Imperial India on Trial:

Crime, Punishment, and Colonialism

by

Kate Merz

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(English)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2019

Date of final oral examination: 12/16/2019

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Susan Friedman, Professor, English and Women's Studies
Aparna Dharwadker, Professor, English and Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies
Vinay Dharwadker, Professor, English and South Asian Studies
Richard Begam, Professor, English

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Susan Friedman for her unwavering advocacy and support, not only of this project but of me. Thank you for making sure I didn't miss the forest for the trees. I want to use this space also to remember Teju Olaniyan, scholar of postcolonial and African studies. His feedback always managed to be devastatingly to-the-point and utterly generous at the same time. Thank you to Aparna Dharwadker, Vinay Dharwadker, and Richard Begam for your thoughtful advice and for taking a chance on this project. Thanks also to Susanne Wofford and Henry Turner for aiding and abetting my early modern days; Rebecca Walkowitz and Caroline Levine for being a joy to teach for; and Gail Griffin, mentor and friend. Finally, to my parents, John and Millie Merz. Your curiosity about the world has always been an example, and your support means the world to me. Thank you for making a home full of love, books, and usually a dog.

Abstract

In the last decades of the British Raj, anti-colonial writers staged scenes of crime and punishment, trial and testimony, in order to interrogate the legitimacy of imperialism itself. This project examines questions of justice in British and Indian novels, with a focus on the 1920s and 1930s. I begin with a historical survey, stretching from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Western authors imagine India as a space of mystery and transgression, in tales that trade in sensationalism as well as pseudoscientific theories of race. At the same time, Enlightenment and Liberal thinkers used Eurocentric notions of "civilization" to justify exploitation and conquest. The effect of both trends was to criminalize Indian cultures.

In this contested space, a "crime" is not limited to a prosecutable act. Anti-colonial writers turn the criminal domain inside out, taking guilt off the back of the "unruly" native to indict the state itself. In *A Passage to India* (1924), E. M. Forster uses the trial as an allegory for the imperial condition. In this racially- and sexually-charged space, it takes a set of dissenting, hybrid voices to disrupt the preordained script of Indian guilt. When state justice fails, healing is possible only in willed acts of interpersonal justice. George Orwell paints a bleaker picture in *Burmese Days* (1934), where *all* institutions are corrupt, and native enforcers (even a judge) are tainted by that corruption. Orwell's essays, "Shooting an Elephant" (1936) and "A Hanging" (1931), unmask the violent rituals of empire, finding a shared humanity in the body of the condemned. Raja Rao also interrogates the role of local collaborators, in *Kanthapura* (1938), yet he shifts focus away from law enforcers and onto the dissenters who protest that law. Rao creates a myth not only around Gandhi, but also around the novel's fictional village, as they imagine new forms of community. Only when all Indians unite, he suggests—across religion, gender, geography, and caste—can a form of grassroots justice prevail.

Introduction

Criminalizing Culture in Narratives of British India

In the last decades of the British Raj, anti-colonial writers staged scenes of crime and punishment, trial and testimony, in order to interrogate the legitimacy of imperialism itself. This project examines questions of imperial justice in British and Indian writers of the 1920s and '30s: E. M. Forster, George Orwell, and Raja Rao. From writers of both continents, we find a narrative fixation on scenes of crime and the practice of "justice." The drive to investigate the crime mirrors both the *cultural* desire to investigate alien customs, and the *narrative* drive to excavate and expound a coherent plot. The set piece of the trial not only dramatizes legal, political, and ethical debates but also becomes an allegory for the imperial condition. Why this fixation on crime and justice, I ask, even from writers in divergent positions within or against the imperial state? What does this trend reveal about the anxieties of imperial power, or the tactics and voices of dissent?

Far from hegemonic, the arena of legal discipline was a contested space of encounter between the "Anglo" and the "Indian" subject, custom, and law. More than a backwater or periphery, the Raj gave birth to the same legal, penal, and academic policies that undergird the modern state—from fingerprinting to anthropology, "English literature" to Benthamite prisons—as well as the bastard genre of detective fiction (the peculiarly "Indian" crimes of Wilkie Collins or Arthur Conan Doyle). Not only the English language, but English literature, was championed as a tool of empire: in the words of Thomas Macaulay, to create "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" ("Minute on Indian Education" 729). In the study of colonial and postcolonial India, literature is not a sideline

or diversion. We can explore the dynamics of power, resistance, and cultural exchange through English writing about—and by—Indians.

In a colonial context, criminality exceeds the domains of sensationalism or plot device, becoming a stage on which authors may explore alien customs or test the validity of alien rule. The tropes of crime and punishment require more attention not just in British India but in colonial and postcolonial literature more broadly. In these narratives, the mechanisms of justice range from the highly codified (the linear march of investigation, prosecution, punishment) to the most unruly (personal vendetta, communal violence, scapegoating)—or, the invalidation of imperial authority through nonviolent non-cooperation.

In this contested space, a "crime" is not limited to a legally prosecutable act. Rather, the critics of empire turn the criminal domain inside out—taking guilt *off* the back of the "unruly" native to indict the state itself: for political and military occupation, the abuse of human rights, economic exploitation (plantation labor as "a monstrous crime against humanity"[1]), and the crackdown of martial law (the infamous Amritsar Massacre of 1919). Thus, criminal acts were regularly committed in the name of law and order; Amritsar merely crystallized the double standard inherent in colonial rule. Conversely, prosecutable crimes were often ignored when committed against Indian subjects, in acts ranging from slander to rape or murder. But by unbinding "crime" from the law-books of the Raj, anti-imperial writers can convict their former accusers and, in literary and popular discourse, *re*write the law. Indeed, what better sign of imperial modernity than the figure of the native judge or lawyer—not least, Gandhi.

[1] Mulk Raj Anand, *Two Leaves and a Bud* 125.

Locating Criminality

Whether in crime fiction or the local news, we have been socialized to see criminals as individual rogues who disrupt the peace and order of civilized society. When that society is stratified by race, however—not to mention caste, class, and gender—it is not so simple. British imperialists, in order to define themselves as not only a civilization but a civilizing *force*, needed to define non-Europeans as uncivilized—and criminally so. In the colonies, criminality was classified not as a personal idiosyncrasy, but a racial and cultural trait.

British merchants and politicians used India's alleged backwardness to justify a system of economic and military rule, imposed first by the East India Company and later, Parliament. Gradually, the British formalized their territorial claims by erecting a scaffolding of laws. By the nineteenth century, they saw themselves as not only *a* civilizing force but modernity's singular civilizing force, spreading British values through the dual instruments of law and education. A champion of both, Macaulay said to the House of Commons in 1833, "no country ever stood so much in need of a code of laws as India" ("Government" 713). England's civilizing mission is a "sacred duty," he argues; it is what "we owe to a race debased by three thousand years of despotism and priest-craft" (717). Such moral judgements were codified into evolutionary theories of history, dismissing India as backward and despotic. And even empirical disciplines like anthropology were yoked to the imperial project. Theories of "criminal types," popularized by Italian physician Cesare Lombroso, helped Westerners believe that they could read criminality in the face and body—in particular, faces and bodies unlike their own.

Let us be clear. The British Empire depended on an ideology of racial superiority. Scholars and politicians buttressed this ideology with words and deeds, whatever veils of benevolent paternalism or academic objectivity they may have tossed on top. As anthropologists

and criminologists busied themselves measuring skulls, British administrators were fascinated by specifically Indian types of criminality, in particular *thuggee* or *thagi*: armed robbery by traveling gangs, in the British imagination entailing ritual strangling. As Thomas Metcalf writes, "the discovery of *thagi* afforded the British once again an opportunity to take pride in their commitment to reforming a depraved Indian society" (41). Here too, crime lay not in the deviant individual but in the character of the collective: "the notion that certain caste groups practised crime as a hereditary profession—that, as one British official wrote, 'crime is their trade and they are born to it and must commit it'" (122). An outsider's view of a specific act is thus reified into a model of Indian culture—violent, inherited, inexorable—that is almost genetic in nature.

In time, however, Indian nationalists turned this cultural definition of criminality on its head, indicting British rule as the true crime. But before we get to this new definition of justice, let us consider what passes for truth in a colonial context.

Knowledge and Encounter

Critical to Western models of justice is the investigation of truth behind any given act—be it an alleged crime or the local conditions that make one law or punishment more feasible than another. Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths" ("Arts" 34).[2] In any contact zone, diverse models of knowledge and belief come into contact, and often conflict. As a result, many colonial texts thematize the pursuit of knowledge, both its problems and its pleasures. Forster's texts are

[2] Pratt coins "contact zone" in preference to "colonial frontier," a term "grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe)" (*Imperial Eyes* 6-7). In contrast, the term "contact" "foregrounds the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters . . . how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other" (7).

haunted by the dilemma: how to "only connect" (to borrow from *Howards End*) across the incommensurable "mystery" or "muddle" that is India (*A Passage to India* 69). What is truth? Who decides? How does one truly know the other? The novel offers no single "*real* India" (24) but shows that there are myriad ways of experiencing India. This is *a* passage, not *the* passage. The asymmetry of power means that the official narrative comes from the colonizers (in the courthouse, say, or the European club), but counter-narratives will inevitably emerge—and in many cases outperform the official version. In fiction of the contact zone, we often find one or more of the following: competing models of art, science, law, or religion; experimentation with the ethnographic or autoethnographic gaze;[3] and a distrust or ambivalence toward mimetic technologies like photography[4] or the trope of the machine more broadly (in technologies of empire like railways or telegraphs, as well as the figure of empire *as* machine[5]). In this context, the mode by which one investigates, much less proves, the truth is by no means a given. For all of this study's authors (Forster, Orwell, Rao) what may read as a failure to know the other we may see more fruitfully as a refusal to resolve the problem of knowledge—the refusal of a single, enduring truth.

As optical and recording technologies expanded, the nineteenth century saw increasing overlaps between the empirical investigation of human cultures and the empirical investigation of crime. The domains of anthropology and criminal detection both turned towards photography,

---

[3] Pratt defines an autoethnographic text as "a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" ("Arts" 35). In her work, autoethnography is strictly from the colonized or disempowered perspective: when "colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms" (*Imperial* 7). Literary critics have expanded the term to include texts where a dominant culture turns the eye back on itself (see James Buzard and Jed Esty). In a colonial context, I argue, a critical autoethnographic gaze, such as Forster or Orwell's, is an effective way to expose the ritualism of empire.

[4] See Benjamin's "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity*.

[5] Writers as diverse as Sara Jeanette Duncan, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Mulk Raj Anand play on the machine-like qualities of empire. Citing nineteenth and early-twentieth-century texts, Robert J. C. Young writes, "Colonialism was a machine: a machine of war, of bureaucracy and administration, and above all, of power." It was also "a desiring machine" with an "unlimited appetite for territorial expansion," which "forced disparate territories, histories and peoples to be thrust together like foreign bodies in the night" (*Desire* 98; see also 166).

anthropometry, and fingerprinting (developed by none other than the Bengali police)[6] as more factual modes of observing, classifying, and documenting racial or criminal types—including certain racial types *as* criminal (the migratory Thugs and "criminal tribes").[7] As with the camera and phonograph, fingerprinting's quasi-magical ability to signify "fact" derived from its status as science. Both photography and fingerprinting were admired for their indexicality: beyond mere icon or symbol, they bear "some natural relationship of contiguity with their referent" (C. S. Peirce, qtd. in Pinney 20). Just as photography was esteemed for its "stern fidelity," fingerprinting was lauded for the "penetrating certainty" it brought over otherwise "slippery facts." These claims were both made by Britons in the Indian province of Bengal—the former in a lecture to its Photographic Society in 1857, the latter by the man who in 1858 pioneered the modern practice of fingerprinting (qtd. in Pinney 20-21) and brought it into the court of law two decades later (Herschel). This optimism for new technologies and techniques was intensified in the alien territories of empire, where investigators of all stripes sought the reassuring solidity of facts. Photographs of Indian landscapes and subjects (however staged) became part of the iconography of empire.[8]

Let us consider the intersection of knowledge and empire in two late Victorian writers. Flora Annie Steel defends the historical fidelity of her Mutiny novel, *On the Face of the Waters* (1896), by comparing the narrative to photography: "I have tried to give a photograph—that is, a picture in which the differentiation caused by colour is left out—of a time which neither the fair race nor the dark one is ever likely quite to forget or to forgive" (Preface). Steel's ideal may

---

[6] For the police's increasing turn to physiological clues, see Cohn 11 and Dirks, *Castes of Mind* 186-87.
[7] For the criminalization of specific groups, see Dirks, *Castes* 173-88 and Metcalf 119-25.
[8] European landscape photographers sought to domesticate imperial territories through a visual vocabulary of the exotic yet picturesque. Those devoted to Orientalist scholarship cast themselves as recorders of historical or ethnographic knowledge. Army photographers combined the above techniques, depicting not only the controllable landscapes at their feet, but the dress and deportment of the "martial races" in their regiments (e.g., Fred Bremner's 1897 *Types of the Indian Army*).

strike us as naïve: a photograph, after all, has a point of view and a frame that obscure as much as they reveal, and "differentiation caused by colour" is impossible to ignore in a colonial context (Steel, a firm believer in difference, does not try). Despite her novel's ornate and sentimental style, when it comes to historical events, she aims to be "scrupulously exact, even to the date, the hour, the scene, the very weather" (Preface). Steel presents a view of knowledge that is not top-down but bottom-up.[9] The only Britons with real insight—into the rebellion or India itself—are those who get to know the locals: who speak "the vernaculars" (38) and listen to "bazaar rumours" (40). Note the exploits of this "diffident district-officer":

> Now Mr. Dashe's intimate knowledge of a certain jungle tract in his district, had resulted in a certain military magnate bagging three tigers. From this, to a reliance on his political perceptions is not so great a jump as might appear; since a man acquainted with the haunt of every wild beast in his jurisdiction, may be credited with knowledge of other dangerous inhabitants. (37)

Dashe's superiors marvel at his ability to read India as easily as he reads the topography: "according to Dashe the whole of India is one vast sign-post!" (39). In the novel, however, policymakers yield no authority to such experts on the ground,[10] preferring their rosy refrain, "We are doing our best for India and the Indians. Now here, in Oude, things are wonderfully ship-shape already" (41). This farcical ignorance is the backdrop for the rebellion that is to come. British colonizers are vulnerable, in Steel's novel, because those in command disdain to appropriate local expertise into the civil and military service.

Steel retells historical facts in order to explore the inner lives of those who took part; in contrast, Arthur Conan Doyle invents fictional tales that fetishize fact. He unites the spheres of

---

[9] Rather than simply reproduce the dominant Mutiny narrative, as Benita Parry argues (118-29), Ann-Barbara Graff argues that the novel subverts patriarchal authority, the Great Man model of history, and "the fetishization of 'fact'" in Victorian historiography (50).

[10] Graff reads Dashe (and the hero Douglas) as "agents of truth" whose modes of knowledge are more feminine and flexible than the dominant narrative: "what Dashe and Douglas trade in is rumor, gossip, and hearsay; their most effective strategy is eavesdropping. Eavesdropping is gendered feminine," and in this novel "those who listen to gossip and rumor are rewarded" (52).

criminal and ethnographic investigation in detective fiction, where Sherlock Holmes uses the techniques of the anthropologist and natural historian to solve an array of imperially-inflected crimes. In the sleuth's second outing, *The Sign of the Four* (1890), it is his knowledge of the tribes, footprints, and poisons native to the Andaman Islands[11] that identifies an unseen and "absolutely unique" killer (161). This killer never appears in any witness account or suspect list; rather Holmes deduces that he *must* exist, and accurately describes him, based solely on physical clues. When Holmes sees the killer's child-sized footprint, he admits, "I was staggered for the moment . . . but the thing is quite natural . . . I should have been able to foretell it" (140). From this point he is sure of the culprit's identity (he dismisses Watson's queries with "there is no great mystery in that" [152]) and merely needs to place him within a coherent narrative. Of course, this Andaman Islander is never allowed to tell his own story; in England he is treated as a primitive curiosity ("exhibited . . . at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal" [203]), though it is his English companion whose "bearded, hairy face, with wild cruel eyes and an expression of concentrated malevolence," ushers in a man's death (128). Despite Dr. Watson's military service in the Great Game (the Second Anglo-Afghan War, or what Duncan calls "the second Afghan business" [89]), his notion of criminality is, like that of the police, too conventional to fathom the imperial intrigue they have unearthed. The evidence is available to any observer, but it takes Sherlock to interpret the data through his specialized knowledge of an obscure corner of empire. As Holmes's biographer and interlocutor, Watson can document that knowledge but not excavate it himself. Their dialogue as Holmes identifies the Islander is telling: first, Holmes enumerates all the data, then asks, "Now, then, where are we to find our savage?" Watson "hazards" a guess (wrong) based on his limited knowledge, and in the next sentence,

[11] The British ran a penal colony in the Andaman Islands; inmates included political prisoners from the 1857 Rebellion and later the twentieth-century Independence movement.

Holmes "stretched his hand up, and took down a bulky volume from the shelf" (161). It is Holmes who, even from London, commands intimate, expert knowledge of a vast empire.

Justifying Conquest

Given the claims of science and technology to penetrate an absolute domain of "fact" or "truth," we may ask if justice, too, was claimed as universal. The degree of compatibility (or antipathy) between British and indigenous justice was a pressing issue for policy makers, administrators, and missionaries striving to legitimate their authority. Depending on how seriously they treated local values and customs, questions of justice ranged from the purely practical (how to administer a territory with minimal fuss and maximal profit) to schemes of ambitious cultural change. For its proponents, "acculturation" might be intellectual, psychological, or coercive in nature; it might be achieved through education, habituation (to new forms of work, manners, or prayer for example), or legal discipline. Empire was not, after all, universally hegemonic (stamping itself on native subjectivities) but often merely dominant: employing coercion and changed environments, but not, finally, colonizing the mind. Thus two parallel processes went falteringly forward—one legal, one cultural—sometimes in tandem, sometimes at odds.

The ad-hoc rule of raiders and traders in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was gradually codified into a formal system of laws. This process spanned the century from 1757, when the East India Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal and began to hasten their territorial expansion, to 1857, when the Indian Rebellion precipitated what was beginning to seem inevitable: the British Crown's take-over of Company powers. Sangeeta Ray writes: "the crisis

marked by the Sepoy Rebellion changed the modus operandi of imperial government in India from that of a purported benevolent ruler to an unequivocal taskmaster" (8).

Throughout the era, British leaders debated both the means and the ends of their rule in India. Edmund Burke, once a supporter of the East India Company,[12] in his later years lambasted its mismanagement and greed. In a 1783 speech he contrasts the way the British govern England (which he views as reasoned and measured) with how they govern India, which he castigates as "the avarice of age" wed to "the impetuosity of youth" (2: 430)—what Sara Suleri dubs "the adolescence of the colonizing mind" (32). Apologists for empire frame the natives as children, but Burke saw the *colonizers* as greedy children. Suleri contrasts eighteenth-century thinkers—such as Burke and Warren Hastings who, despite their mutual antipathy, both held "an imaginative respect for Indian social structures and institutions"[13]—with the next century's Thomas Macaulay and James Mill (and, I would add, John Stuart Mill), who were "impervious to the possibility of cultural sympathy" (33). There is thus a paradoxical transition from the years of Company rule to those of Parliamentary control: even as the state claimed a greater degree of responsibility for Indian subjects, the ruling imagination increasingly failed to find common ground with those same subjects.

The conflict between Company and Crown was dramatized in the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings. This trial is worth inspection because it acknowledged the predatory potential of imperialism without finally convicting the perpetrators. Further, the trial displays the at times unexpected intersection of sex, race, and power in colonial discourse. Hastings had climbed the

---

[12] Dirks, *Scandal* 179.

[13] Burke's grasp of Indian culture may be deluded, but at least he seeks this sympathy of the imagination (see Suleri 25-26, Dirks, *Scandal* xii). If Burke's conservatism seems at odds with his sympathies, he directs much of his ire at class upstarts in his own country known as nabobs: "Englishmen who returned from the East with huge fortunes that allowed them to live like princes." He "painted a terrifying picture of nabobs marrying into the families of the old gentry, buying their way into Parliament, and destroying" the economy (Dirks 9).

ranks of the East India Company and in 1774 became the first Governor-General of Bengal. Officially, he served the British government, but in reality he served his old master, the East India Company. In 1787, the House of Commons, under the impassioned prosecution of Edmund Burke, impeached Hastings for abusing his powers: from the violation of treaties to the extortion of the begums of Oudh (a princely state).[14] Burke assumed the role of righteous savior, claiming to speak *for* "the people of India." To his listeners in London, these people must have seemed little more than a rhetorical device, as he intoned: "I impeach Warren Hastings in the name of the people of India, whose *laws*, *rights*, and *liberties he has subverted*. I impeach him in the name of the people of India, *whose country he has destroyed*—I impeach him in the name of *human nature, which he has cruelly injured and oppressed in both sexes*" (*History of the Trial of Warren Hastings* 152). Burke's notion of a universal humanity accounts for his strong sympathies, but for most Britons, the drama played out as a bitter dual between Burke and Hastings, not a defense of Indians from the rampages of Britons at large.

