

## Editors' Introduction

This volume offers a new translation of Cesare Lombroso's *La donna delinquente*—*Criminal Woman*—a work coauthored with Guglielmo Ferrero and originally published in Italian in 1893. This was the book—and not Lombroso's celebrated *L'uomo delinquente* (*Criminal Man*)—that in an early translation introduced American and British readers to work by the Italian criminal anthropologist who claimed to have discovered a new human subspecies: the born criminal. *La donna delinquente*'s significance also lies in its extraordinary impact on the study of female crime. This work, more than any other book in Western history, determined directions taken in that field of study, albeit in recent decades by providing a backdrop against which feminist criminologists have lobbed very different ideas. The translation presented here gives most readers their first full view of Lombroso's text. It also constitutes the first new English edition of *La donna delinquente* in over a century and the first new English edition of any work by Lombroso in close to one hundred years.

Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) is widely recognized as one of the first people (some would say the very first person) to bring scientific methods to bear on the study of crime. A physician, psychiatrist, and prolific author, Lombroso is best known as the founder of criminal anthropology—the study of the body, mind, and habits of the “born” criminal. Lombroso's theory of the atavistic offender, a throwback to a primitive stage in human evolution, dominated criminological discussions in Europe, North and South America, and parts of Asia from the 1880s into the early twentieth century. His central idea of the born or genetic criminal continues to attract adherents, and the main legal implication of his work—that some offenders are not fully responsible for their acts—remains key in criminal jurisprudence. Today, Lombroso is becoming a basic reference point

for historians of gender, race, law, and science. He is being recognized as one of the most fertile, if uncritical, thinkers in nineteenth-century Europe, and a man whose work marked a turning point in conceiving of the body as a sign of human worth.

*La donna delinquente*'s significance to the Anglo-American world came partly from its rapid publication in English. In 1895, just two years after its original Italian publication, *La donna delinquente* appeared in English as *The Female Offender*. This was a full sixteen years before the release of an English translation of *Criminal Man*. Frequently reprinted in both New York and London, *The Female Offender* for many years formed one of the main bridges over which Lombroso's ideas passed from Italy to English-speaking countries.<sup>1</sup>

Although *The Female Offender* is today less well known than some of Lombroso's other writings, it actually had a greater long-term impact on the study of female crime than *Criminal Man* did on theories of male crime. For decades, there existed no other book on the causes of female crime and, indeed, very little other material in any form. *The Female Offender* continued to influence interpretations of female crime until the 1970s; it became the classic text in its field. In contrast, by 1911, when *Criminal Man* finally appeared in English, Lombroso's born criminal theory was already going out of vogue as an explanation of male crime. The dominance of *The Female Offender* led to the long-term emphasis on female crime as biological in nature. It led, as well, to a particularly heavy stress on sexual and psychological factors in explanations of female crime. Its influence persists into the present, moreover, due to the fact that Lombroso's pronouncements on female crime have become—rightly or wrongly—a much-discussed symbol of all that is wrong in methods and goals with criminology.

This new edition differs so radically from the original *The Female Offender* translation as to form an entirely different book. While Lombroso's original consisted of four major parts, *The Female Offender* translated only one part and bits of another. While Lombroso had titled his book *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale*, *The Female Offender* omitted much of the material on prostitutes and all of the commentary on "normal" women—material crucial to Lombroso's argument because it established the general inferiority of women to men. It also omitted nearly all the material on the sexual characteristics of female criminals, such as lesbianism, virility, menstrual abnormalities, and anomalies of the breasts and genitals. In good Victorian fashion, moreover, it completely sanitized Lombroso's language and thought, for example by changing the phrase "a criminal lesbian" into "a woman" and dropping material on lasciviousness as a cause of crime. Reading *The Female Offender*, one would never guess that Lombroso had

a keen interest in sexual pathology and contributed to the development of sexology as a field of study. This new edition includes all four parts of the original text and restores the sexual material excised and bowdlerized in *The Female Offender*. Following Lombroso's original, we have titled this new edition *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*.<sup>2</sup>

### Goals of the New Edition

This new edition of *Criminal Woman*, and its forthcoming companion edition of *Criminal Man*,<sup>3</sup> has a twofold purpose: to provide, for the first time, adequate English translations of Lombroso's criminological work and to lay foundations for an emerging new generation of Lombroso scholarship.

Research on Lombroso's criminal anthropology has become very difficult due to the virtual inaccessibility of his texts in both the original Italian and in translation. Few of the Italian originals exist in the United States, and, in any case, due to their age it is almost impossible to borrow them through interlibrary loan offices. (To work on this translation, we had to begin by obtaining a microfilm copy of the original and Xeroxing from that.) Not only have Lombroso's criminological works never been adequately translated into English; even the previous translations are out of print. Scholars working in English have had no way to follow the unfolding of Lombroso's ideas. Research has tended to be misleading because it has been based on incomplete or garbled records. And criminology students have had no way to get a clear overview of Lombroso's work, despite its fundamental importance to the field.

Misunderstandings of Lombroso's work are so widespread as to constitute a distinct mythology. Some commentators have ridiculed Lombroso's work as a pseudoscience; others, misled by abbreviated editions, have mistakenly assumed that Lombroso was a political reactionary. In the early twentieth century, when the English prison physician and statistician Charles Goring set out to critique Lombroso's theory, he had only a few, inadequate English-language resources to work from and thus only a vague, inaccurate idea of the work he was determined to refute.<sup>4</sup> Later in the century, when the distinguished American evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould set out to critique Lombroso's thought, he failed to recognize the complexity of Lombroso's central ideas, implying in *The Mismeasure of Man* that Lombroso's born criminal theory derived primarily from the nineteenth-century concept of recapitulation.<sup>5</sup> Lombroso's daughter Gina Lombroso-Ferrero contributed to the confusion by including in her 1911 edition of *Criminal Man*—which became the standard reference text—emendations that cannot be distinguished from her father's text.<sup>6</sup> Even some of her bibliographical

information is inaccurate. For much of the twentieth century, Lombroso existed only as a distant and unapproachable figure—extraordinarily famous, widely ridiculed, and largely misunderstood.

In recent years, as more has become known about the intellectual context in which Lombroso worked, it has become clear that he built on concepts widely held by nineteenth-century scientists and that in many ways he was a liberal and even progressive thinker. In addition, recent work on the history of science and the relation of science to society has erased the formerly easy distinction between “science” and “pseudoscience.” Instead of dismissing criminal anthropology as a naive or aberrant science, scholars are beginning to locate it in the context of the production of scientific knowledge in the late nineteenth century. Thus the time is ripe for reissuing Lombroso’s major works. To provide students and scholars with sound, complete, and accessible editions of Lombroso’s key criminological texts is the first aim of our new editions.

Even with the inadequate resources presently available, Lombroso’s ideas have been the focus of a number of recent studies. Nicole Rafter’s *Creating Born Criminals* investigates Lombroso’s influence on U. S. criminology and the U. S. eugenics movement, while Mary Gibson’s *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* documents his influence in Italy. Richard Wettzell’s *Inventing the Criminal* does the same for Germany.<sup>7</sup> Another sign of the reawakening interest in Lombroso lies in *Criminals and Their Scientists: Essays on the History of Criminology*, a collection centered on Lombroso and his impact.<sup>8</sup> Between 1975 and 2000, ten books on Lombroso were published in Italian<sup>9</sup> and another six in languages other than Italian and English.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, an international explosion of interest in Lombroso’s thought is already underway. To provide the new generation of Lombroso scholars with adequate tools is the second main aim of our new editions. The new editions are likely to prove particularly relevant to biological theories of crime. Recent years have seen an upsurge of interest in such theories, in part due to work on the Human Genome Project and popular interest in DNA identification of offenders. The new editions will help scholars relate Lombroso’s work to these developments and determine the degree to which he served as their forerunner.

