

## Introduction

Over the past twenty years, interest in women's violence has grown as an area of academic research and teaching across disciplines such as criminology, sociology, history, international relations, public health and film and literary studies. This handbook makes a timely contribution by acting as a comprehensive introduction to a wide range of international, interdisciplinary scholarship which applies feminist perspectives to the phenomenon of women's violence.

Violence is enabled and enacted by individuals, organisations and states with interconnections between these different levels (Collins, 1998, 2017). We adopt this multilevel understanding of violence in the handbook, bringing together contributions on interpersonal and intimate violence by women, women's violence as agents of institutions, and women's political violence as state and non-state actors. The handbook is international in scope with contributions from scholars across countries in the Global South and North.

Women's acts of violence are rarer than men's and frequently perceived as more shocking. Violence by women is regularly sensationalised and stigmatised, especially in media discourses. This sensationalisation and stigmatisation relies on and reproduces misogynistic tropes about violent women as 'evil', 'unnatural' and masculinised. The chapters in this handbook are written from a feminist perspective and eschew or deconstruct stereotypical portrayals in favour of more considered and complex analyses

of the violence women enact and the relevance of their social and political positioning, as well as cultural understandings of womanhood and how these inform understandings of and responses to this violence.

Previous literature has emphasised that women's violence is frequently understood as deviant and transgressive, violating norms of ideal femininity. Such ideas are explored throughout the handbook in contributions which consider, for instance, the vilification and monsterisation of women who kill. These chapters tease out the ways in which violent women are profiled as unnatural and abject. The handbook therefore retains a focus on scholarship which considers the 'abnormality' of violent women while also including contributions which demonstrate that women's violent acts can be normalised and made invisible, for example when perpetrated during a professional role. Adding further nuance, various chapters address how, due to marginalisation across axes of race and class, certain women are not always presumed to be non-violent or perceived through norms of ideal femininity. The handbook explores how these assumptions can lead to overcriminalisation and harsh treatment within the criminal justice system. The significance of women's intersectional identities is a consistent theme throughout the handbook.

Running through the chapters too is the seemingly intractable problem of agency – including the obstacles to fully assigning agency to violent women as well as the frequently unwanted consequences when they *are* considered to have acted with agency and are punished more harshly. Throughout the handbook, authors grapple with questions of women's volitional capacity, considering difficult questions of how far we

should consider the contexts in which women commit violence, which include structural oppression, domestic- and gender-based violence, and cultural norms. The contributions reveal the necessity of abandoning a binary view of victim-perpetrator, agency/non-agency and evolving a more complex framework in which to gauge questions of intention and deliberation.

The handbook is divided into eight sections: historical perspectives; understanding women's acts of violence; women as perpetrators of interpersonal and intimate violence; power and women's violence; women and non-state political violence; cultural interpretations of violent women; fictional representations of violent women; and violent women and girls in the criminal justice system. The rest of this introductory chapter outlines the handbook's structure and summarises each contribution.

## **Structure**

### **Historical Perspectives**

#### **No Explanation Needed: Gendered Narratives of Violent Crime**

***Stephanie Emma Brown***

This chapter examines the historical persistence of the 'mad, bad or sad' categorisation of violent women. While violence is an accepted aspect of masculinity, women's violence does not fit gendered scripts of appropriate feminine behaviour. Consequently, women's violence has been viewed as more in need of explanation. The 'mad, bad or

sad' framework refers to three recurrent narratives mobilised to explain women's violence, which rely on stereotypes of femininity. For crime historians, this framework enables analysis of how women's violence was interpreted and how such interpretations influenced the legal process. However, women's own narratives are either absent from or distorted by this framework, creating gaps in historical knowledge of women's violence.

### **“A hard-working and nice person”? Respectability, Femininity, and Infanticide in England and Wales, 1800-2000**

***Daniel Grey***

Perceptions of infanticidal women in England and Wales over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were influenced by concerns about gender, motherhood, and respectability – emphasising that the infanticidal woman stands apart from “other” female criminals and is deserving of special treatment. Particularly remarkable about this longstanding discourse is its routine emphasis that the guilty mother is also a victim of tragic circumstances that led to the crime and deserving of sympathetic treatment. This framing of women who commit infanticide stresses not only their “normality” prior to the offence but also their “respectability”, a sharp contrast to the sometimes overtly misogynistic representation of other types of women offenders.

