CONVICTS, LUNATICS AND CRIMINALS: A CASE STUDY OF COLONIAL WOMEN AND THE CONTINGENT NATURE OF MARGINALITY

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The Bock women were a deviant lot. Annie stole two gowns and was declared a convict. Her daughter-in-law Mary suffered chronic mania and was declared a lunatic. Mary's daughter Amy faced numerous convictions for fraud and false pretences before being declared a habitual criminal. "Convict," "lunatic" and "criminal" are not natural categories; they are political constructs with contested and shifting meanings. As ways of naming people and of representing social identities, they also have very real material consequences (Pettiman). Annie was transported to Van Diemen's Land for a sentence of seven years, Mary was committed to the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum in Melbourne where she died three years later, and Amy spent more than twenty years of her life serving prison sentences.

Annie, Mary and Amy Bock's respective designations as convict, lunatic and criminal defined them in terms of their difference, lack and inferiority to an unmarked norm of sane and respectable womanliness. In this respect, each was clearly positioned as "other" in relation to normative gendered nineteenth-century assumptions of respectable femininity. Implicated in the operation of power, the centre and the margins are necessarily relative and fluid concepts. Utilising a case study of three generations of Bock women, each relegated to the margins of civil society, this article seeks to interrogate and destabilise the mad/bad/woman matrix that defines the centre. In doing so, the contingent nature of marginality is exposed.

Destabilising the Centre: The Mad/Bad/Woman Matrix

By virtue of their respective convict, lunatic and criminal statuses, Annie, Mary and Amy Bock were each relegated to positions of marginality. Sociologists Malelu and Dorn have defined marginality as "the social condition of people who, by cultural prescription, are regarded as borderline, questionable, or something less than desirable participants in the social settings or groups to which they belong" (256). Above all, marginality denotes a power relationship between the group viewing itself as centre and all minorities and non-members who are viewed as marginal or other (Cullen and Pretes). Although spatially conceived of as exclusionary and

dichotomous, the relationship between the periphery and the centre, is, in fact, one of mutual co-definition. The normalised absence of the unmarked centre is defined in relation to the pathologised presence of the Other (Phoenix).

Dominant ontological frameworks of sexual difference that define Woman in opposition to Man are underscored by this same binary logic. Within dualistic systems of language and representation, normative constructions of Woman are predicated on sexual difference: whereas Man denotes reason and good, Woman is essentially defined as not Man and is therefore not reasonable, not moral, not respectable. This is the defining logic that constitutes what is here referred to as the mad/bad/Woman matrix (see also Coleman). This mad/bad/Woman matrix is therefore premised upon a symbolic female disorder. As Elaine Showalter has argued, "[w]hile the name of the symbolic female disorder may change from one historical period to the next, the gendered asymmetry of the representational tradition remains constant" (4).

As a number of writers have shown, particularly in the field of postcolonial literary studies, attention to marginality offers access to multiple points of reference that are commonly denied by the centre (Rinehart; Gunew; Alfred). Marginality, therefore, like its referential centre, is a fluid and relative concept. By moving from one reference point to another, the meaning of marginality, and, by definition, the meaning of the centre, is changed (Cullen and Pretes). In practice, the process of shifting and thereby destabilising the centre necessitates taking a view from the margins, opening the possibility for alternative, resistant explanations and meanings for the labels assigned from the centre: in this case, the labels of convict, lunatic and criminal.

A Criminal Heritage?

Amy Maud Bock (1859-1943) has the dubious distinction of being New Zealand's most notorious female con artist. Possessed of what her contemporaries euphemistically called "a perfect mania for what she called 'shopping,' which consisted of ordering goods she did not require and could not pay for" (*Gippsland Times* 28 May 1884: 2), Amy engaged in a lifetime of fraudulent ventures that saw her repeatedly before the courts and serving prison sentences. When defending her behaviours she frequently pleaded a hereditary misfortune of lunacy from her mother. She might also have pleaded a hereditary criminality as she had convict heritage on both sides of her family: both her paternal grandmother (Annie) and her maternal grandfather (Robert Parkinson) were transported to Van Diemen's Land for theft, the latter receiving a life sentence as he already had a criminal record. What do these designations of "convict" signify? How might these significations differ when viewed from the margins? Moreover, do they, in the case of Amy Bock, necessarily constitute a criminal legacy?