While these new translations provide material for new research in criminology and the history of science, future Lombroso studies are likely to branch out in other directions as well. Lombroso was a multifaceted and exceptionally innovative thinker, and his work proves relevant to a wide range of fields. For example, in both his museum of criminal anthropology and in his book illustrations, Lombroso preserved examples of prisoner art and prison artifacts (graffiti,

slang, tattoos, and wall drawings), work that qualifies him as one of the first cultural anthropologists. Better Lombroso resources also offer fertile ground for art historians and artists—as already demonstrated by exhibitions on the visual strategies of biological theories of crime<sup>11</sup> and a book on criminological museums.<sup>12</sup> Recognizing Lombroso’s pioneering role in scientific applications of photography as well as the power of his visual rhetoric, *Criminal Woman* includes thirty-two reproductions of Lombroso’s art work. (Another forty images will appear in the new edition of *Criminal Man*.) Lombroso’s work will also likely figure in future histories of law and medicine. As a physician and psychiatrist who wrote extensively about legal medicine, moral insanity, epileptic criminality, and psychiatric jurisprudence, Lombroso helped accomplish the shift in authority from keepers who punished crimes to medical professionals who treated criminals. Other signs of Lombroso’s broad relevance can be found in recent studies of women’s history and anti-Semitism, a topic in which Lombroso, as a Jew, took special interest.<sup>13</sup> In retrospect, one can see that Lombroso worked along major intellectual fault lines in the contested areas where various trends in social thought collided. Tensions between, for example, feminism and antifeminism, racism and antiracism, and liberalism and conservatism characterize his life and work.

These new editions, then, aim at facilitating Lombroso scholarship in fields as diverse as anthropology; art history; criminology; and rhetoric; Italian and European history; the history of science, medicine, and psychiatry; law and legal history; studies of race and ethnicity; and gender studies.

### **Lombroso’s Explanations of Female Criminality**

Lombroso wrote *Criminal Woman* to reiterate and reconfirm his riveting theory of the born criminal, according to which lawbreakers constitute throwbacks to earlier evolutionary stages—atavisms whose primitive nature dooms them to violate the laws of civilizations in which they unwittingly find themselves. Having previously applied this theory to the criminal man,<sup>14</sup> Lombroso now tested it on female offenders.

### **The Female Born Criminal**

Lombroso devotes over one-quarter of *Criminal Woman* to demonstrating that offenders are scarred by physical imperfections and abnormalities—the “stigmata of degeneration” that simultaneously signify and prove their primitive natures.<sup>15</sup> He proceeds by comparing the number and type of stigmata in three groups of women: criminals, prostitutes, and “normal,” that is, law-abiding, women. In the chapter “The Skull of the Female Offender,” for example, he reports that “pros-

titutes have the smallest cranial capacity of all,” followed by criminal women, while “in average and above-average capacity, honest women and even lunatics surpass both criminals and prostitutes.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly, “The lower jaw of female criminals, and still more of prostitutes, is heavier than in moral women.”<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere he observes that “anomalous teeth, present in only 0.5 percent of normal female subjects, are to be found in 10.8 percent of criminals and in 5.1 percent of prostitutes.”<sup>18</sup> Summarizing such data, Lombroso concludes that “almost all anomalies occur more frequently in prostitutes than in female criminals, and both classes have more degenerative characteristics than do normal women.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, there is a female criminal type. It appears in only 18 percent of female criminals. (In comparison, 31 percent of male offenders fall into the born criminal category.) If we widen the lens to include prostitutes, however, as Lombroso insists we must, we find that “37.1 percent of prostitutes exhibit the complete type.”<sup>20</sup> Female born criminals, Lombroso explains, “have a passion for evil for evil’s sake . . . an automatic hatred, one that springs from no external cause such as an insult or offense but from a morbid irritation of the psychological centers which relieves itself in evil action.”<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, the “criminal propensities” of female born criminals “are more intense and perverse even than those of their male counterparts.”<sup>22</sup> Although “female born criminals are fewer in number than male born criminals, they are often much more savage.” Like normal women, they are “by nature less sensitive to pain than a man,” and like children, they are “deficient in the moral sense,” leaving them “vengeful, jealous, and inclined to refined cruelty when they take revenge.” All things considered, “women are big children; their evil tendencies are more numerous and more varied than men’s, but usually these remain latent. When awakened and excited, however, these evil tendencies lead to proportionately worse results.”<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, “The born female criminal is, so to speak, doubly exceptional, first as a woman and then as a criminal. This is because criminals are exceptions among civilized people, and women are exceptions among criminals. . . . As a double exception, then, the criminal woman is a true monster.”<sup>24</sup>

### **The Nature of Female Crime**

A second major purpose of *Criminal Woman* is to explain the nature of female crime. Lombroso shows little interest in the details of female offending (Are women likely to be burglars or murderers? Accomplices or initiators?), but instead wants to create a typology of female offenders and, above all, to explain why women have relatively low crime rates. Despite the primitive state of late-nineteenth-century crime statistics, it was widely known that women were ar-

rested and convicted far less frequently than men. Lombroso was particularly concerned to explain this phenomenon.

Here Lombroso encountered an intractable problem. His born criminal theory pointed toward an obvious explanation: Women have lower crime rates because they are less atavistic than men. However, that argument contradicted another idea to which Lombroso was deeply committed—the inferiority of women to men. Thus Lombroso assigned himself the very difficult task of arguing that women were less criminal than men because of their inferiority to men. And he set out to demonstrate this scientifically. He did so by using a control group—perhaps the earliest example of this procedure in criminological history. Lombroso’s control group consisted of the normal women to whom he devotes the entire first part of *Criminal Woman*. “Criminal women could not have been understood,” Lombroso reminds us in his preface, “if we had not also had a profile of normal women.” Compiling information on this control group called for enormous effort, Lombroso admits: “When we searched for such information, we found nothing (certainly very little that was definite).” Thus he painstakingly collected data on normal women from published studies and by corresponding with gynecologists and other experts. Without the facts they provided, it would have been “impossible to determine where the normal state ends and the pathological begins.”<sup>25</sup> *Criminal Woman* offers a glimpse of one of the earliest efforts to define deviance scientifically and to identify the boundary between normality and abnormality.

Lombroso starts *Criminal Woman* at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder, using his first chapter to explain that in the most primitive forms of sexually differentiated life, females dominate: “As soon as differences between the two sexes become apparent, the female is superior to the male in size, strength, and number.” Moreover, “as we go up the zoological scale, the female’s superiority in size and strength recurs frequently.”<sup>26</sup> However, “in the higher orders, males’ struggle with one another—a struggle rooted in their stronger sexual desire and perhaps also in their larger numbers—has led to their development of greater size and force than females, and to their superior physique. . . . The male, then, is a more perfect and more variable female through the greater development of secondary sexual characteristics.”<sup>27</sup> Females—retarded by their passive role in courtship, their reproductive apparatus, and their maternal functions—remain less evolved than males into the present.

The following chapters of part 1 comprise a multifaceted, systematic exposition of female inferiority, starting with the basics (“In human races the woman is nearly always inferior to the man in height and weight”),<sup>28</sup> moving on

to the senses and intelligence (“Woman . . . feels less, just as she thinks less”),<sup>29</sup> and ending with the moral sense (“Lying is habitual and almost physiological in woman”).<sup>30</sup> By the end of this opening section on the normal woman, Lombroso has established two broad kinds of comparison—the first between types of women and the second between women and men. He has shown that two general categories of women exist, one bad, primitive, and masculine in nature, the other law-abiding, civilized, and feminine. He has also demonstrated repeatedly that both types are inferior to men. While the original purpose of the control group was to establish yardsticks against which the criminal woman could be measured, it ultimately served to undergird Lombroso’s subsequent pronouncements on the nature of female crime and to suggest that all women are to some degree deviant.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Atavisms and Prostitutes***

Here we arrive at the heart of Lombroso’s argument. Female born criminals, he readily admits, are rarer than male born criminals, but this relative scarcity, too, is a sign of their inferiority: “Atavism . . . helps explain the comparative rarity of the criminal type in women.” Like all females, criminal women “are less subject to transformation and deformation by the factors that cause progressive and retrogressive variations in the male.” In other words, the male’s relative abundance of degenerative traits or stigmata betokens superiority. Then too, Lombroso reminds us, among savages the most abnormal women had the least chance of survival, another factor tending to erase evidence of stigmata: “Primitive man not only spurned the deformed woman; he also ate her, preferring to keep at hand those more pleasing to his sexual whims. (In those days he was stronger and had a choice.)” Thus women’s lower crime rates actually provide additional proof of their backwardness. Finally, Lombroso urges us to keep in mind that even female born criminals need to be attractive if they want men to invite them to serve as accomplices or if they want to succeed at such typical crimes as adultery and slander; and this factor inhibits the evolution of a telltale “repugnant face.”<sup>32</sup> With this tortured logic, Lombroso accounts for the smaller number of stigmata in female offenders and hence the lower number of female criminals in general and born criminals in particular.