### **The Voices of Violent Women in Nineteenth-Century Ireland**

***Elaine Farrell***

This chapter draws on the case files of 79 women convicted of committing violent crimes and imprisoned or sentenced to death in nineteenth-century Ireland. Taking the women's petitions as her focus, Farrell considers the women's own understandings of their violent acts, or certainly how they wished those acts to be understood. The analysis looks to how women described their crimes, and how they sought to explain and rationalise these acts. The documents reveal women's attempts to plead for some amelioration of sentence by emphasising the circumstances they hoped would secure them leniency or mitigation, in turn revealing much about broader societal attitudes to gender. The centrality women placed on their passivity saw them aligning with notions of ideal femininity. The women typically claimed innocence, provocation, manipulation and self-defence in their strategies. Women therefore tended to play down their agency, recognising the individual benefits this held for them. The chapter draws from archival research to reveal the voices of working-class women as they sought to redefine their pasts and reposition themselves in the eyes of the criminal justice system.

### **The Many Defences of Maria Barberi: Challenges to a Victim-Based Agency**

***Rian Sutton***

The common tropes of 'mad, bad, sad' pressed into service when women commit violent acts work to deny women's agency by stripping them of their humanity, their rationality and their intentionality. Feminist scholars have identified this as a fundamental barrier in conceptualising women's violence. Sutton takes an historical case study approach to explore this question, analysing narratives of victimhood and agency in the trial of Maria Barberi, who appeared before the court in New York in 1895

for the murder of Domenico Cataldo. Barbari's case demonstrates the vagaries of gender and criminal culpability, through analysis of her initial trial, subsequent appeal and campaign for clemency, and retrial. Sutton outlines the failure of Barbari's initial defence argument, which sought to rely on an 'unwritten law' that presented Barbari as possessed of a victim-based agency, a rational woman provoked to violence to defend her sexual honour in light of her victim's sexual predation and abuse. In the first trial, this argument led to Barbari's conviction and death sentencing; she only succeeded when she was instead presented as child-like and teetering on insanity. Sutton uses the case to demonstrate that agency-based narratives in cases of women's violence are notoriously difficult to successfully deploy but are nonetheless desperately needed if we are to see violent women as fully-human volitional subjects.

## **Understanding Women's Acts of Violence**

### **An Investigation of Forms and Drivers of Violence Perpetrated by Women in Lesotho: The case of Maseru Female Correctional Facility**

***Josphine Hapazari***

Recognising that men constitute most of the perpetrators of violence, Hapazari shows in this chapter that some acts of violence are perpetrated by women. Within the framework of the interpretive research model, grounded in the approach of socialist feminism, the author discusses the importance of class and gender in explaining the acts of violence perpetrated by women. The analysis is based on desk review notes and empirical data from a study conducted in the Maseru Female Correctional Facility in Lesotho. The

results show that incarcerated women committed various forms of violence, and most of these acts of violence were driven by poverty, gender inequalities, lack of social capital and self-defence. The author argues that future theoretical engagements and policy responses to women's violence could benefit from empirical evidence, which critically engages feminist approaches.

### **Domestic Abuse: Analysing Women's Use of Violence**

***Leticia Couto***

This chapter discusses historical and contemporary depictions of women's use of violence in domestic abuse incidents in the literature proffered by two groups, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and family conflict researchers. The author suggests that these two groups use differing theoretical frameworks and methods, hence the conflicting findings and arguments on women's use of violence. She notes that domestic abuse is complex and may vary given the conceptual definitions and the context in which abuse occurs.

