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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Wiring the Nation: Telecommunication, Newspaper-Reportage, and Nation Building in British India, 1850–1930* by Michael Mann

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upon her light-coloured frock: it was very broad and square & thick ... [and] the skin was rough to touch" (qtd. in Edge 92). While the women themselves often tried to hide these signs of manual labor, Munby admired them as pure signs. But of what, exactly? Are they signs of authentic class identity or of a sexualized fantasy of power, domination, sex, and voyeurism? Edge illustrates the photograph, one of a powerful series of Cullwick taken by the high street photographer Philip Fink, of Cullwick's hands. In an extreme close-up, her hands are cut off from the rest of her body and displayed like specimens, with callouses and dirt caught by the recording process of the photograph. Here, Munby, Cullwick, Fink, and photographic technology come together to create one of the most extraordinary images of Victorian class and gender.

Munby also collected a number of images of women with facial disfigurements. None of these photographs remain (possibly because Munby removed them when he was preparing to donate his archive), but there are detailed descriptions in his notes and some sketches. It is evident that Munby developed longer-term relationships with some of these women, buying masks to disguise their disfigurements, attempting to find work for them, and assisting with treatment. In a final chapter devoted to Munby's fascination with working-class disfigurement, Edge notes that these photographs "share the same condition of production and consumption" as the studies of working women (226). He would observe his subjects from a distance; he would then interview them and perhaps have them photographed. The women are thus extreme instances of the same fascination with the dirt and coarseness that defined his relationships with other working-class women, offering Munby an intense, visceral engagement with the otherness of class and the experience of both desire and revulsion at what he described as the "hideousness" of their faces (227).

Reading this book, I experienced the same astonishment that I have felt reading previous studies of Munby. He might be a so-called ordinary man, but his archive is so extraordinary that it confers something of this quality on its compiler. Ultimately, however, Munby remains elusive and his archive utterly compelling. The notes, records, sketches, and photographs brought together in the archive are of the utmost importance to historians of nineteenth-century society and culture and, as we now also appreciate, to historians of photography.

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Wiring the Nation: Telecommunication, Newspaper-Reportage, and Nation Building in British India, 1850–1930, by Michael Mann; pp. xxii + 298. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, £32.99, \$55.00.

Michael Mann's *Wiring the Nation: Telecommunication, Newspaper-Reportage, and Nation Building in British India, 1850–1930* is an ambitious book that directs our attention to a series of developments in British India: the telegraph, newspapers, Indian nationalism, and "the concurrent sociopolitical changes [in British India] between 1850 and

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1930" (ix). In bringing together strands that are often treated separately, *Wiring the Nation* undertakes the challenging task of putting in the same frame technology, print media, and the rise of anticolonial nationalism. It thus extends the conversation about newspapers and nationalism (which dates back at least to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [1983]) to global technological developments such as the telegraph, which shrank the globe.

Mann makes a sequence of arguments, the first of which is that, "from the 1860s, electro-telegraphic transmission of information massively influenced the creation, fabrication, and distribution of news and, as a consequence, caused a fundamental transformation of newspapers' layout, formatting, and appearance" (90). His second argument is that telegraphic transmission led to more and more frequent news outlets (with many weeklies or bi-weeklies becoming dailies), which "widened the spectrum of public opinion and public spheres within British India" (90). Eventually, by the 1930s, we see "the emergence of an all-India public sphere"—for Mann, the singular is the key—which was a pre-condition for the success of the anticolonial nationalist movement (91).

The early chapters situate the Indian case in European developments and debates. Mann insists that technological innovations and telegraphic networks were the culmination of "international co-operation, transnational flows of capital, and erection of cartels," not the outcome of rivalry between European empires (4–5). He charts the story of individuals and firms, such as the Siemens brothers and Reuters, that created the "global inter-connectivity," which, he argues, altered newspaper reporting (16). The story is intriguing and bears out Mann's claim of international cooperation and globalization. Mann also revises the Habermasian notion of the public sphere for a colonial context. He concludes: "public spheres in different parts of the world [in other words, colonies] represent the transformation of political entities, politics, and societies ... and [are] not simply an expression of an early political, and eventually, national consciousness" (23). The distinction is a bit too subtle, but it serves to gird Mann's larger argument that "it was the print media and in particular the press, which transformed existing public spheres or/and created new ones in some regions of British India ... enhancing existent patriotic emotions and transforming them into national feelings and national movements" (23–24).

