

- **Debayan Deb Barman, ed. *Critical Essays on English and Bengali Detective Fiction*. Lexington Books, 2022. \$100 hardback. 254 pp.**

Critical Essays on English and Bengali Detective Fiction begins with editor Barman's introduction to the subject. In attempting to cover the scope of detective fiction, the discussion is necessarily broad and reductive. Barman touches on the roots of detective fiction and devotes several pages to early and Golden Age practitioners, such as Poe, Conan Doyle, Christie, Sayers, and others. In a very short section, he briefly considers American hard-boiled masters Chandler and Hammett. Barman ends by recording the introduction of detective fiction into colonial and postcolonial Indian culture and speculating on the adaptations made by Bengali writers in creating their own canon. He declares that the volume's intent is "to create a broader perspective to bring within the ambit of a single cover three strains of detective fiction, and especially to show the gradual postcolonial attempt of Bengali detective fiction to outgrow colonial influences and create an original and organic tradition of regional and vernacular detective fiction" (17). This declared objective of interrogating Bengali adaptations of Western detective fiction as reflections of the emergence of postcolonial subcontinent literature and culture could have provided fodder for a substantial contribution to the literature of detective fiction. Unfortunately, the majority of the volume is given over to general essays on English and American practitioners, without an eye to how their work might be relevant to colonial or postcolonial readers or what elements of it would be ripe for adaptation in a new cultural environment. Barman indeed brings "within the ambit of a single cover three strains of detective fiction," but to what end?