### **Bargaining with Patriarchy, Resisting Sisterarchy: Contextualising Women's Participation in Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)**

***Emmaleena Käkelä***

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons, and is widely practised in Africa, the Middle East and some parts of Asia. Radical feminists associate FGM/C with gender oppression and subjugation, one that reduces women to sexual slavery and servitude

with many health and psychosocial consequences. The author argued that this interpretation of FGM/C limits the practice to gender binaries where women are the objects and men the subjects. It reinforces racial and ethnic stereotyping that serves the interest of western hegemonic discourses. Using Black Feminist epistemologies, this chapter challenges the radical feminist framing of FGM/C by arguing that it limits our ability to fully conceptualize the interconnected nature of women's vulnerability and participation in these practices. Black feminists have called for a nuanced analysis of FGM/C by acknowledging its cultural, historical, generational and situational contexts. Situated within Black feminist thought and employing an intersectional framework, this chapter highlights how African women bargain with patriarchy to maximize their own security in the face of intersecting age and gender inequalities. To support these arguments, the author collected qualitative data from male and female African migrants living in Scottish cities. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns across the data. Findings suggest women do not necessarily participate in FGM/C to perpetrate violence, but to improve girls' social standing in their families and communities.

### **Women as Perpetrators of Interpersonal and Intimate Violence**

### **Women with Intellectual Disabilities: Unraveling their Victim-Offender Status**

***Marta Codina, Diego A. Díaz-Faes, and Noemí Pereda***

This chapter documents the experiences of women with intellectual disabilities (ID) as victims and perpetrators of abuse. The authors argue that in spite of the overrepresentation and diversity of women with ID in the criminal justice system,



existing research has been colonial and paternalistic; often essentialising their voices and experiences. Using an intersectional framework as a conceptual lens, the authors argued for moving away from theorizing and analyzing women with ID as a homogenous group to identifying and acknowledging their multiple intersecting identities. This intersectional approach has become relevant for understanding the complexity of violence committed by women living with ID. It identifies them as both victims and perpetrators of abuse and highlights their victim-perpetrator status as mutually inclusive. This means women living with ID are at a higher risk of experiencing severe forms of physical and sexual abuse, but have been found to be perpetrators of violent offences, including murder, sexual assault, robbery etc. The authors conclude by highlighting the importance of embracing the victim-perpetrator overlap and studying it further.

### **Negotiating vulnerability: Contextualising Nigerian female sex workers' violence against male clients**

***Ediomo-Ubong Nelson, Tasha Ramirez***

In this chapter, the authors draw from feminist scholarship on women's violence, including violence by female sex workers (FSWs), and qualitative data to examine different forms of FSWs' violence against their male clients and the contexts that shape their use of violence. Twenty-seven in-depth interviews were conducted with FSWs recruited through snowball sampling in Uyo, Nigeria. Thematic analysis revealed three forms of violence: 'situational violence', 'collective violence', and 'symbolic violence'. The authors suggest that FSWs' violence is contextualised by daily violent experiences

at the hands of male clients. Thus, within this context, FSWs' violence is not only a form of self-defence but also a means of exercising agency and relative control.

## **Typology of Female Offenders in Intimate Partnerships – A Feminist Approach**

***Rebecca Gulowski***

This chapter problematises the extant literature on gender-based violence as reductionist given its dominant focus on women as victims and men as perpetrators of violence. It argues that this simplistic interpretation limits our understanding of the complexity characterising the dynamics of violence in intimate relationships. It critiques the one-size-fits-all approach to explaining women's acts of violence as reactive violence, and offers other typologies based on four dimensions including, the structure of violence (asymmetrical vs. symmetrical), the patterns of violence (systematic vs. situational), agency (unilateral vs. bilateral), and the attribution of meaning (intimidating, resistant, affect-accentuated, collusive). The authors created these types of violence using qualitative data collected from 58 women who perpetrated IPV against their male partners and had attended a specialised counselling service in Germany called *violenTia* between 2018 and 2021. Data were collected face-to-face and analysed using Kluge's (1999) empirically grounded type construction. The empirical data supported the various classifications/typologies.

## **Men's Self-Reported Experiences of Women's Controlling Behaviours and Intimate Partner Violence in Kenya**

***Eric Y. Tenkorang, Alice Pearl Sedziafa, Sitawa Kimuna***

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a global phenomenon although the focus has been mostly on women as victims and men as offenders. This chapter reversed the course by exploring the motivations and socio-cultural underpinnings of violence against men in Kenya. Using the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey and employing logit models, the authors examine the associations between women's controlling behaviours and IPV among 3,262 Kenyan men aged 15-54 years. The results show that more than 60% of the Kenyan men surveyed reported their female partners were controlling, and many of these men were also victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuses from their female partners. Educated Kenyan men had higher odds of experiencing physical and emotional violence than the uneducated, and they reported higher levels of control by their female partners. The authors argue that IPV against men may be goal-oriented, but there is also evidence that it may be a reaction to male-perpetrated abuse.

