional female criminal, a ubiquitous persona in turn-of-the-century crime narrative, was a herald of changing political and social conditions, changing

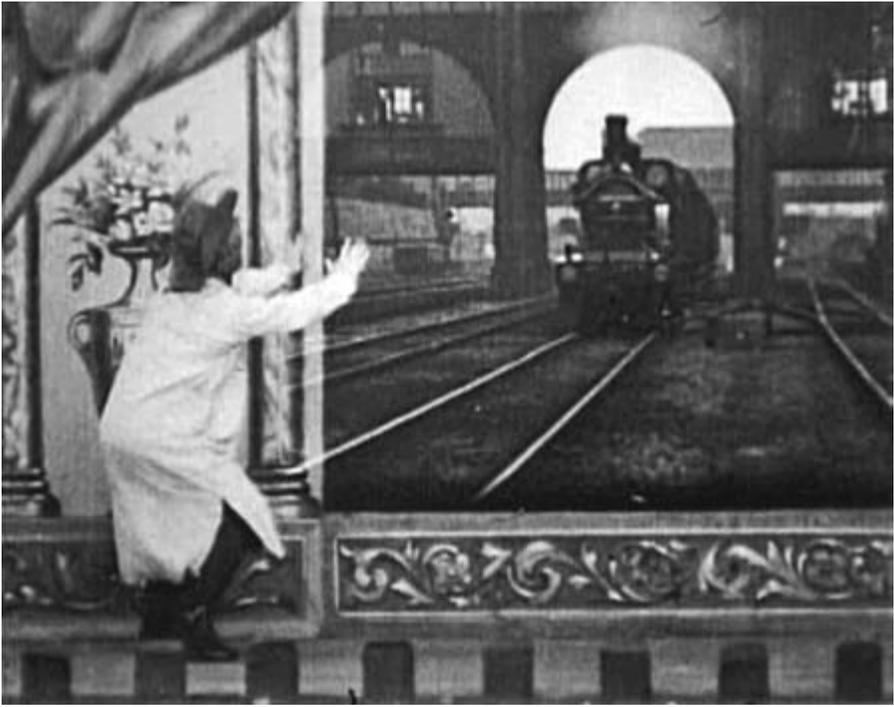


Fig. 2. *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* (1901)

gender roles, and changing definitions of “private” and “public.” While the figure of the female criminal has a long and rich literary history, this book considers her unique role in three new crime genres that emerged in the 1880s and 1890s: the detective series, the crime film, and the “dynamite narrative” (a popular genre focused on political terrorism). Along with the era’s other new, and not so new, symbols of the modern—cinema, dynamite, bombs, violent crime, cosmetics, lurid posters, vivid advertising—these immensely popular crime genres represented “newness” for a culture obsessed with modernity, and they employed the female criminal to embody and explain the shock of modern life.

The new crime genres of the *fin de siècle* engendered a character that I call the “New Woman Criminal.” Like the figurative “New Woman” who emerged in 1890s cultural discourse, the New Woman Criminal represents a specifically *public* form of femininity for a culture that was redefining and redistricting “public” and “private” amid modern social change. The New Woman Criminals populating crime narrative have very little to do with real, historical female criminals of the period. Most

women convicted of crimes at this time were poor and desperate; they did not represent new choices available to women, as New Women did, but often were victims of abuse or of desolate circumstances. Far from representing women's new public influence, as fictional New Woman Criminals did, they tended to commit domestic crimes: the vast majority of Victorian murderesses, for example, killed their own children, husbands, or parents.⁴

The New Woman Criminal's distinction from "real" female criminals indicates that she was a figure of fantasy rather than a reproduction of the headlines. She was not a realistic representation of a subject in her society, but an imaginative creation within a wildly expanding popular culture of crime narrative. The disjunction between real and fictional female criminals raises key questions: Why did authors write about New Woman Criminals? Why did audiences enjoy them? Unlike most male criminals of the period, fictional female criminals tend to be attractive, successful, and alluring. Unlike Mr. Hyde or imaginative depictions of Jack the Ripper in the late-Victorian press, fictional female criminals cannot be classified or labeled within the criminological taxonomy that social scientists of the era had invented. The figure of the female criminal was in many ways a contradictory fictional persona: in a culture increasingly fixated on detectives and policing, she seems to represent not the new circumscriptions of modern society, but its new freedoms.

