

# Female serial killers in social context: Criminological institutionalism and the case of Mary Ann Cotton

Elizabeth Yardley, David Wilson

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To date, approaches to understanding serial murder have focused on individual cases rather than the social context in which they occurred. Written by leading criminologists and world experts on serial murder, this book marks a departure by situating nineteenth century serial killer Mary Ann Cotton within the broader social structure. Using archival records of her court appearances, local histories and newspaper articles, it uniquely explores how institutions such as the family, economy and religion shaped the environment she inhabited and her social integration through the roles of wife, mother, worker and criminal. Acknowledging that it takes a particular type of individual to commit serial murder, the book shows that it also takes a particular type of society to enable that murderer to go unseen. As the first work to analyse serial murder through the theoretical framework of institutional criminology and institutional anomie theory, it will equip criminologists with a methodological toolkit for performing institutional analysis.



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