### **“She Ended Up Controlling Every Aspect of My Life”: Male Victims’ Narratives of Intimate Partner Abuse Perpetrated by Women**

***Alexandra Lysova and Kenzie Hanson***

The authors use thematic analysis to identify types of intimate partner abuse (IPA) experienced by 41 men from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States who participated in focus groups. Four types of abuse experienced by participants in their intimate relationships emerged: Psychological abuse, coercive control, physical violence, and sexual violence. The authors suggest that researchers and practitioners should be cognisant of female perpetrated abuse, which can lead to

severe health outcomes for male victims and call for a more gender-inclusive approach to IPA that focuses on prevention of abuse for all victims; men and women.

## **Power and Women's Violence**

### **Obstetric Violence: A Form of Gender Based Violence**

***Catarina Barata, Vânia Simões and Francisca Soromenho***

In this critical review of the history of obstetrics, the authors show how this medical practice was “stolen” from midwives by male doctors and transformed into a gendered and often abusive process. As such, that obstetric violence is now an extension of the devaluation and subjugation of women in patriarchal societies, where sociocultural conceptions contribute to a view of the female body as faulty and deviating from the male prototype. Since the field of medicine was dominated by men, male doctors created the perception that female reproductive processes require technological corrections. Even with the entrance of women into the workforce and the specialized fields, feminising care-professions, failed to shift this paradigm. Female health workers are taught the procedures instituted by dominant patriarchal structures, expressing values encoded in the professional culture and the institutions where they work. As women conform to the models they are exposed to during their training, perpetuating corporate hierarchies and practices, they act as agents and perpetrators of obstetric violence. Thus, obstetric violence also constitutes a specific type of violence against women at the hands of other women.

## **By Any Other Name: The Difficulties of Recognising Female Police Violence**

***Michael Branch***

This chapter assesses whether increasing the number of women police officers reduces the amount of violence perpetrated by the police. Disproportionate use of force and violence by the police has been attributed to the norms of masculinised police cultures. Recruiting more women is argued to be one way to change these cultures as women are perceived to bring more compassion and care to their roles. However, this argument rests on stereotypical understandings of femininity and women's behaviour. Branch discusses evidence from the United States, Slovenia and Nigeria, which indicates recruiting more women police officers by itself does not change violent police cultures. Rather, women officers are likely to adopt the dominant culture of policing, according to which use of violence is an occupational norm.

## **Women's Violence in Armed Conflict: Toward Feminist Analysis and Response**

***Alexis Henshaw***

This chapter provides a review of the literature on women's involvement in political violence, while expanding the discussion toward new and emerging questions relating to post-conflict processes. This includes concerns about gender issues in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes and the treatment of women as war criminals. In particular, the chapter seeks to engage a growing literature on the legal and social aspects of women's involvement in armed conflict. It analyses women's roles as perpetrators of atrocity and war crimes, as agents of torture, genocide and sexual violence. The author identifies two questions that underpin scholarship on women and

political violence: the question of women's agency (did they chose to take part in the action) and the question of women's role(s) during the conflict (how they participated). Two emerging themes are outlined in the chapter: Women and disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration process, and transitional justice and women as war criminals. Case studies are used to demonstrate how women are underrepresented in post-conflict processes. The chapter highlights how gender intersects with race/ethnicity, religion, and even class in shaping perceptions about women's involvement in political violence.

## **Women and Non-State Political Violence**

### **Strategic Silences and Epistemic Resistance: Agency of Women Ex-Combatants in 'Post-War' Space**

***Keshab Giri***

This chapter draws on empirical research conducted in Nepal between 2017-2018 involving Maoist female ex-combatants, their leaders (male and female), and experts. A review of the literature – which precedes the analysis of the empirical research - identifies the following key themes: post-war as regression; structural forces shaping post-war regression; situated agency of women ex-combatants; and micro-politics of post-war. Two theoretical frameworks are drawn upon: strategic silence and epistemic resistance. Reflections from the interviews highlight the power of silence and how it was used strategically by Maoist female ex-combatants during interviews. Here the women were conveying a political message through their silence. The latter involved women

resisting narratives of social transformation by the Maoists in Nepal. This chapter makes an important intervention in feminist security studies and feminist international relations through a specific focus on gender in post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding.