Research into the origins of the convicts sent to Australia is plentiful (Clark; Shaw; Robson, *Convict Settlers*; Robson, "Women Convicts"; Hughes; Nicholas). In contrast to some of the earlier studies which depicted convicts as professional and habitual criminals (Clark; Shaw; Robson, "Women Convicts"), recent revisionist historiography has demonstrated that the majority of convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales were, in fact, regular British and Irish working class women and men, physically fit and productive, who brought useful skills (Nicholas; Oxley, "Convict Women Workers"). Persistent stereotypic images and contemporary misperceptions of female convicts as primarily prostitutes and drunkards have been exposed as reflections of the dominant contemporary male gaze (Sturma; Lake; Robinson; Oxley, "Women Transported"). These gendered distortions have been countered in detailed studies which have revealed the majority of female convicts to be ordinary working-class women efficiently allocated within the labour market (Oxley, *Convict Maids*; K. Reid). In short, to quote from Deborah Oxley's noted study of convict women:

> Transported women had come from skilled and semi-skilled professions, had undergone apprenticeships, been trained informally in their own and in their employers' homes, arrived equipped with experience of ordinary working and family life, and were of an age where they could benefit from enhanced opportunities, while their colonial employers, the economy and society generally could benefit from them (*Convict Maids* 237).

Mary Ann (Annie) Spencer (later Bock) serves as a typical case. Born in Little Stanmore in Middlesex, England, Annie worked as a nurse and housemaid (Description Lists of Female Convicts 1831). On 9 December 1830, at the age of sixteen years, she appeared before the Old Bailey in London charged with theft of two gowns. Found guilty, she was transported to Van Diemen's Land for a sentence of seven years (Conduct Registers of Female Convicts 1801-1843: #212). After spending six months in prison she departed on the convict ship Mary on 12 June 1831 (Convict Department Appropriation Lists 1831: 167). On arrival in Hobart 131 days later she was assigned to Lieutenant Davies but within six months applied for an indulgence to marry Alexander Cameron, a mariner (Applications for Indulgences 1832). The application was granted and Annie and Alexander were married by banns at St David's Church in Hobart on 23 July 1832, ten days after their first child was born. Their second son, Alfred, was born three years later on 9 April 1835 and both sons were baptised at the Holy Trinity Church in Hobart on 23 March the following year. According to family sources, Alexander Cameron was subsequently "lost at sea" (*Convict Artists in Van Diemen's Land* 3).

Within a few years Annie formed a relationship with Thomas Bock, an engraver and portrait artist who was to become renowned for his early engravings of

Tasmanian Aboriginals. Thomas Bock was also a convict, sentenced to fourteen years transportation for administering drugs to a young woman to procure an abortion (Convict Department Appropriation Lists 1831: #713). By the time Annie and Thomas eventually married in July 1850 they had three sons with three more born over the following three years. When Thomas Bock died in March 1855, Annie Bock was left a widow with six sons under the age of twelve years from her second marriage to support with very little means ("Obituary" 19 March 1855). The year after Thomas's death, Annie, then aged forty-one, remarried to James Wilshire, a draper in Hobart, and they had a family of three daughters.

The trajectory of Annie's life is typical of many convict women. Single, English, a first-time offender for a small-scale property crime committed without violence (Oxley, "Women Transported"), she received a seven-year sentence of transportation. Her conduct on board the Mary was recorded as "orderly and quiet" (Conduct Registers of Female Convicts 1801-43: #212). Initially assigned to an employer on the basis of her trade, upon marriage Annie was reassigned to her husband. Although marriage between convict women and mariners was not common at the time (McNab and Ward), marriage itself afforded a level of respectability (Robinson), if not security, and remarriage upon the death of one's husband accompanied by multiple families was by no means uncommon.

