the New Woman—also labeled “Novissima,” the “wild woman,” the “odd woman,” the “revolting daughter,” and numerous other names—ranked among the most controversial phenomena in late-nineteenth-century Britain. Drawing upon, and bringing to fruition, many of the aspirations of their foremothers, this new generation of (mostly middle-class) emancipated women focused their critical look on the double gender standard, fought for women’s right to systematic higher education, worked to penetrate male middle-class professions, and became notorious for their unflinching outspokenness on various intellectual and sexual questions. Many of these women (and their fictional representatives and Punch caricatures) forsook the cumbersome and paralyzing Victorian female fashion, donning more practical clothes instead. They rode bicycles and smoked cigarettes in public, and a number of them refused the traditional marriage scenario, opting for a single lifestyle and professional career instead. Contesting and defamiliarizing the hegemonic Victorian definitions of gender and sexual identities, the New Woman further fueled the anxieties and fears that already circulated among the middle-class British population at the time.

The British fin de siècle—as Elaine Showalter and Judith Walkowitz have illustrated—was a time of much turbulence, agitation, and panic, and the middle class felt that they had much to fear in the waning years of the nineteenth century. The 1880s and 1890s not only witnessed a host of unnerving sexual scandals (e.g., W. T. Stead’s 1885 exposé of child prostitution, Jack the Ripper murders in 1888, the Oscar Wilde trials in 1895), but, perhaps more significantly, it was also a time of a profound economic
and social crisis resulting in often violent class clashes (such as the 1886 Trafalgar Square riots, the Bloody Sunday in 1887, and the great dock strike of 1889). The agricultural depression of the 1880s, which generated a massive wave of migration from the countryside into urban areas, was compounded by a profound industrial stagnation of the period 1884–1887, severely afflicting a broad spectrum of Britain’s most traditional industries. Unemployment was rampant, and the adverse conditions of the poor, particularly in the East London, were further exacerbated by a chronic shortage of affordable housing. Generally viewed as brutish, immoral, undeserving, and, increasingly, also as biologically degenerate, the urban poor (particularly the so-called casual poor, also labeled the “residuum,” “roughs,” or “criminal class”) were throughout the century’s waning decades a source of growing fears among the middle-class public and were regarded as a major threat to civilization.6

As Britain sought to compensate for economic losses at home by consolidating and expanding its overseas markets, the fin de siècle was also a period of an aggressive territorial expansion and systematic imperial promotion. While (as J. A. Hobson’s criticism of imperialism suggests)7 dissident voices were not lacking, prominent British economists throughout the nineteenth century, such as David Ricardo, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, John Stuart Mill, W. A. S Hewins, as well as Karl Marx, followed the lead of Adam Smith in advocating overseas investment and colonial settlement (preferably self-governed to keep the bureaucratic costs minimal) as a way of creating new economic opportunities and warding off economic stagnation at home.8 Avner Offer summarizes Marx’s assessment of the economic appeal of empire building for Britain as follows: “competition was driving down the rate of profit at home, but this decline of the rate of profit could be postponed by investing overseas, where exploitation was easier and rates of return higher.”9 Beyond opening access to vast natural resources and to new economic opportunities, the imperial project had further benefits for the British as well, such as establishing (with fatal consequences for the indigenous populations) white settler societies around the world tied to Britain by language, kinship, values, and commerce, promoting Britain’s cultural values as well as its vision of trade, and bolstering its prestige as a Great Power.10

Between 1875 and 1914, the British Empire doubled in size.11 The territorial acquisitions were particularly immense in East, South, and West Africa, gained through both a direct military involvement (most conspicuously in Egypt in 1882) and a series of Anglo–German, French, and Portuguese treaties (the notorious Scramble for Africa) which delineated
European powers’ spheres of influence throughout the African continent. By 1911, British Africa had embraced 2.8 million square miles with an estimated 40 million people. In Southeast Asia, Burma was annexed in 1886, and parts of Borneo became British Protectorates in 1888. And in 1898 Britain gained a ninety-nine-year lease on the strategically located Hong Kong, an entrepot for trade with China, the increasingly important part of Britain’s “informal empire.”