**The Representation of Women's Involvement in (Nonstate) Political Violence:  
Dominant Myths and Narratives Surrounding "Radicalised" Women in the UK**

*Itoiz R. Jusué*

This chapter analyses how women's involvement in non-state violence is portrayed in the media. Explanations for women's participation in terrorism draw on conservative gendered explanations that stress women's irrationality and susceptibility to male influence. The media perpetuates dichotomised portrayals of women terrorists as either monsters or victims. Since the early 2000s, the radicalisation discourse of terrorism has become dominant in counterterrorism approaches and the media. Jusue analyses how portrayals of 'radicalised' women in the British news media mobilise longstanding myths and stereotypes about women's participation in political violence. Three case studies demonstrate how the news media engages in highly sexualised depictions, which reinforce old stereotypes of women as lacking political agency.

**News Media Framing of Female Ex-combatants in a Post-conflict Society**

*Ashleigh McFeeters*

Representations of female perpetrators of political violence contribute to society's thinking about women, gender, violence and agency. Analysis of the discourse of women and violence in the news media is vital to understand its influence on society's

knowledge of women and violence. This study investigated how gendered news frames are used to depict female IRA ex-combatants in Nationalist and Unionist newspapers in post-conflict Northern Ireland. In the existing research, the frameworks are perceived to explain women's violence away – to depoliticise their actions as resulting from some personal trauma rather than political ideology. However, this does not happen in the Northern Irish news media. The post-conflict Northern Irish press (both Nationalist and Unionist) does use gendered discourse (of sexuality and attractiveness) which objectifies and dehumanises female ex-combatants. In turn, this perpetuates the discourse, and therefore the knowledge, that women are lesser than men. However, unlike previous literature, the Northern Irish press (both Unionist and Nationalist) coverage of female ex-combatants does not deny agency as a way of lessening culpability or intention.

## **Feminists? Armed: Gender and The Question of Political Violence**

### ***Tammy Kovich***

This chapter draws on women's involvement with left-wing urban guerrilla groups in Italy, West Germany, and the United States during the 1960s-80s. As well as addressing the relationship between gender, agency and violence, the chapter, examines how women's political violence was received by the feminist movement during this time. The chapter focuses on women's involvement in (1) a broad left-wing group (anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and/or anti-racist) that identified as a feminist and (2) a left-wing group (independent or an offshoot) that was explicitly feminist and concerned with women's issues. As the author demonstrates, the relationship between



feminism and political violence is complicated. This is because, historically, political violence has been associated with men and masculinity. In the context of the proliferation of urban guerrilla groups in 1960s-80s, the question of political violence became a major point of discussion within the women's movement. Deliberations centered on the following: 'is political violence the product of patriarchy and something that both enforces and perpetuates destructive "masculine" values and activities? Or is a political violence a tool that can be used to fight against the production and reproduction of patriarchal systems, norms, and activities?' This chapter highlights how the association of women with non-violence not only reproduces the dominant gender order, but also limits our ability to understand and learn from important political moments.

### **The Role of Women in the Spanish Terrorist Group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)**

***Claudia Mayordomo Zapata, Salvador Moreno Moreno and José Miguel Rojo Martínez***

This chapter analyses the role of women in armed Basque nationalist and separatist terrorist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) from a gender perspective. ETA was a nationalist group in the Basque Country (Spain) that claimed the independence of Euskal-Herria through the use of violent struggle. While ETA women were essential agents in the armed conflict, they received differential treatment in the mass media and society compared with their male counterparts. The chapter seeks to contribute to the area of feminist studies on women and political violence by answering the following research question: How have the media represented women's leadership in the Spanish

terrorist group ETA? The chapter contains a qualitative content analysis of the female leaders of ETA from different sources such as mass media (press and journalism articles), audiovisual content, the biographies of high-profile figures, and TV representations in two recent series. Three main strategies are identified in the caricaturing of ETA women: 1) Sexualisation and representation as dangerous seductresses 2) Reducing their capacity for violent activity, and 3) Resorting to an androgynous representation to explain their participation in masculine and deviant behaviour. The authors argue that the ETA women were treated and represented as individuals with the right to kill but not to lead.