One of the positive offshoots of transportation was that female transportees of the lower classes had increased prospects for upward social mobility (Robinson). Without necessarily implying mercenary motivation on her part, Annie's choice of husbands, from mariner to artist to draper, demonstrated an increasing level of economic security in the domestic realm and lends support to Monica Perrott's argument that convict women showed resourcefulness in the marriage market (Perrott). Marriage may have been the primary means for economic advancement of convict women but the cost of that opportunity was often the dependence and vulnerability that accompanied unrestricted fertility (Lake). Annie paid this price: over three decades of childbearing, she gave birth to eleven children.

Annie's case is illustrative of the fact that, in contrast to romantic and exaggerated stereotypes, convict women's lives were based on families, intimacy and warmth, and on giving birth to and successfully nurturing the first generations of native-born white Australians (Robinson; Oxley, *Convict Maids*). By the time of her death in 1898, Annie's progression from convict to lady was complete: her obituary, which failed to record the circumstances of her arrival in the colony and conveniently recorded her age on arrival as younger than would have been consistent with her identification as a female convict, referred to her in glowing terms as "well known for her kindly ways" and as a well respected member of the community ("Obituary" 1898). Annie may have been a convict, but there is nothing on the historical record to suggest she was, in anything other than the strictest legal definition, a criminal.

In contrast, the historical record is unambiguous on the criminal status of Amy Bock's maternal grandfather. Robert Parkinson worked with his father as a coal-heaver. In 1821, at the age of twenty years, he was tried in Leicester on a charge of robbery. His convict records state that he had been part of a gang and had been tried on several previous occasions for similar offences. His previous conviction for theft meant he received a life sentence (Convict Department Appropriation Lists 1831: #215). In 1828, seven years into his life sentence and while working for the Field Police stationed at Bothwell in Tasmania, Robert Parkinson faced a further criminal charge but the case was dismissed due to lack of evidence. Four years later Robert Parkinson married Jane Jones, a free servant, and together they raised a family of five children. After thirteen years of convict status, Robert received his Conditional Pardon in 1834. By the time of his death in 1875 Robert Parkinson was a gentleman of some means (Probate & Will #1851). Like Annie Bock, his convict status did not appear to be carried as a stigma throughout his life and, as far as the records indicate, certainly did not relegate him to a life of crime. For both, the trajectories of their lives held more in common with their non-convict contemporaries than with any marginalised criminal underclass that might be inferred from the designation "convict."

By virtue of their convict status, Annie Bock and Robert Parkinson were relegated to the margins of civil society in Britain. Upon arrival in the penal colony of Van Diemen's Land, however, their convict status positioned them as central to that society. But "convict society" was not a monolithic category and neither were convicts' experiences of that society uniform. Had Annie been sent to a female factory, the trajectory of her life as a convict would have been very different. But by marrying within months of her arrival in Hobart and living a life based around the family unit, Annie experienced the normalising powers of convict society.

A Lunatic Heritage?

Whether or not criminality can be said to have been in Amy Bock's blood, her pleas for mitigating circumstances at various court appearances were based on an alleged inherited lunacy. In April 1888, for example, when she appeared before the City Police court on a charge of obtaining goods by false pretences in Dunedin, New Zealand, the case was adjourned for a week to allow for a medical examination to ascertain whether Amy should be committed to a lunatic asylum. On this occasion Amy "begged earnestly" that she be committed to the asylum because she was unable to control her behaviours (*Otago Daily Times* 5 April 1888: 4). On her reappearance the following week Amy submitted a lengthy letter through her lawyer in her own defence in which she referred to the "malady" she had suffered from childhood. Referring to her condition as "the fearful horror," "the old temptation" and "the terrible evil" which would "attack" her from time to time, she also stated

that her father had told her she suffered from kleptomania ("Alleged Kleptomania" 4).

Late nineteenth-century discourses of madness constructed kleptomania as a particular case of insanity. While originally defined as the impulse of a diseased imagination which manifested itself in cases of theft in which there was no apparent economic imperative, kleptomania was subsequently redefined by sexologists as having sexual origins. Within this construct, it was one of a number of forms of behaviour indicative of a hereditary degeneration in which a reverse natural selection operated. Kleptomaniacs constituted a distinct subspecies of individuals distinguished by their inability to accept social norms (Weeks; see also Coleman).