In this way, the New Woman Criminal offers insight into the development of both modern crime narrative and the modern women's movement. Critics such as Rita Felski, Elaine Showalter, and Judith Walkowitz have described the rich history of feminist social reform in Britain between 1880 and 1913; these years were also exceptionally fertile for new representations of criminality. Many of our current narrative sensibilities regarding crime and criminality can be traced to this epoch, which saw the birth of Sherlock Holmes, the invention of crime film, the first modern serial killer (Jack the Ripper), and the first dynamite campaigns for revolutionary causes like Irish nationalism. In recent years, crime and criminality have been pervasive topics in studies of late-Victorian literature, but these studies have failed to recognize the distinctiveness of the female criminal as a narrative figure, often overlooking her altogether. There is a simple explanation for this omission: female criminals do not suit the dominant critical models and methodologies that have been brought to bear on crime narrative of the period. In the wake of Michel Foucault's profound impact on literary studies, narrative depictions of criminality have been understood to discipline readers to

omnipresent surveillance and power extending beyond the modern state apparatus, and to celebrate the containment of the criminal “other.”⁵ Recent critics have contested this reading of Foucault within Victorian studies, and Lauren Goodlad in particular has argued that Foucault’s later work on governmentality (as in “*Omnes et Singulatim*”) seriously complicates the use to which Foucault has been put in studies of Victorian literature. My point here is not to elaborate a revised Foucauldian reading of Victorian criminality, but to show how the older conception of the Foucauldian criminal subject has contributed to a critical neglect of the New Woman Criminal.

By focusing on female criminals, this book identifies a hitherto unnoticed feature of turn-of-the-century crime narrative: fictional female criminals tend to be more successful, more admirable, and altogether less prone to containment and arrest than male criminals. Instead of using female criminals to narrate the dangers of legal disobedience or the shame of feminine debasement, new genres of crime narrative employ these characters to model effective, autonomous agency within dauntingly complex modern social conditions. Much has been written, for example, about criminal anthropology and criminal science’s influence on late-Victorian fiction. When we come to female criminals, however, this critical model simply doesn’t work. In fin de siècle crime narrative, systematic or scientific efforts to explain, predict, or categorize female offenders typically fail, and the female criminal represents that which cannot be accounted for within modern systems of social control.

When we consider crime narrative’s characterization of the female criminal, these genres suddenly appear to be posing entirely different questions than we have previously supposed. With the female criminal, some crime stories do tell cautionary tales about the dangers of transgressing social norms, but they also celebrate the *pleasure* of such transgression. Detective series, crime films, and dynamite narratives invite readers to admire female criminals because of their ability to evade punishment, often by manipulating beauty, glamour, disguise, cross-dressing, or other visible, imagistic means. These female criminals are remarkably protean characters, employing bodily transformation to resist social controls. Insofar as we can read such characters as supporting a dominant cultural ideology, they promote a *consumerist* rather than a *disciplinary* theory of individual identity.⁶

Careful maintenance of bodily visibility, or managing one’s “public image,” is a vital means of autonomous agency in turn-of-the-century crime genres. By making this point through the female criminal, these

texts imagine the activity of consumption as an avenue for women's personal freedom amid a seemingly centralized and regulated modern society. Clearly, such a narrative accords with central features of late capitalism, such as the promotion of individualization via consumption, and the promise of self-actualization through commodities; this narrative also reveals, however, a fundamental *amorality* or *lack of ideological fixedness* at the root of modern social change. By using the figure of the female criminal to reveal the freewheeling power of image and style in a modern, consumerist, and image-centered society, crime genres demonstrate that under such conditions, traditional ideals governing gender, morality, self, and society can no longer operate as expected.

Explicitly or implicitly, the crime genres I consider in this study present the New Woman Criminal as capable of thriving amid the confusing and unfamiliar conditions of modern society, which all three genres characterize as fast, dangerous, and image-centric. They do this in part through form. Magazine detective series feature short, autonomous stories that do not require one to wait until the next installment for narrative resolution.⁷ From 1891, they were heavily illustrated, graphically violent, and, like sensation fiction, were said to be "addictive."⁸ Cinema, in its early days, appeared so immediate and lifelike that many believed it would produce perceptible shifts in viewers' bodies, directly influencing opinions and behavior; critics feared that crime film, in particular, would *cause* spectators to commit crimes.⁹ Dynamite narrative focuses on "terrorists," a concept that emerged in its modern sense during this period of history, and uses a disordered narrative chronology and the trope of the explosion to associate modernity with shock and disorientation.¹⁰ Both formally and thematically, detective series, crime film, and dynamite narrative helped disperse a tacit theory of modern experience: they portray a culture more intensely visual, more dangerous, and more thoroughly commodified than that which preceded it.

Each of these genres is also formally and thematically attentive to a modern realignment of private and public domains, suited to their depiction of female criminals. Detective fiction often portrays the opening of the home to the public gaze via the procedures of investigation. Through heavy illustration, late-Victorian detective series made this gaze visual as well as figural. Film, as a narrative form, is exhibited to crowds who sit in darkness and spy through the fourth wall into a fictional home or setting; spectators are unseen by those around them and inaccessible to actors on screen. Filmic illusion thus reiterates detective fiction's voyeurism as well as dynamite narrative's ambiguous collectivism. Dyna-

mite narrative typically hinges on the fear that a “private” citizen, in the wrong place at the wrong time, will be victimized for a “political” issue for which they feel no responsibility. A keynote of the genre is that terrorism reveals the uncomfortable inseparability of individual and collective, private and public, personal and political. The forms and themes of these three genres thus emphasize the redistricted, unfamiliar contours of public and private in the modern world.