## **Cultural Interpretations of Violent Women**

### **Online Discourses of Women's Violence, Gender Equality and Societal Change**

#### ***Satu Venäläinen***

This chapter examines the discourse used in online forums discussing violence by women in Finland, especially in relation to IPV. Three main repertoires were identified—change, equal perpetration, and double standard. In essence the discussions in these forums argue that violence by women is worse than before, that when women commit IPV their rates are equal to that of men and at least as severe (although sometimes argued to be more severe even when not physical), and that responses to women's involvement with this violence is not treated as harshly as when it is committed by men. Across all three of these themes, there is also a tendency for those posting to point that finger at feminism/ists for why men are the victims and why the women are getting

away with it (anti-feminism backlash). These discussions feed a moral panic about women being more violent than ever before, as identified by Meda Chesney-Lind and others.

### **Mental Illness/Distress in Representations of Maternal Filicide-Suicide: Silencing the Gendered Aetiologies of Violence**

***Denise Buiten***

This chapter examines media representations of women's use of violence against their children. The author suggests that women who kill their children are often framed as having mental illness or as monstrous mothers. A feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) was used to analyze Australian news reports on maternal filicide-suicide cases. Buiten notes that mental illness is in all cases cited as the main or only reason women use violence against their children. Further, news reports framed women's mental illness in 'psychocentric' terms devoid of other contextual factors.

### **Sad, Bad or Mad: The Denial of Agency to Women Who Kill**

***Belinda Morrissey***

Considering the legal and media discourse of three high-profile cases of women who kill, this chapter considers the mad/bad/sad conundrum which strips violent women of their agency. Morrissey focuses on three contemporary case studies, showing how women with circumstances as diverse as Sally Challen and Maxine Carr in England and Belinda van Krevel in Australia all posed similar issues relating to the difficulty in heteropatriarchal society of acknowledging women's capacity for aggression. Analysing

the 'hopelessly limited' range of narratives available in cases of women's violence, Morrissey demonstrates the importance of the stories told about violent women, and how these shape women's realities. Our understandings of these women are always filtered through the lenses of domesticity, pathology and sexuality. These representations are writ large in the mediasphere, where the relative rarity of women's violence feeds into media fascination and spews out a sensationalised discourse of non-agency. Nonetheless, in her analysis of the trial judgments, Morrissey does see nuance, and the possibilities for alternative narratives.

### **'Evil Women': Sexual Sadism and Murder in Britain, 1960s-1980s**

***Joanna Bourke***

The chapter asks how Myra Hindley's actions were understood and interpreted at the time. In the 1960s, Hindley and her boyfriend Ian Brady sexually tortured and murdered at least two girls and three boys, aged between ten and seventeen years, in the Manchester area of the UK. Central themes are the concept 'evil', sexual violence, pornography, permissive society, and patriarchy, as refracted through gender and class. Gender is an important reason for her treatment, but it is insufficient to explain it completely: her crimes were not 'uniquely evil', nor decidedly abnormal compared to others serving life sentences for murder. Bourke argues that to understand the continued monstrosity of Hindley, her violation of gender stereotypes is clearly important. To understand the extremely punitive responses to Hindley, it is important to supplement a gendered analysis with an acknowledgement of the absence of easily

available explanatory frames, together with political expediency. This absence helps explain why even recent work on Hindley use concepts such as 'evil' or a 'devil'.

## **Fictional Representations of Violent Women**

### **Imagining Women's Violence: The Femme Fatale**

#### ***Katherine Farrimond***

This chapter examines different reiterations of the classic femme fatale character. While different definitions of the femme fatale exist, there is a connection between violence, albeit often from a distance, sexuality, and general transgressions from the expectations of society. She is often described as a "paranoid male fantasy" and representation of anti-feminism backlash. Although some feminist readings of the femme fatale stated that this reading of the character ignores to complexities. After covering the most well-known femme fatale represented in film noir and neo-noir from the US, Farrimond examines race and ethnicity as it relates to the femme fatale character, followed by a demonstration of this caricature is used in discussions of real-life cases and even non-violent women who are considered to be stepping outside the boundaries of appropriate behavior (from politicians to pop stars).