Burke's reference to "both sexes" reminds listeners of a key plank of the prosecution: the violation of Indian women. The sensational "Begums Charge" was brought before Parliament in a series of fiery speeches by playwright Richard Sheridan. The sexualized language with which he framed the charge shocked the eighteenth-century audience as much as its insensitivity to the systemic abuses of empire will shock modern readers. The women's space was invaded by Hastings's troops, Sheridan claimed, despite "how sacred was the residence of women in India. A threat, therefore, to force that residence, and violate its purity by sending men armed into it, was a species of torture, the cruelty of which could not be conceived by those who were

[14] While these charges are what captured public attention, the more mundane charges display the economic injustice of Company power: that he enriched himself through unlawful gifts and bribes, and was biased in awarding contracts for opium, army supplies, and grain. For a summary of the charges, see Suleri 210n. 4 and Dirks, *Scandal* 19-20, 115-23. In describing economic motives for the 1857 Rebellion, Kahldun notes the extravagant profits of nabobs and other traders (5, 60n. 26).

unacquainted with the customs and notions of the inhabitants of Hindostan." Muslim women in India were purer and more isolated, he claims, than their sisters in other lands: "they were not the victims of jealousy in the men" as were women in Turkey. No, "liberty, so far from having any charms for them, was shocking to their feelings; they were *enshrined* rather than *immured*; they possessed a greater *purity* of *pious prejudice* than the Mahomedan ladies of Europe and other countries, and more zealously and religiously practiced a more *holy* system of *superstition*." Hastings's men, and by proxy Hastings, had "prophaned and violated" this "sanctuary" (*History* 77-78).[15] With more images of seclusion and invasion, Burke bemoaned the "rapacity and brutality" of the culprits. The begums were "bereaved even of their jewels: their toilets, these alters of beauty, were sacrilegiously invaded, and the very ornaments of the sex foully purloined" (Burke, 3: 71). Nicholas Dirks asserts, "this explicit language of sexual violation and violence was intended to present a gripping portrait of the rape of India, a literal as well as metaphorical condemnation of Hastings as a vicious man" (*Scandal* 118). Empire was indeed a form of rape, yet the trial blames this rape on one man rather than the overarching principles and practices of empire. Further, it fails to notice victims beyond these purist of the pure: the begums are "the highest description of ladies" (*History* 78). This omission diverts attention from what is done to average Indians, by average Britons or in the name of Britain, while making the charge against Hastings as sensational as possible. Burke admits the abuses of empire—indeed he is eager for national absolution—but refuses to blame British principles.

[15] Sheridan's portrait at once shrouds and imperils these women, but Suleri reads the begums' "unreadability" as "empowering" (71). While the trial presents the begums as nearly passive, elsewhere Burke acknowledges that in the face of these "depredations," they "assumed the courage which became their danger, and defended themselves to the utmost of their power" (Burke, 3: 71).

Early in the trial, Burke presents a scene of explicit sexual violence, blaming Hastings for tortures inflicted by Devi Singh, his revenue agent for a large district in Bengal.[16] After cataloguing Singh's inventive acts of torture,[17] Burke's most dramatic passage begins, "The treatment of the females could not be described." He then describes it in macabre detail:

> Dragged forth from the inmost recesses of their houses, which the religion of the country had made so many sanctuaries, they were exposed naked to public view; the virgins were carried to the Court of Justice, where they might naturally have looked for protection; but now they looked for it in vain; for in the face of the Ministers of Justice, in the face of the spectators, in the face of the sun, those tender and modest virgins were brutally violated. . . . Other females had the nipples of their breasts put in a cleft bamboo and torn off. What modesty in all nations most carefully conceals, this monster revealed to view, and consumed by slow fires; nay some of the monstrous tools of this monster Devi Sing had, horrid to tell! carried their unnatural brutality so far as to drink in the source of generation and life. (*History* 7-8)[18]

It is a vicious scene of spectatorship and predation. Not only is the women's flesh "consumed by slow fires," their breastmilk is allegedly consumed by Singh's agents.[19] Burke next reminds his audience of their own consumption. For the women's husbands and fathers supply Britons with their most prized beverage: "those hands which had been broken by persons under the

---

[16] Dirks notes that these charges were "not only unreliable but also hardly Hastings's responsibility" (*Scandal* 110).
[17] Pillorying, naked flogging, father and son tied together so they suffer both their own and the other's beating: "the monster . . . contrived how to tear the mind as well as the body" (*History* 7).
[18] It is unclear how precisely the record corresponds to Burke's speech; several versions exist. This *History* paints Hastings as victim, and it is useful to read it as Suleri does, as a drama with both chorus and narrator (59-60). A footnote to the above passage guides the reader's emotions: "In this part of his speech Mr. Burke's descriptions were more vivid—more harrowing—and more horrific—than human utterance on either fact or fancy, perhaps, ever formed before. The agitation of most people was very apparent—and Mrs. Sheridan was so overpowered, that she fainted." Burke too is physically overcome: he "dropped his head upon his hands," he is "taken ill," and finally "seized with a cramp in his stomach, and was disabled from going on" (*History* 7-8). Thus do orators, spectators, and the text itself all partake in an elaborate performance of guilt, outrage, and innocence.
[19] Burke fixates on images of imperial predation, both literal, as above, and figurative. In 1783 he condemns the "crude" manner of British "conquest": "there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage, with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting" (2: 430). He figures Hastings as vampire and cannibal: "He gorged his *ravenous maw* with an allowance of 200 l. a day. He is not satisfied *without sucking the blood of* 1400 nobles . . . He never *dines without creating a famine*. He feeds on the *indigent*, the *decaying*, and the *ruined* . . . like the *ravenous vulture* . . . who destroys and incapacitates *nature* . . . Mr. Hastings feasts in the dark alone; *like a wild beast he groans in a corner over the dead and dying*; and like the tyger of that country, he wishes to withdraw into a cavern, to indulge with unobserved enjoyment in all the wanton caprices of his appetite" (*History* 152-53). Such imagery of predation and (following from Marx) cannibalism will return in the work of George Orwell and Mulk Raj Anand.

Company's authority, produced to all England the comforts of their morning and evening tea" (*History* 8).[20] This image could be used to condemn every tea-drinker in Britain, but Burke directs the guilt at Hastings—arguing that the nation will be forgiven if and only if they "punish" him. Thus he "called upon their Lordships to prevent the effects of the Divine indignation upon the British empire, by bringing to justice the man [Hastings] who could employ so infernal an agent [Singh]" (*History* 8). Suleri powerfully shows how Burke uses the women in his speech as "rhetorical weapons." She writes:

> Burke first gives colonialism a body and then strips it; subjects it to rape in a court of law; damages it further in sundry fashions, and then proceeds to collapse it into the pathos of a cup of tea in England. A very dangerous pattern of domestication is established here, for the female body is ushered in only to be transmuted into a figure for the damage Burke wishes on Hastings's political credibility. (60)[21]

Also collapsed in Burke's speech is the identity of the guilty. Long passages go by without Burke reminding us that "he" is Devi Singh, not the accused, Warren Hastings. If so many of its agents are complicit, one wonders why the Company itself should not be put on trial and disbanded. Using the language of sentiment, Burke muddies the waters of guilt and complicity. Dirks writes, "India itself was cast as feminine, in a way that dramatized its exoticism and difference, and rendered into the object of Britain's protective, and patriarchal, benevolence" (*Scandal* 112). Thus, India's rape by Company agents becomes an excuse for British paternalism at large—saving Indians from themselves (men such as Singh) and other tyrants such as Hastings—as if the latter is the exception rather than the rule of British justice, in all its would-be universality.

---

[20] Burke notes that the tea in question is Chinese, purchased with the exorbitant rents the Company extracted from Indian farmers. The Company would eventually simplify this trade (starting in the 1830s) by cultivating tea in Assam, India.

[21] When Suleri quotes Burke, her ellipses omit both Singh's name and, curiously, the speech's climax: the "unnatural" consumption of breastmilk. But this image only strengthens her point. The women are used by Burke as a source not only of evidence but energy: he is so spent that he "dropped his head upon his hands" immediately after describing the men who literally "drink in the [women's] force of generation and life" (*History* 7-8).

As in the speeches above, spectacles of the grotesque abound, and the trial itself was a national spectacle. Sheridan would go on to incorporate parts of his Begums speech into *Pizarro* (1799), a play about another imperial struggle: the Spanish conquest of Peru. Burke too is acutely self-aware of the role he is performing; he confides that his aim is "not to consider what will convict Mr. Hastings (a thing we all know to be impracticable) but what will *acquit and justify myself* to those few persons and to those distant times, which may take a concern in these affairs and the actors in them" (qtd. in Dirks, *Scandal* 100-01, my emphasis).[22] Thus, fact and fiction borrow tropes from one another in a way we will see throughout this project. And, we may note, the prosecution feels at least as much need to justify itself as does the defense. Burke maximizes his condemnation of Hastings by appealing to legal models beyond his own:

> Having thus avowedly acted in opposition to the laws of Great Britain, he fled, but in vain, for shelter to other laws and other usages. Would he appeal to the Mahomedan law for his justification? In the whole Koran there was not a single text which could justify the powers he had assumed. Would he appeal to the Gentoo Code? There the effort would also be in vain; a system of stricter justice, or more pure morality, there did not exist. It was therefore equal whether he fled for shelter to a British Court of Justice or a Gentoo Pagoda; he in either instance stood convicted as a daring violator of the laws. (*History* 5)

Burke's barb is apt, as it is Hastings himself who had had the Hindu *Gentoo Code* translated into English. Indeed, both men are adept at citing indigenous laws if and only if they are expedient. But Burke does not descend into legalisms. More orator than scholar, he cares not about verdicts but public opinion.

Burke put Hastings on trial not to dismantle the imperial project, but to found it (he thinks) on firmer political and moral grounds. Burke portrays Hastings as a rogue and a looter, the Company as a national scandal. Dirks summarizes: "What was supposed to have been a trading company with an eastern monopoly vested by Parliament had become a rogue state:

[22] From a 1785 letter to a rival of Hastings who supplied Burke with much of the evidence against him (Dirks 18-19).

waging war, administering justice, minting coin, and collecting revenue over Indian territory" (*Scandal* 13). Burke's instincts are conservative; he wants to restore traditional powers over unregulated upstarts like Hastings. Sheridan too uses Hastings's humble origins and "mercantile habits" against him. He asserts that Hastings is "bound" both by breeding and "duty" to "balance the transactions of the day—and reconcile his acts to justice and policy" (Sheridan 57). That Hastings could fail in this mathematic, transactional notion of justice makes him monstrous. For he must have "held up, as it were, a glass rightly to his own conscience, and was bound to purge it . . . Yet here we saw the monster—a philosophical tyrant—a cool, deliberate, reasoning tyrant—who violated the rights of man, with a perfect consciousness of what those rights were" (57).[23] The predatory language returns:

> If a stranger had at this time gone into the kingdom of Oude . . . observing the wide and general devastation, and all the horrors of the scene . . . he would naturally enquire . . . what monsters have stalked over the country, tainting and poisoning with pestiferous breath, what the voracious appetite could not devour? . . . No wars have ravaged these lands and depopulated these villages—No civil discords have been felt—No disputed succession—No religious rage—No merciless enemy—No affliction of Providence . . . No voracious and poisoning monsters—No—All this has been accomplished by the friendship, generosity, and kindness of the English nation—They have embraced us with their protecting arms—and, lo, these are the fruits of their alliance. (Sheridan 33-34)

Thus, in Company hands, British values and British justice are made monstrous.

In dramatizing these monstrosities, the trial targets a single criminal rather than a system of abuses. Burke announced, "We are to decide by the case of this gentleman whether the crimes of individuals are to be turned into public guilt and national ignominy, or whether this nation will convert these offences . . . into a judgment that will reflect a permanent lustre on the honour,

---

[23] Sheridan contrasts Hastings with "a Nero and a Caligula," who "were born to rule, and they considered their subjects as creatures over whom they had a right to domineer" (56). But Hastings is a merchant whose accounts do not add up, either in pounds sterling or on the scales of justice: "Born to no rule—entitled to no superiority . . . bred in mercantile habits, which forced him to estimate on every measure—and entrusted by a mercantile Company with a government which was to be carried out by mercantile principles—Bound to give a faithful account of every transaction . . . Who could never go to bed without . . . balancing the transactions of the day" (57).

justice and humanity of this Kingdom" (qtd. in Dirks, *Scandal* 106). The stakes, in Burke's mind, were vast: "the reputation of British justice, all that was good and sacred about the ancient constitution, was on trial as well. To convict Warren Hastings was to uphold the foundations of British sovereignty" (Dirks, *Scandal* 107). But we must put Burke's ambitions in context. It is a time when European states were claiming new forms of power, both within and outside their borders. In trying one man, Burke was empowering his own government. Dirks writes:

> Burke's tirades against Hastings might have been the national expression of a bad conscience, but Burke no more offered to give India back to the Mughals than did Hastings offer to return his early winnings to the Company. Indeed, the trial of Warren Hastings was at one level simply the continuation of earlier parliamentary efforts to take control over a rogue English state, to harness imperial power—and wealth—securely to Britain. (*Scandal* 21)

Rather than dwell on points of law, Burke saw the trial as "the occasion for the cleansing and regeneration of the imperial mission" (Dirks, *Scandal* 92). The trial was hardly the purifying ritual Burke planned, but it did amass symbolic importance. It is no wonder that writers fixate upon trials—real or fictional—to dramatize social and political debates—to distal a societal problem, fairly or unfairly, into a few discrete actors.

When Hastings was eventually acquitted in 1795, the verdict, Suleri writes, "dramatized the limitations of impeachment, thereby exposing how completely the power of the merchant was immune from the law of the state." Still, she argues that the trial contributed to "the eighteenth-century's growing realization that colonialism required to be judged as a system rather than as a set of misdeeds" (56). But, I argue, the trial's most radical implications lurked, unspoken, just below the surface: that imperialism is an inherently predatory and illegal enterprise. Suleri writes, "To read the impeachment proceedings" is "to confront less a trial than a documentation of the anxieties of oppression, where both the prisoner and the prosecutors are equally implicated in the inascribability of colonial guilt" (53). Part of Burke's "towering rage"

at Hastings, she argues, is his own "powerlessness" as "spectator," and the two men's "shared intimacy of guilt" (46)—the guilt of Britons at home, that is, even the critics of empire, who nonetheless share in its takings. This tension between critique and complicity would remain deeply embedded in colonial discourse.

Taking up the mantle of critique, in 1833 Macaulay criticized the East India Company but ultimately supported its future role in furthering empire:

> It is strange, very strange, that a joint stock society of traders . . . a society, which . . . we should have said was as little fitted for imperial functions as the Merchant Tailors' Company or the New River Company, should be intrusted with the sovereignty of a larger population, the disposal of a larger clear revenue, the command of a larger army, than are under the direct management of the Executive Government of the United Kingdom. The Company is an anomaly; but it is part of a system where everything is anomaly. It is the strangest of all governments; but it is designed for the strangest of all Empires. ("Government" 699-700)

Striving to put some design on all this strangeness, the 1830s ushered in a reformist model of empire, justified by the transformative power of education (for the individual) and of utility and "scientific" legal codes (an entire society's "progress to civilization" in the words of James Mill).[24] For Liberals committed to reforming their *own* laws as well as more "despotic" ones abroad, India became an arena *and* a testing ground for that reform. The legacy of Jeremy Bentham lies not just in European penal codes but in India, where his utilitarian followers played a key role in extending and justifying British rule by law (see Stokes). Reformers saw India as a civilizing "laboratory" in which to refine their assimilative, universalist ideals (Metcalf 29). Ultimately, decades of political jockeying left colonial India with a hybrid legal system that "accommodated both the assimilative ideals of liberalism" (that is, the law as universal) and "the insistence upon Indian difference" (civil law varied according to one's "religious community") (Metcalf 38).

[24] Mill's *History of British India* (1818), qtd. in Metcalf 30.

Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) promotes the former model: Muslim and Hindu traditions subsumed under Englishness. He derides "any Orientalist" who values Arabic or Sanskrit texts over English (722): why keep printing such "masses of waste paper" (727)?[25] He is both an evangelist of English and a lawyer constructing a case:

> How, then, stands the case? We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate . . . It abounds with works of imagination . . . Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. (722-23)

He champions not only practical disciplines (law, politics, "experimental sciences" [722]) but "the poetry of Milton" (719) and "works of the imagination" (722)[26]: language so intimate that readers can "relish even the most delicate graces of our most idiomatic writers" (728). Imparting knowledge is also, Macaulay grasps, imparting culture: that "class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (729). In a 1920 speech, Gandhi voiced his suspicion of such educational schemes: "I think that the schools and colleges are factories for making clerks and Government servants" (*Essential* 353). But education is not a factory, and the same system that filled the Government ranks also *armed* that same class of Indians with the tools it would take to fight it. This class exemplifies the ambivalence of Homi Bhabha's mimic man, who is "the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English" (125).

And what is English? To Macaulay, it is a vessel for universal truth and morality. In denouncing Indian despotism, he is also asserting English political and moral philosophies as

---

[25] Money spent on Arabic and Sanskrit colleges, Macaulay argues, "is bounty-money paid to raise up champions of error." He is blithely confident in the power of English translations to "digest the laws of India . . . I hope and trust that, before the boys who are now entering at the Mudrassa and the Sanscrit College have completed their studies, this great work will be finished. It would be manifestly absurd to educate the rising generation with a view to a state of things which we mean to alter before they reach manhood" ("Minute" 727-28).

[26] Despite his love for Milton and the Greeks, Macaulay mocks the status of myth in Indian traditions: "History, abounding with kings thirty feet high . . . Geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter" ("Minute" 723).

universal: "I see the public mind of India . . . which we found debased and contracted by the worst forms of political and religious tyranny, expanding itself to just and noble views of the ends of government and of the social duties of man" ("Government" 705). His goal: "the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws" (718). It is a brash call to universalize English culture.

For all its universalist ideals, at the historical heart of English Liberalism lies a profound belief in difference. Despite his denouncement of slavery as "tyranny" yoked to "the love of gold,"[27] John Stuart Mill promoted the colonial project as a benevolent despotism.[28] There is a gap in Mill's logic as he slips between "the universal rules of morality between man and man" (*Dissertations and Discussions* 253) and the "rules of international morality" between nations (252).[29] When a civilized nation conquers a barbarous one, "A violation of great principles of morality it may easily be; but barbarians have no rights as a *nation*, except a right to such treatment as may, at the earliest possible period, fit them for becoming one" (253). As for this "fitting" process, he posits that "nations which are still barbarous have not got beyond the period" when it is to "their benefit that they should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners" (252). What better logic to justify empire as a civilizing force? But how would one determine when it is ethical to help a people "struggling against a foreign yoke" (261) and when they are better left under that yoke? Mill asserts, "The only test . . . of a people's having become

[27] "The Negro Question" 26. This letter to *Fraser's Magazine* is a rebuke to Thomas Carlyle's letter in the prior issue (both were printed anonymously). Mill derides Carlyle's image of the "beneficent whip" which "compels" a "servant" "to work." Carlyle's theory that might makes right—that some men are "born lord" over others (Carlyle, qtd. in Mill 25)—is not surprising from the author of the Great Man theory of history. But Carlyle's "beneficent whip" bears a dark kinship to Mill's benevolent despotism. It is evidence of his deep-seated belief in difference—in the civilized and the uncivilized—that Mill could castigate the former as "tyranny" ("the law of force and cunning") (25) while defending the latter as not only a right, but a responsibility: the strong, civilized nation "finds itself obliged to conquer" its "barbarous neighbors" (*Dissertations and Discussions* 253).

[28] The origin of the phrase is unclear, but it soon wove its way into nineteenth-century political and economic discourse. Macaulay calls it an "an enlightened and paternal despotism" ("Government" 716). Mill contrasts British and Indian despotism (*Dissertations* 254); as a good Englishman he also disdains "Continental despots" (260).

[29] My parenthetical citations refer to Mill's 1859 essay "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" (which might also be called "25 Pages of Excuses to Intervene").

fit for popular institutions is, that they, or a sufficient proportion of them to prevail in the contest, are willing to brave labor and danger for their liberation" (258). Note that he is writing two years after the 1857 Rebellion. We must read his logic, then, as follows: since an *in*sufficient proportion of Indians prevailed, they must *not* be "fit for freedom" (258).

Thus, a historical model of Indian despotism justified the despotic ambitions of the British. Metcalf writes, "Many continued to see India as a land suited for despotism, only now that of enlightened British officers. In part a nostalgia nourished by early nineteenth-century Romanticism, this dissident ideal flourished principally among officials in newly conquered territories" and was nicknamed the "Punjab School" (38). Bernard Cohn explains the colonial mindset thus: "Indians are best ruled by a 'strong hand,' who could administer justice in a rough-and-ready fashion unfettered by rules and regulations" (65). Despite Mill's support for colonialism, he would surely balk at his theory of despotism being used to justify British lawlessness. The logic of benevolent despotism ultimately undermines itself. During the Hastings trial, Burke argued, "The moment a sovereign removes the idea of security and protection from his subjects, and declares that he is everything and they nothing, when he declares that no contract he makes with them can or ought to bind him, he then declares war upon them: he is no longer sovereign; they are no longer subjects" (qtd. in Suleri 54). As Suleri writes, "If Burke's rhetoric were followed to its logical conclusion, the trial would not end with the impeachment of Hastings alone but could further threaten the future of the East India Company" (54). Empire flourished in the gaps and contradictions inherent in British economic and philosophical principles. Dirks writes, "The desire for perfect market freedom on the part of followers of [Adam] Smith" (who decried the monopoly power of the East India Company), "like the desire for perfect individual freedom on the part of the great nineteenth-century British

liberals James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and Thomas Macaulay, existed alongside the acceptance of empire" (*Scandal* 139).