While the new acquisitions added millions of square miles onto the imperial map, economically, as well as militarily, India remained the most significant part of the empire, inspiring Sir Charles Dilke’s remark in his 1890 *Problems of Greater Britain* that “from the larger British Imperial point of view the loss of India would be a crushing blow to our trade.” Contributing a variety of natural resources (raw silk, indigo, tea), India also provided a major customer for British textiles and was responsible for financing the Indian Army (of both British and mostly Indian troops) regularly deployed in military conflicts throughout the world. Half a century after the 1857 Indian Rebellion, the British rule in India (the Raj) was successfully rehabilitated and fairly stable.

The exaltation that accompanied the consolidation of imperial relations in India and the acquisition of new exotic territories in Africa and the South Seas was, however, periodically pierced by such worrisome events as the disappearance of David Livingstone in Central Africa in the 1870s, the death of General Charles Gordon at Khartoum in 1885, the military defeats in Africa in the 1880s, and the disastrous Boer War of 1899–1902. These and other anxiety-generating occasions fueled the sense of ambivalence with which many British contemplated the imperial project. The empire was a source of much national pride, its existence presumably making the idea of cultural and racial superiority of the British self-evident. But the British “civilizing mission” was also viewed in terms of the “White Man’s burden” and was accompanied by mounting anxieties over the likelihood of racial degeneration of the “imperial race” through its contact with the presumably inferior races overseas (as well as the nation’s “degenerate” classes in its own midst). Tending to compare their own imperial nation to the Roman Empire, nineteenth-century historians and writers warned ominously that the British Empire might follow its Roman predecessor and predicted its ultimate demise.

The renewed alliance between Russia and France in the 1890s and the arrival of new formidable powers on the colonial map (Italy, the United States, and the increasingly aggressive Germany) further compounded Britain’s worries about its imperial future. By the beginning of the twenti-
eth century, Britain was losing its position of commercial supremacy in Latin America—an important part of its “informal empire” throughout the nineteenth century—to the United States. Also alarming (because viewed as potentially threatening British interests in Asia) were Germany's imperial designs on parts of the Middle East. Between 1895 and 1914, Germany's conspicuous naval expansion was a source of continuous concern for the British Crown and public. And while the financial costs of running the empire had always been an issue with the public (prominent Victorian economists' promotion of imperialism notwithstanding), with economic crisis in full swing, they were now viewed by many as particularly worrisome.

Contending that the changing economic and social circumstances, including the much publicized "surplus" of women, signified a need for altering the traditional Victorian ideology toward gender roles, the champions of the New Woman insisted that women's economic independence and sexual liberation are both a woman's right and a pressing social necessity. This is how Blanche Alethea Crackanthorpe articulated the argument in her moderate yet uproar-causing article, "The Revolt of Daughters": "We are now face to face in England with the gravest economic and social changes . . . Who can affirm that fifty years hence the producers will be permitted to consume even their own production, and as for the consumers who produce nothing what is their portion likely to be? When that day arrives who will venture to marry the luxurious daughters of the folded hands?"

The opponents, on the other hand, regarded the demands for the emancipation of women not as a remedy for the current economic and social crisis but as a cause of this social malady. They blamed the New Woman for the spread of socialism and nihilism, castigated her determination to redefine gender roles as undermining the long-term interests of the English nation, and sought to diminish the impact of the new fiction and drama by lambasting them as semipornographic and indecent. Regarding the maintenance of clear distinctions between the masculine-public and the feminine-private spheres as essential for the "health" of the British Empire, the adversaries of the movement also pronounced the goals of fin-de-siècle emancipated women as dangerous to the integrity of the English "imperial race" and to the institution of the British Empire.

The perceived connection between (as she called them) "Wild Women's" gender transgressions and the state of the British Empire was spelled out particularly unambiguously by Elizabeth Lynn Linton, one of the most ardent advocates of patriarchy at the fin de siècle, in "The Wild
Women as Social Insurgents,” an article published in 1891 in the Nineteenth Century. The author first represents the habits of “Wild Women”—which she satirizes and exaggerates as was the habit among the contemporary adversaries of women’s emancipation— as aesthetically repulsive. She thus seeks to neutralize the threat she perceived emancipated women posed to the status quo by summoning the beauty ideal internalized by many Victorian middle-class women. But Linton not only portrays the New Woman as “absolutely unwomanly”; she also maligns her for presumably introducing “into the cultured classes of certain qualities and practices hitherto confined to the uncultured and—savages.” In the section of her article that targets fin-de-siècle women travelers, Linton reprimands them for discovering “no new field for British spades to till, no new markets for British manufacturers to supply.” And speaking specifically of British women missionaries in India, she accuses them of “trying to make the Hindus as discontented, as restless, as unruly as themselves.” The New Woman emerges from Linton’s vitriolic account as a chief cause of cultural (and racial) degeneration of the English “imperial race,” as a blundering colonialist, and as threatening the fate of the entire empire by presumably disseminating social unrest among the British colonial subjects.