### ***Killing Eve: Television Violence as Liberation?***

#### ***Rosie White***

This chapter analyses the representation of female spies and violent women on screen in the first three seasons of television show *Killing Eve*. The two main characters –

assassin Villanelle and spy Eve – exemplify how recent portrayals of violent and ‘difficult’ women on television have become more complex and non-stereotypical. While these portrayals bear the influence of feminism, they do not engage in feminist politics for social change and instead offer a version of individualised neoliberal feminism. White interprets the spectacular representations of women’s violence in *Killing Eve* as consistent with this neoliberal feminism, in which scenes of violence by and between women are offered for the enjoyment of the audience. However, *Killing Eve* also parodies neoliberal corporate culture, according to which employees are disposable if they do not meet employers’ expectations.

### **Not Afraid to Kill: The First Female Literary Detective in Bengali Crime Fiction**

***Shampa Roy***

This chapter examines women’s violence in Bengali detective fiction by focusing Prabhavati Saraswati’s Goyenda Krishna series. It looks at the development of the genre when the main character is a woman detective, which is considered transgressive in that she takes on a job typically done by men and is thus required to behave in ways not deemed appropriate for women. The character challenges patriarchal stereotypes by refusing to get married, becoming a detective, wanting to avenge the murder of her father, and her use of violence in the course of her job. Unlike previous violent women in Bengali fiction, her behavior is accepted rather than demonised. Goyenda Krishna is an example of how culture and changing beliefs can shape standard characters and how violence by women is depicted.

## **“Returning to Destroy Your World”: A Transhistorical Approach to Cultural Constructions of the Female Avenger**

***Stevie Simkin***

The figure of the female revenger has been a powerful character in culture from earliest myths to modern movie. Simkin looks to the shifting and evolving female revenger, contextualising the role of these narratives historically, and drawing out some of the particularities of the female, compared to the male, avenging protagonist. While revenging men are often portrayed as navigating heady ethical mazes, or as more straightforwardly heroic, the female revenger tends to be more ambivalently drawn, noting especially the trope of the ‘scorned’ woman. Female revengers are also, unlike their male counterparts, often created as figures avenging their experiences of sexual abuse and violence. Simkin takes the specific genre of the rape revenge film, looking at how this film category has shifted since its inception in the 1970s through its post-#MeToo iterations. At its heart, this genre of film carries a paradox in which we must first witness violence before we can see ‘justice’. Indeed, in early manifestations of the genre, audiences were presented with the gratuitous eroticization of sexual violence. Moving on to consider the ‘new generation’ of rape revenge films, Simkin sees these knowing and feminist-inflected films as an evolution of the female revenger, in which narratives are steeped in awareness of concepts such as ‘rape culture’ and in which female victim ‘can speak of suffering’. While cautious of backlash, these films speak to a subtle shift not only in the protagonists but in society itself.

## **Women’s Violence in Tamil Mega Serials**

### ***Premalatha Karupiah***

This chapter examines a Tamil mega serial, which is an Indian version of a soap opera or a telenovela. These serials are female-centric and revolve around the domestic sphere and replaying traditional notions of femininity in Tamil culture. In these series, the protagonist is often an ideal daughter-in-law who must protect her family from the villainess who is seeking to break up the family and get the husband of the protagonist. Her future is in the balance as her worth is rooted in the relationship with her husband and being an ideal wife and mother. The visuals and storylines reinforce messages about good and bad women based on the culture. Violence is used by the antagonist or the representation of the bad woman or someone who transgresses the traditional notions of femininity.

### **Feminist Perspectives on Rape-Revenge and Necroempowerment in Narcotelenovelas and B Movies**

#### ***Gabrielle Pannetier Leboeuf and Anaïs Ornelas Ramirez***

This chapter offers a post-colonial feminist reading of the female avenger and rape revenge in narcotelenovelas and B-movies from Mexico and Colombia. Violence and revenge are a structural factor of the narco-order. One can achieve self-empowerment through the use of violence. But this is typically reserved for men. In the series and film used as a case study, rape is the catalyst for this self-empowerment. The women employ the acceptable methods of the culture to deal with injustices committed against them or people they know. But in the end this adoption of the violence does not stake their place in the culture and both characters. As the authors state, the women are still



vulnerable and the status quo remains intact. In essence, the avenging women are punished in the end for seeking vengeance and transgressing the norms of women's place in the narco-culture.