"Wild Justice"

The 1857 Rebellion at once concretized and raised the stakes for justifying British conquest. While some portion of soldiers and citizens had been organizing in advance (Khaldun 23ff.), the uprising's immediate sparks were the exact themes I am exploring: willful cultural negligence from British officials, followed by what was widely perceived as an unjust trial. That May, 85 sepoys were court-martialed for refusing to use the greased cartridges—purported to contain pig and cow fat—assigned to their new Enfield rifles. They were "sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment," and three regiments of Indian soldiers rebelled the next day. They first freed the prisoners, then marched on Delhi as the rising spread (P. C. Joshi 353). As with the designation of criminal tribes, culture is transmuted into crime. By refusing to accommodate to Muslim and Hindu dietary restrictions, British officers essentially criminalized the sepoys for their religious commitment. The effect, wrote one nineteenth-century historian, "was to convert soldiers into felons" (qtd. in Thompson, *Medal* 36). Four decades after the uprising, the highly-decorated Field Marshal Lord Roberts, who fought the rebels as a lieutenant, admitted that "incredible disregard of the soldiers' prejudices was displayed in the manufacture of these cartridges" (qtd. in Khaldun 63.n 126). This disregard took place against a backdrop not only of economic hardship, which helped fuel the uprising among civilians, but also fears of forced conversions to Christianity (Khaldun 21-22)—rumors that the Army's behavior seemed to confirm.

Rebels opposed both the tools and the symbols of British power—not least, of British law. Khaldun writes that "wherever revolt broke out," whether by sepoys or civilians, "the government treasury was plundered, the magazine was sacked, barracks and court houses were burnt and prison gates were flung open" (31). Rebels also sought to restore indigenous rulers: in Delhi, the Mughal Emperor; in Oudh, the son of the exiled Nawab. Against these leaders' claims to sovereignty, Britons depicted resistance fighters as the "treacherous seditionist or bloodthirsty fanatic" (Thompson, *Medal* 31). There is no starker opposition than the competing interpretations of Britain's suppression of the rebels: it was either *justice* or *murder*. Writing in 1925, Edward Thompson compares these two theories of 1857: "British troops returning from a village-burning expedition shot and bayoneted a number of loyal sepoys; this the *Times* called 'wild justice,' but [General] Outram termed it 'cold-blooded murder'" (51).[30] Justice became an ad-hoc affair and, even more than usual, a spectacle of domination: from the show trial of the Mughal Emperor (who was exiled to Burma) to the execution of presumed traitors, either by hanging or, in the language of the day, "blowing from guns" (being tied to the mouth of a canon before it is fired—a method reportedly adopted from the Mughals). One British lieutenant wrote to his mother, "The death that seems to have the most effect is being blown from a gun" (qtd. in Thompson 41). As Thompson argues, this form of execution exacted "no kind of torture except . . . mental." What was intended as a spectacle of British dominance has become, he writes, a spectacle of British barbarism: "by our use of it we placed ourselves beside that Mogul Empire which we despise; and the exhibition in Europe of pictures[31] of Russians hanging Polish

[30] "Wild justice" likely alludes to Francis Bacon's essay "On Revenge."
[31] Thompson cites Vasily Vereshchagin, famed for his graphic paintings of war.

prisoners and of the British blowing Indian prisoners to pieces[32] conveyed the same impression of barbarous brutal empire" (44). Though themselves no more than alien occupiers, Britons further associated "mutiny" with other types of criminality, from looting to rape. Thus the Rebellion was not only a watershed in the formalization of British power; it also crystallized the cultural trope of the transgressive Indian. The most pervasive trope was the supposed threat to "the 'purity' of English womanhood," which "left as an enduring legacy lurid tales of rape and molestation" (Metcalf 44). As we shall see, it is this legacy that E. M. Forster strives to interrogate and disrupt in *A Passage to India*.

The Mutiny narrative was also told in photographs.[33] Landing in India one month before the end of the Rebellion, photographer Felice Beato was just in time to capture—or in many cases, reconstruct—iconic scenes of the carnage. One depicts a ghoulish, skeleton-strewn courtyard that testifies to the aftermath of the siege of Lucknow (in Desmond 68). Not even pretending to document the scene intact, Beato had skeletons of the Indian dead uncovered in order to dramatize the totality of British victory. In the background, four Indian subjects survey the scene—learning, the viewer infers, the lesson of submission.[34] A second photograph, *The Hanging of Two Rebels* (in *Last Empire* 64), highlights the fate of dissidents, as well as the duty of India's loyal sepoys. The act of witnessing is prominent in this image as well. This time there are 10 witnesses standing within the scene, in a rough circle around the hanged men. The landscape is bare, apart from a discarded rope and timbers, which suggest the improvisational nature of the execution and the fact that these witnesses are also participants: they have just *built*

[32] The paintings formed a trio, together with his painting of a Roman crucifixion. Though referring back to 1857, the Indian scene depicts British soldiers in contemporary (1880s) garb. Vereshchagin thus links British soldiers to a series of atrocities by collapsing history, whether that of three decades or two millennia.

[33] I will typically refer to 1857-58 as a Rebellion or Uprising, but will use the term Mutiny when discussing the British cultural narrative.

[34] The photograph's caption attempts to direct the viewer's loyalties, dubbing it "the Slaughter of 2,000 Rebels," then commemorating the specific regiments (one an older British regiment, one Punjabi) who defeated them.

this gallows and been ordered to hang their countrymen. In fact, such improvised executions were often committed by the British officers themselves. This photograph emphasizes the role of the sepoys instead. Viewed within the narrative of Mutiny, it is another lesson in dominance and submission. Viewed less orthodoxly, these silenced yet vigilant men are giving witness not only to injustice, but desecration of the dead.

Even a writer like Steel, who expressed sympathy with the causes of Mutiny,[35] still replicates part of the standard narrative. At the end of *On the Face of the Waters*, she returns to Dashe, the magistrate with "intimate knowledge" of his district (37). An admirer recalls how "Dashe kept his district together by sheer absence of fear" (430), and the novel rewards him for his relative mercy: in his district, only sepoys rebel, no civilians (426). Steel takes pains to paint him as both rational and merciful ("he favours Clemency Canning" and quickly "ordered the gallows to be removed" [430]), yet her sympathy is limited by her profound belief in Indian difference (see Parry). In a report supposedly written by Dashe, he casually recalls "putting down some Goojurs and other predatory tribes who took occasion to resort to their ancestral habits" (427). Steel thus inserts the Mutiny into the broader narrative of ancient, immutable criminality.

The Mutiny narrative was so pervasive that historian and novelist Edward Thompson felt the need to systematically deconstruct it in *The Other Side of the Medal* (1925). His is "*not* 'a book about the Mutiny'" (viii), but a book about the misreading of history and the power of popular memory. Thompson deplores "the uncritical and incurious character of my people's minds" that has led them to accept the conventional narrative for 70 years (50). "English histories" draw a "veil . . . over the excesses of our own infuriated forces," but do not likewise veil "the infuriated mutineers" (39-40). He proposes that "we should look, once, clearly and

[35] She writes of the causes in *India Through the Ages* (see Graff 60-61), though her sympathy in the novel is equivocal: "But suddenly from a single throat came that cry for justice which has a claim to a hearing; at least, in the estimation of the people of India" (*On the Face of the Waters* 154).

finally, at the side which has been hidden from ourselves; then we shall understand what madness is working subtly in the Indian mind to-day" (40). This line is typical in that Thompson is unforgiving of British atrocities, yet misreads Indian grievances as "madness."[36] He is elsewhere more subtle, pointing to "widespread popular memories" that "spread" Indian "hatred" and "discontent" (26) and describing "the Mutiny" as "an unavenged and unappeased ghost" (32). Thompson quotes and compares a wide array of primary documents; the sheer succession of brutal accounts is designed to shake British readers' faith in their own narratives—and even in history itself. British atrocities are not "exceptional," Thompson writes, but common. He invokes the language of law, noting the need to present "the Indian case" (85). As for the law itself, he condemns the abandoning of legal process in favor of "government by gallows" and "government by massacre" (75). He includes "martial law" in this critique, quoting one British Commissioner, "I have often heard of 'martial law,' and have known a good many occasions on which energetic people demanded 'martial law,' but to this day I have never been able to make out what it means, unless it be a general leave to any military person to kill anyone, take any property, or do anything else he pleases" (in Thompson 56). This judgement had renewed resonance in the wake of the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 (see Thompson 97) and in debates over how to respond to Gandhi's campaign of Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience. The problem: how to justify British actions that did not match their own rhetoric, especially now that there was an active Indian nationalist movement and an active Indian press.

[36] Part of this dissonance comes from Thompson's intended audience: he is writing to correct British wrongs, and "Had it been possible, I would have kept its circulation within the strict limits of Great Britain" (viii). He defends his country at large (49), including British "service" to India (20-21), though he admits that they too succumbed to the madness of war (54).

"Rule by Legal Fiction"

Despite the haphazardness with which India was claimed as a colony, both the Company and Crown found it increasingly necessary to justify their acquisitions, however disingenuous, retroactive, or fraudulent those justifications might prove. In the land-grabbing decades following the Battle of Plassey (the Nawab of Bengal's defeat in 1757),[37] the Company had not only to erect, but to justify, a series of state-like institutions—a task unprecedented in Britain's constitutional history. Early claims to economic and legal jurisdiction rested on "grants" from Indian rulers, such as the *Diwani* of Bengal, which in 1765 transferred the power of revenue collection from the Mughal ruler to the Company (Dirks, *Scandal* xi-xii).[38] In *Master of Bengal*, Percival Spear writes, "The dominion of Bengal was not desired in itself, but only as a safeguard for peaceful commercial operations. . . . Rule by legal fiction and by deputy was both safer and cheaper in the conditions of the time" (qtd. in Dirks, *Scandal* 359n. 16). But this new order also fostered disorder. Britons misunderstood Indian models of land use and ownership, thus disempowering the village collective (Khaldun 8ff.) in favor of individual taxation and above all state power. Within five years, the new tax policies led to catastrophic famine in Bengal, and the resulting chaos and destitution "led to a breakdown in law in order" in which "roving gangs (*dacoits*) began to prey on a helpless peasantry and to disrupt trade" (Cohn 59-60).[39] The Great Bengal famine of 1770 provoked the Sannyasi Rebellion, fictionalized in the 1882 Bengali novel, *Ānandamaṭh*. Thus, famine was both an effect of British intervention[40] and a cause of

[37] The outnumbered British succeeded largely due to an act of bribery.
[38] As the spoils of conquest grew, the Company came into conflict with Parliament. They tussled over the *Diwani* right, with the Company soon paying a hefty annual share to Parliament. But this was only a temporary compromise: "the precise nature of the sovereignty—Crown, Company, or Mughal—was hardly clarified" (Dirks, *Scandal* 180).
[39] Cohn argues that the British tried, but failed, to fit Bengali agriculture within "the British cultural system." That is, they tried to determine individual ownership and thence to demand—with recourse to the courts—"what they thought was the just share of the surplus of agricultural production" (59). Cultural misinterpretation and fear of punishment thus led to food shortages and famine.
[40] The novel also blames Bengal's Muslim rulers. See Lipner 61-70 for Chatterjee's depiction of Muslims.

dissent. In his novel, Chatterjee uses the famine as an allegory for British "rapaciousness" and elevates the rebels into a specifically *nationalist* mission (Ray 24-25).

By 1784 the British had established a mode of "double government," with checks and balances between Company and Parliament, and which was embodied on the ground "in the separation of the powers of district judge and collector" (Metcalf 17). Metcalf argues that the relative powers of judge and collector highlighted "tensions between competing visions of the Raj." In an ideal model, the judge would "embody universal principles of justice," while the collector was projected into a Romantic vision of a personal, "Oriental" style of rule: a benevolent despotism in which the collector acted as "the *ma-bap*, or compassionate father and mother," over a childlike peasantry (Metcalf 25, 27). Over the next century, that paternalist claim was extended to the Raj itself.

British administrators appropriated the tools of linguists and scholars in order to excavate (and thence preside over) indigenous learning. William Jones's *Digest* of Hindu and Muslim law (1798) exemplifies the era's efforts to rule (and justify rule) through a complete command of indigenous knowledge: a knowledge "scientifically" codified and supervised by English masters. His ambition was appropriately imperial: through his legal code, he would make Governor-General Cornwallis "the Justinian of India" (Cohn 70).[41] Despite this attempt to translate Sanskrit and Arabic texts into rules a British judge could oversee, "Hindu and Muslim legal advisors remained attached to the British Indian courts until the 1860s" (Metcalf 24). Similarly, Macaulay proposed to "digest" the diverse strands of India's laws. He stresses the palimpsestic nature of Indian history, in which "Each of the successive races of conquerors has brought with it its own peculiar jurisprudence" ("Government" 715, 713). This lack of consistency, he argues,

[41] As Metcalf notes, Jones was neither the first nor the last to compare British imperialism to the Roman model, a parallel that would "be drawn ever more insistently as time went on" (13). For instance, Macaulay is "proud" to compare Britain's governance of India with Rome's over its vast provinces ("Government" 706).

renders the results "arbitrary. What is administered is not law, but a kind of rude and capricious equity" (714). Here he is channeling Jeremy Bentham, who aspired to a penal code that was universally "complete," "concise," precise, and "justified"—i.e., "manifestly useful" (qtd. in Stokes 222-23). Ultimately, however, Macaulay prizes decisiveness over uniformity: "We do not mean that all the people of India should live under the same law . . . we wish to give no shock to the prejudices of any part of our subjects. Our principle is simply this; uniformity where you can have it; diversity where you must have it; but in all cases certainty" ("Government" 715). Ironically, British attempts to codify ancient and "authentic" indigenous laws led to a *new* body of case law, which, having been interpreted by British judges, became the new precedent. By the 1860s, Cohn concludes, "What had started with Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones as a search for the 'ancient Indian constitution' ended up with what they had so much wanted to avoid—with English law as the law of India" (75).

Throughout British rule, imperialists "contained" their fears by "projecting" them upon distinct native groups—rendering the illegible legible—to root out and "destroy" (Metcalf 41). Metcalf explains the *thagi* "conspiracy" of the 1830s as an attempt to impose order over a largely symbolic threat. Thags (anglicized to thugs) were robbers who worshipped Kali and strangled their victims, but in reality were hard to distinguish from the broader category of *dacoits*:

> What gave thagi its distinctive appeal was . . . the way it enabled the British to give voice to their own enduring fears and anxieties. Uneasily dependent upon native intermediaries, whom they could not bring themselves to trust, but without whose collaboration the Raj could not function, the British saw deception and deceit everywhere in India. Thagi thus became a metaphor for . . . what they feared most in India, the inability to know and control their colonial subjects. By projecting these fears outward onto thags, and then destroying this threatening conspiracy, the British could in some degree contain what they could not openly avow and hence reassure themselves of their mastery of India. (Metcalf 41)

Always on the lookout for sensation (in this case, goddess-worship and murder), the British public[42] was fascinated with *Confessions of a Thug*, an 1839 novel by Philip Meadows Taylor, based on contemporary reports and narrated by a vengeful and remorseless (indeed exultant) thug. The book is less true crime than adventure novel, but it is framed by Taylor's disquisition on Thuggee[43] and his dialogue with the main narrator. The book simultaneously emphasizes its basis in fact and its unbelievable, seemingly-fabular tales.[44] It also reminds the reader of the relation between subject and sahib, prisoner and enforcer, as the thug directly addresses Taylor (and indirectly, readers) as "sahib" from within prison. *This* thug is no longer a threat, but, within the narrative, he is an informant about an entire cult (or culture), and *as* narrative, he is an entertainer.

But fears of the other could not be confined to narrative or to a single brand of criminality. For the British, the lesson of 1857 was not their own culpability, but the profound *difference* of their Indian subjects (Metcalf 43-44). Criminals were not isolated to minor cults or tribes; any sepoy could mutiny, any villager rebel. With racialist fears renewed, assimilationist models of empire became less popular. The Ilbert Bill met with severe backlash, as it proposed to grant Indian judges criminal jurisdiction over anyone in India, including Europeans. Yet the bill was a logical manifestation of what "liberal" imperialists had long advocated: English education, equality and universality of law,[45] plus a more "open" civil service. As more Indians advanced through the ranks, how would authority be delegated? Who had the right to judge whom? Who, in a trial by jury, were one's peers? When the bill finally passed in 1883, its most liberal aims

[42] Queen Victoria was equally fascinated; she was granted proofs of the novel before it was published (Rushby).
[43] Taylor cites his own experience in India as well as the work of civil and military men to identify and suppress thugs. Courtesy of the police, he includes a tally of prosecutions and types of sentencing.
[44] Taylor's "Introduction" begins, "The tale of crime which forms the subject of the following pages is, alas! almost all true." His epigraph is a slightly-excised verse from *The Law of Lombardy*: "I have heard, have read bold fables of enormity,/ Devised to make men wonder; but this hardness/ Transcends all fiction."
[45] The Indian Evidence Act (1872) standardized what was admissible for evidence in Indian law courts, so it would no longer vary by caste or religion. It was authored by James Fitzjames Stephen, Virginia Woolf's uncle.

were neutralized (European defendants were guaranteed a jury of at least half Europeans) to appease a public still obsessed with visions of tyrannical or lascivious Indians preying on white women. The debate precipitated mass protest, even by progressive reformers and feminists. The scholar Annette Beveridge, who taught at Calcutta's Bethune College, denounced the bill for "subjecting civilized women to the jurisdiction of men who have done little or nothing to redeem the women of their race, and whose social ideas are still on the verge of civilization" (qtd. in Metcalf 212). Despite her devotion to Indian women's education, Beveridge here distinguishes between "civilized women" and "women of *their* race." Alongside British stereotypes of "Indian men as sensual and unmanly" (Metcalf 213; see also Ray 23), critics of the Ilbert Bill revealed that their real fear was the opposite: Indian men who assert authority and expertise. One opponent to the Bill (James Ferguson) draws a remarkable line from the alleged mistakes of *one* Indian scholar to that of *all* Indian judges. Thus, a Scotsman's attack on an Indian rival[46] devolves into an attack on any Indian's ability to comprehend his own history and culture, and finally any Indian's capacity for knowledge and judgement. He begins what we might expect to be a dry treatise on archeology with a surprising analogy to criminal law:

> If, after reading the following pages, any European feels that he would like to be subjected to his [Mitra's] jurisdiction, in criminal cases, he must have courage possessed by few; or if he thinks he could depend on his knowledge, or impartiality, to do him justice, as he could on one of his own countrymen, he must be strangely constituted in mind, body, and estate. (Qtd. in Cohn 96)

In this analogy between academic and legal discernment, he claims that it is natural "why Europeans resident in the country, and knowing the character of the people among whom they are living, should have shrunk instinctively, with purely patriotic motives, from the fatuity of the Ilbert Bill" (ibid.). It is revealing that he traces this "instinctive" shrinking not to a yearning for

[46] Fergusson's antagonism shines through in his title: *Archeology in India, with Especial Reference to the Works of Babu Rajendralal Mitra* (1884). He is less concerned with his subject than the subject of his attack.

universal justice, but to an insular, exclusionary model of patriotism, in which one's "country" determines one's "character." Fergusson was a true Orientalist in his claim that only Western forms of knowledge could comprehend—and in turn judge—the East.

From Calcutta to London, questions of justice were debated through a handful of symbolic "Indian" issues. The Raj staged itself as the antidote to India's representative crimes, most dramatically *sati* (self-immolation by a Hindu widow) and the nomadic violence of *thagi*. Both entail modes of death the more transgressive because they follow codes entirely out of British control. Another recurring topic was rape: the rumored rape of white women by Indians, as in the Mutiny myths, or the silenced rape of Indian women by white men, which Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand address in their novels of the 1930s. We have already seen how some Europeans allude to empire *as* rape (in the trial of Warren Hastings), a theme also explored by an author as far removed as Virginia Woolf in *The Voyage Out*. Another intersection of gender, race, and religion was the debate over widows' rights, in which many voices claimed to speak *for* subaltern women, as Gayatri Spivak argues, to the exclusion of the women themselves. The *sati* debate dramatizes how a single issue can elicit an array of strategies, even from those with only a symbolic stake in the outcome. Thus, debates over widows' rights and child marriage gave rise not just to indigenous reformers, as in Bengali intellectual circles (see Chakrabarty, Part II), but gave Britons an excuse to claim jurisdiction over local customs and morality. Spivak writes: "The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of 'White men saving brown women from brown men'. . . . Against this is the Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins: 'The women actually wanted to die'" (93). Reading Steel reinforces Spivak's point that "White women . . . have not produced an alternative understanding" to that offered by white men (93). Thus, *On the Face of the Waters* laments the

"incomprehensible tragedy" of a young widow tempted to submit to this "*suttee* nonsense" (72, 71), which another character dismisses as "suttee and widow re-marriage and all that" (128).[47] More radically, British feminists claimed solidarity with their oppressed Indian sisters (see Grewal); yet, as with the Ilbert debates, gender bonds were often sacrificed to or subsumed by race. Indian traditionalists conflated the issue of women's rights with Western dominance. Indeed, the more a writer fixates on the figure of *the* Indian woman, the more stylized his account. Forster at once emblematizes and embodies this failure in Hamidullah's call for a poetic portrait of "the Indian lady as she is and not as she is supposed to be" (*A Passage to India* 270-71). This counsel would have to wait, for in this novel, Indian women remain largely silent, faceless, or enclosed—all of them witnessed through the eyes of men.

