



# Twisting in the Wind: The Murderess and the English Press

*Judith Knelman*

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Women accused of murder in nineteenth-century England got bad press. Broadsides, newspapers, and books depicted their stories in gruesome detail, often with illustrations of the crime scene, the courtroom proceedings, and the execution. This sensational coverage fed the public appetite for stories of female deviancy and punishment.

Judith Knelman contends that the portrayal of murder by women was linked to a broader public agenda, set and controlled by men. Women were expected to be devoted to giving and sustaining life. Aggression was "masculine." Thus a woman who killed posed a threat to patriarchal authority.

Knelman describes the range and incidence of murder by women in England. She analyses case histories of different kinds of murder, and explores how press representations of the murderess contributed to the Victorian construction of femininity. She also suggests that class and gender discrimination pushed women to kill.

*Twisting in the Wind* is a comprehensive and balanced account that will appeal to true crime fans, sociologists, criminologists, historians, and researchers in women's studies.

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