In Amy's case, the presiding judge, no doubt influenced by testimony to the effect that there was a great deal of method in Amy Bock's madness, iterated his belief that kleptomania was simply another name for stealing, and duly assigned a prison sentence of two months noting that, should the prisoner exhibit signs of insanity, the case might be reviewed ("Alleged Kleptomania" 4).

The 1888 court case was not the first time Amy Bock had used a defence of insanity when appearing in court. Four years earlier, in a highly publicised court case in Melbourne, Amy presented as "a young woman of very frail appearance [. . .] so ill that she had to be supplied with stimulants to keep her from sinking" ("Extraordinary Conduct" 5). Postponed for several weeks due to her very delicate health, when her case was finally heard her lawyer pleaded that Amy was "not quite responsible" ("The Charge Against a State School Teacher" 15) for her actions because she suffered from a "mania" (*Gippsland Mercury* 12 June 1884: 3). The fact that her mother had been committed to a lunatic asylum was repeatedly mentioned in the media reports. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, published the following:

> It appears from a letter signed by several justices of the peace resident in Gippsland [. . .] that the mother of Amy M Bock, the public school teacher, was, for some time prior to her death, very eccentric, and not responsible for her actions. The gentlemen whose signatures are appended to the communication knew Amy M Bock at Maryvale, East Gippsland, and seem to think that she has inherited from her mother the "peculiarities" for which the former was noticeable ("Extraordinary Conduct" 5).

But Amy's mother was not the only one of her ancestors to have been diagnosed with a form of insanity. Her paternal grandmother, Annie, was recorded in the Surgeon-Superintendents' Medical Journal during her voyage of transportation to Hobart as one of three women presenting with "spasmic hysteria" during the voyage. The Surgeon-Superintendent's journal entry, recorded one month into the four-month voyage, reads: "[t]he 2nd is delicate and of the Nervous

Temperament. Very susceptible from any slight cause of irritation and liable to Hysteria and Convulsions" (Description Lists of Female Convicts, 11 July 1831).

The Surgeon-Superintendent was the title given to the Royal Navy surgeon assigned to each female convict transport, responsible for the day-to-day administration, supervision, discipline and regulation of the lives and health of the female convicts during the voyage. With control over virtually all aspects of the management, supervision and treatment of these women, the powers of the Surgeon-Superintendent were indicative of the expanding role of medical practitioners as managers of health and regulators of social order. It has been argued that the role these Royal Navy surgeons created for themselves as "producers and managers of health," represents "a phase in the early development of 'modern repressive institutional apparatuses' of medical supervision by the state" and "one of the refinements of the machinery that placed everyday behaviour under surveillance and control" (Brand and Staniforth 24).

As medical practitioners, the Surgeon-Superintendents were dependent upon prevailing medical knowledge about the cause, prevention and treatments of recognisable and classifiable diseases and conditions. The Surgeon-Superintendent on board the *Mary* was no exception. In his Medical Journal he noted that all three women who had presented with "spasmic hysteria" appeared to be influenced by tropical heat and the high change in atmospheric temperature. Reflecting medical opinion and the episteme of the time, he also commented on the sanguine nature of young women and how this resulted in the circulating system being intimately connected with the nervous and sensorial systems resulting in young females being more susceptible to excited states due to vascular stimulation.

However, as Foucault insists, such accepted theories were not based on empirical observation; rather, "their explanatory force made possible a structure of perception, in which at last the symptoms could attain their significant value and be organised as the visible presence of the truth" (Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* 128). Underlying nineteenth-century discourses of insanity was a "deeply rooted convergence between the requirements of political ideology and those of medical technology" (Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* 38-39). Gendered assumptions were also implicated in the regulatory role nineteenth-century medicine played in the construction of normative assumptions of moral health, or what Foucault refers to as "a medicine of the social space" (Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* 38). As figures of conscious and unconscious representation, convict women represented the threat from within: "They represented the susceptibility within all of us to disintegration in consequence of violating the boundaries between 'civilised' and the 'savage'" (Damousi 63).