The late Raj continued to present itself as a reforming influence, despite waning interest in empire after the Great War. In 1923 we find a political scientist trumpeting Britain's feat (thanks to Bentham) of "separating law from despotic discretion" by "building up a system of legal and judicial institutions based on political science and independent of the executive government" (Wallas 55). This reading is utopian: Bentham as he is supposed to be, not how law was implemented on the ground. Wallas goes on, "If ever we march out of India and leave behind us anything better than mountains of empty soda-water bottles, it may be that this principle of Bentham's will prove to be our most permanent contribution to Indian civilization" (55). The only way to defend the continued occupation of India (especially as new nations emerged from the sway of the Great Powers, at least in Europe, after 1919) was to assert equality under the law. But the individuals who practiced that law—the Indian judge or lawyer—arose as problematic figures in the professional classes. His expertise in British law—and his role as its servant and representative—seem to align him with Macaulay's projected "class of persons

[47] For Steel, the Indian woman is "always already 'sati'" (Ray 19).

Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" ("Minute" 729). As Homi Bhabha notes (150), Macaulay's plan echoes a Church Missionary Society plan of 1818, which called for "a body of well instructed labourers, competent in their proficiency in English to act as Teachers, Translators, and Compilers of useful works for the masses of the people."[48] When carried to a logical end, such "well instructed" magistrates were authorized to mediate British law to *any* of its subjects, Asian or European. Thus, the empire translates back: mediating British law to Britons themselves.

Of course, the racially stratified cases imagined under the Ilbert Bill or in *A Passage to India* were not the bulk of legal practice. Local traditions of property and inheritance created their own network of lawsuits and disputes. In fiction such as *Krishnakanta's Will* (1878) by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee or the short stories of Rabindranath Tagore, daily life is punctuated by the seemingly endless work of scribes, clerks, and lawyers. Chatterjee's novel is largely conservative in outlook, but it also addresses contemporary debates about widow remarriage and the property rights of women. These texts use legal problems to propel personal dramas and moral debates, while also illustrating the diverse actors who keep the judicial machines running.

Against this mundane backdrop, dramatic trials played a major, if sporadic, part of the imperial scene. Sometimes, with the reins of power and profit so in flux, more was on trial than the man or woman in the dock. Sometimes the legal process itself was on trial, at least in the court of public opinion. Hastings was accused not only of abusing Company power, as we have seen, but of manipulating the machinery of the law in order to remove—by way of the hangman—an Indian rival. Macaulay called it "judicial murder" (in Dirks, *Scandal* 94). The mere rumor that a political skirmish could lead to execution undermines popular belief in the law. James Fitzjames Stephen writes, "it was the impression of the natives at the time that

[48] For the full quote and context, see the CMS *Missionary Register* 233.

Hastings prosecuted Nuncomar [a collector or *diwan* in Bengal], and that he was punished for having accused" Hastings (267).[49] Thence Stephen draws the sweeping lesson, "it also proves, if proof is needed, how vague, inaccurate and ill-informed native popular opinion is" (267). But he is quick to forgive Hastings's other accuser, Macaulay, who was merely giving vent to "traditional" Whig "hatred" of Justice Impey, "and also because his marvellous power of style blinded him to the effect which his language produced" (3). This praise of Macaulay sits uneasily with his dismissal of Indian popular opinion, especially as both are combining pathos with circumstantial evidence to come to the same conclusion. Macaulay's dazzling style and, for Stephen, his shared cultural heritage forgive all.

Throughout the colonial period, other representative trials tested, if not the limits of British power, then the culpability of British subjects who, in representing that power, commit a crime. In the "Rangoon Outrage" of 1899, a group of British soldiers[50] were witnessed raping a Burmese woman, leading to a series of civil and military trials—but no convictions. When it was clear that the men would not be convicted, the Viceroy (George Curzon) pressured the military to punish them directly.[51] Canadian journalist Sara Jeanette Duncan fictionalized the resulting acrimony in her novel *Set in Authority* (1906), where a British soldier is charged with murdering an Indian man.[52] In both trials (the real and the fictional) British opinion was divided: those who supported the prosecution judged the soldiers' actions an outrage, while those who did not were

[49] The alleged intermediary was Hastings's friend—also India's first Chief Justice—who tried Nuncomar on an unrelated charge. After studying the transcripts, Stephen calls the charge against Justice Impey "wholly unjust" (3).
[50] The exact number was disputed. In her Introduction to *Set in Authority*, Warkentin says there were twenty (23).
[51] Jeremy Neill argues: "Oddly, if the legal system had done what the government wished it to do, and punished the soldiers involved, the officers likely would not have been disciplined. Curzon and Hamilton were more enraged about the cover-up than the crime. In the end, the affair was not a concern over what happened to the unfortunate Ma Gun, who largely disappears from the record after this case . . . Rather, it was an argument over appearance and discipline that the British had to maintain in order to keep the prestige and masculine appearance of control that underlay the entire structure of British imperial power" ("Conclusion").
[52] Perhaps she felt that omitting the rape would make the story more palatable or publishable. The rape could be read as a metaphor for Britain's seizure of India and Burma, which Duncan, a supporter of a more benevolent form of empire, might find threatening. A simple murder is controversial enough.

outraged by Curzon's temerity in intervening.[53] Ironically, both positions implicitly question the basis of British authority: Britons who support the prosecution show a will to hold their own representatives accountable, while those who object to the Viceroy's intervention pose a challenge to *his* authority—a lofty claim given that he represented Victoria herself. These implications were rarely articulated, but they show how the conflicts arising from foreign occupation will gradually undermine whatever justification is given for that occupation.

Criminalizing Indian Modernity

As the nationalist movement consolidated in the early twentieth century, imperialists projected their fear of transgression not onto thugs or mutineers, but upon the *modern* (hybrid or westernized) Indian: a conspiracy theory, both real and re-imagined, of Indian nationalism. Of course, Europeans were not the only ones touting reform. Internal Indian reform movements like the Brahmo Samaj (founded in 1828 during the Bengal Renaissance) questioned Hindu orthodoxies about the role of women and the caste system. If one might expect the most utopian, Enlightenment-minded imperialists to support the equal rights of man (if not woman), instead, 1857 ushered in "a flood of reactionary opinions" (Khaldun 54, quoting a high-ranking civil servant of the time). In the wake of the revolt, the Raj chose to ally with traditional elites such as landlords and native princes. Khaldun writes: "The British in India began jealously to guard and preserve the social and religious survivals against the demands of the progressive, rising middle class in respect of age of marriage, legislation against untouchability, divorce among Hindus, and

[53] Duncan wrote the anonymous "A Progressive Viceroy" to rebuke Curzon's interference. She calls him "an idealist in a hurry" (*Set in Authority*, Appendix I). Her belief, Warkentin writes, was "that no matter how benevolent the regime they live under, the people on the spot know best how to manage their own affairs" (22). This instinctive closing of the ranks is exactly what Forster and Orwell find dangerous.

the right to inheritance among Hindu women" (55). As Hutchins argues, "Once the target of reformers, India had now become the hope of reactionaries" (xi).

Macaulay's "class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern" was now viewed with suspicion: as pretenders at best, subversives at worst. Britons who believed in a "rough-and-ready" mode of justice argued that the courts only "made the simple peasant folk of India the prey of the urban-based lawyers, merchants, and agitators" (Cohn 65). We may here compare the figure of the Indian judge or lawyer to that of the Indian doctor. All appear frequently in Anglo-Indian fiction, and all disrupt the supposed-universality of Western rationality. The professions of law and medicine are also implicated in the surveillance and control of laboring or subject populations,[54] and both privilege certain types of witnessing—the eye witness—as the condition for a proper and civilized response—be it the response of medicine, sanitation, or famine relief, or that of a fair trial. Beyond the call for an eye-witness, they also privilege the ability to preserve what is seen through recording technology, or to enhance it through optical lenses—be it the detective's magnifying glass, the doctor's microscope, or Dr. Aziz's field-glasses, which begin as a tool of exploration and end as an exhibit in court. The Western-educated native professional occupies an ambivalent position. Lest they become too autonomous, the state tried to co-opt native judges (as in Forster) and doctors (Orwell) into its own self-justifying spectacle. Handicapped by his role as civil servant, Forster's judge is pressured to render a verdict favorable to his white audience. A young British judge boasts that he can control, or at least predict, the verdicts of his Indian colleague: "*My* old Das is all right" (*Passage* 215, my emphasis).

[54] See David Arnold's *Colonizing the Body*.

But the modern Indian may seem insidiously *not* all right, inhabiting as he does a liminal cultural space. In the modern Raj, the exemplary criminal is no despot, dacoit, or juggler,[55] but an English-speaking professional who mediates between East and West, presaging the rise of the *post*colonial Indian state. The alien villain of imperial romance now adopts a cosmopolitan air, more threatening for his hybridity. For if the real rapist is not the native but the Raj, the *modern* Raj visits its greatest violence not upon its most alien "criminal castes" or "backward tribes," but the hybrid figures of Indian modernity. After all, the leader of the modern independence movement was a London-trained lawyer, who first mastered, then opted out of, rule by British law. And it was not only Gandhi: the first leaders of an independent India and Pakistan, Jawaharlal Nehru and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, shared similar credentials.

Part of what made Gandhi effective was his *precise* stance on the law—on which laws should or should not be obeyed and how. His was not the anarchistic or bloodthirsty revolt of the British imagination, but a set of strategic choices, at once practical and symbolic. In his "lessons in non-co-operation" (1925), he asserts, "We must tolerate many laws of the State, even when they are inconvenient . . . it is only when a people have proved their active loyalty by obeying the many laws of the State that they acquire the right of Civil Disobedience" (*Satyagraha* 67). If "right" seems the wrong word for persons under a foreign yoke, recall that he is striving for Britain's *peaceful* withdrawal: he wants the Raj to see neither disorder nor violence, but "respectful disobedience" that will stress the "immorality" of specific laws (67). He used his weekly *Young India* to publish the tenets of Satyagraha, including how to acquit oneself in prison

[55] In *The Moonstone*, suspicion falls on three Indian "jugglers." Who else would steal an Indian diamond from an English country house? Collins plays with our expectations here. Their "jugglery" exudes an air of the occult (48), but "the celebrated Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite" (65), declares, "The clairvoyance in this case is simply a development of the romantic side of the Indian character. It would be refreshment and encouragement to those men—quite inconceivable, I grant you, to the English mind—to surround their wearisome and perilous errand in this country with a certain halo of the marvellous and the supernatural" (282). Collins endorses this skepticism: the men appear as lowly itinerants, but are in fact Brahmins who are "sacrificing their caste" (71) to (quite justly) pursue the stolen gem.

(this not long after his own release in 1924). Gandhi chose issues with both economic and symbolic impact, from his advocacy for indigo farmers in 1917 (which centered on rules of crop selection and price-fixing) to the Salt March of 1930 (taxation of a traditional natural product), down to the homespun khadi he wore to protest British textiles. But the most dramatic of his early protests involved Britain's use of criminal law as an excuse to exercise raw power. The Defence of India Act (1915) gave the government power to imprison anyone perceived as insufficiently loyal to the war effort, including moderate nationalists. When these measures were indefinitely extended in the Rowlatt Act (1919), Gandhi organized nonviolent protests and was arrested. The Act flew in the face of civil liberties, as it suspended legal protections such as the right to trial and civic building blocks such as a robust and open press. Defiance from the Indian public was met with aggression from British leadership—most savagely in the Amritsar Massacre, where British troops open-fired on an unarmed crowd who had no means of escape. So paranoid was the ruling class that this act of peaceful assembly became an excuse for legalized violence. Yet the nationalists persisted in their quest to "make the Government position uncomfortable and untenable" (Gandhi, *Satyagraha* 65). In 1924 Gandhi writes: "They were able to deal with anarchical crime but they have not yet found out any way of dealing with non-violence save by yielding to it" (65-66). His goal is at once to master British law and to withdraw from it—in fact, to master it *by* withdrawing, and in turn, cause the British to quit India.[56]

The Art of Surveillance

Displaced from home to observe and order alien territories, the detective, ethnographer, or colonial civil servant is the consummate participant-observer—an ethnographer not, first, of

[56] Shortly after Gandhi made his "Quit India" speech (1942), he and most of the Congress leadership were arrested under yet another Defence of India Act.

an alien populace, but of his own. The historian of anthropology James Clifford likens Joseph Conrad and George Orwell to ethnographers: "ironic participants" and "ethnographic liberals" who contrive "to stand out or apart from the imperial roles reserved for them as whites" (79). This view of novel-as-anthropology has its counterpart in anthropology's own need to define and defend itself using the language of older disciplines. Orwell's contemporary, the French anthropologist Marcel Griaule, used "juridical metaphors" to describe the choice of "evidence" and "witnesses" that he assembles to make a "case" (Clifford 67). And this court of law is also an epistemic battlefield. Each "ethnographic encounter" entails a "clash of interests" and "partial truths," so "for Griaule, fieldwork was a perpetual struggle for *control* (in the political and scientific senses) of this encounter" (67). These metaphors[57] illustrate the play of power in the quest for knowledge—especially in a colonial context. Moreover, the models of ethnography as *trial* and as *war* both require *narrative*: be it the sifting, interrogating, and assembling of evidence, or the competing tales told by colonizer and colonized. This entanglement of knowledge, violence, and story lays bare the complicity of the imperial arts and sciences: in the curation of exotic objects, for instance, as conduits of knowledge, beauty, and the collector's power; the study of culture as a tool for legal or military surveillance; the judicial quest for a "true" narrative; or the traveler's tale to the folks back home.

Of course, the documentary claims of anthropology are materially distinct from the coercive practices of empire. Yet the mystification of ethnography as an objective science left it vulnerable to appropriation *by* imperialists, liberal and conservative alike. Evidence of Indian unfitness could be used to justify Macaulayesque acculturation, or, equally, to secure a Conservative model of essential difference—a subject population requiring indefinite, unabashed

[57] Clifford reads Griaule's metaphors as ironic and deliberately provocative: "If he compares ethnography to a theater of war or a judicial proceeding, one need not assume that in the field he acted consistently as a company commander or an examining magistrate" (79).

military rule. Moreover, the need of administrators to gather and deploy locally specific knowledge placed civil servants in the role of amateur ethnographers. Thus, ethnography was appropriated not just ideologically, but through practical techniques and knowledge—even, ironically, inaccurate knowledge. In the wake of the "Mutiny," the exhaustive eight-volume *The People of India* (1868-75) does not even pretend to address a neutral audience, but was published by, and directs its evidence at, servants of the Raj (Metcalf 117). The books aim to catalogue the diverse segments of Indian society, depicting each with representative photographs and notes on the "group's essential character" (119). The project emphasizes "political loyalty (or its lack)," with "an ongoing desire to provide practical clues to the identification of groups which had so recently had the opportunity to demonstrate either their fierce hatred of British rule or their acquiescence" (Pinney 34). It was all part of the Raj's effort to define (and thus contain or destroy) "collective criminality." We can follow a direct path from the *Thuggee* campaign of the 1830s to the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. Both projects attempted to reify a definition of "caste" or "tribe," however sensational or erroneous that definition might be (Metcalf 123). Viewing internal Indian divisions as ancient and immutable, British scholars and administrators only reinforced those divides.

This taxonomical impulse again intersects with statecraft in Britain's Censuses of India, which began in the 1860s and, from 1881, followed Britain's decadal schedule (*Census* 1: v). The divisions and subdivisions under "Religion" and "Caste" are particularly exhaustive. Such taxonomies reified western notions of Indian social divisions which, in practice and in history, were often more fluid. Late-nineteenth-century imperialists put increasing emphasis on caste, so "by 1901 caste was used in the Indian census as the equivalent to the social categories used in Britain" (Cannadine, *Ornamentalism* 42). This analogy is useful, but Cannadine underplays the

role of race in the imperial mind. The census divisions were based "on the social Darwinist principle that 'caste was the result of interactions between two racial types, a white and a black', and ended up by classifying the people of India into 2,378 main castes and tribes, competitively arranged according to social precedence" (Young, *Desire* 178, quoting Inden 59). Young summarizes: "For the Victorians, race and sex became history, and history spoke of race and sex" (178). As for "Religion," if we scan the 1911 Census (this from the volume on the Punjab), the subsets under "Hindus" alone are overwhelming: from "Devi Cults" to "Sects worshipping Muhammadan Saints," 10 sections on "Saint Worship," 4 subsets of "Reformers," and 10 "Tests prescribed by the Census Commissioner," which delineate the subject's orthodoxy according to beliefs about Brahmans, the Vedas, death rituals, and cows.[58] In his overview, the 1911 Census Commissioner notes that forms prepared "by trained Enumerators" are more accurate than those prepared by "private persons (chiefly Europeans) who filled in the schedules for themselves and their families" (1: vii). He pokes fun at the errors made by high-ranking Britons (one a High Court Judge) while praising the under-educated but well-trained enumerators (presumably Indian and presumably local). Despite the document's strong bureaucratic bent, between the lines we can read a value in local expertise: the counter must know his assigned blocks down to the last person (1: vi-vii). The Census thus combines the disciplines of geography and ethnography while enlisting local experts to collect data on the ground.

The title character of *Kim* (1901) takes the participant-observer status to its logical end: he becomes a spy. Kim is culturally Indian, genetically Irish, and the British seek to appropriate both his talents and his whiteness in service of the state. Colonel Creighton woos Kim in "fluent and picturesque Urdu," presenting the technical job of surveying first as a romantic adventure,

[58] *Census* 14: Table of Contents. Each region includes a religious breakdown, but this volume on the Punjab is notably comprehensive. For "the 10 tests," see 109-11.

then as a spy game: "Yes, and thou must learn how to make pictures of roads and mountains and rivers—to carry these pictures in thine eye till a suitable time comes to set them upon paper. Perhaps some day, when thou art a chain-man, I may say to thee when we are working together: 'Go across those hills and see what lies beyond'." And if "there are bad people living in those hills who will slay the chain-man if he be seen to look like a Sahib," then the shape-shifting Kim must search "for knowledge of what is behind those hills—for a picture of a river and a little news of what the people say in the villages there" (101). That is, the state seeks both objective and subjective knowledge—including gossip, rumor, and sources of dissent. Kim hones his powers of surveillance by learning "the Jewel Game"—a memory game played "sometimes with veritable stones, sometimes with piles of swords and daggers, sometimes with photographs of natives" (134).[59] It is a more practical lesson in anthropology than perusing the eight volumes of *The People of India*, and Kim also gains the embodied knowledge of "how such and such a caste talked, or walked, or coughed, or spat, or sneezed" (134).[60] *Kim* walks a fine line between what Parry identifies as "Kipling's emotional involvement with India" (reveling in its diversity and contradictions) "and his ideological commitment to the Raj" (254). In the novel, ethnographic tools (as well as Kim himself) fall finally into the hands of the state.

Yet despite the state's appropriation of anthropology, ethnographic techniques may also be used to *resist* imperialism. Clifford describes ethnography as "a hybrid activity" that "appears as writing, as collecting, as modernist collage, as imperial power, as subversive critique" (13). "Ethnographic liberals" thus occupied an "ambivalent" position within or alongside "colonial regimes" (78). Likewise, other liberal imperialists may find themselves performing roles with

[59] Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts (and in his former life an officer in India and Africa), dubbed it "Kim's Game." Today it is purportedly taught to US snipers and Special Forces.
[60] Kim has echoes of the chameleon-like Murthwaite, in *The Moonstone*, "who, at risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before" (65).

which they disidentify. Ironically, it is only then that they may become less prejudicial ethnographers, observing not only indigenous groups, but the peculiar hothouse cultures of empire—cultures which participate, like themselves, in a perpetual process of migration and hybridization.

The Alienated Observer

There is a sub-category of European colonial writing that we might call anti-colonial colonial texts. These texts disidentify with the imperial project and act as autoethnographic critiques, exposing imperial culture to public scrutiny. These writers may not be able to escape Western paradigms, or their own privilege, but they nonetheless write against the grain and against dominant power structures. Orwell is perhaps the most extreme example, as he rebels against the Anglo-Indian[61] culture he once helped to enforce. But less strident critics like Duncan or Thompson also partake in this "anthropological turn" by exposing the exploitive, absurd, or perverse rituals of their own culture: the whitewashed enclave of the club or hybrid domestic space of the bungalow, the scripted routes of the tourist, the masculine trophies of game hunting or sacrifices to "sport," and the mating rituals of sahib and memsahib. In these texts, a liberal or disillusioned imperialist finds himself (occasionally herself) alienated, either by choice or compulsion, from Anglo-Indian society. He or she uses that psychological distance to reflect upon the norms that sustain the imperial status quo. Indeed, the insularity of each Anglo-Indian enclave (British "pools" in an Indian "desert," to borrow from Duncan) make them prototypes for any investigation of "culture." Adapting the realist (and often satirical) techniques of an Austen,

[61] Following Benita Parry, I use "Anglo-Indian" in its original sense, "to designate the British community in India" (preliminary note 1). The *OED* cites this usage from as early as 1805. In the 1911 Census, the term was officially changed to designate those of mixed Indian and British ancestry, thus replacing "Eurasian, their former designation, which was very unpopular amongst them" (*Census* 1: 139). However, the old terms persisted until independence (Parry). Thus, Orwell uses the old versions of "Eurasian" and "Anglo-Indian" even in a 1934 novel about Burma.