The following chapters describe how these popular crime genres use female criminals to make sense of social and political shifts associated with modernity, including the rise of first-wave feminism, the proliferation of consumer culture, increasing legal intervention into the private sphere, democratization, and the first sustained campaigns of terrorism in Britain. Beyond producing mere “entertainment,” “titillation,” or “shock,” these three genres delineate new, specifically “modern” relationships among individual, society, and state. They presuppose the resolution of contentious social debates, presenting readers with a modern world that has already progressed beyond such debates.

“The woman question” is one such contentious social debate. The “first wave” of the British feminist movement coalesced in the campaign for suffrage, unleashed by groups like the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (founded in 1897 to unify existing organizations) and the Women’s Social and Political Union (founded in 1903 on militant rather than “constitutional” principles). A long history of feminist organization and agitation preceded these developments, as throughout the nineteenth century, middle- and upper-class women won new educational and occupational opportunities and new economic and social rights. Lower-class women’s experience of feminism was different. For them, feminism meant the valuing and safeguarding of labor outside the home that women were already doing, rather than the expansion of women’s lives outside the home. Working-class women typically had freer access to the extradomestic sphere, but this was hardly an elected condition, as they were among the most oppressed and underpaid of all Victorian workers. This was what was “new” about the New Woman, the upper- or middle-class figure who came to symbolize feminist advancement: before the 1880s and 1890s, many British women had worked or held other public roles, but now such a life was extolled as a new *choice* or *liberty* for women who might otherwise have married or stayed home.

The New Woman was thus an imaginary icon who signified real shifts in the relative freedom and occupational choice available to many

young women near the end of the century.¹¹ She sprang from the pages of the periodical press. Sarah Grand coined the term *New Woman* in 1894, articulating a name for a figure already at the center of cultural debates, and defined the New Woman by her insistence on a role in the public sphere: she “proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman’s-Sphere” (Grand, “New Aspect” 142). A proliferation of cartoons and other visual images of the New Woman soon appeared in the popular press. As figures 3–6 exemplify, ideographic “props” in such cartoons associated the New Woman with masculine habits and pursuits, such as scholarly books and spectacles, cigarettes, neckties, and guns. These cartoons also denote the New Woman’s desire to freely navigate



“I am afraid Mother doesn’t much like the latter-day girl.”

Fig. 3. From *Punch*, 19 May 1894, 229



"CAN I GO ABROAD TO FINISH, MA?"
"NO. IT'S TIME YOU WERE MARRIED; AND MEN DON'T CARE HOW ILL-EDUCATED A WOMAN IS."
"YOU SHOULDN'T JUDGE EVERYBODY BY PA, MA!"

Fig. 4. From *Punch*, 19 May 1894, 231



THE NEW WOMAN.

"YOU'RE NOT LEAVING US, JACK! TEA WILL BE HERE DIRECTLY!"
"OH, I'M GOING FOR A CUP OF TEA IN THE SERVANTS' HALL. I CAN'T GET ON WITHOUT FEMALE SOCIETY, YOU KNOW!"

Fig. 5. From *Punch*, 15 June 1895, 282



A "NEW WOMAN."

The Vicar's Wife. "AND HAVE YOU HAD GOOD SPORT, MISS GOLDENBERG!"
Miss G. "OH, RIPPIN'! I ONLY SHOT ONE RABBIT, BUT I MANAGED TO INJURE QUITE A DOZEN MORE!"

Fig. 6. From *Punch*, 8 September 1894, 111

masculine space: to go abroad rather than marry, to transform the atmosphere of the drawing room to that of a male club, or to hunt outdoors for a rabbit rather than a husband.

Many of the freedoms and opportunities for women that the New Woman represented arose in tandem with consumerism and an accompanying consumerist ideology of individual choice. In the second half of the nineteenth century, amid the advertising, department stores, mass-produced commodities, and other hallmarks of modern consumer culture that flooded Britain after the Great Exhibition of 1851, advertisers, marketers, and architects of consumer infrastructure increasingly targeted women as prototypical consumers. By the end of the century, this meant new roles for women in the public sphere, such as more retail positions for “shopgirls,” expanding opportunities for middle-class women to shop—and hence inhabit public space—on their own, and a proliferation of tea shops, lounges, and lavatories that made consumer space more welcoming to women.¹² Such changes were coupled with a growing sense that women should be in control of their own finances, reflected in the Married Women’s Property Acts of the 1870s and 1880s.¹³ Many commercial outlets happily promoted women’s new rights and freedoms in the public sphere: they were, after all, good for business. In the heyday of the suffrage campaign, a number of London department stores advertised clothing appropriate for suffrage demonstrations, and constructed window displays in National Union colors (Tickner 93).