The *prostitute*—a term that sometimes narrowly denotes sex workers but at others refers to all women who experience sex outside of marriage—turns up frequently in Lombroso’s discussions of the female born criminal, just as she does in his more general remarks on the female criminal. Yet it is difficult to pinpoint the prostitute’s precise role in his theory due to Lombroso’s characteristically



rapid and confusing shifts in comparison groups. Occasionally, he declares that among women, not criminals but prostitutes constitute the real degenerates. On such occasions, he treats prostitutes almost as a distinct species, compiling separate tallies of their anomalies. But at other times, instead of comparing female criminals and prostitutes with one another, he groups them together, comparing them collectively with normal women. (Lombroso may have been inspired to include prostitutes in the population of female criminals by Richard Dugdale's "*The Jukes*" (1877), an American work he admired and which equated prostitutes with male criminals. In any case, in Lombroso's book as in Dugdale's, prostitutes swell the population under discussion, making the group of female deviants more significant numerically than it would have been otherwise.)<sup>33</sup> At still other times, Lombroso compares prostitutes with male criminals, at least obliquely, as when he states that "women's natural form of retrogression" is "prostitution, not crime. Primitive woman was a prostitute rather than a criminal."<sup>34</sup> In *Criminal Woman* the imprecise term *prostitutes* becomes a rhetorical device, invoked and applied to confirm a point or to help Lombroso escape from a tight logical corner. A clearer term would have had less explanatory power.

Like many other nineteenth-century scientists, Lombroso had a passion for classifying the phenomena of the natural world. He devotes most of the final part of *Criminal Woman* to his classification of female offenders, whom he divides into two main groups, criminals and prostitutes, and several minor categories (suicides, insane criminals, epileptic and morally insane offenders, and hysterical offenders). As in his typology of male offenders, the major categories are then subdivided, yielding chapters on the born criminal, the occasional criminal, and the criminal by passion, and also on the born prostitute and the occasional prostitute. The classificatory scheme proves both descriptive and etiological, with Lombroso using the groupings to profile the types and simultaneously explain their involvement with crime.

### **Tone and Strategy in *Criminal Woman***

On the surface, the tone of *Criminal Woman* appears dispassionate, clinical, and "scientific," and indeed this is the only tone conveyed by *The Female Offender*, the partial translation of 1895. The full text, however, discloses undercurrents of frustration, self-apology, and even apprehension. Lombroso seems worried about the persuasiveness of born criminal theory, the validity of his research methods, and the book's reception by critics. While he tries to anticipate objections and paste over problems, at times he evidently senses that certain problems remain unsolvable. Moreover, *Criminal Woman* occasionally has an exasperated and be-

leaguered air, especially in passages dealing with normal women. This tone confirms what Lombroso states in his preface: that the writing of this book was at best a “bitter pleasure.”<sup>35</sup>

Born criminal theory, introduced in the 1876 edition of *L'uomo delinquente*, had attracted immediate attention in Europe and the United States, but it had also encountered stiff resistance. Clergymen and others who associated crime with sin objected that Lombroso's science negated free will and excused criminals as irresponsible beings, driven by defective biology rather than by choice. Prison wardens and others with direct experience of offenders doubted Lombroso's claim that criminals differed physically from law-abiding people. And scientists were put off by Lombroso's uncritical approach to evidence.<sup>36</sup> Lombroso's positivist or criminal anthropological school came under heavy attack at the Second International Congress of Criminal Anthropology, held in Paris in 1889, where the French anthropologist Léonce Manouvrier derided Lombroso's statistical naïveté and his failure to use control groups of “honest men.”<sup>37</sup> Harsher still was the witticism of Lombroso's former admirer Moritz Benedikt, who pointed out that an enlarged median occipital fossetta (the skull anomaly that originally inspired Lombroso's theory) might just as well be used to hypothesize a predisposition to hemorrhoids instead of criminality.<sup>38</sup> Lombroso reacted “scientifically” to such criticisms, modifying his procedures and his theory. Nowhere does his interest in polishing his performance emerge more clearly than in *Criminal Woman*, where he sets out to test his theory on a completely new population and introduces a control group.<sup>39</sup> The substance and very structure of *Criminal Woman*, with its long introductory section on normal women, reflect Lombroso's willingness to take criticism to heart.

But these risks and innovations also meant that Lombroso had a great deal at stake in *Criminal Woman*; he might well have been apprehensive about the results. Moreover, self-criticism did not come easily to him, as we discover in a passage of *Criminal Woman* that acknowledges earlier errors but does so with such caveats, contradictions, and contortions that the final impression is one of responsibility evaded. The passage starts as follows: “When I began studying criminals some thirty years ago, I professed a firm faith in anthropometry, especially cranial anthropometry, as an ark of salvation from the metaphysical, a priori systems dear to all those engaged on the study of Man. I regarded anthropometry as the backbone—indeed, the entire framework—of the new human statue I was attempting to create. But as so often happens in human affairs, use degenerated into abuse.”<sup>40</sup> Here Lombroso admits that his earlier studies relied too heavily on anthropometry (the measurement of body parts) in general and on cranial anthropometry (the

measurement of the skull) in particular. However, he remains ambiguous about the identity of those whose “excessive confidence” led to abuse of anthropometrical methods and in the next paragraph hints that the responsible parties may have been anthropology professors. At the same time, he claims to have himself recognized some time ago the inadequacy of anthropometry for identification of born criminals. In fact, Lombroso continues, he himself now uses the superior method of “anatomico-pathological investigation” (a term he has not used earlier and does not use again). Had others followed his lead instead of foolishly persisting with anthropometry, they undoubtedly would now be more receptive to his work.<sup>41</sup>

After these twists and turns, Lombroso suddenly and astonishingly reverses direction to endorse anthropometry, extolling physical measurements as “the symbol, the flag of a school [criminal anthropology] in whose armory numbers furnish the most effective weapon.”<sup>42</sup> And then he turns immediately to specific anthropometric studies, reporting their results as solid and significant data. What began as self-criticism becomes self-congratulation, and the fundamental issue—the validity of anthropometrical research—is dismissed as though it made not the slightest bit of difference. Lombroso here seems torn, even paralyzed, by conflicting impulses—ambition, scientific integrity, exasperation with critics, inertia, a sense of superiority, and simple annoyance at the need to acknowledge past mistakes.

Irritation and frustration surface again in *Criminal Woman*’s passages on women’s nature. Lombroso’s beliefs about female inferiority were fairly typical among men of his social class and time.<sup>43</sup> (Guglielmo Ferrero, the assistant whom Lombroso credits with coauthorship of *Criminal Woman*, clung fiercely to disdain for women’s abilities well into the twentieth century. Ferrero may well have been the extremist of the pair.<sup>44</sup>) However, as the “pivot” around which his wife and children revolved,<sup>45</sup> Lombroso may have felt apprehensive about the growing independence of his two daughters, Paola and Gina, who were both approaching the age of twenty at the time he embarked on *Criminal Woman*. Moreover, while he was working on the book, Anna Kuliscioff, a leading feminist, spent a great deal of time with Lombroso’s family, dining with them almost nightly and slipping the girls a copy of J. S. Mill’s *The Subjection of Women*.<sup>46</sup> (It was Kuliscioff who converted the family to socialism. She first interested the girls, and Lombroso followed in their wake.)<sup>47</sup> Lombroso’s home life, together with the women’s movement that Kuliscioff represented, may from time to time have led him to view women with annoyance and even trepidation. Criminal anthropology’s biological “proofs” of female inferiority formed part of a reaction against

transformations in women's status. "With the arrival of industrial society," writes Delfina Dolza, "the door opened for some women to the possibility of entering the education and professional system, and some [scientists] found it necessary to delimit, with universal norms, the boundaries that could not be trespassed."<sup>48</sup>

Arguments at the family dinner table over women's status and roles may also help explain why, from time to time in *Criminal Woman*, Lombroso apologizes for his harsh words about women. At the end of the chapter on female intelligence, for example—immediately after remarking that "it is amazing, then, that woman is not even less intelligent than she is"—Lombroso adds a line suggesting that prejudice may contribute to women's lowly condition: "Certainly greater participation in the collective life of society would raise women's intelligence."<sup>49</sup> Another apology appears in his preface, where Lombroso claims that his emphasis on woman's relatively low crime rates and pathetic qualities should offset "a thousandfold" his conclusions about her inferior intelligence: "If I must show that in mind and body woman is a male of arrested development, the fact that she is somewhat less criminal than he, and a little more pitiful, can compensate a thousandfold for her deficiency in the realm of intellect." Most fulsomely of all, Lombroso later in the preface declares: "Not one line of this work justifies the great tyranny that continues to victimize women, from the taboo which forbids them to eat meat or touch a coconut, to that which impedes them from studying, and worse, from practicing a profession once they are educated. These ridiculous and cruel constraints, still widely accepted, are used to maintain or (sadder still) increase women's inferiority, exploiting them to our advantage."<sup>50</sup> But these nods to injustices against women clash with the misogynist tone of the book as a whole.