In another much cited, ardently antifeminist article “Tommyrotics” (published in Blackwood’s in 1895), Hugh Stutfield—taking his cue from Max Nordau’s Degeneration—lambastes the new fiction and drama as products of mentally disturbed minds and warns that the British women’s fascination with the New Woman production will have broader deleterious consequences for the mental health of the entire nation. With the increased colonial competition and with the omnipresent post-Darwinian (pseudo)scientific theories predicting a possible degeneration of the English as a nation, these hostile charges—recurrent in the contemporary criticism of the New Woman—were not to be taken lightly.

Their adversaries tended to generalize in their ominous pronouncements of the New Woman’s negative impact on the nation and the empire. But as present-day feminist scholars have begun to acknowledge, many British fin-de-siècle women were actually deeply invested in the maintenance of the British Empire, and their work was often steeped in their imperial culture’s racial bias.

The colonial angle was not a primary interest of the earliest pioneers in the New Woman scholarship—Elaine Showalter and Ann Ardis—whose chief project (in which they more than succeeded) was to bring the fin-de-siècle women writers back on the literary map. But taking their cue from Edward Said’s now classic assessment of the various roles...
nineteenth-century European fiction played in the history of imperialism (in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*), the authors of more recent anthologies on New Woman writers—Lyn Pykett, Sally Ledger, as well as Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis—have turned attention to the influence of the colonial narrative on New Woman writings. These post-colonial examinations of New Woman fiction have been informed by other feminist scholars (e.g., Vron Ware, Margaret Strobel, Anne McClintock, Rita Felski) broader investigation of the roles played by actual European women in the imperialist contest. McClintock, for instance, has contended that “[although] women and men did not experience imperialism in the same way . . . white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting.” And noting that the organized British feminism’s rise in the 1870s and 1880s coincided with the height of popular imperialism, Ware has argued that “feminist ideology and practice were shaped by the social, economic, and political forces of imperialism to a greater extent than has been acknowledged.”

It is as a contribution to this larger project currently underway within late-Victorian studies—a project aimed at problematizing earlier, exclusively gender-centered examinations of fin-de-siècle British women’s texts and set upon examining the roles played by colonialism in the development of the New Woman movement—that this present book should be viewed. As my study demonstrates, it would be a mistake to generalize in the other direction and conclude that all New Woman writers took the interests of the empire and of the “imperial race” unequivocally for their own. I agree with Ware’s conclusion that fin-de-siècle feminism lacked “a vision of politics which would connect the struggle against patriarchy with the struggle against racist domination.” Indeed, we would not find an expression of unequivocal and organized opposition to imperialism on the pages written by the women studied in this book. But while I underscore the various ways in which the work of the examined authors supported British imperialist ideology and colonial practices, I also highlight various subtle discursive strategies some of these women devised to either express contempt for the colonial conquest or represent the idea of the colonial master and colonial appropriation as pathological.

Offering an in-depth analysis of the work of four culturally, socially, and nationally disparate New Woman writers—Sarah Grand, George Egerton, Elizabeth Robins, and Amy Levy—this book underscores essential differences in these women’s negotiations of the Victorian colonial narrative and significant distinctions among them in respect to their implica-
tion in the late-Victorian discourse of “scientific racism.” I explore the question of what in the background/ideology/location of these women (two Anglo-Irish, one Anglo-American, and one Anglo-Jewish) contributed to their adopting or resisting racial biases then prevalent in the British colonial superpower.

Compared to the New Woman scholarly books mentioned above, this project’s cross-genre scope (fiction, poetry, drama, acting) approximates that of the anthology edited by Richardson and Willis while perhaps offering a more coherent narrative than their collection of essays does. In this way this work is intended to be more comparable to the book-length studies by Pykett and Ledger, although in its consistent focus on the examined women’s engagement with the imperialist discourse it is modeled more after McClintock’s post-colonial inquiry into Olive Schreiner’s work.