Paradoxically, however, “feminist” consumer capitalism also shifted the terms of women’s oppression: under the auspices of an image-centered consumer culture, women became increasingly sexually commodified as femininity became increasingly constituted by self-administered regimes of health, beauty, fashion, and appearance. Women’s bodies shifted from being the property of individual men (such as fathers or husbands), to being social property, in need of constant maintenance to meet the new cultural standards of femininity. The cartoons in figures 3–6, for example, disparage the New Woman for not looking adequately feminine. Feminist film critics like Laura Mulvey and Mary Ann Doane have described how cinema transformed representations of the female body, but the growing importance of image in establishing femininity and gender difference is also apparent in historical developments that predate film: the surge in visual advertising, the increasingly visual formats of illustrated magazines, the expansion of urban consumer culture, and the emergence of new jobs for women in the public sphere. These

developments intensified the significance of women's public image in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

Turn-of-the-century crime narratives register such developments by engaging female characters in new kinds of interaction with public space—from office workers to shopgirls to suffragettes—but they also chart the escalating significance of “imagistic femininity” by portraying beautiful women criminals. Criminologists in this period insisted that the female criminal fit a “masculine” physical type, and the figural New Woman was depicted as masculine, but crime narrative's New Woman Criminals instead embody a new form of feminine glamour associated with consumer fantasy and the screen culture of the cinema. They do not validate the empirical conclusions of late-Victorian criminology, that visible traits reveal “born criminals,” but rather the more abstract promises of consumer discourse: that women can effect power through style and image. Beautiful, alluring, and emphatically immoral, New Woman Criminals demonstrate how consumerism redefined femininity as a set of visual signifiers rather than behaviors, a purchasable commodity rather than a moral imperative. Femininity, with the steady growth of a visually oriented consumer culture, becomes an image rather than an ethic.¹⁴

The New Woman Criminal represents women's increasingly public lives not only in light of feminism and consumerism, but also in terms of a trend toward legal interventionism. The public visibility of the home and women is very much at issue in narratives of crime and detection, as Sherlock Holmes explains to Watson in the second story of Arthur Conan Doyle's series:

If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over this great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most *outré* results, it would make all fiction with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions most stale and unprofitable. (“A Case of Identity” 30)

Holmes goes on to uncover just such an *outré* state of affairs in the seemingly mundane, middle-class family of the New Woman typist Mary Sutherland.¹⁵ This case is typical of turn-of-the-century detective fiction in that it features Holmes penetrating a private home and family in order to make public—via the medium of the story—an instance of crime or scan-

dal. Although Holmes is a “private detective,” public forms of legal interventionism accompanied the historical development of such a formula.

Amid the broader late-century trend toward a more interventionist state, legal interventionism meant that the domestic sphere was increasingly public, in a literal and metaphorical sense.¹⁶ Stricter state control over the domestic arena was a progressively popular legal philosophy through the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, as Martin Weiner has established, and there was growing support for laws regulating sexuality, domestic abuse, child welfare, and other domestic concerns. Legislation against child beating and neglect, wife beating, and animal abuse required a shift in the legal understanding of the home. That the state should have jurisdiction over the home, and the expression of power within, opposed an idea of the home as inviolable, private, and patriarchal. As Frances Power Cobbe wrote in her 1878 essay “Wife-torture in England”: “We are accustomed to accept it as a principle . . . that the first lesson of orderly citizenship is that no man shall be judge, jury, and executioner in his own cause. But when a wife’s offences are in question this salutary rule is overlooked” (139).

By the end of the century, the “sanctity” of the father’s role in the home had sufficiently dissipated for the passage of the 1878 Matrimonial Causes Act, which allowed abused women to separate from their husbands more easily.¹⁷ Similarly, legislation against child abuse and neglect came with the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Acts in 1889 and 1893. Feminists had been calling for such developments for decades, and many authors of nineteenth-century fiction made the need for such interventions a central point of their fiction. Emily and Anne Brontë, for example, in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), illustrate the extent to which the autonomy and impermeability of the home can shelter alcoholism, abuse, and corrosive male violence. That it took so long for interventionism to take hold is a testament not only to British laissez-faire liberalism, but to the powerful ideology of patriarchal domesticity.¹⁸ In this sense, the expansion of legal interventionism and first-wave feminism at the end of the century are not unrelated phenomena.