Lombroso's anxieties about *Criminal Woman*, his research methods, and the ultimate fate of criminal anthropology emerge most fully in the book's preface. Even before publication, he informs readers, *Criminal Woman* has elicited hostile attention. Some critics have objected to the apparent illogic of his central thesis, according to which women are less criminal than men because they are too weak and stupid to be bad. Others charge that he has been "insufficiently chivalrous" toward women, and still others think it foolish to equate prostitutes with male born criminals. Lombroso uses the preface to reply to these critics, but his tangled defenses sometimes make matters worse.

### ***Criminal Woman* in Context**

English-language readers have lacked not only good translations of Lombroso's works but also an understanding of their historical context. While major crimi-

nological textbooks routinely cite Lombroso as the “father of criminology,” they rarely mention the major currents of social, political, and intellectual change in nineteenth-century Europe which helped to shape his theories. Even the life of Lombroso himself is little known because all of his full-length biographies are available only in Italian.<sup>51</sup> Both Lombroso’s personal story and his place in Italian history help to explain the passion of his quest to turn the study of crime into a scientific endeavor. We will therefore turn to a series of nineteenth-century contexts within which Lombroso lived and worked: the unification of Italy; the growing prestige of science, specifically Darwinism; the revolt against Enlightenment legal theories; and the birth of sexology.

### ***The Unification of Italy***

Lombroso grew up in the ferment of the *risorgimento*, the movement to expel foreign and absolutist powers and unify the Italian peninsula under a parliamentary government. Born in 1835, Lombroso spent his youth in the northern Italian provinces of Lombardy and the Veneto. These constituted the culturally richest and most socially progressive states of the Italian peninsula, in contrast to the more rural and often impoverished areas to the south. The Austrian Empire ruled both Lombardy and the Veneto, however, a fact that inspired Lombroso, like many others of his generation, to support the *risorgimento*. Lombroso’s Jewish background also explains his youthful liberalism. Although never religious, he trusted that the leaders of the *risorgimento*, with their belief in individual rights and a secular state, would remove the discriminatory restrictions on Jews that still characterized parts of the peninsula.

After studying at the universities of Padua, Vienna, and Pavia, Lombroso completed a medical degree in 1858, with an emphasis on psychiatry.<sup>52</sup> When the long-anticipated war of unification broke out the following year, he volunteered as a doctor in the revolutionary forces.<sup>53</sup> Sent to the southern province of Calabria in 1862 as part of the new state’s campaign to suppress brigandage, he was shocked by the population’s poverty, illiteracy, and malnutrition. Most people were landless peasants, tending the large estates of noble landlords in a system that reminded him of medieval feudalism. While in Calabria, Lombroso developed a sense of mission to improve the physical and psychological health of the lower classes. He also had the opportunity to examine the soldiers in his unit, thus establishing his lifelong technique of classifying individuals based on physical measurements and interviews. He would later transfer this clinical approach to mental patients and criminals.

After completing his military service, Lombroso spent the rest of his life in

northern Italy, working as a university professor and medical officer in insane asylums and prisons. As a patriot, he continued to be preoccupied with the problems of the new state. In his view, these included the threat to unity and stability posed by people who did not or could not conform to the role of respectable citizen. Rapid population growth was causing mass migration to both northern and southern cities, swelling the ranks of the so-called dangerous classes. The prostitute, a woman seemingly no longer bound by family or morality, emerged as a central figure in the iconography of the dangerous classes. To middle-class observers, the increasing numbers of homeless and unemployed women on urban streets seemed all to be prostitutes. Blamed for the spread of venereal disease, actual prostitutes were placed under police supervision immediately after unification, and they were required to live in state-regulated brothels, so-called closed houses. It thus comes as little surprise that Lombroso found the prostitute more threatening and atavistic than even the criminal woman.

Lombroso's preoccupation with female crime also reflected his anxieties about the growth of the women's movement in Italy during the decades after unification. Although individual female emancipationists had struggled since unification to win equal rights for women, they did not establish formal organizations until the 1880s and 1890s. It is not coincidental that *Criminal Woman* was published during a period when members of the women's movement were vociferously demanding access to education, entrance to the professions, equality within the family, and the right to vote. Politically liberal and a friend of feminists like Kuliscioff, Lombroso did not inexorably oppose all changes in women's legal status and even took a position, radical for his day, in favor of divorce. But the prospect of a fundamental restructuring of gender roles deeply, and perhaps unconsciously, troubled him, as his allocation of the first major section of *Criminal Woman* to proofs of the inferiority of normal women shows. His ridicule of intellectual women and his insistence on maternity as the proper aspiration for all women scientifically affirmed traditional stereotypes and directly challenged the vision of female emancipationists.

### **The Growing Prestige of Science**

A second context for Lombroso's theories was the growing prestige of science, and specifically Darwinism, in the second half of the nineteenth century. In Italy, science became especially important as a weapon against the traditional hegemony of Catholic thought. The wars of unification directly challenged the church when revolutionary armies conquered the lands ruled by the pope in central Italy and finally Rome in 1871. Withdrawing into the Vatican, Pope Pius IX condemned

the new Italian state and forbade Catholics to participate in its political institutions. Supporters of unification, mostly members of the middle classes, therefore had to find a new philosophical basis for national identity. Science offered the fledgling state a discourse compatible with its aspirations to liberalism and secularism and signaled its transition from feudalism to modernity. Lombroso, with his year of medical school in Vienna, readily conceptualized his own research as part of a wider European endeavor to spread the methods of science to new fields.

To emphasize the importance of applying science to the study of crime, Lombroso and his followers labeled themselves the positivist school. As a general term originally coined by Auguste Comte, *positivism* held that inductive reasoning based on empirical evidence was superior to the deductive method of philosophers. Enthusiasm for positivism swept Italy in the last half of the nineteenth century, spreading from the sciences to social theory and even to humanistic research in history and literature. As the “lay faith” of academia,<sup>54</sup> positivism promised to apply a modern empirical approach to solving Italy’s social problems. It proved, moreover, compatible with socialism, a political movement that sought to analyze economic inequality based on material facts. Lombroso, like many of his followers, joined the Italian Socialist Party after its establishment in 1892 because the liberal government’s inability to improve the lot of the poor left him disillusioned. Thus he never lost the humanitarian impulse that had inspired his work during his military service in Calabria.

Lombroso had already read *The Origin of Species* before its translation into Italian in 1864.<sup>55</sup> He became an immediate proponent of Darwin’s theory of evolution in opposition not only to the spiritualism of the Catholic Church but also to the rival evolutionary theory of polygenism, which held that the white, yellow, and black “races” constituted different species.<sup>56</sup> Noting the similarities between the brains of monkeys and humans, Lombroso instead endorsed the Darwinian mechanisms of the struggle for existence and natural selection as responsible for the emergence of the black race and, from it, the yellow, and finally the white.<sup>57</sup> His conviction of the nonhuman animal origins of human life helps to explain why Lombroso included patently ridiculous chapters in *Criminal Woman* on theft, infanticide, and sexual licentiousness among mammals, birds, and even insects.

Despite Lombroso’s defense of monogenism, or the common ancestry of all human beings, he nevertheless posited a racial hierarchy stretching from African blacks at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder to European whites at the top. He believed the superiority of whites to be legible from their bodies, which exhibited “the most perfect symmetry.”<sup>58</sup> Black Africans, on the other hand, seemed clearly

to bear the imprint of their animal origins in what he characterized as misshapen bodies and inferior intellect. In his appropriation of Darwin to delineate and rank racial groups, Lombroso typified late-nineteenth-century thinkers.<sup>59</sup> His “scientific” racism was innovative, however, in its equation of criminals with what he referred to as savages, members of nonwhite races. Throwbacks on the evolutionary scale, European criminals exhibited physical and psychological features that he believed were anomalies for the white race but normal for lower, less civilized races. This constitutes the fundamental message of Lombroso’s first criminological book, *Criminal Man*.

