

pick you up and take you to the end of the oh-so-downward road. Like the other two novels it is beautifully produced, with a cover photograph of Rue des Marmousets c.1870 – you can feel the slippery film on the cobblestones.

All these novels have a more or less set format – a biographical, textual and contextual introduction, the text, and a number of appendices which cover reception, current debates etc. They are also footnoted. The only uneven note for me was the footnoting. In *Wormwood* Kirsten McLeod footnotes every French word, usually beginning “French term for [ . . . ] .” I found this irritating and it made me wonder who these editions are aimed at. The Broadview website says they are intended as university texts, but the assumption seems rather more aimed at high school – does a reader of *Wormwood* require to be told that every word or phrase in italics is a “French term for [ . . . ]?” What other language would it be? But this is a minor point. It’s a real pleasure that a wide range of Victorian novels are being published in stylish, affordable and scholarly editions, and for those of us working in the area they are an invaluable resource.

**Lydia Wevers**

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***Crime, Gender And Consumer Culture in Nineteenth-Century England*, by Tammy C. Whitlock. *The History of Retailing and Consumption*. Ashgate Publishing 2005. 244. ISBN 0754652076. US\$89.95.**

The image of the innocent sent out to Australia for stealing a piece of lace or a pocket handkerchief haunts most Australian imaginations except those of professional historians of transportation and the first decades of Australian settlement. Behind this historical urban myth lodged in white Australian consciousness lies the question of how such a seemingly small act could attract the severe punishment of transportation. As Tammy Whitlock explains in her deft and informative examination of retail crime and fraud in Regency, early and mid Victorian Britain, theft of valuable property (as drapery and dress goods undoubtedly were for the economy of that era) was a capital offence frequently commuted to transportation. This book serves to remind the reader of how little of the material culture experience and practices at the time of early Australian settlement is securely known even to the academic community.

Whitlock’s study is not only a book for specialists in retail history, but provides unexpected unfamiliar cross-references to a wide range of subjects. The book opens up with the story of Jane Austen’s aunt and her brush with the law when accused of shoplifting a card of lace. Australian Janeites frequently reiterate that Austen’s aunt could well have been sent to New South Wales if the charges stuck. But they did not stick due to a variety of factors – not least the relative leniency with

which laws around shoplifting, fraud and larceny were applied when middle and upper class people stood in the dock. The problems posed by middle class thieves who disproved or upset evangelical or social Darwinist explanations about the innate criminal tendencies of the lower classes thread throughout Whitlock's study. The medicalisation of theft as a mental symptom and the pathologising of the female temperament to the stage that femaleness itself was seen as an *a priori* state of unfitness and imbalance is another ongoing theme. Eventually in some ways thieving was considered (if not excused) as a natural expression of female hysteria and lack of control.

The text addresses a wide readership in so far as Whitlock consistently discusses shoplifting and retail crime as metaphorical touchstones for other issues: fear of women as independent agents, women's mobility, women's participation in the cash economy, in both licit and illicit manners, borderlines of class expressed by fashion and display, the role of fashion in advertising and shaping visible signs of status, the changes in shopping practices and the development of a recognisably modern urban social life. Eighteenth-century shopkeeping, which operated at a level of both personalised trust and ritualised tradition, spoke of a local village mentality and a barter, cashless economy. With the advertising of goods, the fixed and visible pricing for an anonymous unknown customer from beyond the local district, came an abstraction of social relations which were indicative of the tone of the new *grosstadt* experience that would shape the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of Whitlock's subjects have been dealt with before – especially the idea that the department store opened up urban spaces to respectable women, whilst simultaneously offering women via the open display techniques new opportunities for criminal consumption and fetishistic obsession with fabric and stuffs. Early psychiatric texts around female behaviour in the department store are familiar subject for scholarly deconstruction especially in women's studies, feminism and art theory. Yet as Whitlock rightly points out in her introductory chapter, many of the previous studies have concentrated on France and the United States. Britain has been relatively ignored by scholars when examining the impact of shopping culture on nineteenth-century lives.

Also overlooked by scholars is the period between the Regency and the accession of Queen Victoria. This period of transition is effectively highlighted by Whitlock. This was a period of flux, where the precursors to the Victorian era were clearly visible, but where the culture was still somewhat expressionistic, grotesque, lopsided and not fully formed and ordered, an interlude of mobility, bizarreness and grotesqueries between the neoclassical Regency/Napoleonic era and the identifiable aesthetic and cultural sensibility of the Victorian era. For literary historians, I think there is a particular relevance in Whitlock's book as this slightly inchoate sprawling social world was reflected in the ill-disciplined structure of Dickens's early works. For Whitlock this period set the foundational trajectory of the retail expansion with all its gender and psychological ramifications. Incidentally, the British novelist who

is most frequently quoted is Trollope who (like Zola) set a novel in a department store.