Critics of Victorian crime fiction have read the police infiltration of fictional homes as an ideological maneuver of a broader disciplinary apparatus, but as the following chapters show, narratives about female criminals often present interventionism as emblematic of women’s increasing public significance. Michael Warner has written that twentieth-century feminism “encouraged an activist state to assert the public relevance of private life” (35); this is also true of nineteenth-century

feminism. A problem with such legal developments, of course, was that they could easily be corrupted in the service of repressive aims. Judith Walkowitz has described how the final version of the infamous 1885 Criminal Amendment Act, originally intended to raise the age of consent and protect young girls from sexual abuse and exploitation, included a clause that made male homosexuality illegal, for which the act is now better known (*Prostitution*).

Legal interventionism, however, was only one part of a broader transformation in law and policing that occurred within a climate of criminological discovery. The *New Woman Criminal* represents consumerist rather than criminological ideals, in contrast to fictional male criminals, but the rise of criminology in the 1880s and 1890s is nonetheless a crucial context for my study. Crime narrative's emphasis on the visual manifestation of femininity echoes a wider fixation on body, image, and identity in the wake of criminological theory. Criminologists such as Cesare Lombroso and Alphonse Bertillon on the continent and Havelock Ellis, Francis Galton, and William Douglas Morrison in Britain advocated empirical strategies for visually identifying criminals, and early scientific criminology was based on the premise that one might apprehend "criminal identity" via sight.¹⁹ The criminal's image is thus of utmost importance in turn-of-the-century crime narrative, but stories featuring female criminals emphasize the ways that criminological identification doesn't work, or the ways that it can be eluded. Female criminals use disguise, passing, cross-dressing, or cosmetics to manipulate their image; while such devices have a long literary history, here they become tactics specifically for resisting the criminological gaze, and image and bodily modification become forms of leverage for women entering the public sphere.

Critics have traced out many parallels between late-Victorian crime genres and criminological science, arguing that they constitute two new languages used to talk about crime at a time when older discourses of criminality were becoming obsolete.²⁰ Secularism and the emergence of social science are important contexts here: conceptions of "sin" could not adequately explain social transgression at a time when scientific conceptions of the individual—as a calculable, measurable, and predictable agent—were replacing theological notions of human behavior. In outlining this reorganization of thinking about criminality, however, no critic has accounted for the female criminal, who was pathological in criminological discourse, but glamorous and appealing in crime narrative. This radical disjunction between the female criminal as scientific

subject and the New Woman Criminal in the narrative imaginary suggests that these discourses are not nearly as coterminous as critics have supposed.

Rather than reflecting contemporaneous criminological ideas, the New Woman Criminal emerges from—and diverges from—earlier fictional traditions of representing criminal women. In her peculiarly attractive badness, she is a more intensely visual or imagistic version of the prostitutes, bigamists, child murderers, and other “fallen women” of Victorian genres such as social realism or sensation fiction—*Mary Barton’s* Esther (1848), *Adam Bede’s* Hetty Sorrel (1859), or the eponymous Lady Audley (1862). She even resembles, in this respect, Daniel Defoe’s Moll Flanders (1722). The New Woman Criminal tends, however, to threaten public rather than domestic institutions, and is typically motivated by economic or political desires rather than familial or sexual concerns. This marks a turn away from Victorian literary convention, in which female characters—bad or good—convey the national value of home and family.

Female criminals in other late-century genres beyond crime narrative likewise intersect with but depart from the New Woman Criminal: Oscar Wilde’s *Salomé* (1896) and Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891), for example, depict the female criminal as an emblem—or victim—of decadent modernity, but not in terms of women’s new public role in the modern world. Like female criminals in crime genres, *Salomé* uses image as a form of power, purposefully drawing or manipulating others’ gaze, but *Tess Durbeyfield* is punished precisely for drawing others’ gaze, even though the appeal is unconscious on her part. Alec d’Urberville blames her for catching his eye: “I was on the way to . . . social salvation till I saw you again!” Contrary to the New Woman Criminal, *Tess* feels no agency in determining whether and how she is subject to another’s gaze: “I couldn’t help your seeing me again!” (349).

In focusing on public and visible femininity, the new crime genres of the fin de siècle pick up on a narrative motif that long predates them: the literary fixation on the figure of the prostitute. So many critics have discussed the Victorian prostitute that she has become almost emblematic of the period: to Nancy Armstrong, she is “the figure underlying all the monstrous women” in Victorian fiction (*Desire* 182); to Walkowitz, she is a “conduit” of intercourse among disparate groups in a highly stratified society (*Prostitution* 4); to Anne McClintock, she is the “primitive” within “civilized” society, “the metropolitan analogue of African promiscuity” (56). All of these accounts position the “public woman” as a figure of orientation, a marker of boundaries and binaries. The New

Woman Criminal who emerges in the final decades of the nineteenth century represents a new cultural use for public femininity. Like the prostitute, she appeals to a range of cultural fantasies about the pleasures and horrors of feminine corruption, but she also corresponds with new conditions of gender and authority that emerge at the end of the century. In the crime genres of the *fin de siècle*, the female criminal is a thief, murderer, fraud, blackmailer, terrorist, or spy, but never a prostitute. In Victorian literature, the prostitute was defined by her access to public space, and was infinitely useful in locating the boundaries of “unacceptable” femininity. By the end of the century, the ideology of separate spheres had eroded to such a degree that her transgression of public space no longer carried the same symbolic weight. She did not disappear as a fictional persona, but neither does she serve the same representative functions.

