Book Review

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*Homeland,* John Jakes’ formidable novel about the final explosive events on the nineteenth century, is the first in a series that will focus attention on a new “Jakes” family, the Crowns.

Multiple characters and setting is normal for Jakes; however, this story rivets primary attention on Paul Crown, a young German immigrant. Paul leaves behind a Germany of cholera, poverty, and political upheaval, only to face problems of equal magnitude in America.

Undaunted by a difficult ocean crossing, Paul arrives at Ellis Island penniless but naively optimistic about his future. He makes his weary way to the opulent home of his uncle, Joe Crown, a well established brewer in Chicago. Jakes uses the Chicago setting as a backdrop for his “class struggle” motive, which is central to the plot of his story.

Paul’s uncle, Joe, and cousin, Joe Jr., are foils in this class struggle that ultimately fractures the Crown family and forces Paul to leave his uncle’s home to find work on his own. The behavior and work ethic of Joe Jr., who is born to wealth and privilege in America, is juxtaposed with that of immigrant Paul. Jakes portrays Joe Jr. as spoiled and without focus, especially when compared to Paul’s mature approach to life and work.

Jakes utilizes the character of Paul to introduce the reader to the fledgling business of moving pictures. Paul is fascinated with this new art form which involves him in many adventures including war, a brush with death, and marrying his first love.

This first novel of the Crown series does a creditable job in setting the stage for future adventures of Paul Crown and his budding new family.

Reference

Jakes, J. 1994. *Homeland.* New York: Bantam Books. (Paperback Edition).