Whitlock bravely plunges into the vast, but inconsistent, seas of early Victorian popular journalism, the small print of the names of dress fabrics, of letters from outraged correspondents, of columns of anecdotes and snippets of provincial news and commentary, medical debates and suppositions – many of these texts repel somewhat in their numerical vastness and the constant mutability of logic and trajectory. Whitlock draws conclusions from this daunting and formless *oeuvre*. There is a slight problem in that she often draws a pattern from a mere handful of references and contradictory sources although plenty could be easily located, thus rendering the structure and argument a little arbitrary and pre/over-determined. Also it must be said that Whitlock touches on so many thought-provoking ideas, that many are only mentioned in passing as intriguing sidelines. However the framework that she builds up is plausible and will certainly serve as introduction or road map to the area.

One theme that is fresh, intriguing and fully developed is the notion of the “Bazaar” culture, the novelty collections of small traders’ booths in post-Regency London that provided both an entrée into business for small scale female companies and the development of a luxury industry and market for handcrafted, finely worked trifles. The Bazaar, staffed by respectable working class tradeswomen with matrons and beadles to keep out prostitutes and thieves, became so popular that the middle and upper classes imitated it with the charity bazaar in which women of the respectable classes also turned entrepreneurs and manufacturers all in the name of good works. Whitlock uncovers powerful material around how the Bazaar was seen as disruptive to social stability on two fronts. Firstly, the trivialness of the goods on sale disrupted the idea of material goods and industrial necessities as an indication of national prosperity and as an unalienable basis of market economy. Secondly the bazaar was an environment where women handled and managed cash, even as they were the chief victims of the allure of the bizarre and wasted father and husband’s money on trifles. The Bazaar substituted a delusional, hysterical (and hedonistic) world of glitter, mirrors, conjuring tricks and exotica for the solid reality of the enlightenment public realm. Women’s incontinent consumption did not only facilitate capitalism, but simultaneously perverted, parodied and endangered it by luring buyers not to spend on reliable items for the national good but on a chimerical parallel universe of items of little function, over-inflated prices and meretricious, overelaborate production. The parallels with the *oeuvre* of twentieth century criticism thrown up around fashion and even the Barbie doll as a symbol of feminine presence within an *a priori* evil capitalism are striking, again suggesting that such critiques are paradigmatic and laced with psychological anxieties, as much as well-considered expressions of social justice. Yet concurrently to this fear of female infiltration of public life and the economy, other Victorians expressed their anxiety about urban development and changing social structures through indicting rapacious,

grasping, amoral (mostly male) shopkeepers who would lie to clinch a deal or worse, plant items in shoppers' parcels and bags in order to blackmail them over false shoplifting charges.

Indeed there are mythic resonances even with the present. Whitlock makes a brief remark (one of the many fascinating asides that are scattered through the text) in the conclusion that shoplifting is not to be defined only a "crime" or even as an uncontrollable psychiatric illness manifested in women, but both in the nineteenth century and now it is a deliberate strategy of balancing the demands of display and appearance that are expected of the responsible citizen of the polis with a possible lack of funds to maintain the appropriate social front. One thinks of Anarchist "manuals" that advocate shoplifting as a disruption of capitalism (as well as a low cost means of getting what one wants) to the urban myth of the architecturally impressive "Macmansions" of the outer suburbs with bare and makeshift interiors, as all the spare cash goes into the mortgage whilst the fixtures are sold off as collateral to short term money lenders.

The demand for a publication record on a modern and viable academic CV ensures that many excellent texts come to publication but to a great extent go unnoticed by potential readers. To keep up with the yearly output of Sage, Berg and Ashgate – to name typical examples – would be a fulltime job in itself, not to mention the considerable lists maintained by publishers attached to specific institutions and the slightly more highly profiled and commercial outfits such as Routledge. Thus the reviewer is not only given the happy opportunity of engaging with a particular text that might otherwise have been far back on their list of priorities but also can assist in ensuring that a particular text does not miss in action amongst the myriads of deserving titles by capable academics.

### **Juliette Peers**

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***Poetical Remains: Poets' Graves, Bodies, and Books in the Nineteenth Century*, by Samantha Matthews. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. x + 310, 16 illustrations. ISBN 0-19-925463-X (hardcover).**

To the Victorians, Death was a lively presence. The state of the body and of the soul after death loomed large in the cultural imagination for multiple, interrelated reasons, ranging from sanitary (the scandalous state of inner-city churchyards gave rise to earnest reform efforts), to commercial (new, socially exclusive suburban graveyards began to be built), to theological (Swedenborg's ideas about the proximity and materiality of spirits had broad influence), to literary, perhaps best illustrated by the crowds waiting to read of Little Nell's expiration. Characteristic of the period was the urge to memorialise the famous dead, though a number of