The next four chapters flesh out the argument concerning the "transformation of what may be called ... public opinion into a critical public sphere," a transformation enabled by newspapers and, in particular, telegraphic reporting (83). Mann's primary sources are seven English-language newspapers owned and edited by Indians, including the *Delhi Gazette*, the *Hindoo Patriot*, and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. This is the heart of the book and lays the case for the argument that the telegraph altered the ways in which news was reported, that the reformulated print media with its professional journalists and reliance on novelty played a pivotal role in producing public spheres, and that these spheres coalesced into a pan-Indian public sphere that eventually mounted a successful challenge to British colonialism.

There are many gems in these pages. Mann cites intriguing passages from Indian newspapers' coverage of the Russo-Japanese War between 1904 and 1905, capturing the hopes newspapers initially placed in Japan as a source of Asian strength and rejuvenation. Indian newspapers' coverage of Woodrow Wilson, Vladimir Lenin, and Egypt also tells a rich story of lessons learned and parallels drawn from international events. And the

role Indians living in the United States played in building support for the anticolonial movement, both through their own publications and by reaching out to policymakers, captures the transcontinental face of the Indian nationalist movement. Such coverage, as Mann rightly points out, drew upon the rapid dissemination of news and ideas; it was the outcome of the telegraph and news agencies such as Reuters. The globe had shrunk, indeed, and it made possible connections and imaginative alliances that would have been impossible or far more challenging in the days of steamship transmission.

Mann is an accomplished and widely published scholar of India in the twentieth century, and his knowledge is evident throughout. There is hardly a book or article he hasn't read, and the notes are a rich resource to works by Anglo-American, German, and Indian scholars. Sometimes these references are too prominent and Mann's own contributions eclipsed. At other moments, the four phenomena he takes up—the telegraph, novel forms of newspaper reporting, the emerging public sphere, and the rise of anticolonial nationalism—are treated as independent rather than interdependent or intertwined phenomena. Large portions of the final chapters, for instance, trace developments such as the Swadeshi movement, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and Gandhi's salt march as contributing to a growing pan-Indian public sphere. Mann writes, for example: "Together with the Russo-Japanese War, it was the [S]wadeshi movement that eventually helped to initiate and to constitute an all-Indian consciousness" (163). That such events created an Indian national imaginary is incontrovertible. What is less clear is how newspaper coverage of events, much less the telegraphic transmission of reports, birthed the public sphere Mann is interested in tracing. Notwithstanding the rich material Mann has drawn from newspapers, the claim that newspapers and telegraphic reports created—rather than, say, reflected—an emergent national consciousness feels overextended. That argument would stand on firmer ground perhaps if the book more closely analyzed the passages cited from newspapers to instantiate the causal claim of coverage and consciousness.

In the last two decades, the study of nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals has blossomed. The bulk of that scholarship has focused on British newspapers, and only recently have monographs on Indian newspapers started to appear. *Wiring the Nation* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on Indian newspapers. Mann's work in this archive is most welcome and will, one hopes, encourage more young scholars to dig in these understudied trenches.

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Steampunk and Nineteenth-Century Digital Humanities: Literary Retrofuturisms, Media Archaeologies, Alternate Histories, by Roger Whitson; pp. xiv + 229. London and New York: Routledge, 2017, £115.00, \$150.00.

Roger Whitson's *Steampunk and Nineteenth-Century Digital Humanities: Literary Retrofuturisms, Media Archaeologies, Alternate Histories* takes up the ambitious task of uniting steampunk,

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