Following Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s challenging of the established feminist readings of *Jane Eyre* from a post-colonial perspective, McClintock has similarly problematized the earlier feminist interpretations of Schreiner’s 1883 novel *The Story of an African Farm*. This New Woman novel had been typically (and justifiably) celebrated by feminist scholars for its conscious critique of the double sexual standard and its search for alternatives to the choices traditionally available to Victorian women. McClintock examined Schreiner’s writing through a more complex lens—beyond earlier critics’ exclusive attention to gender—enabling her to bring the marginalized racial and imperial issues into focus.

Drawing on McClintock’s analysis of race, gender, class, and sexuality in Victorian imperialist discourse, my goal is to investigate the intersections among these categories in the work of Grand, Egerton, Robins, and Levy. This study is directed toward ascertaining how these individual authors located and constructed the New Woman project in relation to the late-Victorian colonial contest. Did they tend to link the women’s movement for emancipation with anti-imperialist currents, as was feared by their conservative detractors, or did they observe the interests of the empire first and try to fit their feminist agenda within these limits? How is the answer to this question determined by these women’s personal investment in the colonial status quo? How does their location within the relations of colonial power surface in their work, and how does it affect the direction of their critical challenges to the prescribed Victorian women’s roles in the family and the empire?

In exploring these issues, I have found useful Michel Foucault’s and Ann Stoler’s arguments concerning Victorian strategies of disciplining women’s bodies and the deployment of these strategies for the purposes of
the British Empire's management. According to Foucault, since the classical age (and particularly in the nineteenth century with the aggressive advancement of the bourgeoisie), new power mechanisms have been germinating in Europe, gradually taking over the older strategies of power, appropriating and transforming them. The ancient mechanisms of power—based on the sovereign's right to kill and represented by the law—have been supplemented by “biopower”: the modern technologies of disciplining, normalizing power, which deploy sexuality (and particularly women's sexuality) to control individuals and regulate populations. The technologies of “biopower”—strategically situated and exercised directly at the level of individual bodies as well as at the level of the species (rather than merely within the legal system)—consist of producing and controlling knowledge about human bodies and human species. This knowledge is simultaneously deployed—in the form of the hegemonic scientific discourse—to discipline the bodies and sexualities of individuals and to regulate the life processes of entire populations. The two main poles around which the bio-political nomenclature is deployed (the discipline of the individual and the regulation of the larger populace) are joined together by sex as a means of access to both the life of the individual and the life of the entire species.

Taking up where Foucault left off, Ann Stoler's contribution lies in situating the technologies of “biopower” back on the imperial (rather than just European) landscape where they emerged in the first place. Stoler has spelled out significant implications of Foucault's comments on “biopower” for Victorian racial relationships and underscored the interconnections that these technologies of power brought to the categories of race, sexuality, gender, and class. As she has articulated it, one important implication of the development of the bio-political nomenclature was that the earlier type of popular racism became supplemented in the second half of the nineteenth century by a new biologizing form of state racism. This new “scientific racism” was distinguished from the older forms by being directly linked to technologies of power. It was intertwined with official forms and structures of knowledge by means of the scientific discourse. Nineteenth-century psychologists, physicians, anthropologists, and sociologists deployed Darwin's evolutionary observations to rationalize and legitimate the already existing popular racial prejudices, and their (pseudo)scientific theories were then utilized for the bourgeois state's exercise of its power. Victorian science was invoked to distinguish between “those who must live and those who must die” within the nation—between those who presumably did not and those who did pose a threat to the
“quality” of the nation’s population—as well as to justify the colonial project and control the behavior of the colonizer toward the colonized overseas. 37

Theories of evolutionary progress and worries about degeneration—which constituted the main discourses of “biopower” in Britain—thus conjoined issues of gender and sexuality with those of race and class and were frequently deployed (although dissenting voices were not entirely absent) to rationalize and justify the existing gender-, class-, racial, and imperial status quo. Francis Galton’s eugenics demonstrates how the cause of the empire came to be seen as resting on the sexual prudence of every British individual and couple. If procreation were restricted to physically and mentally fit couples, the argument of eugenics ran, laws of heredity would ensure that the “unfit” would be gradually eliminated and Britain would become a nation of healthy bodies, physically and mentally capable of continuing its domination of the world. Thus everyone came to be seen as able and as having the duty to ensure the success of the imperial nation by means of exercising appropriate personal politics at the level of his/her body and sexuality.