Eliot, or Trollope, authors use the figure of the alienated imperialist to thematize the modes by which any investigator, from census taker to anthropologist to police inspector, pursues knowledge about a community.

Indeed, colonial fiction intersects with realism in general and detective fiction in particular when it narrates a community's internal dynamics through the external scrutiny of an investigator. Thus, the Victorian detectives of Collins or Doyle inspect the dynamics not just of "culprit" or "victim," but of the community itself. In *The Moonstone*, the police fail to solve the mystery, but as D. A. Miller argues (chapter 2), the English country house ultimately polices itself. In Doyle, the polymath detective doubles as armchair anthropologist. Holmes's monologue on the Andaman Islands drifts from natural history to criminal history to ethnography. Skimming his gazetteer, he exclaims, "Hum! hum! What's all this? Moist climate, coral reefs, sharks, Port Blair, convict barracks, Rutland Island, cottonwoods—Ah, here we are! 'The aborigines of the Andaman Islands . . . '." The description is physical at first, but soon devolves into cultural traits: "fierce, morose, and intractable," they are a "terror" to outsiders, whom they turn into "a cannibal feast." It is a model of culture-as-character which allows Holmes to dismiss an entire culture—"Nice, amiable people, Watson!" (162)—without the nuanced motives he would ascribe to a Western subject/suspect. If Holmes seems uncharacteristically unimaginative here—not willing or curious to learn the Islanders' motives—it is when the investigator explores his *own* culture that he reaches greater depths.

In colonial fiction, the autoethnographic impulse is typically allied with the perspective of an alienated imperialist: Forster's Fielding, who always "travels light," or the inquisitive, relativist Mrs. Moore (*A Passage to India*); Flora Annie Steel's nomadic master of disguise, a Scots prototype of the Irish Kim (*On the Face of the Waters*); Kim himself, who must choose

between serving the state in the Great Game or the lama on his road to Enlightenment; Duncan's chief commissioner and female doctor (*Set in Authority*); Virginia Woolf's Peter Walsh (*Mrs Dalloway*); Orwell's disaffected timber merchant (*Burmese Days*); and Anand's "renegade" plantation doctor (*Two Leaves and a Bud*).[62] Although writers like Kipling and Steel display essentialist notions about race, they open up a space for critique through their alienated or ambivalent characters. By critically examining the mechanisms that sustain their communities, these liminal characters also serve as stand-ins for the reader. Like Paul de Man's scenes of reading,[63] scenes in which the alienated imperialist observes his or her society serve as interpretive models, not only for the novel, but imperial culture itself. If "any narrative is primarily the allegory of its own reading" (76), then narratives of empire cast the reader in the problematic role of adventurer or voyeur—but, told at a certain slant, they may also model processes of skepticism, inquiry, and disillusionment. De man writes: "By reading we get, as we say, *inside* a text that was first something alien to us and which we now make our own by an act of understanding" (12-13). If this seems a peculiarly territorial—perhaps colonial—model of reading, de Man reminds us that this act does not necessarily "unite outer meaning with inner reflection . . . into one single totality" (13). It is the *gap* between "stated meaning" and "understanding" (58) that reveals the playfulness of a text or, in these skeptical novels of empire, the hypocrisy of a society. Whether the text is ironic or tragic or both, the alienated imperialist is the reader's guide: an estranged spectator who deconstructs imperial culture and opens it to critique. Thus, Orwell turns the anthropological idiom of "mysterious ritual" back upon the

---

[62] Then there are the autoethnographies that are also autobiographical, such as Forster's *The Hill of Devi* or J. R. Ackerley's *Hindoo Holiday*, both told from the in-between space of an Englishman serving as secretary to a Maharajah. Parry notes how exceptional were both men in refraining from a "tone of moral condemnation"—"perhaps because both men were critics of their own society" (52).

[63] For de Man, scenes of reading ask us to probe the relationship "between the *stated* meaning and its *understanding*" (58, my emphasis). We thus become attuned to processes of meaning-making more broadly: not only the creative act of the artist, but the interpretive acts of the reader or observer.

empire, exposing a disciplinary culture that operates through an "unbreakable system of tabus," which only, emptily, "fetishize" whiteness (*Burmese Days* 51, 69, 48). Moving from colony to metropole, in *The Years* (1937) Woolf uses similar techniques to expose the Conradian "heart of darkness" (388) at "present day" London's social and financial core. Yet even if the liberal European recognizes this net of taboos, escaping them proves problematic. For the anti-imperial imperialist is still called on to represent "British" culture—or be sacrificed to it—abroad. If *changing* that culture is the Western writer's dilemma (the muddle or mystery that obstructs a fuller passage), their autoethnographies suggest that to know thyself offers a more incisive critique than the ethnographic claim to know the other.

Indian and British alike, the novels in my project examine communities in transition, even crisis—from the hypocrisy and violence of the Raj to clashes between disparate systems of value: tradition and modernity, compromise and resistance. Tagore's *Gora* (1909), Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), and Anand's early fiction are all narrated from perspectives marginal to the Indian communities at their center. Anand's protagonists are manual laborers of low caste or class (often both) who also confront the paradoxes of combining the two hierarchical systems. Tagore and Rao's protagonists are pillars of the Brahmin community who gradually disidentify—politically, ethically, sexually, even in Gora's case genetically—with its more rigid tenets. Part of a village, family, and religious community, yet outside its centers of power, their dual gaze enables a double critique—not only of empire, but of the local norms (whether indigenous or hybrid) that constrain them personally and, in a tragic irony, undermine resistance against the British. Anand carries this dual critique further in *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), where he renders both Indian and Anglo-Indian households in detail.

This ambivalence toward traditional centers of power did not arise in a vacuum. In the wake of Victorian exuberance for empire, twentieth-century imperialism was increasingly characterized, even by imperials themselves, by feelings of failure, ambivalence, and doubt. Justification for Britain's far-flung adventures became even more muddled in the interwar years. Plenty of authors less visionary than Forster or radical than Orwell express this ambivalence in fiction—Duncan and Thompson, for instance, whose European characters mean well, but fail to find a meaningful or productive niche in India. Even authors most closely associated with England repeatedly interrogate the imperial project. Virginia Woolf never made it past Constantinople, but her first novel journeys to an imagined South America (*The Voyage Out*), and her later fiction is peopled with imperialists who export their waste, violence, and capitalist neuroses abroad, as well as sullying the emblems of empire back home (*Mrs Dalloway*, *The Waves*, *The Years*, *Between the Acts*). Indeed, although literary modernism is conventionally explained as a turn inward, modernists take on empire as urgently as their realist counterparts, albeit in fragmented and oblique ways. The failures of late imperialism feed into the broader angsts of modernity itself: the subject's alienation within rapidly shifting urban and global landscapes, the search for meaning and community beyond empiricism or technology, as well as practical and ethical debates regarding labor, poverty, and public health.

The Ethics of Witness

India suffered a series of devastating famines between 1860 and 1900, an era also marked by great public pomp in the name of the Raj.[64] This rage for spectacle was exemplified in the Delhi Durbar of 1877, as Victoria was proclaimed Empress, and the still more extravagant 1903

[64] The timing is no coincidence. After the 1857 Rebellion, the British strove to preserve power by allying with strong Indian intermediaries. The resulting "'alliance' between Indian landlords and British imperialists pushed India into an agrarian crisis whose effects," writes Khaldun in 1957, "have still to be fully wiped out" (55).

Durbar presided over by Viceroy Curzon. Yet as Cannadine argues in *The Invention of Tradition*, the greatest spectacles came at a time of waning commitment to the imperial project. Still, proselytizers of Western progress remained, with their claims to endow the diseased and indolent tropics with sanitation, modern medicine, and an efficient workforce. Missionary and humanitarian groups made similar claims, whether or not they identified with the imperial state. Such evangelists of progress—and the increasingly global public to whom they postured—relied on a healthy, robust image of empire. Yet the harbingers of modernity only exacerbated the Great Famine of 1876-78, thanks to grain speculation, price-fixing ("the telegraph ensured that price hikes were coordinated in a thousand towns at once" [Davis 26]), exports to England, and hoarding. Mike Davis explains: "The newly constructed railroads, lauded as institutional safeguards against famine, were instead used by merchants to ship grain inventories from outlying drought-stricken districts to central depots for hoarding" (26). As it had with the Great Hunger in Ireland, the British state spouted paternalist rhetoric, but abandoned its responsibility for the millions whom they had steadily stripped of political and economic power. When mismanaged relief programs intensified shortages, politicians denied responsibility—having learned from their Irish failures, not efficiency, but how to justify inaction[65]—and invested instead in the trappings of a robust Raj: territorial wars and public ceremony. In 1877, a Londoner might open the news to an illustration of emaciated Indians awaiting famine relief, or of grand maharajas bowing to the viceroy at the Delhi Durbar. The cognitive dissonance this generated is hardly unique to Victorian England. Empire is built on such contradictions: an imbalance of power that produces want in its subjects and splendor in its selectively-benevolent

[65] Citing Adam Smith's "strict laissez-faire approach to famine" and Thomas Malthus's "grim doctrines" (now wed to Social Darwinism) of inevitable population growth and collapse, "those with the power to relieve famine convinced themselves that overly heroic exertions against implacable natural laws, whether of market prices or population growth, were worse than no effort at all" (Davis 31-32). Despite attempts at reform in the 1880s, famines recurred in the 1890s (Davis, chapter 5).

rulers. Psychologically, at least on a crude, macro level, empire was a visual medium that relied on spectacle.[66]

But on a micro level, the politics of the gaze were more complex. By focusing on the dynamics of the gaze, scenes of cultural "reading" help us theorize the role of witnessing in a colonial context. Within this frame of witnessing, I focus on scenarios in which a crime or violation is rumored, alleged, or committed. Depictions of such violations range from the melodramatic (Steel) to the satirically grotesque (Orwell), from the ironic distance of Duncan or Forster (who describe "crimes" only at second- or third-hand) to the realist pathos of Anand (as he leads readers up close to poverty, disease, and physical or sexual abuse) or Rao's frank portraits of police brutality, where suffering is distilled not into victimhood, but resolve—and finally, into myth. In addition, Forster and Anand explore the psychology of both violator and violated in a way that belies pretensions of impartiality, from either witness or police.

After all, no "crime" is committed or interpreted in a homogenous field. In a context as stratified as the colonial state, specific crimes accumulate particular assumptions dictating how victim and suspect are identified, witnesses questioned (or ignored), trials conducted, and punishments assigned. Certain scenarios become symbolic of the colonial system itself. An early allegory for colonial criminality is Steel's scene of an Indian girl fatally trampled by an Englishman's horse in *On the Face of the Waters*. While readers may wish to indict the "mad," unfeeling rush of Western occupation, Steel treats the "little tragedy" with characteristic fatalism (57). As one witness—complicit in the carriage's speed—says, "there was nothing we could do" (56).[67] Colonial fiction obsessively returns to such scenes in order to critique systemic racism (the dubious trial in Forster; the toxic effects of xenophobia and slander in Thompson or Orwell)

[66] Cannadine, riffing on Edward Said, calls it "Ornamentalism."
[67] Steel presents India as an ancient and unchanging land. In this view, peasants' resignation in the face of "India's inertia" (Parry 107) is commensurate with their resignation in the face of British speed.

or the infrastructure of the law itself (Duncan's soldier tried for an Indian's murder; the excesses of police and martial law in Tagore, Anand, Orwell, and Rao).

Nor is Steel's tragedy an "accident." Vehicular offenses dramatize how the frivolous, aggressive haste of Western progress threatens the lives and livelihoods of imperial subjects: the horse trampling in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, two car accidents in *A Passage to India* (one comically reunites an English couple, but only briefly, and one disfigures the Nawab's son), and one in *Coolie*, which combines farce and tragedy in one event. Ironically, the technologies of modern empire only make it a more efficient killing machine. The self-willed blindness of perpetrator or witness suggests the intimate—here, failing—link between witnessing an offence and responding ethically. The asymmetric relations between colonizer and colonized, or between classes and castes, only heightens the modern witness's alienation from the afflicted subject. If this alienation-effect seems a feature of modernity that is isolated from imperialism, we may recall that even the most modernist—and ostensibly metropolitan—novels, *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Waves*, directly implicate colonialism (and colonialism in India specifically) in fostering a callous and alienat*ing* mindset. Thus, Peter spots one of London's "triumphs of civilisation" (the hygienically efficient ambulance, which only succeeds in isolating sufferers from loved ones and witnesses) only to ruminate over his own "undoing—this susceptibility—in Anglo-Indian society; not weeping at the right time, or laughing either" (*Mrs Dalloway* 151-52). In a more biting indictment of imperial pretension, Percival (just as mock-heroic as the ambulance) may be imagined "righting" a bullock cart (and thus, by the wayside, solving "the Oriental problem") (*The Waves* 136), but he dies through his own negligence. Unable to ride a horse, how can he right a cart, much less a subcontinent?

In the absence of effectual response, the "little tragedies" of empire come to represent the failure of imperialism itself. Time and again, an Enlightenment ethics of visualism—in which to *see* or *know* an offense translates into a just response—fails. This gap is unsurprising given the complicity of empire and spectatorship in museums, world's fairs, and visual art. Within this empire of visualism, new technologies (chiefly photography and film) promised amateurs the ability to expand the scope of their vision—both in geographic breadth and microscopic depth.[68] Despite the *virtual* nature of this vision (alienating the viewer from the viewed in both space and time), the illusion of reality intensifies: a reality at once immanently credible, yet, in its very sensuousness, susceptible to interpretive idiosyncrasies. Visually saturated as this world is, when ethics fails, it is not the fault of the overstimulated eye.

Those who strive to *link* observation with ethical action are armed not just with a seeing eye, but imagination. As the European doctor learns in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the Empire's "monstrous crime against humanity" (125) is best crystallized not in statistics, but in single, intimate acts of witnessing. Through this humanist poet-doctor, Anand opposes an obsession with efficiency and profit—"the intensely narrow vision of the specialist"—against the "thoughtful imagination" of the true healer (whether of bodies or "world society" itself) (123). Of course the Empire too laid claim to world salvation. But even in the guise of paternalist state, the Raj failed in its duty—as in the habitual fiascos at "famine relief" in areas devastated by

[68] In the same era, the Soviet film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) uses montage to assert its own ethics of visualism, in a tale of revolt against imperial (in this case Tsarist) oppression. By alternating shots of individual sufferers with vast, seemingly-inexorable forces (the merciless advance of imperial soldiers, the carnage on the Odessa Steps), Eisenstein imposes emotional and ethical clarity onto a historical movement. He relies not only on close-ups (maggots crawling on rotting meat, an old woman's shattered eyeglasses) but an expansive vision of the oppressed citizenry: from a legless man, likely the veteran of another war, to a runaway baby carriage. Like the onlookers within the film, we follow the baby's descent with horror; we are powerless to stop it, yet we can at least bear witness to the child's murder. It is at this instant that the woman's face is bloodied and her glasses broken: as if we had reached a limit of what good we can do by witnessing.

drought. In the 1890s, photographs of the starving failed to mobilize a meaningful response[69] due to a failure of both imagination and will in the viewing public. Martha Nussbaum argues for the exercise of "fancy" in the practice of justice (xvii-xviii), writing that "storytelling and literary imagining are not opposed to rational argument, but can provide essential ingredients in a rational argument" (xiii).

Thus, one response to a failed ethics of visualism is an ethics of the imagination, in which a witness or respondent strives to imagine the distress of the other, whether that distress is caused by poverty, disease, physical abuse, sexual exploitation, or political repression. Indeed, the lack of imagination can lead to war—when patriots and policy-makers fail to imagine the impact of battle on the soldier's psyche. Thus, *Mrs Dalloway*'s contrast between callous officialdom and Septimus's trauma, or Wilfred Owen's effort to immerse readers in the chaotic experience of war.[70] In an imperial context, even mundane or "accidental" offences implicate the witness or perpetrator for a lack of imagination—in the chilling words of Steel's Englishwoman, that a non-white death "doesn't feel to me like killing a human being" (58).[71] To counter such willful blindness, Orwell's unadorned, visceral account of "A Hanging" refigures the body of the "native"—even a criminal—as incontrovertibly human, and thus due a more humane justice than law enforcers are prepared (or expected) to confer. By indicting the failures of imperial justice *and* imperial imagination, critics of imperialism strive to construe an ethics lacking in the British system—and in British society at large.

---

[69] Davis 147, 157. On his decision to include the devastating photographs, and to use the word holocaust, Davis writes, "The contemporary photographs used in this book are thus intended as accusations not illustrations" (22).

[70] In "Dulce Et Decorum Est" (1918), Owen thrusts us ("you") into the sensations of a soldier, asking us to see as he sees—indeed, to give witness to a man who can no longer see: "If in some smothering dreams you too could pace . . . And watch the white eyes writhing in his face . . ." (17, 19). If our imagination is adequate, Owen concludes, then "you would not tell with such high zest . . . The old Lie" (25, 27). "The old Lie" is the platitude that it is "sweet" and "decorous" to die for one's country; it is an abstract notion of duty that sends young men off to die.

[71] In contrast, Steel's protagonist is roused to anger by witnessing an act of violence against a bird: "her wrath blazed out again. Her Hindustani, however, being unequal to a lecture on cruelty to animals, she had to be content with looks" (138). This horror at animal suffering makes the indifference to human suffering all the more glaring.

Discipline and Publish

If we consider detective fiction in its crudest form, we might conclude that its impulse—both thematic and structural—is conservative. The hero-detective sniffs out and snuffs out the source of criminality or perversion, order is restored, and the participants (survivors, witnesses, investigators) are reabsorbed, with more or less anxiety, into the community. It is when writers disrupt or subvert this narrative arc that we take notice: as when the detective goes rogue, endangering others in the name of truth/justice/order, or when the state/dominant culture is not the antidote but the source of corruption.[72]

Orientalist tropes were appropriated into detective novels at the genre's birth in *The Moonstone* (1868). In the same era, the role of the London police detective was evolving, both in fact and in fiction, from a bumbling beat cop to a skilled investigator. An early example of this mastery is Inspector Bucket in *Bleak House* (1853). Bucket commands knowledge of the most convoluted corners of London (Dickens describes the poorest quarters as if they are a foreign land) and is not above bending official procedures to his own will. He both assumes and sees through disguises, and even solves a murder, but is unable to prevent further tragedy, much less solve the inequities of the English legal system. To solve a problem on an intellectual level is not enough, Dickens suggests, and Bucket moves in and out of the tale, just as he moves through the parlors of both rich and poor: intelligent, resourceful, persistent, but not quite sufficient. In *The Novel and the Police*, D. A. Miller observes that "Police and offenders are conjoined in a single

[72] Such exceptions tend to be generic hybrids, giving a more nuanced psychological portrait of characters or their socio-economic origins. Take Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* (1938), a thriller told from the inside out. And even a more conventional genre writer like Dorothy Sayers, in *Gaudy Night* (1935), traces criminality not to evil, but to a toxic intersection of class boundaries and gender norms. Of course the detective him- or herself often occupies a liminal space—an eccentric, traveling in and out of the milieu he or she is investigating (a Poirot or Miss Marple)—or the self-imposed social exile of the hardboiled detective, as in *The Maltese Falcon* (1930).

system for the formation and reformation of delinquents" (5). It is not only that the police require criminals in order to exist, but that enforcing the rules and breaking them, tracking the suspect or evading the pursuer, produce a similar mindset or worldview. Recall Joseph Conrad's quip that "the terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket" (*The Secret Agent* 53-54).

Policing is not always limited to law enforcement. Rather, the modern subject is policed by a web of internalized social and disciplinary norms. Building on Foucault's model of discipline, Miller writes, "To label all this 'the police' thus anticipates moving the question of policing out of the streets, as it were, into the closet—I mean, into the private and domestic sphere on which the very identity of the liberal subject depends" (viii-ix). It is worth exploring both domains of "policing": the explicit, championed in the court of law, and the internalized "regime of the norm" (viii). Often the two interact, as when the participants in Forster's trial are paralyzed by the expectations of onlookers, both real and imagined, or when Anand's hero is hounded not only by factory bosses and policemen, but metropolitan consumer desires, to the point that he develops "a conscience about work" and irreconcilable "dreams" of luxury goods (*Coolie* 272, 9).

