



# Convict Voices: Women, Class, and Writing about Prison in Nineteenth-Century England (Becoming Modern: New Nineteenth-Century Studies)

*Anne Schwan*

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## **Convict Voices: Women, Class, and Writing about Prison in Nineteenth-Century England (Becoming Modern: New Nineteenth-Century Studies)** Anne Schwan

In this lively study of the development and transformation of voices of female offenders in nineteenth-century England, Anne Schwan analyzes a range of colorful sources, including crime broadsides, reform literature, prisoners' own writings about imprisonment and courtroom politics, and conventional literary texts, such as Adam Bede and The Moonstone. Not only does Schwan demonstrate strategies for interpreting ambivalent and often contradictory texts, she also provides a carefully historicized approach to the work of feminist recovery. Crossing class lines, genre boundaries, and gender roles in the effort to trace prisoners, authors, and female communities (imagined or real), Schwan brings new insight to what it means to locate feminist (or protofeminist) details, arguments, and politics. In this case, she tracks the emergence of a contested, and often contradictory, feminist consciousness, through the prism of nineteenth-century penal debates. The historical discussion is framed by reflections on contemporary debates about prisoner perspectives to illuminate continuities and differences. Convict Voices offers a sophisticated approach to interpretive questions of gender, genre, and discourse in the representation of female convicts and their voices and viewpoints.



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