A crucial absence of sentimentality distinguishes turn-of-the-century accounts of prostitutes. They are no longer wretched and pitiable, like Esther in *Mary Barton*, nor angelic and self-sacrificing, like Anne in Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822). In some late-century writing, prostitutes are vaguely demonic incarnations of *fin de globe* decadence, as in Wilde’s poem “The Harlot House” (1885). Other representations focus on economics rather than sex, reflecting women’s new status in the commercial sector: Bernard Shaw’s *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (1898), for example, depicts the prostitute as greedy capitalist rather than preyed-upon sufferer. Late-Victorian criminologists similarly came to view prostitutes as economic opportunists rather than victims: William Douglas Morrison wrote in 1891 that prostitution “exists among communities where destitution is an almost unmeaning word; it exists in lands where no women need be idle, and where she is highly paid for her services. In the face of such facts it is impossible to believe that destitution is the only motive which impels a certain class of women to wander the streets” (113). This contrasts with earlier accounts such as *London Labour and London Poor* (1861), where Henry Mayhew and Bracebridge Hemyng depict prostitutes as victims of male vice. Feminist advancement and the New Woman clearly inflect such depictions, wherein prostitutes become active entrepreneurs rather than passive victims of circumstance.²¹

Beyond literary depictions of prostitution, the new genres of crime narrative that emerge at the *fin de siècle* also draw on the transgressive women of sensation fiction, a popular genre that arose following Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860). Indeed, as will often be apparent

in this study, a web of continuities connects sensation fiction and fin de siècle crime narrative: Ann Cvetkovich groups both sensation and detective fiction, for example, with other somatic genres defined by their affective power (15). A key difference, however, is that sensation fiction is largely a domestic genre, focusing on bigamy, cross-class marriage, illegitimacy, inheritance, and family secrets, while the new crime genres of the 1880s and 1890s typically feature public and political dramas, often involving governments or terrorism. Sensation fiction undermines the notion that domesticity is the sacred seat of wholesome value in Victorian society, but never fully extricates women from that sphere. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* (1866) feature two monumental female villains of sensation fiction, for example, but the women's crimes appear to stem from the corrupting influence of violent husbands and ruinous marriages. Like sensation fiction, turn-of-the-century crime genres demythologize domesticity, but also reconfigure women's place in government, the professions, and public culture.

While the connections between late-century crime genres and earlier fictional representations of female criminality are crucial to my understanding and formulation of the New Woman Criminal, this study offers a highly contextualized view of three emergent fin de siècle genres via extensive reference to primary materials, the early film archive, periodicals, illustrations, and newspapers; for the New Woman Criminal emerged in the context of new narrative genres and media, amid various kinds of literary and filmic experimentation. This formal and thematic novelty is a crucial part of these genres' cultural role: detective series, crime films, and dynamite narrative all rely on similarly innovative aesthetic, thematic, and formal effects, just as they all insist on the "modernity" of the New Woman Criminal. The book is organized, accordingly, in three sections, each of which focuses on one of the genres.

PART ONE: DETECTIVE SERIES

The first chapter, "Private and Public Eyes: Sherlock Holmes and the Invisible Woman," considers Arthur Conan Doyle's wildly popular series of short stories about detective Sherlock Holmes, published in the *Strand Magazine* beginning in 1891. Holmes embodies the visual acumen and scientific aptitude associated with the new science of criminology in the late-Victorian period; in this chapter, however, I show how his ex-

pert eye is continually thwarted by the female body's resistance to interpretation. Conan Doyle presents a fantasy of omnipresent surveillance and omnipotent authority under modern forms of social control, but female criminals continually undermine Holmes's system of detection. Whereas with male criminals, Holmes locates "scientific" identity in the body, the identity of female criminals is consistently detached from visual and bodily moorings. Published in heavily illustrated periodical formats, Conan Doyle's detective series makes this point via uniquely visual means. I thus begin the chapter by discussing visuality and illustration in late-Victorian magazine narrative, and then move to a discussion of visibility and identification in the series, focusing on law, policing, and legal interventionism. On the surface, the stories privilege and celebrate the eye and the image, but in representing female criminals, they express profound doubt about how meaning is gleaned from the visible. This underlying ambivalence clusters around a series of problems related to femininity, publicity, and domesticity. To insist on the primacy of the visual in the making of meaning challenges the privacy of patriarchal families and the domestic sphere. In order to investigate families and homes, these spaces must be visually accessible to Holmes, yet Conan Doyle is also invested in domestic intactness, which hinges on concealment and inaccessibility. Holmes's theory of crime and criminality as visually ascertainable categories thus conflicts with the imperative to "veil" women and the home. This collision of values is most apparent when Holmes investigates female criminals and domestic crime, engaging key contemporary debates about legal interventionism and feminist challenges to patriarchal social organization.