When we think biopower, we think Europe: a Parisian scaffold or *clinique*, Bentham's Panopticon, Goya's madhouse. But Western law and order did not develop in a European vacuum before diffusing to the rest of the world.[73] Rather, vibrant crossings between colony and metropole—indeed, systems developed in the colonies and only later exported to Europe—undergird the foundations of modern disciplinary culture. Likewise, detective fiction was not a one-way export. At least as popular in the colonies as at home, it bound the empire ever more tightly to Britain, both in plots and in popular readership. Of the European books available in Indian public libraries, readers were disproportionately confronted with the likes of Collins,

[73] For more on Foucault's "blind spot," see Spivak 85-86.

Doyle, the sensational *Mysteries* of G.W.M. Reynolds, and the "Indian" novels of P.M. Taylor (the bestselling *Confessions of a Thug* and historical novels like *Tippoo Sultaun*) (Joshi 64). Priya Joshi writes: "Indian readers' affection for British popular fiction in the melodramatic mode" helped them "to recognize unexpected affinities between India's epic tradition and narratives of modernity associated with the novel" (xviii). In 1920s London, Anand bonded with Leonard Woolf over the cheap Victorian serials, especially the *Mysteries* of Reynolds, "mainly read by bored Englishmen in the tropics" (*Conversations in Bloomsbury* 96).[74] Joshi demonstrates that they were read by Indians too, and she argues that this consumption influenced the act of "narrative indigenization, a process by which first Indian readers and then writers transmuted an imported and alien form into local needs" (xviii).

As prose genres traveled east and west, Indian novelists adapted Western conventions into their own languages to expose varieties of guilt both historical and modern: for instance, Chatterjee's didactic *Krishnakanta's Will* or his retelling of the eighteenth-century Sannyasi Rebellion, *Ānandamath* (1882), which became entwined in the public consciousness with modern struggles for independence. Also writing in Bengali, Rabindranath Tagore attained global status in both literary and political circles. As his poetry and prose were translated and circulated abroad—to be admired, critiqued, or emulated by modernists like W. B. Yeats—he not only redefined and expanded notions of Bengali and Indian nationhood, but also helped instantiate a domain of *world* literature. This global shift is best emblematized by the roster of Nobel laureates in Literature: Kipling was the first British laureate (1907), followed just six years later by Tagore (the only non-European until 1945).

[74] In contrast to the amused exchange between Anand and Woolf, Orwell attacks the listless, decaying milieu that passes for culture at the European Club, where members flip through illustrated magazines and ignore the "forlorn 'library' of five hundred mildewed novels" (*Burmese Days* 20).

Tagore highlights Britain's disciplinary culture in an allegory for Anglo-Indian history, "A Fanciful Story" (1892). Here we find Britain exporting the spirit of discipline (embodied in the son of a *kotwal* or police chief) long before it erects a formal state. The three protagonists who settle in the new land are a merchant's son (representing imperial trade), the *kotwal*'s son (imperial discipline, be it legal or extralegal), and an exiled prince (political rule). While the *kotwal*'s son is (in the fable) a benign figure, the police become more sinister in *Gora* (1909), Tagore's most overtly political novel. Gora, whose name reflects his white skin, must defy the laws of his privileged caste (Brahmin) and race (genetically, we eventually learn, he is Irish) in order to combat the "police oppression" (172) and "civilized law courts" of the Raj—"market places," that is, "for the buying and selling of justice" (185). Gora's social and political consciousness is radicalized only when he leaves his wealthy compound to visit Bengali villages. Here he witnesses poverty, hunger, and disease, and he seeks out their causes—not only in the laws of empire, but in the laws of religion and caste. Aware that India's political fate is not distinct from the ostensibly-natural, indigenous ties of caste, he fights the "intolerable" absurdity of social codes and begins to break the taboos of caste (174). When Gora is arrested (for defying the police on the villagers' behalf), he vows neither to buy his way out nor to hire a lawyer, but to share "the fate of the helpless in this kingdom" (185). Tagore does not depict Gora's imprisonment firsthand. Rather, the prison is the obscure, unrepresentable sign of India's political subjugation—and it is also the crucible from which its leaders will emerge. Not unlike Gandhi, whose hunger strikes served his politics even as they weakened his body, Tagore's protagonist undertakes prison as a form of pilgrimage. Tagore also asks why Indian nationalists who honor a female motherland would prevent women from taking an active role in shaping it.

He does not resolve this question, but we will see it raised more insistently in the work of Raja Rao.

In 1915, the Indian National Party published a compact, 68-page collection called *British Rule in India Condemned by the British Themselves*. At six pence, it would have been a handy resource for anyone (especially in London, where it was printed) trying to articulate the injustice being meted out in the name of civilization. The Introduction concludes with the charge:

> India stands at the bar of Humanity and pleads her case, she calls witnesses from the enemy's camp to substantiate her charges, for even in perfidious Albion there have been some men in every decade, though their numbers are very few, who have raised their voices in protest . . . The damaging evidence of these men . . . is published here to prove that the British occupation of India has been a curse and Great Britain stands condemned by her own tribunal. (10)

We have already seen the internal contradictions of John Stuart Mill's brand of liberalism, so it is fitting that the book's epigraph should be his: "such a thing as government *of* one people *by* another does not and cannot exist" (my emphasis). The book is dedicated "to the memory of the Indian martyrs": the people who certainly *have*—to quote Mill against himself—"braved labor and danger for their liberation" (*Dissertations* 258).

Outline

This project seeks to disrupt the center/periphery model of empire by exploring writers of diverse backgrounds who witnessed or experienced its iniquities on the ground. Chapter 1 examines Anglo-Indian fiction's most infamous trial: for the alleged sexual assault in *A Passage to India* (1924). Giving Foucauldian discipline a colonial twist, Forster shows that the work of the Raj is not to identify the criminal, but to produce a category of pathological criminality in which any non-conforming subject may be fit. Forster locates mystery not in the "real India" his characters so naïvely seek, but in the failure ("not there," "not yet") of cross-cultural

connections. The trial is a performance that strives to reify a set of racial suspicions and thus ratify the community's segregation. I begin with this chapter—placing trial before investigation, verdict before crime, judicial law before police order—because the trial previews the themes of later chapters by staging them in a condensed, if artificial, form. If the court operates under the illusion that its actors can extract and summarize the "facts of the case" in a publicly legible form, the messiness underlying the trial—and always threatening to spill out—is revealed in the methods of investigation and enforcement practiced by the police on the one hand and the community on the other.

Chapter 2 uses the work of George Orwell to explore the disciplinary matrix of the police and military: scenarios in which questions of justice are decided on the ground, either by law enforcers or the civilians and soldiers who provisionally assume their powers. *Burmese Days* (1934) turns the anthropological idiom of "mysterious ritual" back upon the empire, exposing a disciplinary culture that operates through an "unbreakable system of tabus." This rigid system produces not order, but a hotbed of rumor, stagnation, and extralegal violence. Against the satirical grotesque of his novel, Orwell's essays humanize suffering by representing it from marginalized perspectives. "A Hanging" (1931) explores the ambivalence of the liberal imperialist who recognizes the shared humanity of his prisoner yet is caught in the mechanisms of "duty." Like "Shooting an Elephant" (1936), it is a tale of the reluctant execution of the native. As a former Imperial Policeman, Orwell not only shows how the law is used to mask extralegal ends; he also indicts its most hallowed institutions—from the secret ballot to hanging—as inhumane. In Orwell's world, resistance is necessary but futile. Dissent is registered in small, strategic acts, but other forms of rebellion are presented as failures or as fakes.

In contrast, chapter 3 explores the awakening of nationalist resistance in *Kanthapura* (1938). This first novel by Raja Rao creates a modern myth around Gandhism—a myth all the more powerful because we never see the man himself, but we see how his message spreads. The young Brahmin who articulates that message (drawing a line between "truth" and "law," "the people" and "the police") may appear to be the story's hero, but it is a collective of village women who put his words into action. These women aspire to be warriors. They even compare themselves to the police—but theirs is a reimagined police whose loyalty is to the community, not to a plantation owner or foreign power. The novel's female and collective narrative voice posits the need for an indigenized and feminized mode of authority. Rao also dramatizes forms of alienation and conflict being worked out *within* Indian communities, as when a Muslim cop is sent to a Hindu village. Ultimately, the novel acknowledges, yet also attempts to elide, sectarian conflict, both inside and outside official forms of power—the conflicting allegiances within the police, that is, as well as within the Indian National Congress.

In this project I hope to achieve a dialogue between Indian and British authors. For all three, modernity was not merely an act of rupture, or even an urge to forge a new, more just world. Modernity also brought the promise of creative encounters—encounters both violent and generative—between distant cultures and traditions. In adapting the English novel, Rao is not statically "writing back" to some English master, but conversing with peers in a language he had come to love—but also, in using that language, to change it. Joshi calls this process indigenization. Indeed, had Macaulay lived a few years longer, he might have wondered at the hybrid fruits of India's English education. Joshi argues: "Though frequently regarded as a tool for inspiring assent and anglicization among colonial subjects in the nineteenth century, the novel . . . paradoxically emerged in India as one of the most effective vehicles for voicing

anticolonial and nationalist claims in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries" (xvii). Even as modern discipline would forge a docile, self-monitoring subject, anti-imperialists and modernists alike work to challenge, evade, or disrupt a disciplinary gaze. Indeed, if the imperial state aims to surveil the public—and solicit citizens to scrutinize each other—then the many-eyed, many-voiced publics of modernist texts may in turn scrutinize—and undiscipline—the state.

Chapter 1

"The Prisoner and the Guide": The Hybrid Testimonies of Forster's Missing Witness

While drafting *A Passage to India* (1924), E. M. Forster confessed his belief "that most Indians, like most English people, are shits" (qtd. in Furbank, 2: 106).[75] So too does his novel indict both native and colonial cultures as criminal, even as the "unspeakable" crime that haunts its pages is, allegedly, an Indian one (*Passage* 187). The imagined rape at the heart of the novel (of an English woman by an Indian man) reenacts the crime of the so-called Mutiny, in an imperial allegory at once political and perverse. For Forster, however, the pathological rapist is not the native, but the Raj itself. The novel shows that colonial justice is neither blind nor invisible but performs itself to unequal publics at home and abroad. Unconfinable to the courtroom, the trial is a spectacle that tests not only cultural allegiance, but the translatability of English law, ethics, and epistemology—the West's most cherished methods for extracting, giving witness to, and judging the truth. The novel indicts Western investigation as both naïve and falsifying—enabling the Raj to police not only alien landscapes, but indigenous knowledges and transcultural connections.

Forster plays on Western readers' fascination with exploration and otherness, before implicating that impulse as both selfish and delusional. The novel's naïve Englishwoman, Adela Quested, is determined "to see the *real* India" (24), and a mixed-race expedition to the Marabar Caves offers an entry-point into the Oriental mystery. When the excursion goes awry, Adela, confined inside the dark, uncanny caves, convinces herself that Dr. Aziz, their mild-mannered leader, attempted to rape her. Sexually, racially, and politically charged, Aziz's trial exposes the

[75] From a letter to Syed Ross Masood, 27 Sept. 1922. Forster had recently returned from his second stint in India.

radical inequality afforded to empire's different subjects. Who, here, is a credible witness? Whose testimony is to be believed? And who deserves judgment—the accuser or the accused?

If the Marabar Caves form the psychological heart of the novel, then the trial, in all its dramatic officialdom, is its public face. The role of the trial is not to seek the truth, but to perform—to publicly ratify—the spectacle of justice. "Liberal" measures like the Ilbert Bill (enabling an Indian judge to try a white defendant) were appropriated into this display of fairness. But even as Indian judges took the bench, the court's assumptions about different racial and social groups dictated the type of hearing they would receive. By exposing the dubious foundations of colonial justice, Forster puts empire itself on trial, by way of the discourses that sustain it: narratives of rape, criminology, and ethnography. Institutional justice works, in this setting, only in spite of itself—only when the "victim" withdraws from the spectacle (having initiated it in the first place) to reinstitute some attempt at "truth" (227).

In the court, as in the museum or fairground, "India" becomes a field rich with exhibits to collect, classify, and display—as a sign of otherness or lawlessness, custom or criminality. As prosecutors reify the fluid media of speech and memory into the deposition, then cobble a pastiche of surfaces into guilty narrative, justice becomes complicit with other colonial disciplines, from cartography to ethnography, archeology to medicine. But even as the novel begins with this most scripted mode of testimony, it gives way to a testimony that is conditional, hybridized, and mystical. Indeed, even at its most scripted, the court is *always* an enchanted space: "elevating" the prisoner, in his infamy, from human to taboo; "a principle of evil," publicly exhibited, for all to judge (220). Once invested with "the logic" of "Guilty," the mystifying surfaces of forensic science can be combated only by eruptive acts of oral testimony—the most just way, in their very instability, to pursue knowledge (167).

In the failure of "only connect",[76] only an extralegal, hybrid form of testimony can subvert a preordained verdict of Indian guilt. Dissolving the formal rules of the court, Forster locates a provisional form of justice in the spontaneous, uncontainable crowd. Voices excluded from judicial mechanisms invoke an absent, "Indianized" Mrs. Moore—the "refrain in the street" of *Esmiss Esmoor*—as a mantra for justice (227). Shattering the border of courtroom and bazaar, this hybrid refrain provisionally bridges the gulf between legal abstractions and public demands. Indeed, the trial's improvised orality reduces the pressure to assign guilt, as, now on public platform, the alleged victim breaks from script to acquit the accused. Against all bias toward empirical fact, this unexpected testimony eludes not just rationality, but language itself. Only by confronting the subjective frailty of Western perception—its failure to "to see the *real* India"—can the English witness "confess" her "mistake" (24, 202).

Criminal and Cultural Landscapes

Locating corruption within a brown body rather than a white one—much less the white psyche—Anglo-Indians fuse an array of nebulous yet emblematic trespasses into a profile of the Indian criminal. Criminology's obsession with the criminal *body* intensifies in the colonies, entangling with ethnographic taxonomies of race, caste, tribe,[77] and now psychology, to lay the ground of Aziz's guilt. Invoking evidence that "testifies" (in the words of Forster's police superintendent) not just to Aziz's "character," but the "general truth" of "Oriental pathology," the prosecution of the individual thus becomes the prosecution—and persecution—of culture (218). Aziz knows that "old story" well. He calls it the "old story of 'We will rob every man and rape every woman from Peshawar to Calcutta' . . . which you get some nobody to repeat and

[76] The epigraph to *Howards End* and an abiding theme in Forster's work.
[77] For the complicity of ethnography and colonial law, see Dirks, *Castes* 149-97.

then quote every week in the *Pioneer* in order to frighten us into retaining you! We know!" (321-22).[78] That Aziz is a modern, English-speaking professional only makes him, to a paranoid mind, more insidious. His is the new face of an old story.

Forster himself was susceptible to vestigial fears of the Indian landscape. In a letter to his mother, he admits: "Although the country was perfectly safe, it gave the feeling of Robbers at every turn," being so "wild and tropical." As it transpires, India's real robbers are the English. Forster notes the ease with which he appropriates native labor: "Ali Akbar and I walked quite 10 [miles], with a policeman, stolen from Hyderabad, to carry our bananas" (*Letters*, II: 15-16). That the police are being employed not to protect local citizens but to carry travelers' provisions is alarming (more alarming than the nonexistent robbers), but Forster highlights the incongruity with humor.

It seems that the police cannot win; if they are not hauling produce, they are chasing elusive, nonviolent dissenters. In the same letter, Forster describes a visit by the Prince of Wales which a group of students "refused to attend." In response, the police act as a *political* rather than a legal force, demanding "a list of all the boys who hadn't come." Forster is not surprised, "so like the Police" is this heavy-handed behavior. Yet he is sympathetic: "I am very sorry for the authorities—except for those who invited the Prince to come. Now that he has come, they simply don't know what to do. If they do nothing, as at Bombay, there are riots. If they arrest right and left, as at Allahabad, the boycotting becomes more and more spontaneous." Here we see the category of criminal being expanded to the political space—a space made more volatile by the visit of an alien prince. Forster's sympathies also lie with the protestors: "To the educated Indian, whatever his opinions," British power is at best "an impertinence" (*Letters* II, 17).

---

[78] Founded by a wealthy tea planter in 1865, *The Pioneer* stood for the Anglo-Indian establishment (Das Gupta 233-34).

To legitimate their political, economic and social claims, Anglo-Indians deputize one another (both officially and informally) as criminal and cultural judges, both of Indians and of themselves. Anglo-India breeds a cloistered atmosphere of surveillance, both mutual and self-monitoring. "Nothing's private in India," says Ronny, the local magistrate (33). Ironically, the self-consciousness of British power—the awareness that they, too, are performing a role—makes them too inflexible to adapt to other cultures. They become doubly paranoid—of Indian betrayals and of their English reputations. Ronny warns Adela about Aziz (on the grounds that he is an "educated native"), and she remarks, "You never used to judge people like this at home" (33). The liberal sentiments of home become playthings against the inflexible *work* of empire. Adela "knows you in play . . . but not in work" (34). By consuming himself in work, the transplanted individual shrinks to his institutional role. Of course, Ronny's *job* is to judge, but his verdicts take the form of lazy stereotypes and repetition: "to silence her he had been using phrases and arguments that he had picked up from older officials, and he did not feel quite sure of himself" (33). The less he knows, the more surely he judges.

Mr. Turton, a "little god" in Anglo-Indian society, offers his own narrow view of judgment: "India does wonders for the judgment, especially during the hot weather" (28). To him, good judgment excludes difference (different races, different classes, different worldviews). But by excluding difference, one becomes submissive and insular, conforming to one's peers. We see Adela's more expansive instincts when she and Ronny draw opposite "lessons" out of the same problem: the magistrate's relationship with Indian colleagues. Adela proposes that they socialize—"Isn't the lesson that you should invite all the Pleaders to have a smoke with you?"—but he prefers "my own sort" at the club (29). Forster's magistrate is insular and self-ratifying, as is the law he represents. Indeed, the courthouse is a mirror to the space of the club. One is

public, the other private, but they perform similar roles. At the club, whites plot legal campaigns and try one another for cultural allegiance. The court presents a public face, but it is also a racialized retreat. For whites, it is a place of excursion, like "a booth at a fair" (217). Like the law itself, the court is full of loopholes for those who know it well. The Turtons stock the court with brandy (in some "private room") to buck the party up, and champagne, to usher in victory (214, 212).

Dr. Aziz begins the novel as an "Indian gentleman." In this paranoic milieu, it is at best an unstable category and at worst a condemned one. Europeans suspect "the Indian gentleman" as a counterfeit of English gentility. The potential for social transgression is everywhere. Aziz recalls one notorious "'case' last year—an Indian gentleman had driven up to an official's house and been turned back by the servants and been told to approach more suitably" (16). In the space of a European home, the man's "Indian" race trumps his "gentleman" status. The public inflates this social misunderstanding as if it were a legal "case"; Forster's quotation marks highlight the incongruity. Aziz's character (his "good fellowship") is earlier tested on the polo grounds (58). It is a test of sportsmanship, but also of his status as civilized being. For the English subaltern, who will accept Aziz so long as he can ride a horse, there is no difference (183-89). Even as Aziz is surveyed and scrutinized, he strives to be the perfect host. After the incident in the cave, when Adela disappears, he places her liberty and desires above his own: "guests must do as they wish, or they become prisoners" (157). Soon, however, these guests to his homeland will make him the prisoner.

Forster structures the novel around "Mosque," "Caves," and "Temple," each one a sacred Indian interior. In contrast, the Raj builds its temples not to gods but to law. "God who saves the King will surely support the police," remarks the narrator (211). The trial begins with a "battle of

the platform," as British spectators claim an elevated position in the court (222). They stage their entrance with the same panache as Aziz staged the Marabar expedition that brought them here: "Their chairs preceded them into the Court, for it was important that they should look dignified. And when the chuprassies had made all ready, they filed into the ramshackly room with a condescending air, as if it was a booth at a fair" (217). Aziz's defense challenges the move, for "a platform confers authority" and "intimidates our witnesses." The magistrate, Das, bids the English "party" "descend from its rash eminence," but the Raj has the last word—Ronny's "Well done, Das, quite sound"—in its power to endow law in the first place (221). The native judge is cast as the state's creation and thus the *property* even of this inexperienced supervisor, who insists, "*My* old Das is all right" (215, my emphasis).[79]

The participants in Forster's trial stage three competing narratives: the prosecution tells a heroic epic; the defense recasts that tale as vicious farce; and finally, unofficially, these narratives are interrupted by the voice of unnamed witnesses from the street outside. The trial begins as a contest between the epic and the farce, as the victim's horrific ordeal and heroic rescue is, for Aziz, a tragic farce of guilty until proven innocent. Like other imperial arenas (club, playhouse, Maidan) the trial relies on strict rules of exclusion and ever-conditional inclusion—of witness, evidence, testimony, lines of argument—and it unwinds in a contested interpretive and physical space. As the punkah wallah fans on (an aestheticized labor that makes the space habitable), would-be authorities trade moves like chessmen, playing out a "farce" of masters and "slaves," "pawns" and viceroys (224, 214).

---

[79] The law always has a predisposition for the establishment. In most of Forster's novels, the legal system lurks in the background, felt but unseen, in service to the upper and middle classes. In *Howards End*, the Wilcoxes assume the police will take their side in car accidents, in defense of female honor, and in the killing of Leonard Bast. The law refuses to cover up this final mess, though the punishment is not proportional to the crime. Class distinctions are exacerbated by the law in *Maurice*; the penalty for homosexuality is affected by one's social position. Forster notes that Maurice might be spared Clive's punishments, but the working-class Alec will not ("Terminal Note," 1960).