In *Criminal Woman*, Lombroso again uses Darwinist terms, this time to naturalize gender differences. Among lower races, he writes, women resemble men in their strength, intelligence, and sexual promiscuity. Through sexual selection, however, males—whether animal or human—choose mates for feminine qualities like beauty, modesty, passivity, and domesticity. Evolution, therefore, increasingly differentiates the sexes, with men dominating the public sphere of politics and work and women relegated to motherhood in the home. Again, Lombroso was not unusual for his time in turning traditional gender stereotypes into supposedly scientific categories. But his work presented an enormous problem for the nascent Italian women’s movement, which saw science as a potential ally in the struggle against the restrictive gender roles endorsed by religious and conservative thinkers. With the publication of *La donna delinquente*, however, supporters of women’s rights were instead faced with a book purporting to present modern empirical proof of women’s inferiority. Written by a well-respected intellectual of the left, *Criminal Woman* weakened the Italian women’s movement in its quest for expanded legal and political rights for women.

### **Revolt against Enlightenment Legal Theories**

The development of legal thought in Europe since the Enlightenment offers a third context for understanding Lombroso’s intellectual efforts. By labeling his work *criminal anthropology*, or the study of criminal man, Lombroso consciously demarcated his approach from that of the eighteenth-century classical school, which dominated Italian legal thinking into the late nineteenth century. The principles of the classical school, originally laid out in the famous treatise by Cesare Beccaria entitled *Of Crimes and Punishments* (*Dei delitti e delle pene*), included equality before the law, presumption of innocence, and proportionality between crime and punishment.<sup>60</sup> Such principles would apply to all citizens because all were presumed born with the same inalienable rights and to exercise free will when committing crimes. As European nations reformed their criminal laws in



the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they adopted the classical approach of calculating punishment on the basis of the severity of the crime, with violent crimes considered more serious than those against property.

Criminal anthropology directly challenged classical thinking, arguing that individuals committed crime not out of free will but from biological or social determinism. Those who seemed to pose the greatest danger were the atavistic born criminals, who required removal from society no matter how small their crime. On the other hand, so-called occasional criminals, even if their crimes were serious, deserved alternatives to incarceration because outside environmental forces, rather than innate perversity, had tempted them to break the law. Lombroso thus shifted the focus of legal thinking from the crime to the criminal, a physical entity whose atavisms could be measured and counted. He sought to replace the old-fashioned philosophical approach of the classical school with a more fashionable positivist method based on scientific methods. And he sought to redefine dangerousness by stressing not the seriousness of the offense but the degree of criminality in the offender.

Although generally seen as the progenitor of positivist criminology, Lombroso was not the first to apply a biological approach to the problem of crime, and he generously acknowledged his debts. His precursors included phrenologists like Franz Joseph Gall and Gaspar Spurzheim, who in the early nineteenth century correlated sections of the skull with propensities for both good and evil. According to phrenology, which endured in popular culture even after its scientific decline, criminals could be identified by bumps or enlargements of areas associated with negative traits. Criminal anthropologists rejected the phrenological maps of the head and extended physical measurement to the criminal's entire body. But their emphasis on the shape of the skull and their assumption that external physical features reflected internal moral states can be traced back to the earlier movement.

The school of moral statistics also prefigured Lombroso, in this case his use of quantitative data to distinguish normality from deviancy.<sup>61</sup> Benefiting from the national crime statistics published by the French government beginning in 1825, Adolphe Quetelet and André-Michel Guerry began to study crime as an aggregate phenomenon with certain regular characteristics. Quetelet is best known for his statistical portrait of the "average man," from which he derived the demographic traits of the typical criminal: young, male, poor, and with little education. Showing that rates of crime varied little in France from year to year, he argued that only general social forces, rather than free will, could explain such statistical regularity. Guerry broke these regularities down by region, developing the technique

of crime mapping later used by Italian criminal anthropologists. Both Quetelet and Guerry tentatively proposed that biological factors, whether phrenological or racial, complemented social forces in causing crime, again foreshadowing positivist theory.

Lombroso's initial explanatory concept of atavism drew on phrenology and moral statistics, but he later drew on two other theories as well to account for the born criminal. The first, moral insanity, appears only in the third edition of *Criminal Man* (1884), but early enough to show up in *Criminal Woman*. In response to criticisms of his concept of atavism, Lombroso expanded his list of physical and psychological conditions predisposing certain individuals to commit crimes. Moral insanity, a concept that extended back to the early nineteenth-century writings of the French psychiatrist Philippe Pinel, was the diagnosis applied to mental patients who retained their intellectual powers but could not restrain their emotional impulses. To his catalogue of hereditary conditions leading to born criminality, Lombroso also added degeneration, a concept adopted from the French physician Benedict Augustin Morel.<sup>62</sup> Unlike atavism (an inborn tendency to revert to a primitive state), degeneration was thought to result from outside influences such as tuberculosis, syphilis, and alcoholism. Social in origin, degeneration nevertheless caused a gradual and hereditary weakening of individuals and their offspring. In *Criminal Woman*, Lombroso does not carefully distinguish atavism from degeneration, often using the terms interchangeably to explain anomalies or criminal behavior.

Building on these earlier theories, Lombroso and his positivist colleagues constructed the first coherent criminological theory based on empirical data. Renouncing free will as an old-fashioned concept, they redefined crime as a disease for which its perpetrators held no moral responsibility. Society, however, had the right to defend itself against crime, either by incarcerating the incurable born criminal or reforming the occasional offender. Lombroso spent the last decades of his life campaigning to bring Italian law and institutions into line with positivist criminological theory. He sought to reform the Italian criminal code so that criminal anthropologists, rather than judges, would examine criminals and recommend sentences. Although punishment for born criminals would be harsh, he proposed alternatives to prison for most women, including those guilty of infanticide and abortion, on the theory that social pressures pushed them into crime. Few of his specific recommendations were adopted before his death in 1909, but Lombroso's theory of female crime had gained wide acceptance at both the academic and popular levels.

### **The Birth of Sexology**

The final context providing an intellectual background for *Criminal Woman* is the birth of sexology. In contrast to his acknowledged role as a founder of criminology, Lombroso has never been listed as a pioneer in the study of human sexuality. The truncated nature of the translated *The Female Offender*, which excises most of *La donna delinquente*'s passages on sexuality, partially explains this omission for English-language readers. Yet Lombroso should be recognized as a transitional figure between Victorian prudery and the celebrations of sexual freedom characterizing sexology from its foundation in the early twentieth century on.

As a transitional figure, Lombroso shared many views with earlier nineteenth-century moralists. His contribution consisted of furnishing modern scientific underpinnings for traditional condemnations of nonmarital sexuality. Consistent with the bourgeois ideology of separate spheres for men and women, he points to the movement of sperm and the immobility of the egg to justify male public activity and female domestic passivity. Claiming that an unbridled and masculine sex drive characterizes "primitive" women, he champions monogamy as one of the treasures of civilization produced by evolution. And he concludes that white European women no longer desire sexual intercourse except for procreation, the defining act of womanhood.

Yet Lombroso resembled modern sexologists in his curiosity about a variety of sexual practices and his interest in cataloguing them. The original Italian version of *Criminal Woman*, unlike the English abridgment, devotes sections to adultery, frigidity, lesbianism, masturbation, and premarital sex. In a long section on the history of prostitution, Lombroso enumerates its many purposes in the past: to celebrate the gods, to entertain guests, and, in the case of Greek and Renaissance courtesans, to unite beauty and learning. Two chapters, cut by *The Female Offender*, offer an exhaustive analysis of the causes and characteristics of contemporary prostitution, both "born" and "occasional." Although Lombroso condemns sex outside marriage as a sign of arrested evolution for women, he draws his conclusions from a wealth of empirical data. This approach, while sometimes prudent, contrasts with many earlier writers' silence about sexuality.

Lombroso's approach to sexuality resembles that of another transitional thinker, the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Both men collected and catalogued information about "deviant" sexual practices, although Krafft-Ebing was more systematic in his famous work *Psychopathia sexualis*, first published in 1886. Both men championed an objective, positivist approach to sexuality while moralistically proclaiming monogamy as the norm. Both attributed deviations from this norm to degeneration and considered them dangerous to the

future of the European race. Krafft-Ebing also shared Lombroso's interest in the legal implications of sexual "perversions," which he thought deserving of medical treatment rather than prosecution by the courts. Neither psychiatrist held individuals responsible for their deviant sexuality on the grounds that heredity had overridden free will.

