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## Framed

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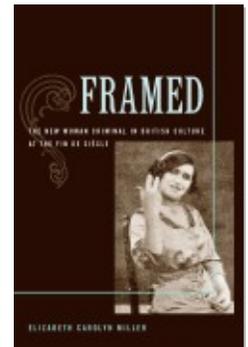
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## AFTERWORD

*Sabotage*, Alfred Hitchcock's 1936 film adaptation of *The Secret Agent*, brought the visual aspects of dynamite narrative to the forefront of the story, making film itself a salient feature of the plot. In Joseph Conrad's novel, Verloc and Winnie keep a shop that sells pornography and radical propaganda; in Hitchcock's film, they operate a movie theater. In Conrad's novel, Stevie's bomb explodes in the middle of Greenwich Park; Hitchcock's Stevie unwittingly blows up a bus with a bomb disguised as film equipment. Stevie also carries two reels of a sensational film entitled *Bartholomew the Strangler*, and in a wonderful moment of suspense and dramatic irony, the bus driver nearly refuses to let him board since early film stock was so dangerously flammable. Hitchcock also retains consumerism as a central term in Conrad's narrative: Stevie blows up the bus instead of Piccadilly Station, as Verloc intended, in part because a toothpaste entrepreneur delays him by coercing him into becoming a live model for his product. Hitchcock's adaptation of Conrad's novel thus captures a key link among the three genres I have been considering: Detective series, early crime film, and dynamite narrative all rely on a particular conception of modern life in which shock, spectacle, images, and consumerism are almost inextricably related. Preserving the novel's vision of an explosive, visual, consumerist modernity, the film reminds us that the character and the value of modernity itself are at stake in the new genres of crime narrative that emerge at the fin de siècle.

*Sabotage* does not gender visuality and consumer culture as relentlessly

as *The Secret Agent*, however, and this is just one example of how the film alters the significance of women, and especially criminal women, in its source. Many of Hitchcock's changes to the plot of *Secret Agent* work to create a more conventional narrative of gender. Winnie Verloc becomes a sympathetic victim—a *Woman Alone*, according to the film's alternate title for its U.S. release—who doesn't so much stab her husband as hold the knife while he runs into it. *Sabotage* also introduces a new character, Sergeant Ted Spencer of Scotland Yard, who is an amalgamation of Alexander Ossipon and the assistant commissioner, but unlike either of them is dashing and gallant. At the end of the film, he becomes Winnie's rescuing hero and romantic love interest. *Sabotage* thus relies on a highly conventional narrative of gender; its ending promises what we might call the "excelsior domesticity" of the Victorian marriage plot, a steady escalation toward a future domestic perfection.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the works discussed in this study, very few end in the manner of Hitchcock's movie. *The Dynamiter*, with which the last chapter concludes, does offer an end-of-the-novel marriage as resolution for its complex terrorist plot, but for the most part, New Woman Criminal narratives resist such forms of closure. Female criminals elude capture in the Sherlock Holmes stories; *The Exploits of Three-Fingered Kate* ends with another successful heist by Kate, but no indication that there won't be another film in the series; *A Girl among the Anarchists* echoes New Woman novels in the ambiguity of its ending; and in *The Sorceress of the Strand* and *Vera*, the female criminals die, but their deaths are pointedly not at the hands of the authorities. Such ambiguous conclusions accord with the vision of modernity that these narratives propose, for within fin de siècle crime narrative, competing definitions of the "modern" are insistently gendered: male criminals are regulated via modern, hegemonic, and scientific discipline, while fictional female criminals, as we have seen, represent a modernity that is unmanageable, unfixed, visual rather than fully articulated, and chaotically democratic.<sup>2</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell has argued that "spectacle and surveillance epitomize the basic dialectic between illusionism and realism in contemporary visual culture: they might be thought of as the 'soft' and 'hard' technologies for the formation of subjects in our time" (327). Crimes genres of the fin de siècle foment the late-twentieth-century visual dialectic that Mitchell describes, but forcefully remind us that the process of forming subjects in our time may sometimes be "hard," may sometimes be "soft," but is invariably gendered. With New Woman Criminals, vision itself seems

to function in a completely different way than we see with male criminals of the era: rather than rendering the gaze in terms of a powerful seeing eye examining a vulnerable subject, New Woman Criminal narratives conceive of the gaze as a reciprocal practice or even an image-centered practice, in which subject and object are both implicated and both active.

Recognizing the gendering of various versions of modernity, criminality, and the gaze reveals, most obviously, the extent to which these are historical constructions rather than part of a natural order. Visuality is inextricably tied to consumerism in the genres we have considered, for example, and both are linked to women's increasing significance in public life. Indeed, the female criminal in fin de siècle crime genres reveals the formation or solidification of a conception of modern life wherein women's public presence seems indivisible from a consumerist, image-centered, and chaotically freewheeling democratic modernity that is always changing but not always progressing. Many scholars have considered crime fiction and film as central to the formation of visual modernity, but we have not always been attuned to the distinct role of gender within this formation, nor to the way in which such narratives directly intersect with debates about democracy, historical progress, and the boundaries of the political sphere.

Narratives of female criminality, I have attempted to show throughout this study, often link image-centered notions of the gaze not only with consumerism, but with the rise of an ostensibly democratic consumer sphere. The association that we see between women, consumption, and democracy in narratives of female criminality speaks not, I believe, to the "natural" desires of newly empowered women and working classes, or to a "natural" connection between democracy and consumer culture, but to an opportunistic cultural development in which consumerist concepts and rhetoric came to align with progressive movements for feminism and democracy. Some feminist authors, such as L. T. Meade, respond by appropriating consumerist discourse for feminist ends; others, such as the Rossetti sisters, attempt a wholesale rejection of mainstream economic and political outlets for individual expression. Most of the authors in this study are not engaged in explicitly feminist or antifeminist projects, yet their work is no less invested in the female criminal's relation to an imagistic, consumerist, and democratic modernity. The previous chapters have tended, perhaps, to portray the opportunistic alignment among these terms as detrimental or corrosive to gen-

uine gender or class equality. What the female criminal of fin de siècle crime narrative most obviously indicates, however, is not that imagistic consumerism works in the service of “good” or “bad,” democratic or antidemocratic, feminist or antifeminist ends, but that it is an incredibly adaptive, mutable, and unanchored force. Like the New Woman Criminal, its relative morality is the least visible thing about it.