Individual v. Institutional Justice

The novel's central relationship is between Dr. Aziz and Cyril Fielding, "Principal of the little Government College" (45). Despite their attachment, their time together is beset with irritations, misunderstandings, and failures. They are continually asked to choose between racial and personal allegiances. In one comic scene, Aziz's friends suspect Fielding of poisoning:

> "Dr. Aziz took tea with our Principal . . . ," piped Rafi, the engineer's nephew. "Professor Godbole, who also attended, has sickened too, which seems rather a curious thing, sir, does it not?"
>
> Flames of suspicion leapt up in the breast of each man. "Humbug!" exclaimed Hamidullah in authoritative tones, quenching them. (103)

Present in the scene are a doctor, lawyer, engineer, and police inspector. Their careers are all founded in empiricism, yet they spend their days navigating racist and arbitrary slights, vying for respect with less qualified whites.[80] The "flames of suspicion" (that Fielding is a homicidal racist) are spontaneous and contagious. It takes the skeptical lawyer, Hamidullah, to quell them. He presents no proof, for they all know countless proofs (of British perfidy) on the other side. Instead, he deflates the lofty claims of Western deduction with the quip, "Rafi is the Sherlock Holmes of Chandrapore" (104). But the grounds for suspicion remain, whatever Fielding's intention, because he belongs to the class of oppressors. After the trial, the more radical lawyer, Mahmoud Ali, insists that Fielding has "treachery" "afoot," and Hamidullah "murmurs" his qualified assent (281). In this racialized setting, "scandals" are infectious, even for the most empirically inclined (104). Both guilt and innocence are rendered communal.

[80] As a student at Fielding's College, the engineer's nephew is subject to the same pressures as his English-educated elders and peers. When Aziz goes on trial, the students are the first to radicalize—to read the trial within a nationalist lens. Not only do they protest the trial (214) but, as onlookers stream out of the court, they hope to carry the procession to the college—the site of Anglicization—itself.

Even reason is suspect if it does not obey the laws of race. When Aziz is arrested, Fielding must choose between the two. Ironically, this Englishman's devotion to Enlightenment reason undermines his credentials *as* English:

> He had not gone mad at the phrase "an English girl fresh from England," he had not rallied to the banner of race. He was still after facts, though the herd had decided on emotion. Nothing enrages Anglo-India more than the lantern of reason if it is exhibited for one moment after its extinction is decreed. All over Chandrapore that day the Europeans were putting aside their normal personalities and sinking themselves in their community. Pity, wrath, heroism, filled them, but the power of putting two and two together was annihilated. (165)

The English turn themselves into a vengeful mob—their faces "white, fanatical, and rather beautiful" (163)—as they recast the "natives" as the delinquent herd. Rumor spreads that "Aziz paid a herd of natives to suffocate her [Mrs. Moore] in a cave" (187). The further from the event itself, the more absurd the charges that gather around native subjects. We see a petty theft labeled as "looting" (166) and the "respectable" Aziz (103) charged with "disturbing the public peace" (203). But it is the British whose emotions inflame public opinion. Turton's "sense of justice functioned though he was insane with rage" (166). In fact, Forster suggests it functioned *because* he was insane with rage. The Anglo-Indian community is fueled by panic and anger. Civility is an outward sign; inside is "panic and emptiness!" (*Howards End* 26-27). Forster applies these words to the imperialist Wilcox family, who extract rubber from West Africa while protecting themselves with the show of civility at home. In Chandrapore, the English panic will erupt only in the "crisis" of the courtroom—but in the meantime, arrests will have to do (*Passage* 227).

The second improbable charge against Aziz, for "disturbing the public peace," becomes an excuse to re-imprison him—and to criminalize Islam. It occurs when Adela begins to doubt her story, uttering the conditional: "If Dr. Aziz never did it he ought to be let out" (203). Ronny replies with a garbled tale in which putting Aziz in prison is an act of state benevolence: "He was

let out—until the Mohurram riot, when he had to be put in again" (203). Dubbing a sacred procession of mourning (for Muhammad's grandson) a "riot" is one way to police a foreign culture. At first the procession is called "merely Mohurram" (181), then "the Mohurram troubles" (195), and finally a "riot" (203). The mourners' only transgression is to stray from their "official route" toward the British civil lines. It is not a riot but a spectacular traffic jam (195), which happens to coincide with Aziz's car accident. He is "rescued by the police" only to return to prison. Ronny relates this "anecdote" not just to "divert" his fiancée, but to regain her wavering allegiance—to her nation and, by the way, to him (203).

It is this closing of communal ranks that demands a different form of justice. As Fielding pursues the daunting trail of "facts," his fidelity is not to "reason," much less to "herd," but to a man. If, as the narrator proffers, "It is impossible to regard a tragedy from two points of view," "whereas Turton had decided to avenge the girl, [Fielding] hoped to save the man" (165). Does the state leave room for a personal, direct performance of justice—individual acts which are, like speech acts, affirmed, particularized, and renewed in each performance? Fielding says: "I believe in teaching people to be individuals, and to understand other individuals." This "manifesto" (121) of individual over collective allegiance anticipates Forster's credo in "What I Believe," that "Love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the State. When they do—down with the State, say I, which means that the State would down me" (69). In Anglo-India, it is not just the state that demands loyalty; it is race. For both men's audacity in befriending the other, Fielding's race will try to down them both.

In a preview to Aziz's trial, Fielding is put through an impromptu tribunal at the English club. Refusing to "detest" his friend, but to "wait for the verdict of the courts," Fielding's crime is to privilege personal fidelity over racial revenge (189-90). The mock trial that follows deflates

English law as arbitrary and vindictive. The club is torn between imprisoning him (the subaltern bars his exit) and exiling him, as an undignified "scuffle" "propels" him from the room (190). Only Ronny, in his role as martyr (because his fiancée is involved) and magistrate, can dismiss the comic breakdown with a forlorn "Let him go" (190). Anglo-Indians extend this brand of racialized club justice to Aziz's trial. Ensconced in "Ronny's private room" at the court, one club member asserts that Das is "more frightened of acquitting than convicting, because if he acquits he'll lose his job" (214-15). It is here on the borders of private and public, institution and individual, that the emptiness of this particular institution (colonial law) is revealed.

During his own time in India, Forster was repelled by the claustrophobic "social manner" of Anglo-India. The Canadian journalist Sara Jeannette Duncan invited him to her Simla home in 1921. Both writers were fond of satirizing social conventions, yet Forster finds that she can be disconcertingly conventional when in company. He describes Duncan as "clever & odd—~~at times very~~ nice to talk to alone, but at times the Social Manner descended like a pall." Her Simla house is "quite English," making him "forget I was in India," as "there is nothing there but government & scenery" (*Letters*, I: 159). In *A Passage to India*, Fielding is continually trying to get past all the "government & scenery," as, at first, are Adela and Mrs. Moore.

Aziz asserts the same triumph of individual over category—"This picnic is nothing to do with English or Indian; it is an expedition of friends"—just as the fantasy "snaps" (161). One of empire's tragic ironies is that inequity can breed the deepest, most intuitive of intimacies. At the first sign of trouble (Adela is "lost"), Aziz "drops the 'Mr.' for the first time" to cry "Fielding! Oh, I have so wanted you!" (155). As Aziz's tour goes awry, everyone is guilty of something—and every crime becomes a cultural one. Fielding's first sin is arriving late. It is a sin against his friend's plans but also against Englishness and punctuality: "missing a train—a sin he was never

guilty of" (157). But Fielding's real crime is to be *too* English. When they return to town and Aziz is accused, Fielding lets himself be "called off by the authoritative tones of Mr. Turton, and Aziz went on to prison alone" (162). Indeed, at the very "moment he was throwing in his lot with Indians," Fielding racializes: "They always do something disappointing. Aziz had tried to run away from his police, Mohammed Latif had not checked the pilfering" (173). What he laments is not that they initiate crimes, but that they neglect the signs of law and order.

If Aziz's arrest initiates the failure of personal justice, it also exposes institutional justice as profoundly personal. The rule of law can be suspended under the flimsiest of "circumstances" if the right person has the ear of the police. When Fielding questions Aziz's arrest, he is told: "no warrant is required under these particular circumstances." The charge? "I am under instructions not to say" (161). However "particular" the "circumstance," it is a staggering exception. The Indian inspector who obeys these extralegal "instructions" is in the same trap as Das, the magistrate, compelled to perform a duty that feels like a betrayal.

Forster contrasts Fielding's "passionate" "faith" "that Aziz *was* innocent, and all action must be based on that," with Hamidullah's "prating of 'policy' and 'evidence'" (172-73). Hamidullah has equal "love" for his client (Aziz means "beloved" in Arabic and Urdu [Childs 196]), but his profession ("the leading barrister of Chandrapore, with the dignified manner and Cambridge degree") demands empirical evidence. At first, he interprets Fielding's imprecise remark, "It's all a mistake," as a sign of new facts: "Ah, ah, has some evidence come?" (172). Fielding's attempt to override evidence with "faith" is insufficient and impractical, but necessary. In India, after all, the institutions that enshrine facticity are the same colonial sciences which, far from actualizing the individual, would taxonomize him.

Legal discourse transforms Aziz into the anonymous "'the prisoner,' 'the person in question,' 'the defence'" (202). Like his alleged victim, he is "always referred to by a periphrasis" (182). As "the person in question," Aziz is at once de*personal*ized and overinvested with *emotion*. His name awakens the irreconcilable taboos of "horror" and desire (202). If one's person is "in question," then the law does not protect but poisons it. And to contact the police is to be, like the suspect, "in question." The police station is a taboo space, at once sacred and sordid. Turton "preserves" Fielding from the "odium that would attach to you if you were seen accompanying him to the Police Station" (163). If the law is supposed to value fact over emotion, here, the governing laws are not of empiricism but of magic. According to James Frazer,[81] the Law of Contagion establishes a magical bond between people or things after they have been in contact ("The Roots of Magic" 7): in this case Fielding and the Police Station. It is an atavistic law, yet it is in full effect around the contaminating institutions of delinquency. Of course the "odium" has already attached itself to Aziz, and it is the colonial space that dirties him, not the Indian.[82] One must be circumspect even at court. Upon their journey to the trial, but before "gaining Ronny's private room," Turton escorts the Englishwomen "round to the rear of the building," to preserve them from the "hysterical," "jeering" protestors (214). The image contrasts the public demands made at the front of the building against the insularity of the judge's "private room."

Fielding allows himself to be led away from the "odium," but he tries to reaffirm his allegiance to Aziz. Social contagion is a price he will pay, but he cannot allow his *loyalty* to be

---

[81] Frazer's anthropological study of mythology and religion influenced many thinkers of the period. *The Golden Bough* was published in three editions between 1890 and 1915.

[82] Forster shows the implicit violence of social contagion throughout his work. In *Howards End*, the Basts carry an air of desperation to the Wilcox wedding party, sparking Mr. Wilcox's revulsion—less at his own transgressions than at their presence. In the end, the real violence is visited upon Leonard Bast, for daring to contaminate Howards End.

contaminated. Clinging to his implicit faith that "Aziz *was* innocent, and all action must be based on that," Fielding "relegates" the factual "discrepancies" of the case "to the edge of his mind, and forbade them to infect its core" (173). Rather than accept Aziz's identity as prisoner, Fielding satirically dubs him (to Superintendent McBryde) "*your* prisoner," thus signaling the biased and conditional status of the charge (171, my emphasis). Fielding anticipates Aziz's need to perform his innocence, cautioning, as the police escort him away, "Never, never act the criminal. . . . Put your hat straight and take my arm" (162). Having been punished for being too much the Indian gentleman, Aziz again has to navigate the hybrid parts of his identity: to keep his dignity without being called an imposter.

As Aziz, the man, is *un*named (he rightly fears for "My children and my name!") his name, like his body, become "synonymous with the power of evil" (162, 202). The trial's other participants are likewise cast to play specific roles. Adela is medicalized, referred to as "the patient," "his patient," or "my patient"—progressively casting her as the Civil Servant's personal creation (170, 185, 221). Such is the taboo of rape that she is rarely called "the victim." The title is first invoked with trepidation. Turton pauses and says "'—the victim herself. . . .' He nearly broke down, unable to repeat the girl's name" (163). But Anglo-Indians soon dismiss her as "only a victim," cutting a less compelling figure than her "martyr" fiancé, who "bears the Sahib's cross" (185).

The Enchanting Science of the Evidence

In a community under scrutiny, the imperial eye, if not blinded, is overstimulated, distorting, and distracted—either by racial suspicion or naïve touristic desires. It is a penetrating, empirical eye that unites the arenas of ethnography and criminal law. Against an allegedly

inscrutable Indian psyche (or Indian landscape) each invokes the testimony of the expert (fieldworker, doctor, detective) and the eye-witness (even a tourist as hapless as Adela). As Britons strive "to see the *real* India" (24), then penetrate the claustrophobic site of its alleged crimes, their visual technologies (photography, cartography, magnifying and field-glasses) and colonial knowledges fail. Aziz preempts that ethnographic gaze in an *auto*ethnography of his home—sign and symbol of self, nation, religion, culture. In a parody of a health inspection or world's fair, the doctor exhibits his domestic "squalor"—"the celebrated hospitality of the East"—to challenge Fielding's loyalty: "Look at the flies. . . . Isn't it jolly? Now I suppose you want to be off, having seen an Oriental interior" (115).

Even the native is no expert at navigating the novel's more mysterious, allegedly criminal, Oriental interior, the Marabar Caves. Casting himself as the Englishwomen's "Oriental guide," hired elephant and all (144), Aziz wonders, "What is in these caves, brother? Why are we all going to see them?" The answer (as recursive as the caves' echo) only compounds the mystery: "that God and the local villagers knew, and that the latter would gladly act as guides" (132). Unlike the reassurance of a Baedeker, whose shallow guidance Forster satirizes in *A Room with a View*, the information these "guides" proffer is, like the landscape, roundabout, ever multiplying, elusive. Given a choice of explanations, the guides "gave both," "never clearing up" the "confusion" (140). The novel thus disperses—and ultimately defers—the role of the Indian guide: from the doctor to the villagers to the hypothetical rapist—and implicitly, the police and lawyers who orchestrate the trial. By denying readers a stable guide, Forster exposes the *limits* of empiricism. Adela's field-glasses are useless here, just as the guide (who "should have kept her in sight, it was your duty") offers but a "vague gesture" as to his "lost" charge (154). Compounded, the witnesses' diverse narratives—vague gesture, epiphanal echo, sexual assault—

fracture the already-stratified grounds of colonial knowledge. Visual prosthesis or no, the imperial eye cannot penetrate the Indian "uncanny" (124). The best way to see a cave is simply to "strike a match"—and even then we cannot breach the "surface." That surface is "marvelously polished" (125) so what we see are the expectations we bring into it.

The investigator fails to excavate India's metaphysical mystery, but, in incriminating an Indian subject, he purports to solve the criminal one. As we move from cave to courtroom, the tools used to "unlock" the "real *India*" are now used to lock up the falsely accused *Indian* (69, 24). The legal pressure to assign guilt transforms the "Orient" from touristic parody to criminal "pathology" (218). Aziz's domestic property is turned into a judicial exhibition—as moral and "scientific" evidence against his culture and criminal evidence against himself (219). Adela makes no direct charge against Aziz. Rather, it is the *signs* of racial aversion that Adela displays (she "couldn't stand the Indian driver") that puts neighbors "on the track of what had happened"—i.e., on Aziz (168). Like amateur museum-hounds, police "rummage" through his locked drawers and pocket-case to excavate "photographs of women" (a single image of Aziz's dead wife, on which the "bestial," "inquisitive" superintendent pounces with an "Ah!" "Wife indeed," he thinks, "I know these wives!") and a "not edifying" letter that will "have to be quoted in court, as bearing on his morals" (172, 169). More than static surfaces, these "documents found on him at his arrest" (in his "interior," that is: the home made psyche) will actively "testify," not just to Aziz's "character," but the "general truth" of "Oriental Pathology" (218). As investigators psychologize the *Indian*, as opposed to "*English* crime," the prosecution of the individual becomes the prosecution—and persecution—of culture (169, my emphasis). Forster ultimately *inverts* this racial pathology, as it is the "inquisitive," Western investigator who "bestially" penetrates and slanders the Indian woman (172). Successively enclosed in

compound, home, drawer, brown paper, and memory, Aziz's wife remains in figurative purdah. McBryde misreads her photograph, which is "in itself . . . just a woman in a sari, facing the world" (116).

Despite the state's appeal to data, the trial undermines the empirical myth that "the facts will speak for themselves." McBryde implies that a *fact*, unmediated, is silent, but must be voiced by particular actors. His "laborious" syntax conceals a more specious logic (218): "I will now call my witnesses. The facts will speak for themselves. The prisoner is one of those individuals who have led a double life. I dare say his degeneracy gained upon him gradually. He has been very cunning at concealing, as is usual with the type . . . " (223). Initially, McBryde rests authority in *human* testimony—"I will now call my witnesses"—yet slips seamlessly to the contrary claim that *facts*, witness or no, utter their own testimony. Thus, "Facts will speak"; "documents . . . would testify" (218). Then, despite the nod to corroborated fact, he slips to the hypothetical "I dare say" (223)—and to turn "I dare say" into "general truth," requires a new set of eyes. Joining the West's other revelatory lenses are McBryde's spectacles, which he compulsively toys with whenever "enunciating a general truth." As a model of truth, however, these transparent portals clarify the world for (at most) a single wearer—and only then from a limited, preordained perspective. More revealing than the lenses themselves, only when they are off does he "look into them sadly" to detail his theory (218).

Dancing delicately between fact and fantasy, enlightened indifference and Anglo-Saxon zeal, the state reifies sentiment as science even as it exhibits mundane objects as iconic racial truths. McBryde's "studied negligence" belies his xenophobia, casting Eastern depravity—because "darker races are physically attracted by the fairer"—as "just a fact which any scientific observer will confirm" (218-19). The state's exhibits, in court as in museum, are confined to

surfaces—maps, photos, optical lenses—which, lacking a concrete link to guilt or innocence, grant an illusory access to the real—not just "the *real* India," but the real Indian *crime*. Hence "the culminating evidence: the discovery of the field-glasses"—Adela's, their strap "newly broken"—"on the prisoner" (223, 167). Eye-piece jammed, the glasses are no longer a tool for "seeing India," but the signifier of Indian guilt (69). Their aura of objective transparency now jumps from the arena of visual display to that of legal logic: once glasses and Aziz make contact, "The logic of evidence said 'Guilty'" (167). Obeying Frazer's magical Law of Contagion, we might rename this "logic" the *magic* of the evidence. If, in this age of mechanical reproduction, art is liberated "from its parasitical dependence on ritual," then its *aura* affixes all the more insidiously to mechanical tools themselves (Benjamin, "Work of Art," part IV).

Despite the glasses' assumed self-evidence—McBryde has "nothing to add"—Western epistemologies falter (223). Ironically, they began life as a tool of the magistrate: "Ronny's field-glasses" becoming "Miss Quested's" at the first hint of crime (140, 155). In a more damning form of irony, Aziz's one reference to the glasses predisposes Adela to see Indian guilt. "Insisting" that what "looked like a tree through the glasses" was "a black cobra really," he "improvised some rubbish about protective mimicry" (141). He will soon be cast in the same ambivalent position as the "cobra." Like Bhabha's mimic-man, Aziz "speaks in a tongue that is forked, not false" (Bhabha 85), claiming the objectivity of Western science (his glasses) even in his romanticizing guise of "Oriental guide" (Forster 144). In attempting to exoticize his homeland, this guide inadvertently predisposes her for his own guilt.

The glasses distort rather than clarify vision. It is in view of the glasses that McBryde first asserts his race science. When Fielding counters with his own logic—"it's impossible that, having attempted to assault her, he would put her glasses into his pocket"—McBryde argues,

"When you think of crime you think of English crime. The psychology here is different." Why? "When an Indian goes bad, he goes not only very bad, but very queer" (169). This profile of the "queer" criminal is treacherous, lecherous, and perverse. Cloaked beneath Aziz's three-piece suit (82) and "quite normal" façade (169), McBryde insinuates, the professional Indian is a counterfeit.[83] "Exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats," Aziz is a bit of a dandy (82); his one failing is the missing collar stud he gives to Fielding. By sacrificing the gold stud, Aziz imperils his own disguise while enabling Fielding's, who is at least as counterfeit as himself. Aziz's impulsive self-sacrifice is their first act of intimacy (64-65), but his generosity is read as "inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race" (82). Anglo-Indians read him as effeminate yet also predatory (like the rapist in a Mutiny narrative) and now, in one way or in many, as "queer." The modest Aziz is cast as a threat to British womanhood and British masculinity at once.

