

encounter novels mired in “tension” and contradiction, torn between idealist and materialist views of character (as in *Oliver Twist*), between arguments for and against pastoral intervention (as in *Bleak House*), and unable to offer persuasive alternatives – different ways of seeing or thinking that might reconcile or transcend conflicts drawn squarely from the Victorian social and political world. Certainly one might question whether Victorian novels performed functions more active and intellectually generative than the culturally reflexive and symptomatic function granted them by Goodlad. Yet if Goodlad’s literary readings occasionally pale in comparison with her greater historical claims, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State* still offers more than adequate compensation in its remarkably layered and cogent account of Victorian Britain’s course towards a liberal society.

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***Crime and Empire: The Colony in Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Crime,* by Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. xii + 205. ISBN 0-19-926105-9. £49, US\$60.45 (hardback).**

Crime and Empire begins and ends, predictably enough, with *The Moonstone*. But the argument developed by Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee inside this frame is by no means predictable. The crime in Collins’s novel which sparks Mukherjee’s interest is not the theft of the titular diamond, but the murder of its thief, Godfrey Ablewhite, by three Hindu priests. Why should it be, Mukherjee asks, that in the aftermath of the Indian mutiny; in a society where the racist discourse of colonialism routinely projected the criminality of colonial subject races; where the dissident Indians were as feared and reviled as suicide bombers; and where the imperial enterprise was underwritten and rationalised by the rule of law: why should it be that Collins so sympathetically portrayed those priests and their crime? The answer, Mukherjee suggests, lies in a subtle but discernible series of social changes after the turn of the nineteenth century. Those changes – focused around Peel’s police reforms – transformed the rhetoric of criminality and justice, a rhetoric which was quickly absorbed and interrogated in English fiction and non-fiction with domestic as well as imperial settings and concerns. Mukherjee discovers in these texts “a long tradition of British writing that used ‘criminal India’ to interrogate, rather than empower, colonialist/imperialist ventures” (4-5). It was the novel, he insists, “more than the legal, historical, political, and geographical narratives, that used the rhetoric of crime to air the possibilities of dissent” (5). The “culture of the juridical,” as he calls it, is at the centre of “stories of order and disorder” which “could interrogate empire even as they played a central role in its entrenchment” (3).

The chapter structure of *Crime and Empire* clarifies the argument. In two central chapters (4 and 5) Mukherjee focuses on the decades after Peel's "new police" reforms of 1829, juxtaposing brief accounts of the rhetoric of crime and criminality in domestic discourse (Dickens in *Household Words*, Thackeray in *Fraser's*) and domestic fiction (Newgate novels) with a close re-examination of the contradictions between anti-thuggee discourse in the 1830s and '40s and the spate of thuggee novels from that period, including Philip Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* (1839). But first Mukherjee must set up the argument, and in chapters 1 and 2 he rehearses this juxtaposition of the domestic and the colonial whilst establishing the densely contextual nature of his approach. The opening chapters are a thoroughly researched and closely argued account of the determining conditions out of which the fiction would come to be produced. They concentrate predominantly on the "non-fictional narratives that formed the discourse of the British empire," showing "how the rhetoric of crime became a crucial, perhaps a dominant strain in the British representations of India from the mid- to late eighteenth century onward" (24).

The final pairing of chapters (6 and 7) brings together fictional and non-fictional representations of the 1857 mutiny, concluding that the novels "display a complex response to the non-fictional colonialist discourse" (157), refuting the "universal criminalisation of Indians" while producing "their own version of legitimising colonialism by splitting India into liminal/criminal and loyal/legal halves, and focusing on the latter as a site for the operation of humane reformism of British power" (157). The final chapter looks at shifting images of the criminal and argues that Wilkie Collins "borrowed the figure of the 'criminal' Indian from Mutiny fiction to critique 'domestic' Britain" (166).

As we might imagine, Mukherjee's book has cause to take issue with some of the best-known and most influential critiques of culture and power in the Victorian novel of the past two decades, most notably D.A. Miller's highly deterministic Foucauldian thesis in *The Novel and the Police* (1988). But does it go far enough? Despite the implications of his own argument ("Even Foucauldian analysis of literature must bear Foucault's own observation in mind – 'there are no relations of power without resistances'" [4]), Mukherjee has no real interest in challenging the paradigm. In this respect, he hesitates where others have been bolder. Caroline Reitz's recent *Detecting the Nation: Fictions of Detection and the Imperial Venture* (2004), for example, follows Lauren Goodlad (*PMLA* 118.3, 539-56) in critiquing the wearisome overexposure of *Discipline and Punish* and its central idea of panopticism in Victorian studies, contending that it distorts our understanding of Victorian genres and their ideological underpinnings. Despite his opening caveat, however, Mukherjee slips into the familiar rhetoric of *Discipline and Punish* to explain what was going in Britain and British India: the "threat of 'criminal classes' was used to establish a growing network of surveillance that cast its disciplining eye

on the marginalised figures unable or unwilling to participate in ‘useful’ economic activities” (32).

More importantly, though, *Crime and Empire* is an example of the increasing attention to “the mutually defining relationship of center and periphery” (Reitz) in Victorian studies. Moreover, in Mukherjee’s aim to “read the cultural and ideological histories of the colony and the ‘centre’ not as separate but as enmeshed entities” (9), we can see how vital this metropolitan-colonial symbiosis is to a re-examination of the old problem of the novel and its relations to the dominant ideology. Mukherjee gathers together the evidence for the now standard argument that novels narrate their own “troubled distance from dominant ideologies” (7) – they trench and interrogate, are complicit and oppositional. Early on, he quotes Lennard Davis’s *Resisting Novels*: “Like any complex social formation, novels are highly ambivalent in their message [. . .] Novels can offer in their heroes and stories various kinds of opposition to stasis and power, but at the same time it would seem that the formal elements of the novel add up to a social formation that resists change” (6). In the impossibility of extricating the contradictory radical and authoritarian impulses of the novel, Mukherjee sees the impossibility of keeping “the colonizing/metropolitan and the colonized societies” (2) safely distant from one another. This is one of the most interesting and important insights of this rewarding study.

Works Cited

Reitz, Caroline. *Detecting the Nation: Fictions of Detection and the Imperial Venture*. Victorian Critical Interventions. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State UP, 2004.

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***Ever Yours, C.H. Spence*, edited by Susan Magarey with Barbara Wall, Mary Lyons and Maryan Beams. Kent Town SA: Wakefield Press, 2005. v + 392. 23 illustrations. ISBN 1 86254 656 8. \$39.95 (hardback).**

The Face on the Five Dollar Note

Ever Yours, C. H. Spence adds to the already considerable number of publications on the life and work of Catherine Helen Spence, an iconic figure in Australian colonial history; so distinguished in fact that her face was chosen to grace the five dollar note at the commencement of the twenty-first century.

In this volume the Editors have assembled Spence’s *An Autobiography* (1825-1910); her Diary for the auspicious year 1894 (when South Australian women won