Annie Spencer's "spasmic hysteria" could simply have been brought on by excessive heat and increased atmospheric pressure. That she was described as delicate in health is significant. While she was robust enough to give birth to eleven children over three decades of child-bearing, as her criminal records and

photographs testify, she was of a small fragile build, a build her granddaughter Amy appears to have shared. But what of the "peculiarities" Amy Bock's mother exhibited that Amy is said to have inherited?

Born in 1837, Mary Ann Parkinson was one of five children born to Robert Parkinson and Jane Jones. The Parkinson family lived in a large rented stone dwelling at Old Beach in Brighton, Tasmania. The 1842 Census records her father as the head of a fourteen-member multi-generational household comprised of Mary and her four siblings, then all under the age of fourteen, one other male aged under twenty-one, three single adult male farm hands, one single adult male domestic servant, two married females between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five (one of whom was Mary's mother) and one other married female aged between forty-five and sixty years. All were Church of England and only one member of the household was a convict with Ticket-of-Leave status (Census 1842).

In July 1858, Mary Parkinson married Alfred Bock, second son of Annie's first marriage. Alfred had assumed the Bock surname and regarded Annie's second husband Thomas Bock as his father. An artist and photographer of some note with works at the London International Exhibition (1873), the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition (1876) and the Paris International Exhibition (1889), Alfred was also active in local community affairs. In 1867 the family shifted from Hobart to Sale, a rural settlement in Gippsland, Victoria. Three of Mary's married siblings lived in the Gippsland area where they farmed extensive properties. Alfred Bock opened a photographic studio in Sale and gained recognition for his pioneering of new photographic methods. He served on the local School Board of Advice, was elected to the Sale Borough Council, and was very active in organising theatrical events at the local Mechanics Institute. Although held in high regard as an artist by his peers nationally and internationally, Alfred Bock's business ventures, which frequently took him away from his family for periods of time, were not commercially successful and he was declared insolvent on several occasions.

In the absence of specific historical records, it is likely that Mary Bock's daily life assumed a typical pattern of giving birth and caring for a young family. Her first child (Amy) was born ten months after she married, closely followed by a second daughter (Ada Jane) seventeen months later. Ada Jane died at the age of five months. Just before Amy's third birthday Mary Bock gave birth to a son (Alfred Parkinson, known as Alfie) and the following year her fourth child (Edwin Robert) was born. In her sixth year of marriage, just several months after three-month old Edwin died, Mary's mother died of a "long and painful illness" ("Deaths" 1864: 1). The following year, Mary gave birth to a second daughter (Ethel Sophia) and a year later, with her oldest child aged seven, Mary gave birth to another son (George Ernest).

In 1868, the year after Alfred and Mary Bock and their young family shifted to Sale, Mary, aged thirty-one, suffered an attack of "chronic mania." Two years later she experienced another attack which lasted for twelve months, after which time, at

the request of the Mayor of Sale, she was examined in her home by two medical practitioners and certified a lunatic "not under proper care and control" (Public Records Office of Victoria, 1871). Obtaining certification for someone to be detained at Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum was not a difficult procedure. Under the 1867 Lunacy Act, all that was required was either examination in custody by two magistrates and two medical men or a friend, not necessarily a relative, could obtain certificates from two doctors stating that the patient was an appropriate person to be detained (Bonwick). According to the Police Report of her subsequent arrest she was considered destructive and dangerous to others (Public Records Office of Victoria, 1872). Deemed in need of care and treatment, Mary Bock was admitted to the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum in Melbourne on 7 January 1872 in feeble bodily health, suffering from melancholia and requiring to be fed. Throughout her confine she had visits from her husband and brothers and was checked by the medical officer twice daily and prescribed "medical comforts" in the form of cod liver oil tonic. At 4pm on 4 January 1875, Mary Bock died. Her inquest report recorded the cause of death as "Disease of the Brain" (Inquest Report, 1875).

Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum was the main lunatic asylum in Victoria and, like all asylums of that period, was custodial rather than curative in character. Confinement of the insane was bound up with discourses of punishment and, as Foucault's studies have shown, nineteenth-century "reforms" were heavily "infused by notions of restraining, controlling and examining bodily behaviour" (Coleborne 127), as is clearly evident in the detail of Mary Bock's inquest report.

The diagnosis of "chronic mania" in the Police Report at the time Mary Bock was taken into custody appears to be at odds with the comment of the Coroner's inquest that she had been suffering from "melancholy" when she was first admitted to Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum. Mania is associated with continual and often violent actions whereas melancholia is associated with an internalised fixation, often accompanied by sadness or fear. The designation "mania" operated as a catch-all diagnosis in psychiatry at the time "often intertwined with melancholia in a rather fluid and imprecise nosology" (Brickell 166). "Melancholia" was defined as a mixture of irrationality and reduced behavioural output and as a form of delusional insanity (Berrios). Alcohol, epilepsy and suicidal tendencies were specifically discounted as factors contributing to Mary Bock's presenting condition in the Police Report.

While not endorsing the accuracy of the medical profession at the time, there may be reason to favour the diagnosis of "melancholia" when the immediate circumstances of Mary Bock's married life are taken into consideration. During the first eight years of her marriage she had given birth to six children, buried two of them as infants and seen her own mother buried. She may well have suffered what is now recognised as postnatal depression. This, coupled with the absences of her husband and his financial difficulties, presents a context in which it is conceivable that the family home did not always enjoy economic and emotional stability. Under

these circumstances, it would not be surprising if Mary Bock felt overwhelmed by her domestic situation. In an era in which "the mad-doctors enhanced their status by arguing that more and more forms of deviant behaviour could be classed as insane, and should fall within their jurisdiction" (J. Reid 250), perhaps Mary Bock simply did not manifest the behaviours expected of a wife and mother. While such explanations can only remain in the realm of speculation, they do illustrate how alternative possibilities are available when the particular social circumstances of Mary Bock's life become the referential centre.

Alternative resistant explanations for Mary Bock's melancholia, however, cannot ignore the historical record that clearly states that she engaged in eccentric and destructive behaviours to the extent that she was deemed by authorities to be a danger to others. It may well be, therefore, that her "long and painful illness" ("Deaths" 1875: 1) was what would now be diagnosed as manic depression or bipolar disorder. By the late eighteenth century most physicians accepted a proximity between mania and melancholia. Both were considered to be effects of the movement of the animal spirits: "the melancholic predisposition, if aggravated, becomes frenzy; frenzy, on the contrary, when it decreases and loses its force, finally grows calm and turns to melancholic diathesis" (Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* 124-25). By the nineteenth century it was acknowledged that the succession of mania and melancholia was a phenomenon either of metamorphosis or of remote causality. This was to be later characterised by what is now called the manic-depressive cycle.

The question of whether or not Amy Bock inherited a tendency of mental instability requires a medical judgement which, lack of historical records and professional expertise notwithstanding, is not appropriate for the present discussion. What is significant is that medical, legal and popular discourses at the time attempted to construct a correspondence between Mary Bock's mania and her daughter's supposed insanity. In interrogating such discourses, a consciously crafted marginality on the part of Amy Bock emerges. As the newspaper reports of her 1884 trial in Melbourne indicate, Amy Bock certainly had a public reputation throughout her childhood in Sale for being "strange" in manner, "impatient of restraint," and "at times quite uncontrollable" (*Gippsland Times* 28 May 1884: 2). These behaviours were persistently linked to her mother's mental instability. For example, the Melbourne *Age* wrote that it was alleged that Amy was not responsible for her "erratic actions" "as insanity exists in her family on the side of the mother" ("Charge Against a State School Teacher" 5). The *Gippsland Mercury* referred to her "idiosyncrasy," noting that she was always remarkable for "the vague nature of her ideas respecting the property of other people" (*Gippsland Mercury* 12 June 1884: 3). According to this writer, Amy suffered from "an aberration of the intellect" and "a phase of insanity" (*Gippsland Mercury* 12 June 1884: 3). Her current plight was "inevitable" because she suffered from "a hereditary misfortune" (*Gippsland Mercury* 27 May 1884: 3).