Chapter 2, "Beautiful For Ever! Cosmetics, Consumerism, L. T. Meade, and Madame Rachel," discusses the correlation of imperialism, consumerism, and feminism in accounts of the real-life 1860s criminal cosmetologist Madame Rachel, who was convicted of fraud in 1868. Her case was extensively covered in the Victorian press and later fictionalized in L. T. Meade's 1902–3 detective series *The Sorceress of the Strand*. A "professional beautifier" who ran a London cosmetics shop and wrote a beauty manual called *Beautiful For Ever!*, Madame Rachel was the object of widespread scorn among her contemporaries. I read Meade's series, which details the exploits of a criminal cosmetologist, as a feminist intervention into the textual legacy that trailed Madame Rachel—a legacy that fueled cultural apprehension about female consumer power. In an era when advertisers and marketers were increasingly targeting women, and when detectives like Holmes dreamed of

enhanced power through *looking*, consumerist rhetoric told women that *to be looked at* can be a form of power, if one has the right commodities. This chapter examines a variety of narrative and journalistic sources—from courtroom testimony to Wilkie Collins’s novel *Armada* to Max Beerbohm’s essay “A Defence of Cosmetics”—to present cultural responses to Madame Rachel as an anxious foil to a popular, consumerist, pseudofeminist discourse about women’s power of influence through image. Meade intervenes in this legacy by transporting Madame Rachel into 1899 London, where women’s social and economic position is considerably altered, and by reimagining Rachel as a beautiful genius of science and commerce, continually able to subvert the detectives on her trail. The series fails, however, to account for the limitations of a feminism grounded in imperialist capitalism. Seeking to redefine British feminine identity in the wake of women’s expanding economic role, Meade uses the rhetoric of popular imperialism to sanction female consumption. The real Madame Rachel was Jewish, and coverage of her crimes was often anti-Semitic, but Meade’s version of Rachel is instead half-Indian. She provides colonial-derived cosmetics to her clients, and through these products, her English customers assert independent sexuality. Meade’s stories thus “package” Anglo-feminism as an expression of imperial domination.

PART TWO: CRIME FILM

Chapter 3, “The Limits of the Gaze: Class, Gender, and Authority in Early British Cinema,” extends my analysis of criminality, gender, visibility, and authority to early British crime films featuring female criminals. My endeavor is in part archaeological, as little attention has been paid to early British crime film, and no critic has yet established its relation to contemporary crime fiction. I consider crime films produced from 1896 to 1913, examining their roots in magazine detective fiction, but also how early cinema’s form and context altered representations of the female criminal. Female criminals had been depicted as glamorous, rapacious consumers before the advent of motion pictures, but this portrayal is intensified in film, and takes on an overtly democratic sensibility. Because film is a distinctly visual medium, female criminals’ beauty, body, and allure become even more important, completing a shift toward image-centered ideologies of femininity that is only just apparent in fiction like Meade’s. Moreover, in film’s earliest years, British audi-

ences were overwhelmingly working class, fostering a populist and anti-authoritarian filmic sensibility that broke from the detective-centered structure of late-Victorian crime fiction. Rather than producing heroic “master detectives” like Holmes, early film highlights the class politics at work in crime and policing. Female thieves in early crime films steal luxury goods from wealthy aristocrats, and the women’s desire to consume such commodities is presented as no less valid than a rich person’s. On the other hand, many early British films focus on militant suffragettes and suffragette political crime, and these take a far more repressive approach to female deviance. Female criminals in early British film are mostly alluring thieves, whose acquisitiveness essentially accords with the individualist and consumerist values of modern, capitalist society. Militant suffragettes, in contrast, attempt to achieve social change through violent collective action, which at root was far less tolerable than individual criminal deviance. Early crime film’s suffragettes are thus far less appealing than its glamorous thieves. My analysis of filmic accounts of suffragette political crime—including arson, window smashing, bombings, and sabotage—sets the stage for an in-depth consideration of female political criminals in the next section of the book.