Hobbled by contradictions and moralistic in tone, the writings of Lombroso and Krafft-Ebing merely constituted precursors to the work of Havelock Ellis, generally considered the founder of modern sexology. With the publication of *Sexual Inversion* in 1897, Ellis set the tone for later scientific studies that celebrated alternative sexual practices to monogamy and counseled toleration. For Ellis, homosexuality was neither a disease nor a sign of degeneration. Although congenital, it represented a healthy sexual variation consistent with a normal intellectual and emotional life. In later works, he demolished other Victorian taboos against, for example, masturbation, which had been thought to cause illness and even insanity. As Paul Robinson has written, Ellis "assumed the role of sexual enthusiast," emphasizing the normality rather than the deviancy of a wide array of sexual practices.<sup>63</sup>

Yet Ellis's analysis of female sexuality itself remains in many ways traditional and echoes the teachings of positivist criminology. Resemblances between the ideas of Ellis and Lombroso are not coincidental. Ellis admired Italian criminal anthropology and wrote a book, *The Criminal* (1890), to introduce Lombroso's theory to English-language readers. In the spirit of *Criminal Woman*, Ellis characterizes women as passive and modest and thus appropriate objects of aggressive male courtship. Evolution, with its goal of reproduction, requires such differentiated gender roles. Unlike Lombroso, Ellis recognizes that women have normal sexual needs possibly not satisfied by monogamy. But in his eyes, too, marriage is appropriate for most women because it encourages reproduction and protects children.

In sum, Lombroso's criminal anthropology, parts of which today seem odd and sometimes even comic, spoke to the anxieties of late-nineteenth-century Europe and was consistent with more general intellectual trends. A man of the *risorgimento*, Lombroso sought to help his nation solve major problems like disunity among geographical areas and social classes, disorder accompanying urbanization and industrialization, and violations of law by brigands, mafiosi, and common criminals. Like most men of his class, he was particularly troubled by the new mobility of prostitutes and other poor women, and by the new demands of bour-

geois women for legal parity with men. To address these issues, he developed a new academic field within the wider European movement of positivism.

As a man of cosmopolitan learning and reputation, Lombroso proved instrumental in establishing a series of international congresses of criminal anthropology, which the Italian positivists initially dominated.<sup>64</sup> His theory of the born criminal did not, however, remain unchallenged, especially by French criminologists like Alexandre Lacassagne and Léonce Manouvrier, who considered social milieu more important than biology in determining criminal behavior.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, they continued to accept Lombroso's general framework, which defined the criminal rather than the crime as the appropriate object of research. They also left his theory of female crime untouched. The centrality of biology, and especially sexuality, to female behavior remained dogma among criminologists and even among progressive sexologists like Ellis. In the next section, we turn to the long life of *Criminal Woman*, prolonged through the repetition of its central tenets in major criminological texts until the birth of feminist criminology in the 1970s.

### ***Criminal Woman's Influence***

In what follows, we assess *Criminal Woman's* impact by looking first at its influence on subsequent English-language work on women and crime and then at its more general influence on criminological thought. We make no attempt whatsoever to estimate the book's influence in such areas as scientific applications of photography; the evolution of the fields of anthropology, psychology, and sociology; the development of female stereotypes in European and American literature; jurisprudence, social control and sexuality; or gender, race, and social class relationships. Even the following comments on criminology are meant as suggestive, not comprehensive or definitive ones. The purpose of this new edition is not to answer questions, but to provide materials for others to use in answering standing questions and formulating new ones.

### ***Influence on Subsequent Work on Women and Crime***

No other study can rival *La donna delinquente* in its influence on subsequent thinking about women and crime. Yet the nature of that influence on American and English criminology has seesawed dramatically over time. In very early twentieth-century writings on women and crime, authors typically open by shooting furiously at Lombroso, ridiculing his work and disclaiming his influence, but going straight on to repeat his findings about women offenders as incontestable

truths. This pattern appears, for example, in *Woman and Crime* (1912) by Hargrave L. Adam, a British writer on crime for popular audiences. Adam begins by rejecting criminal anthropology out of hand, speaking contemptuously of *The Female Offender* (“rubbish”)<sup>66</sup> and of “the late Professor Lombroso and other so-called crime ‘scientists.’”<sup>67</sup> But he goes on to parrot Lombroso, stating that there is a great deal of hidden female crime; that the female offender “far outstrips the worst male criminal known to the records”; and that “women of that kind are altogether abnormal and . . . not, in fact, women in the ordinary acceptation of the word.”<sup>68</sup> Thus despite his mockery, Adam produces a book substantively close to *The Female Offender*.

This inability to escape Lombroso’s influence resurfaces in a very different type of early-twentieth-century study, Hans Gross’s *Criminal Psychology* (1911). One of the first titles in a prestigious American criminal justice series,<sup>69</sup> *Criminal Psychology* is designed to guide judges and investigators in the scientific study of crime and criminals. Its author, an eminent Austrian professor of criminal law, includes a long subsection entitled “Woman” in a more general section on ways in which the testimony of women and children differs from that of adult men. Dissociating himself from the most notorious aspect of Lombroso’s work, Gross refers to “the scientific interpretation of [physical] phenomena which . . . went shipwreck in the form of Lombroso’s ‘criminal stigmata,’ inasmuch as an overhasty theory has been built on barren, inexperienced, and unstudied material.”<sup>70</sup> He also rejects the “unfounded, adventurous, and arbitrary assertions of the Lombrosists” on “the question of heredity.”<sup>71</sup> However, much of Gross’s specific advice takes its justification from references to *La donna delinquente*. Thus we learn that one cannot expect too much in the way of truth from women in a courtroom: “According to Lombroso, women lie because of their weakness, and because of menstruation and pregnancy. . . . Indeed, they are themselves no more than children, Lombroso concludes.”<sup>72</sup> Here Gross parts company only with Lombroso’s belief that deception has become a physiological characteristic in women. Later, explaining the nature of female crime, Gross reports that “nobody finds greater joy in revenge than a woman. Indeed I might say that revenge and the pursuit of revenge are specifically feminine. . . . Lombroso has done most to show this.” In addition, “Lombroso has already indicated how fundamental women’s inclination to cruelty is.”<sup>73</sup> Throughout, Gross cites Lombroso as an authority on the nature of women in general and female offenders in particular.

After several decades, Lombroso’s influence on the study of female crime waned, briefly. The 1916 English-language edition of Willem Bongers’s *Criminality and Economic Conditions* ignores Lombroso, even in its section entitled “The

Criminality of Women.” It strongly rejects biological explanations, holding that “the smaller criminality of woman is not to be sought in innate qualities, but rather in social environments.”<sup>74</sup> *A Study of Women Delinquents in New York State* (1920) by Mabel Ruth Fernald and colleagues explicitly rejects Lombroso’s methods (“puerile” and “worse than futile”)<sup>75</sup> and arrives at opposite conclusions: “Any search for a well-defined type of individual, appearing as *the delinquent woman*, will probably be fruitless. Apparently the concept of such a type can not be saved even by expanding it beyond Lombroso’s anthropological criminal type and pruning off certain of the absurdities incorporated in his idea.”<sup>76</sup> Even more significantly, William Healy’s *The Individual Delinquent* (1915), one of the most respected American criminological studies of the early twentieth century, rejects biological determinism in favor of a multifactor, psychological approach which Healy applies to female and male offenders alike. Although Healy occasionally evaluates girls in terms of their sexual attractiveness, he uses what he calls mental traits to account for law-breaking in both sexes.