## **Violent Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System**

### **Trends in Girls' Delinquency in the United States**

***Meda Chesney-Lind***

This chapter discusses the feminization of the juvenile justice system in the United States. The author argued that early theorizing of juvenile delinquency neglected important sociological variables including race and gender. These theories celebrated masculinity by focusing on boys while ignoring girls. The theories also failed to critically engage the role of race and racism in understanding juvenile delinquency despite the United States' chequered history on racism. Recent theorizing, especially by feminist criminologists and black feminists have encouraged a focus on gender and race. Using secondary data sources, the author documented the gendered nature of juvenile delinquency in the United States. The data showed that a larger proportion of girls are charged with violence offences than boys, and girls' share of detention and incarceration has also increased. Black girls and girls of color were significantly more likely to be charged and incarcerated. The author concludes by highlighting the need for change in how society treats and punishes girls who offend.

## **The Importance of Language, Intersubjectivity and Recognition in Creating Space for Women's Rehabilitation from Acts of Violence**

***Melanie Sheehan***

The power of language, which creates the gendered body when the “girl is girled” by the midwife calling the baby a “girl” according to how she looks at birth, has life lasting impacts on women. Such labelling comes with cultural, political, and social expectations of behaviours. This chapter examines the role of female subjectivity, stereotypes of femininity and the gendering of behaviours, alongside an exploration of the paradox of the female ‘victim-offender’. The author discusses how language affects the feminisation of ‘victim-offender’ using various theoretical perspectives and her own data from qualitative semi-structured interviews with the keyworkers in a women-only charity in the criminal justice system of England and Wales. The discussions lead to the conclusion that the keyworkers’ attention to interpellatory dynamics and intersubjectivity effects individual change.

## **Female Incarceration and Criminal Selectivity: Reflections on Crime Committed by Women in Brazil**

***Carmen Hein de Campos and Cristina Rego de Oliveira***

This chapter examines the specific characteristics of female criminality related to drug trafficking in Brazil. Drug trafficking accounts for 62% of female behind bars compared to 41% of male imprisonment for the same crime. The intersection between gender, race, class, and age is highlighted to inform the criminalization process of women. The authors argue that the incarceration of women in Brazil is explicitly selective whereby

most of the incarcerated are young, Black, poor, and semi-literate with limited access to the formal labor market.

## **Violence and Systemic Injustice: The Effects of Colonialism and Neoliberalism on the Overrepresentation of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada's Criminal Justice System**

***Becky Ratero Greenberg and Maéva Thibeault***

In Canada Indigenous women are over-represented in the criminal justice system although they represent just 5% of the total population. Taking an abolition feminist and decolonial theoretical framework, the authors argue that Indigenous women's criminalisation is contingent on the legacy of colonialism, which includes an ongoing genocide against Indigenous women and girls. To fathom the scope of contemporary instances of violence inflicted upon and perpetrated by Indigenous women and girls in Canada, the authors take an all-encompassing approach to the definition of violence as a continuum, with the violence of war and genocide experienced by Indigenous peoples inevitably impacting on the interpersonal violence such women experience as victims and commit as perpetrators. The victimisation-criminalisation continuum is useful in thinking about this. While not denying women's agency, the authors contend that Indigenous women's violence relates to their position within institutional power structures. Reflecting on this, they take an abolitionist stance to the prison, which ignores the structural problems of social inequality that punish Indigenous women and instead advocate for restorative and also transformative approaches to justice.

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**To cite this article:** Banwell, S., Black, L., Cecil, D. K., Djamba, Y. K., Kimuna, S. R., Milne, E., ...Tenkorang, E. Y. (2023). Introduction. In S. Banwel, L. Black, D. K. Cecil, Y. K. Djamba, S. R. Kimuna, E. Milne, ...E. Y. Tenkorang (Eds.), . Bingley: Emerald. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80382-255-620231001>

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