PART THREE: DYNAMITE NARRATIVE

The final two chapters explore depictions of the New Woman Criminal as an overt political force, filling out a characterization implicitly embedded in detective series and crime film. These chapters illustrate how narratives about female criminality often correlate democracy, feminism, and consumerism as though they are necessarily allied, either to critique or promote such values. Chapter 4, “Dynamite, Interrupted: Gender in James’s and Conrad’s Novels of Failed Terror,” treats Henry James’s 1886 novel *The Princess Casamassima* and Joseph Conrad’s 1907 novel *The Secret Agent*. While it is the only chapter focused on conventionally “high” culture, I contextualize both novels within a popular subgenre of “dynamite narrative” that emerged in 1880s Britain. Dynamite stories delve into the characteristically modern topic of political terror. They don’t always include literal dynamite, but whether depicting an explosion, assassination, or another threat to the social order, they invariably focus on politically motivated criminal plots. Most dynamite narratives exploit fear of terrorist attacks for sensational effect, emphasizing the fragility of the social order, but James and Conrad strike a disso-

nant note in the mostly harmonious popular genre. Their novels contrast ineffectual and pathetic male “terrorists” with female criminals who are violent and successful, and explore the significance of contemporary controversies about feminism and gender roles. They present the feminization of public culture via consumerism—rather than radical militancy—as a threat to civilization. James locates civilization in art, while Conrad locates it in masculine endeavor, but both see feminized consumer culture as its anarchic antithesis, and use female criminals to represent consumerism’s anarchic force. Indeed, the novels not only reject a feminized culture of consumption, but present it as a threat to masculine identity, linking their female criminals with the meretricious deceits of modern consumer capitalism. James and Conrad suggest that in such a society, the traditionally feminine subject position of the prostitute becomes the ineluctable position of all citizens. By interlacing topics central to late-Victorian gender debates with narratives of failed terror, they pinpoint gender ideology’s use value in the political imaginary. In both novels, gender roles function as metaphorical placeholders for an emerging conception of the individual body in the modern nation-state. The novels thus characterize the prototypically “modern” subject as feminine and as inhabiting a feminized role of pliant consumption.

Chapter 5, “‘An Invitation to Dynamite’: Female Revolutionaries in Late-Victorian Dynamite Narrative,” discusses three dynamite narratives that focus on revolutionary female protagonists: Oscar Wilde’s first play *Vera; Or, the Nihilists* (1883), Olivia and Helen Rossetti’s semiautobiographical novel *A Girl among the Anarchists* (1902), and *The Dynamiter* (1885), a novel by Robert Louis Stevenson and his wife Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson. Nineteenth-century iconography commonly represented “the spirit of revolution” with a beautiful woman, but only with the rise of dynamite narrative in the 1880s did female revolutionaries emerge as complex *characters* rather than abstract figures. Wilde, the Rossettis, and the Stevensons use the figure of the female revolutionary to show how modern “terrorism” and “political crime” complicate traditional notions of criminality and political representation. The unfamiliar threat posed by modern terrorist campaigns was at variance with British crime fiction’s tendency to locate criminal agency in the lone individual. Not only did organized political insurgency threaten to deindividualize criminal guilt, it was often aimed at collective rather than individual targets, randomizing victimization and raising unnerving questions about the complicity of private lives in crimes of the state. Dynamite narrative, as a genre, works to convey this broadening out of criminal guilt and vic-

timization, and women's tenuous relation to political agency made them apt subjects for the task. Wilde, the Rossettis, and the Stevensons use the female political criminal to express the new, uncomfortable sense of public/private interconnectedness embedded in modern terrorism; their female revolutionaries convey a newly modern, newly deindividualized, and newly "public" narrative of crime. By correlating their revolutionaries with New Women, however, the authors also illustrate feminism's relevance to debates about the democratization of the political sphere and the status of political "crimes" as political "acts." They position their revolutionary heroines in the context of first-wave feminism and women's swelling political voice, attaching a powerful symbolic value to the figure of the female political criminal, and linking together democracy, first-wave feminism, and political terror as modern challenges to traditional configurations of political representation.

Female criminals were widespread in late-Victorian literature, engaging popular writers as well as canonical authors. Indeed, the *New Woman Criminal* intersects with many levels of discourse, compelling us to see intricate interrelations between dimensions of culture that have often been viewed as discrete: between literature and cinema, between journalistic and fictional writing, and between the "low" culture of magazine detective fiction and the high literary discourse of writers like James and Conrad. Fredric Jameson has described "culture" as a "space of mediation between society or everyday life and art as such" (177). In this sense, the *New Woman Criminal* is a cultural figure who reveals a great deal about late-Victorian narrative, society, and the reciprocity between these two domains. Detective series, crime film, and dynamite narrative—three emergent genres of the era—use the figure of the female criminal to define a particular vision of modern life wherein feminism, democracy, and an image-centered consumer culture are mutually constitutive and mutually reinforcing rather than merely historically coincident. In making this claim, the following chapters recover the often surprising forms that feminism took at this crucial moment in women's history; they trace out a complicated and uneven relationship between feminism and consumerism, and show how an opportunistic symbiosis between the two transformed both of them in unpredictable ways. More broadly, they show that popular crime genres played a crucial role in defining major cultural and political debates.