Amy Bock readily drew on such Darwinian discourses to explain and excuse her criminal behaviours. Whatever the truth of her mental health, Amy Bock clearly positioned herself as marginal in this respect as a deliberate strategy to escape conviction. In a lengthy letter of self-defence, she described her condition as manifesting itself as a voice which urged her to "[g]ive, give, never mind how you get the things; you can pay for them by-and-bye" ("Alleged Kleptomania" 4). For the most part, however, the legal authorities refused the label of insanity in favour of criminality.

Miscreant or Misfit?

Amy Bock is best known for her exploits as Percy Redwood when, taking on the persona of a man, she legally married unsuspecting Agnes Ottaway in Balclutha, New Zealand in 1909. In the months leading up to her infamous marriage, Amy had committed multiple offences of fraud and false representations under the names Agnes Vallance and Charlotte Skevington. With several outstanding police warrants for her arrest, assuming a male identity presented as a strategic ploy by which she could evade detection as well as maximise opportunities to ameliorate her financial circumstances.

Evidence that emerged after her true identity was exposed confirmed that personal financial gain had been a significant motivation for the marriage. However, while there is no evidence in the historical record to suggest that Amy's marriage to Agnes Ottaway was motivated by any sexual attraction to Agnes, Amy did subsequently lead what would now be called a lesbian lifestyle in her later years. So were her crimes evidence of a mania or a disease? Did she suffer from a flawed criminal character? Was she a misfit because of her sexual orientation? Or was she simply an opportunistic woman who paid no regard for the social conventions of her time?

Whether or not a criminal or lunatic legacy was in her blood, Amy Bock was an artist, albeit a con-artist. She executed elaborate scams, utilised multiple identities, and produced numerous documents in support of her schemes to defraud individuals and companies of goods and money. She was highly intelligent, exceptionally talented and a very credible and personable individual. Although she regularly deployed a defence of insanity and frequently broke down in tears in the dock and pleaded for leniency, she always admitted her guilt and never questioned her sentences. Whether this was genuine remorse or staged histrionics can only remain a matter of conjecture. Her childhood was, after all, peppered with artists and stage actors. The construction of images and manipulation of impressions are central to the confidence trickster's artistry: "the heart of a confidence game lies in its dishonesty, its deception, its pretense of innocence" (De Grave 10). Whether or not Amy was "mad" in any recognisable, psychological sense, she most certainly was different and eccentric and a law unto herself. Perhaps she was the archetypal "mad

genius" – she was certainly talented, creative, intelligent and highly motivated. Then again, perhaps she was simply an individual who did not subscribe to normative societal expectations. Mad? Criminal? Genius? Lesbian?

Like her mother and paternal grandmother, Amy Bock was labelled deviant. In an early sociological study of gender, stigma and social control, Edwin Schur argues that "[t]he designation of deviance goes beyond publicly proscribed and formally processed wrongdoing. Being treated as deviant is a standard feature of life as a female" (3). According to Kathleen De Grave, this essential deviant status requires that in order to achieve a cultural ideal of womanliness, women must engage in a form of masquerade (12). Within the symbolic order of the mad/bad/Woman matrix, the masquerade takes the form of adherence to cultural constructions of femininity. Such a masquerade, however, does not protect any individual woman from the label "insane" which functions as both a penalty for "being 'female' as well as for desiring and daring not to be" (Chesler 16).

We cannot know with any surety the actual circumstances that resulted in Annie (Spencer) Bock being charged with theft and being transported to Van Dieman's Land. Neither can we know the basis, organic or social, of Mary Bock's mania. And Amy Bock most certainly is a fascinating enigma for the biographer. But what we can know is that Annie Bock's progression from convict to lady, Mary Bock's regression from wife and mother to lunatic, and Amy Bock's degeneration from respectable state school teacher to habitual criminal are evidence of the contingent nature of marginality as a politicised and gendered construct implicated in the exercise of power.

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