Bonger, Fernald, and Healy channeled criminology away from criminal anthropology, and studies of male criminality thereafter pursued psychological and sociological explanations. Why studies of female criminality instead reversed direction, returning to biological causation, remains an unsettled issue in criminological history. But regress they did, yielding, in 1934, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck’s *Five Hundred Delinquent Women*. This study of prisoners at the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women returned to Lombroso’s practice of judging female deviance more stringently than male deviance and according to primarily sexual criteria. The authors conclude that in women, extramarital sexuality is often a sign of biological inferiority and bad heredity, part of a syndrome that includes feeble-mindedness or weak intelligence. For such “defective delinquents,” even though the majority was convicted of nothing worse than prostitution, the Gluecks recommend up-to-life sentences. In their view, this is the best way to prevent biologically inferior women from reproducing their bad heredity.<sup>77</sup>

The Gluecks, while barely mentioning Lombroso, reiterate nearly all of his major ideas and carry his hereditarian implications to a eugenical conclusion. *Five Hundred Delinquent Women*—published by Knopf under the auspices of Harvard Law School, introduced by Roscoe Pound, one of the country’s leading legal theorists, and written by two highly regarded criminologists—strongly re-inforced Lombrosian explanations of female offending. Moreover, it did so at a time when nearly all investigators of male criminality (including the Gluecks themselves) downplayed biological factors in favor of sociological explanations.<sup>78</sup>

Otto Pollak’s *The Criminality of Women* (1950) perpetuated this gender division

in explanations of criminal behavior. The only significant mid-twentieth-century study of female crime in English, *The Criminality of Women* was nonetheless to a large extent *The Female Offender* warmed over. To be sure, Pollak places more emphasis on the masked quality of female crime, arguing that women commit much more crime than they receive statistical credit for; he pays more attention to social factors than Lombroso does in *The Female Offender*; and he does not try to show that all women are inferior to all men in nearly every respect. Nonetheless, Pollak lifts many of his key ideas right out of *The Female Offender*, including the view that much more female crime exists than statistics indicate. Pollak turns repeatedly to Lombroso for evidence (including evidence that “women are particularly addicted” to crimes “which are most easily concealed” and that “deceitfulness [is] the outstanding characteristic of female offenders”).<sup>79</sup> He adopts Lombroso’s analytic approach (“In the investigation of the causational aspects the purely statistic method will be abandoned and reliance will be largely placed on nonstatistical analysis”).<sup>80</sup> And he uncritically recites findings that Lombroso had reported fifty years earlier (“Lombroso found that among eighty women who were arrested for resistance against public officials, 71 were menstruating at the time of the offense”).<sup>81</sup> Pollak was a sociologist, but as British criminologist Frances Heidensohn points out, he “used none of the existing repertoire of sociological explanations of crime. There are no references at all to Chicago school authors, to Tannenbaum or to Merton. . . . Instead Pollak put forward a view of women as inherently deceitful and vengeful. . . . Although Pollak stressed cultural variables his explanations are rooted in biological ‘facts’ and are profoundly ahistorical and unsociological.”<sup>82</sup> Had a study attempted to take male criminality down this explanatory path in the 1950s, it would have been dismissed out of hand; yet Pollak’s *Criminality of Women* was reprinted and cited uncritically for the next two decades.

Lombrosian ideas reverberate in the women-and-crime literature through the 1960s. Gisela Konopka’s *The Adolescent Girl in Conflict* (1966), for instance, while it does not draw directly on Lombroso and actually takes protofeminist stands, echoes *The Female Offender* by presenting ahistorical generalizations about gender roles as social-scientific truths; by reducing girls’ delinquent behavior to psychological deviance; and by treating prostitution as “a personal problem [that] lies in the area of emotional disturbance.”<sup>83</sup>

Lombrosian views on female crime remained plausible partly because few social scientists paid attention to women’s criminal behavior. At best, each decade produced but one new volume on the topic, which meant that those who did do research in this area lacked social and intellectual support to break with the Lom-



brosian tradition. Moreover, the few researchers who did contradict Lombroso's pronouncements on women and crime were routinely dismissed by mainstream criminologists, who in this period tended to glorify male offenders as oppressed rebels and scorn female offenders as insipid and irrelevant. In addition, as sociologist Carol Smart notes, the teachings of Lombroso and his followers were compatible with the "ideological stance . . . of professional pathologists and agents of social control"; as a result, "female criminality . . . remained predominantly within the sphere . . . of medical and psychological professions,"<sup>84</sup> where most social scientists were content to leave it. Lombroso's ideas about female crime remained influential through the 1960s, far outliving their scientific credibility, because so few people were willing to challenge them.

But the fundamental reason behind the continuing influence of Lombroso's work lay with the way it built on age-old myths about women's nature. The equation of woman with nature, man with society; the tendency to dismiss the "natural" as unproblematic and beyond the reach of social analysis; and the ancient conflation of female deviance and sexuality—these deeply ingrained ideas were not born with Lombroso, nor did they die with him. The myths were so ubiquitous and their truths so seemingly obvious that criminologists, while questioning many other aspects of Lombroso's work, left them intact. They did not undergo serious questioning until the renaissance of the women's movement in the 1970s. With the arrival of the first generation of feminist criminologists, *The Female Offender* returned to center stage, becoming the symbol of everything that feminists objected to in criminology. These critics, like Lombroso himself, had an agenda, but it emphatically did not include advancing a theory of male superiority. The new scholars wanted to study women's crime in its own right and to free it from the fetters of biological myth which had constrained it for so long.

The new agenda was set first and with particular clarity by Frances Heidensohn in a 1968 article in the *British Journal of Sociology*. Pointing out that the "deviance of women is one of the areas of human behaviour most notably ignored in sociological literature," Heidensohn called for a two-pronged strategy, "a crash programme of research" on female crime and a sociological analysis of the factors that had led sociology to neglect it.<sup>85</sup> This second recommendation led Heidensohn directly back to Lombroso and *The Female Offender*, the basic arguments of which she laid embarrassingly bare.

Working independently in the United States and without knowledge of Heidensohn's article, Dorie Klein, a graduate student at the University of Berkeley, reached very similar conclusions. In her now-famous 1973 article, Klein, too, began with the observation that "female criminality has often ended up as a foot-

note to works on men that purport to be works on criminality in general,”<sup>86</sup> and she too called for analysis of not only female crime but also of sociologists’ and criminologists’ neglect of women lawbreakers. Like Heidensohn, Klein cogently critiqued Lombroso’s work. Together, they laid a foundation for the new feminist criminology.<sup>87</sup>

The next step was the creation of courses on women and crime, an enterprise for which textbooks proved crucial. Carol Smart’s *Women, Crime, and Criminology*, which appeared in 1976 and included a half-dozen closely reasoned pages on *The Female Offender*, provided material for graduate programs in both Great Britain and North America. Clarice Feinman’s frequently reissued *Women in the Criminal Justice System* (1980), with a shorter but again incisive analysis of Lombroso’s book, became the key text for undergraduate classes.

Lombrosianism resurfaced in the 1960s and 1970s in Katharina Dalton’s efforts to correlate premenstrual tension with women’s criminal behavior.<sup>88</sup> Dalton’s criminological work sank under the weight of its own methodological problems, however, and exercised much less influence than it would have in earlier decades because it could now be put in perspective as part of a biological tradition. The rich outpouring of feminist criticism ushered in a new period of women-and-crime research, this one unencumbered by the Lombrosian tradition and dedicated to empirical, sociological investigation. Most researchers of the 1980s and 1990s included both sexes in their offender samples and began with the assumption that crime has similar causes for males and females. It remains to be seen, however, whether criminology will continue on this new trajectory or will instead, as part of the broader return to biogenic explanations, again adopt Lombrosian assumptions.

Lombroso bequeathed four interrelated but in some respects contradictory concepts to subsequent understandings of female criminality. The first concerned the nature of female crime, which according to Lombroso is fundamentally biological in origin. Lombroso was not original in equating female deviance with sexuality, but he powerfully reinforced the association by confirming it “scientifically.” The effects reverberated through the criminal justice system: female crime such as shoplifting was explained in terms of sublimated sexuality, and in many jurisdictions girls arrested for delinquency were automatically given vaginal exams to determine their virginity. Related to Lombroso’s emphasis on the biological nature of female criminality is the notion that female criminals are less evolved than both male criminals and law-abiding women, an idea that throughout the twenti-

eth century reinforced infantilizing disciplinary modalities for women offenders, treating them as errant children.

The idea that criminal women are more masculine than law-abiding women constitutes a second major part of Lombroso's legacy. This concept reemerged with considerable fanfare in the 1970s when Freda Adler published *Sisters in Crime* (1975), a work arguing that women's crime rates are on the rise because women (especially women of color) are becoming more like men. Closely related to the masculinity thesis is the criminological tendency to conceptualize female criminality as what Heidensohn calls "a beauty contest,"<sup>89</sup> with the prize of greatest "reformability" awarded to the most feminine offender. This practice, which extends from Lombroso's photographs into the present day, reached an apogee in the Gluecks' recommendation that "defective" women be imprisoned until they can no longer reproduce.

A third influential facet of Lombroso's legacy is the idea that normal women, as well as criminal women, are inherently deviant, walking bundles of pathology, which can at any moment unravel into criminality. This pathologization of ordinary womanhood authorized physicians and other "normalizers" to intervene more frequently and deeply into women's lives than into those of men. Additionally, it made female sexuality automatically suspect.