Speaking more specifically of women, the evolutionary discourse enlisted the Victorian ideal of ascetic, self-disciplined femininity for the purposes of the English bourgeois nation and the British Empire. Science was manipulated by those who wished to keep middle-class women out of the professional world and to restrain their sexuality to conjugal beds (and thus to their socially and racially complementary partners) so that they would not be distracted from successfully reproducing the British “imperial race.” Henry Maudsley’s evolutionary psychology—with its extension of Darwin’s observations about “natural” differences between the sexes to the sphere of mentalities—was one of the Victorian disciplines which made sure that it would be primarily women’s sexualities and bodies that would come to feel the impact of the technologies of the bio-political nomenclature. Although as both Showalter and Patricia Murphy have pointed out, late-Victorian profeminist scientists, such as the physician Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, dissented from Maudsley’s conclusions, 38 the sway of his claims among the general public persisted throughout the 1880s and 1890. Declaring that “there is sex in mind and there should be sex in education,” Maudsley insisted that a proper schooling for women must consider their “foreordained work as mothers and nurses of children” and that women “cannot be relieved from the performance of those offices so long as it is thought necessary that mankind should continue on earth.”49 Chained to motherhood as their “essential” function by Mauds-
ley's prescriptive theories of mental degeneration as inevitably following any attempt at defying their "feminine nature,"

Victorian middle-class women were considered nothing more and nothing less than the reproductive site of the species.

It was theories like these that permeated the writings of the New Woman detractors such as Elizabeth Lynn Linton or Hugh Stutfield, and it was in relation to these theories that the fin-de-siècle emancipated women—including Grand, Egerton, Robins, and Levy—articulated their feminist discourses. Grand’s "imperialist feminism"—inspired by her personal investment in the imperial status quo—endeavored to stress and capitalize on the connection between British upper-middle-class women’s presumed bodily self-discipline and the state’s imperial power in order to seize some measure of social influence for (certain select) women. Locating her writing solidly within the evolutionary narrative, Grand, however, inherited its racial determinism and created feminism preoccupied with purity, centered on issues and interests of white English middle- and upper-class women, and disavowing the experience of women of other classes and races.

Egerton’s very different experience with the reality of colonialism, her precarious social location, and her immersion in Nietzsche—as a philosopher who deliberately resisted the strategies of state control over individuals and populations—placed her in a unique position in relation to the evolutionary narrative, although this position was not outside but rather still in relation to "evolutionism." As a result, at least in her early collections of short stories Keynotes (1893) and Discords (1894), Egerton was quite successful at avoiding an assertion of racial discrimination, although she did not always escape the perils associated with her essentializing concept of womanhood.

Robins’ contribution—being personally affected by the Darwinian medical science more than Grand or Egerton—lies in her passionate indictment of the biological determinism of Victorian science as far as it applied to women, and in her search for ways of asserting women’s self-determination against the system of state control. Still, she seemed less conscious than Grand of the interconnections between British imperialist practices and the technologies deployed to control women’s bodies—of the interfusion of the state control over bourgeois women’s sexuality with state racism. Challenging the misogyny of these bio-political technologies, she, as I will argue, often accepted their racism.

My last chapter deals with the poet, essayist, and novelist Amy Levy. It needs to be noted here that temporally Levy’s career preceded those of the
other three New Woman authors discussed in this book. With Levy committing suicide in 1889, her life was already over before the other women’s careers took off. In 1889, Grand’s *Heavenly Twins* and Egerton’s *Keynotes* were yet to be written (although Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*, considered a text that launched the New Woman fiction genre, had been published in 1883). And Robins had just arrived in London a year earlier (in 1888) and was still an obscure actress struggling to find her place on the London stage. The placement of the Levy chapter at the end of my book reflects (1) the still relative novelty of this author in the New Woman scholarship (although thanks to Melvyn New’s collection of Levy’s writings and Linda Hunt Beckman’s biography, this has begun to rapidly change); and (2) my desire to explore these materials in relation to the authors’ respective apparent variance from hegemonic views concerning racial politics. Viewing them through the lens of race, I consider Levy’s writings the most complex of those of the four women analyzed in this study.

My examination of Levy’s work focuses on the strengths and the limitations of the author’s use of irony to trivialize both the colonial narrative and the authority of the evolutionary discourse, which targeted her doubly—as a woman and as a Jew. Levy not only brings a Jewish dimension and the dimension of a poet to the present study of the New Woman. I also use her life and work to ask questions concerning the limits that membership in a subaltern community—such as the Anglo-Jewish community in fin-de-siècle London—places on women determined to expose and criticize the patriarchal aspects of that community.