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Shampa Roy

Gender and Criminality in Bangla Crime Narratives

Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

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There are many readers who might scoff at certain writings on the grounds of their being about unworthy subjects. But in the future, those who will sit down to write the history of Bengal, will find that their histories are incomplete and crippled by the absence of the records of many such supposedly trivial events.

Girish Chandra Bosu, *Sheykaaler Darogar Kahini* (The Tales of a Police Detective of Those Days) (1885) (trans. mine)

Acknowledgements

This book has roots that go back several years when I first became interested in crime fiction in English (and translated into English) and subsequently in crime fiction written in Bangla. While reading the latter I realized that many of the early writings on crime, that emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century in colonial Bengal, have received insufficient critical attention despite their immense popularity at the time of their publication. Thus began this journey into what was an immensely exciting area to explore and research. Since gender studies has also fascinated me for the longest time, things gradually began to fall into place like a well-written detective clue-puzzle mystery. The project as it took shape gave me the opportunity to piece together clues and leads that would help look at those very popular writings in terms of their gendered and richly layered contexts. And now in addition to the joy of having spent the last couple of years working on this book I now get the pleasure of thanking everyone who helped and supported me in this journey.

One of the highlights of this journey was the presenting of a paper on Priyanath Mukhopadhyay's writings at a conference on crime fiction in Galway, Ireland in 2013. The paper had been well received and it had in some ways sown the seed of the idea of the book and confirmed my belief that these writings needed to be talked about. The paper subsequently metamorphosed into [Chapter 3](#) of this book. I am grateful to

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The immense help that I received from Prof. Francesca Orsini while I was In SOAS as an Academic Visitor in July 2016 left me overwhelmed. Conversations with her pushed me towards greater clarity in my arguments in ways that I can only be grateful for. Her keen comments on the draft of the first chapter have also been of immeasurable help. I would also like to thank Prof Ben Murtagh for welcoming me to SOAS.

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