Fourth and finally, Lombroso's work on the female offender helped establish "normality" itself as a standard for conceptualizing law-abiding behavior.<sup>90</sup> This standard was applied to male behavior as well, but there remained alternative ways of thinking about male deviance (heroic rebellion, for example, or the sowing of wild oats). Female deviance, on the other hand, almost always ran the risk of being labeled abnormal and hence pathological. This also put law-abiding women in peril, for any woman who challenged the status quo could be deemed abnormal.

### **A Guide to This Translation**

No translation can fully communicate its source's meanings. All communications suffer from some degree of "noise" or distortion brought on by differences in the situations of the writer and the reader, a noise that naturally increases with translation. The act of translation involves figuring out how to communicate the original meaning while minimizing the chances for distortion and misunderstanding. Our key translation decisions followed from an assessment of differences between Lombroso's goals and ours. In writing *La donna delinquente*, Lombroso wished to advance his theory of criminal anthropology by applying it to an entirely new

group, criminal women. In translating *La donna delinquente*, we wanted to give English-speaking scholars and students access to the book's text—not just to the bits and pieces translated by *The Female Offender* but to all four of its parts. While we were interested in Lombroso's methods of proof and types of evidence, we did not consider it crucial to present every one of his hundreds of examples. Moreover, our emphases on students and accessibility meant that our translation had to be a good deal shorter than the 640-page original, and affordable to boot. It followed that we had to boil down the original while preserving its meanings, procedures, and key examples.

### **Fidelity to the Original Text**

Boiling *La donna delinquente* down to manageable size while including all four of its parts involved cutting sections, pages, paragraphs, and—within single sentences—words that seemed unnecessary. Our cuts involved nothing substantive, however. Indeed, we have restored a great deal of material excised, without notice, from the 1895 English edition, and we have made the full (albeit abbreviated) text available to English-speaking readers for the first time. However, we did eliminate two sorts of material—repetitions and examples. Repetitions appear to have left Lombroso untroubled, and indeed, he often presents material over and over again, approaching it from new angles or combining it in new ways with other topics. We eliminated major overlaps.

We also eliminated many of the examples Lombroso presents in support of his positions. To Lombroso as a scientist, a wealth of examples was important because it signified a wealth of scientific evidence. The sheer quantity of evidence mattered less to us, however. From today's point of view, moreover, the “science” of Lombroso's examples often proves dubious or even ludicrous. (Some of his contemporaries shared this opinion.) Our policy for each of Lombroso's new points was to translate one or two of the more vivid or clarifying examples but to omit the rest.

Our cuts created two translation effects. First, they minimize Lombroso's long-windedness. In this respect, our translation somewhat distorts the original. Second, by cutting some of the book's outlandish examples, our translation may, ironically, make the text seem more rational and scientifically sound than it in fact was. In this respect, too, our cuts may slightly skew Lombroso's original. However, without them, the book would have remained inaccessible to most contemporary readers.

Lombroso wrote in formal, scholarly Italian, using medical and scientific terms that are today obsolete. To twenty-first-century Italians, Lombroso's language

seems old-fashioned, difficult, and at times even incomprehensible. However, its datedness in part results from the passage of time. To educated contemporaries, Lombroso's language would have seemed appropriately learned, and among non-scientists, his obscure terminology might have increased his credibility. Because one of our goals was to make Lombroso's work accessible, we translated obscure words into more familiar terms. We also tried to relax his prose style a bit, making it slightly more colloquial. Our rule of thumb was to write for our audience, not his. On the other hand, we did not aim at fully colloquial English. We attempted to make his prose comprehensible to modern readers while preserving some of its formality.

### ***The Embarrassment Factor***

In working on this translation, we occasionally flinched at reproducing Lombroso's gaffs and missteps—his sloppy use of numbers, uncritical examples, unsophisticated generalizations, internal contractions in the text, and overall incoherence. Our temptation here was akin to what translation theorists call ennoblement—the temptation, confronted most often by poetry translators, to make translated material more flowery or elevated than the original. But if our temptation was similar to that of ennoblers, it was certainly not the same; few translators can have had to cope as we did with outright foolishness on the part of the source author.

Lombroso's work is historically valuable despite its scientific and logical naïveté. In fact, it is valuable partly *because* it so clearly reveals scientific and scientific vulnerabilities, making them available for study. For better or worse, moreover, one outstanding quality of Lombroso's work is its magnificent tangle of brilliance and nonsense, the way it combines what a recent biographer calls Lombroso's "encyclopedic ambition, his characteristically extreme mental adventuresomeness, and his titanic failures."<sup>91</sup> Our key concern was to produce a full (if abbreviated) and accurate translation, a concern that led to our explicit resolve to include the warts. We still flinched, but having recognized the temptation to hide Lombroso's faults, we were better able to resist it.

As we worked, we kept in mind a passage from an essay by criminologist Hans Kurella, written in 1911, two years after Lombroso's death, to commemorate his work:

Lombroso was a philologist, philosopher, mystic, anatomist, anthropologist, neurologist, psychiatrist, sociologist, statistician, and social and political scientist. He was always original, always assembling piles of observations, everywhere paradoxical, bold in hypotheses, surprising in his ability

to bring together otherwise disparate fields, and a collector of facts of the highest order. His not inconsiderable analytical capacities were completely outshone by his passion for synthesis; his titanic efforts toward inductive research were again and again crisscrossed and often paralyzed by his gifted eye for analogies.<sup>92</sup>

Kurella recognizes Lombroso's tendency to wreck his own creations, and he perceptively analyzes Lombroso's intellectual fallibility, but at the same time he is able to acknowledge the older scholar's creativity and achievement. Kurella's fair but tolerant assessment provided an example we tried to follow.

### **Lombroso's Attitudes toward Women**

Lombroso's extremely negative opinions of women generally posed another major translation issue, at least potentially. *La donna delinquente* constitutes perhaps the most extended proof of women's inferiority ever attempted.<sup>93</sup> We thought this hostility might make it difficult for us, as translators and as feminists, to relate to the book's content. But in practice, this problem did not materialize. It proved easy to maintain our respect for the integrity of Lombroso's text while remaining dispassionate about his arguments. We were thoroughly familiar with Lombroso's opinions of women before we undertook the translation. We considered him an important thinker and recognized that many intellectuals of his day had shared his views on women. This is one reason why those views hold historical value. Another lies in the book's influence on other peoples' ideas about women.

In translating *La donna delinquente*, we viewed ourselves not only as conduits through which Lombroso's meanings could flow but also as collaborators in or coproducers of his meanings. We had no more interest in condemning him than in adulating him. Our aim was to open doors through which his text (in renewed form) and, metaphorically, he himself might pass into the present day.

### **Reading Criminal Woman**

The text has two kinds of footnotes: Lombroso's and ours. Lombroso's footnotes are indicated with small letters and appear as page notes. We include all the notes appearing in the parts of *La donna delinquente* that we translate, aside from cross-references to other parts of this book or to *L'uomo delinquente*. Lombroso's citations indicate his familiarity with a vast range of international scholarship and show that researchers all over Europe were working on similar topics. We have not attempted to translate Lombroso's citations, partly because most of the works to

which they refer were never translated, partly because leaving them the way he wrote them gives readers a clear sense of his documentational decisions and procedures. (Similarly, we simply reproduce without translating the citations that Lombroso occasionally inserts directly into his text.<sup>94</sup>) However, in the few cases in which Lombroso uses footnotes to make substantive comments, we do translate his notes.

Our own notes, which include glosses of difficult parts of the text, explanations of terms, and identifications of people to whom Lombroso refers, are indicated with numbers and appear at the end of the book. In them, we speak of “the author” and not of “the authors” because (as we explain in more detail in the first appendix) Guglielmo Ferrero’s contribution to *La donna delinquente* was probably closer to that of a graduate assistant than a true coauthor. This edition also includes a glossary of Lombroso’s key terms.

We do not use ellipses marks to indicate cut passages or words. We trimmed in so many places that to use ellipses marks would have meant to produce a book full of distracting dots. In any case, few readers will want to compare this text with the Italian original, and so for the majority, ellipses marks would have had little meaning. However, our appendix offers a sample chapter as it appeared in the original and in the 1895 (*The Female Offender*) translation. This example illustrates how we condensed the original, and it enables readers to evaluate our procedures.