Enchanted by their own evidence, Forster's police strive to discipline three-dimensional, alien territories into two; archeological artifact into judicial fact; testimony into deposition. Myopically fixing on the "routes" of Aziz's expedition, they map the caves as they would a building or administrative unit, wielding "a plan of the Marabar Hills" and "an elevation of a specimen cave" (222-23).[84] Just as the alleged crime disrupts the most carefully laid plans ("an expedition of friends" [161]), it refuses to be represented *in* a decipherable plan. The

---

[83] The policeman's *queer* connotes the typical meaning of peculiar or suspicious (*OED* adj.[1] 1) as well as psychological disorder (out of sorts, giddy [2]) and, of course, emergent slang for homosexual (3), itself a criminal offense. Queerness has long been associated with criminality, as it denotes disreputability (a quote from 1575: "A Quire bird is one that came lately out of prison"), counterfeit money (adj.[2]) or, as with Aziz, counterfeit gentility (see Forster 223). Fielding too is "a queer chap," equally threatening to Anglo-Indian norms (122).

[84] Forster highlights the abstracting, falsifying operation of maps as Mrs. Moore traverses Central India on a train. From this vantage point, "the indestructible life of man and his changing faces, and the houses he has built for himself and God . . . appeared to her not in terms of her own trouble but as things to see." So "disconnected" is she from the landscape that even as she passes "a place called Asirgarh . . . and identified it on a map," she instantly "forgot it" (209). Fort Asirgarh is "a stronghold of Muslim nationalism" (Childs 208n. 36); in forgetting it, Mrs. Moore is neglecting something essential about Aziz, just as she declines to testify on his behalf.

prosecution's maps, "plans," "elevations," and "specimens" only, compulsively, *mis*label Indian landscapes (their "Buddhist Cave" may in fact be Jain), just as the policeman's Oriental Pathology mislabels Indian psyches.[85] With the caves so "notoriously like one another" (even the guide gets confused), linguistic signs are destabilized, so "in the future they were to be numbered in sequence with white paint" (199). Despite the confusion over the caves' religious significance,[86] as numbers, they lose their spiritual meaning entirely, and they are still no closer to exposing a crime.

The defense takes the fight to the prosecution on the prosecution's own terms. If their knowledge of the landscape can be debunked, so can their case: "'In which cave is the offense alleged, the Buddhist or the Jain?' asked Mahmoud Ali, with the air of unmasking a conspiracy" (223). But by committing themselves to documented fact, the defense's counter-evidence is doomed. In court, the caves' four dimensions—their spatial and temporal depth—diminish to a mere "point," a "wild hope of establishing an alibi" (222-23). Fielding and Hamidullah's fact-finding mission to the caves—zealously "pacing and measuring all one moonlit night"—only spawns more questions (223). As physical archeology fails, so do Western archeologies of knowledge. Like Adela, they come "up against" a wall of "surfaces," and they dead end (125).

Scripting Testimony

With Adela unable to fathom or express her feelings, in her silence, her companions read Aziz's guilt. For Forster, the cave is a space of illegible feminine alterity. Virginia Woolf presents a similar image in *A Room of One's Own*: "For if Chloe likes Olivia and Mary

[85] Just as the caves are painstakingly, if inaccurately, mapped, so is the accuser's medicalized body. On Adela's return from the caves, "Hour after hour, Miss Derek and Mrs. McBryde examined her through magnifying glasses, always coming on fresh colonies" of cactus spines (192-93).
[86] The Ellora Caves that Forster visited were *already* hybrid: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain in a single site (Ganguly 27).

Carmichael knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been. It is all half lights and profound shadows like those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down, not knowing where one is stepping" (84). Here, although the women's feelings are obscure, once explored, they are in fact expressible. Adela, to this point, has not expressed her experience—and when she tries, the listeners shut her down.

Police evidence is more scriptural than empirical, with lurid "Mutiny records" doubling as the white man's "Bible in this country" (169). Rape is a notoriously difficult crime to bring to court, *except* when it fits a specific racial or class narrative in which the prosecutors can cast themselves as saviors. Aziz's alleged crime fits into Anglo-India's founding narrative: "the unspeakable limit of cynicism, untouched since 1857" (187).[87] In fact, Forster's trial is the inverse of Britain's Mutiny narratives. A Mutiny narrative sexualizes a political uprising, while Aziz's trial politicizes a sexual crime. Because rape is "unspeakable," Adela's community refuses to identify what specifically occurred. Obscuring the incident in euphemism, Turton will say no more than the passive, "Miss Quested has been insulted." This imprecision only spawns more "grotesque" conjectures (163). At the trial, it is the defense that finally articulates the charge of rape. They remind the court that Aziz is not charged with some vague, inborn depravity but a specific act. Against the wild claim that Aziz "got rid" of "another English lady," Mahmoud Ali breaks the taboo and satirically demands if "his client was charged with murder as well as rape" (223-24).

The key witness, here, *should* be Adela, and the deposition seeks to reify her fractured memories—the fluid media of speech and memory—into a text as unassailable as their forensic exhibits. In this model of witnessing, diverse, subjective perceptions (here, of the Caves) congeal into a single, authoritative text, to be extracted (in police interviews), standardized (transcribed in

[87] Jenny Sharpe argues that the rape narrative reveals the limits not of Indian cynicism but of Britain's civility.

legal form), and documented (in the deposition). But *this* deposition is less fact than sexual and racial allegory. It is a colonial relic, like Ronny's profile of the queer criminal or "educated native": "phrases and arguments" "picked up from older officials" (33). As Adela's testimony is textualized, we lose all context of the original event.

Demanding such labor to produce, even the Superintendent, "most reflective and best educated" of officials (166), "could not bear his depositions to be upset." "The signed deposition, which lay before him," is his talisman against skeptics like Fielding (168). It is the police who sensationalize Adela's tale—adding new characters and "developing" it for dramatic effect (222)—to the point that it is "*his* deposition" (168). He is outraged that "his witness" (230) must take the stand at all: "In the old days an Englishwoman would not have had to appear, nor would any Indian have dared to discuss her private affairs. She would have made her deposition, and judgement would have followed" (195-96). McBryde's "judgement" is an abstraction, separate from a human (Indian) judge as well as from the equally human (fallible) witness.

Properly disciplined, his witness will reproduce "his deposition" on the stand.[88] Once the police hammer out that narrative, she need only "go through it," by rote, "in the witness-box"—and in the meantime not be "worried overmuch with questions" (Fielding's) that challenge its validity (167). As further proof against her lingering doubts, questioner and witness "employ agreed words throughout, so that this part of the proceedings held no surprises" (228). Answering the well-rehearsed questions, she exemplifies Wittgenstein's model of pedagogy, in which the student (following his teacher's precedent) strives to carry forward a series of signs according to an established pattern (§208). Adela has less faith in her testimony than in the way the police will frame her testimony to achieve a result: "my verdict" (213).

[88] Sara Suleri argues that Forster has written his own devious script for Adela, in which she "must experience a delusional rape in order that her body may be transmogrified into that legal space over which Fielding and Aziz can stake out the overdetermination of their mutual loyalty" (77).

However scripted, the judicial space must also open itself to improvisation. The trial is polyvocal and unruly—its spontaneous, conditional orality decomposing any single, authoritative voice.[89] If the trial purports to reorder society along "fairer" lines (Forster's pun [219]), it also exposes itself to its own reordering. Debunking the state's racial science becomes a task not for experts but an unruly "voice" in the crowd. Laying bare the absurdity of Oriental Pathology (that "the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer") this voice "from nowhere" quips, "Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?" (218-19). As the trial's "first interruption," it is also a test of the magistrate, who "felt bound to censure it." Detecting the real culprit is as futile as it is irrelevant, as long as Das produces the show of order. At his command, "Turn that man out," the native policeman grabs "a man who had said nothing, and turns him out roughly" (219). That no one can agree on who "that" signifies betrays the slipperiness of language, even when uttered with the authority of the court. With this decisive action, both Das and the policeman prove their judicial fitness. But the interruption proves that spectators may find a way to insert themselves into the trial. The man's voice "fell from nowhere, from the ceiling perhaps" (219), as if the courthouse itself is tired of the charade (219).

"Indianizing" Mrs. Moore

The unruly quip about Adela's ugliness ushers in appeals to a new witness which will soon turn the trial on its head. Both sides "claim" the hypothetical testimony of the absent Mrs. Moore within a broader tale of guilt or innocence (225). Prosecutors cast the older woman as secondary victim in an elaborate sexual plot ("another English lady" "crushed" "into a cave" to

[89] Lynn Franken reads the criminal trial, via Bakhtin, as a "space of contestation" that "disrupts and reorganizes the experience of the linear" (115). Although it is "modeled on British law," Aziz's trial "is punctuated by scandal within and flanked by scandal without" (118): the voice "from the ceiling" (Forster 219), "battle of the platform" (221), and embodied rebuke of the punkah wallah (217-28).

"leave him free for his crime" [223-24]), while the defense invoke her as a character witness: "imprisoned" not in a cave but at the port of Aden, in a conspiracy not against white womanhood, but an Indian man. In the seat of referee, Das must negotiate between (and reject) both Mrs. Moores: "Neither side called her, neither must quote her as evidence" (224).

Voices outside the court invoke an absent, "Indianized" Mrs. Moore—the "refrain in the street" of *Esmiss Esmoor*—as a mantra for justice. Reimagined as "a Hindu goddess" (226), the refrain is bound neither by the law, the god, or the language of the West, nor its time and space. Shattering the border of courtroom and bazaar, this hybrid refrain provisionally bridges the gulf between an abstracting imperial law and local, public demands (that Aziz be released). The trial is hybridized both in Bakhtin's sense and in Bhabha's: performative, polyvocal, hybrid, and disordering, the chant engenders a transcultural counter-testimony to the Raj—one that is *in* the court but not *of* it. Like Joyce's "shout in the street" (the "Nestor" episode in *Ulysses*), Forster's "refrain in the street" (227) is spirit made immanent—in sound if not in flesh.[90]

Mrs. Moore herself is absent, aware of Aziz's innocence yet unwilling to defend him. She is so weary of the rigid formalities of Anglo-Indian life that she refuses to engage them—even to hasten their destruction. She simply refuses "to take [her] part" in the impending farce. She perceives that it is not *Aziz's* trial at all, but Adela's and Ronny's ("I shall attend your marriage, but not your trial"), and ultimately, Anglo-India's. Mrs. Moore interrogates Ronny: "Why should I be in the witness-box?" He proposes that she simply ventriloquize the prosecution's case: "confirming certain points in our evidence." Refusing to confirm anything, Mrs. Moore is the only Englishperson to *dis*identify with English law: "I have nothing to do with your ludicrous law courts" (200). Mrs. Moore's refusal to defend Aziz is troubling. It is not enough to

[90] Campbell argues that Joyce's "shout" demonstrates God's immanence (62).

disidentify with the law; sometimes one needs to fight it. Mrs. Moore perceives the artifice of the situation, yet she disengages, rather than save the man trapped in that artifice.

As her corpse is "committed to the deep," her signifier unmoored from signified (256), Mrs. Moore is inverted, "repeated like a charm," and "Indianized into Esmiss Esmoor," "a Hindu goddess" (226). Mrs. Moore passively rejected English law; the translated Esmiss Esmoor actively combats it. What she signifies, however, is as disputed as the case itself: she is at once a legal "trick" to "make a scene"; a "revolting" "travesty"; or a sacred, secret weapon (225). Thus does a disembodied witness subvert the body of the law—even if, the judge asserts, she is judicially "extraneous"; "as a witness [she] does not exist" (226). The trial's one moment of legal harmony comes when the law is challenged by voices *outside* its jurisdiction. The lawyer, Amritrao, facilitates a spontaneous flash of "forensic humour" by requesting Das to "persuade the gentlemen outside" to "withdraw" all "reference" to the nonexistent witness. Like the joke "from the ceiling" and the chant itself, this unscripted remark transforms the court milieu, permitting "peace" (at least until the next "crisis") to be "restored" (226-27). Das concedes the limits of the law, as, confined to his flimsy platform, he confesses, "I am afraid my powers do not extend that far" (227). Das seems grateful, momentarily, to air the public's voice; he knows that "Until the magic exhausted itself, he was powerless" (225).

More magical than the state's flimsy exhibits, the hybrid refrain is prophetic: at its climax, "It was as if the prayer had been heard and the relics exhibited" (226). Provisionally, the unruly voices from the street *disenchant* the court as legal space; now, "the magic" lies with indigenous voices in the street. The chant locates authority not in objects but in performance: in the speech-act itself. Although Mrs. Moore is no longer with them, after hearing the chants, the

defense claims to know her intent: "we had just learnt that Mrs. Moore had important evidence which she desired to give" (226).

Testimony Untethered

Before the chant, the court is steeped in what Wittgenstein would call the "psychological 'atmosphere'" of guilt: a fog that muddies the "*various* interpretations" of each piece of evidence (§213). Like Wittgenstein's series of signs—"guided" only by precedent, "guess," and assumption—Adela's testimony culminates a "process" whose prior phases (her isolation and deposition, the state's forensics and pathology) constrict her future decisions (how to testify) (§210, 213). With "Oriental Pathology," McBryde's "favourite theme, laying around him," how can "his witness" resist (Forster 218, 230)? Only when Indian voices penetrate that guilty "atmosphere," hijacking court authorities, can alternative verdicts emerge.

Now that the law's vulnerability is manifest, "when Adela came to give her evidence, the atmosphere was quieter than it had been since the beginning of the trial" (227). Unable to mute the crowd, Adela is reminded of an alternate narrative: that Aziz may be innocent. Now on public platform, the alleged victim ignores her cues and acquits the accused. Against the state's empirical claims, this more just testimony eludes not just rationality, but language itself. Jolted into consciousness (and conscience) by the call for counter-testimony, the scripted witness revises her memory. Eliding the stable surfaces of forensic science, and even Newtonian physics (see Froula), Adela conjures a more fluid, provisional model of the physical universe. She thus "returned to the Marabar Hills, and spoke from them across a sort of darkness to Mr. McBryde. The fatal day recurred, in every detail, but now she was of it and not of it at the same time" (227). This "double relation"—the private made public, embodied as well as witnessed—revives

the fatal day's "indescribable splendour," even as the tactile "sound of her own voice" erects an "armour" under which "truth and nothing but the truth" (or something closer to it) might emerge—including the most demanding truth, doubt (227). The novel's truth, such as it is, is *local*, even if it is not *locatable*. Thus does the episteme of Mrs. Moore rove the land ("Mrs. Moore—she did know"), even as her body is irrecoverably "committed to the deep," "lowered into yet another India—the Indian Ocean" (263, 256).

If the state would flatten such an India into a map or chart, Adela, from the stand, fleshes it out once more. Whatever her ignorance of local names ("yes, she had noticed the 'Tank of the Dagger,' but not known its name"), the witness's caves are not "specimens." Her caves inhabit space with their own syncretic and erotic geology. The act of testimony reconstitutes that space: "As she spoke, she created the Kawa Dol" (228). However unscientific, Adela's "vision" restores sensual, observable "beauty and significance" to "the polished walls," as she "saw the niches up the curve of the stone, and felt the heat strike her face." Though "blind to it[s beauty] at the time," beauty and truth (provisionally joined in the punkah wallah fanning the courtroom) now derail the engines of guilt, "leading along" the uncharted, labyrinthine, "paths of truth, and the airs from the punkah behind her wafted her on" (228).[91]

It is an act of public psychoanalysis, in which the patient/witness/analyst excavates her own memories. Adela exposes her own blind spots, realizing that the would-be rapist may not exist. (Even Fielding had posited the rapist's existence, obsessing over the missing guide.) When the state demands that she identify Aziz as the one person present, she refuses the safety of certainty. Finally perceiving her *im*perception, Adela "found the exact reply" when "something caused her to add: 'No one else was present to my knowledge. We appeared to be alone'" (228). Her scripted narrative derails, and she "failed to locate him." Shuttled to a realm where "Speech

[91] We may compare this labyrinthine puzzle to the scene at the Figsbury Rings in *The Longest Journey* (1907).

was more difficult than vision," the English witness confronts the subjectivity of perception to achieve a more radical act of *non*-witnessing: "I am not—— . . . I am not quite sure" (229). Undermining the trial's empirical pretense, her very "doubt" is "solid and attractive, like the hills" she experiences so sensuously.[92] Paradoxically, police pressure to repeat the incriminating tale—"I will read you the words of the deposition which you signed two hours later"—enables the witness to at last refute it: "No" (229). It is not even a confession ("Atonement and confession—they could wait") but a logical, "prosaic" "withdrawal" (230).

It is only in the witness-box, faced with the most leading of questions, that she takes that "half a minute" to re-envision the scene "before I reply"—and out of that pause, to admit her "mistake" (227-29). Inarticulately expressive, Adela's "something" reawakens the cave's echo: a force she is ever "up against," impenetrable as the "dark" yet "polished" wall "I ran my finger along." Yet it is something which "Mrs. Moore—she did know" (263). Even an echo, after all, has three dimensions. Wittgenstein exclaims: "words, significantly uttered, have . . . not only a surface, but also the dimension of depth!" (§594). Still "*of*" the scene, yet "*not of it* at the same time," Adela "saw herself *in* one [cave], and she was also *outside* it, *watching* its entrance, for Aziz to pass in" (227-29, my emphasis). As both subject and object, viewer and viewed of her own drama, she *observes* her own subject-position moving through this tangible, touchable, yet still uncanny, terrain. Her double-witnessing suggests the paradox of quantum physics: equally likely, at any instant, to be inside the cave or out, victim or witness, testifying to the equal yet opposite charge of guilt or innocence. And in order to determine her status, she (or her interrogators, or we who observe in turn) will inevitably change it. Against a positivist model of truth—Mr. Wilcox's "one thing or the other" (*Howards End* 100)—we find that the ability to

[92] Against "the Anglo-Indians' positive belief that she and they 'know' what happened," Adela's is "a knowledge negative yet real" (Froula 24).

be—and to *see*—one thing *and* the other is more productive, and more real, than disabling.[93] Faced with her tale's inadequacy—it indicates one thing (guilt) rather than the other—the "victim" resists the imperative of victimhood—her conviction *in* conviction—as, "in hard prosaic tones," "I withdraw everything" (230).

Fredric Jameson characterizes modernist perception as "a cinematographic kind of space, with its Einsteinian observer on a train moving through a landscape whose observation it alters at the moment that it makes it possible" (53).[94] This mode of perception "offers some space, some third term, between the subject and the object" (53). Mrs. Moore experiences this space *between* the subject and object as she hurtles through Central India on a mail train. "Rushing," "sliding with [it] through the night," it is a passage through time, space, and a "hundred Indias" (210). At first she sees the space as a cartographic abstraction: "identifying" a place on the map only to "forget it." Yet she also attains a doubled, unmappable vision when Asirgarh "reappears," insistently changed, in a new space: "to the left of the bastions now." Now, even if she can "connect it with [nothing] except its own name," "it had looked at her twice and seemed to say: 'I do not vanish'" (209). Likewise, Adela's dual perception of the caves undermines the trial's dichotomous premise: that "It is impossible to regard a tragedy from two points of view" (165). Beyond the court, it opens a third way *between* the "India" and "England" of the novel's divisive final scene, widening the "gap" through which a "rider" (like Aziz or Fielding) must as yet "pass single file" (322).

---

[93] In the indeterminacy of here and there, in and out, guilt or innocence, Forster dramatizes the severance of truth from language. Wittgenstein likewise highlights the instability of any "I" or "here" or "this": "'I' is not the name of a person, nor 'here' of a place, and 'this' is not a name" (Wittgenstein §410). Woolf expresses a similar principle of indeterminacy in *Mrs Dalloway*. Refusing, even ontologically, to judge her fellow-creatures, "She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or were that. She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on" (8).

[94] Illustrating his special theory of relativity (1905), Einstein's thought experiment of train and platform shows that even simultaneity (when an action *appears*, to the observer, to occur) depends upon that observer's perspective.

As the witness (now a "broken machine" [230]) breaks from script, Forster suggests that Western logic is just as seductive as the desires of the tourist. Professor Godbole regards logic as a trap: "logic and conscious effort had seduced" (286). Like the illusive transparency of visualism, logic seduces even as it disciplines. After the trial, Aziz concludes: "This pose of 'seeing India' which had seduced him to Miss Quested at Chandrapore was only a form of ruling India" (306). But if we debunk the notion of fact entirely, it becomes impossible to *dis*prove Aziz's guilt. However rigorously the defense pursues the "truth" of the caves, the evidence cannot be refuted, only met with more evidence. It is only the missing guide, evasive as the "*real* India" (24) for which there is no guide, who might settle the proportion of truth and invention behind the unnamable crime. Just as unlocatable as Mrs. Moore, then, is the trial's second missing witness, the unnamed guide to the Marabar Hills.

Forster ungrounds the notion of a legible colonial terrain by dispersing, and ultimately deferring, the role of "Indian guide." Before a crime is even alleged, Fielding doggedly pursues the missing guide (if not as rapist then as witness), demanding of the unperturbed Aziz: "I suppose the guide helped her"; "Then the guide came back to you?" (159). He interrogates Adela in this detective quest: "who did follow you, or did no one follow you? . . . I don't like it left in air" (263). Fielding's quest to "identify the guide" is as inconclusive as his "wild hope of establishing an alibi" (223). Adela renounces herself to uncertainty:

> "Let us call it the guide," she said indifferently. "It will never be known. It's as if I ran my finger along that polished wall in the dark, and cannot get further. I am up against something, and so are you. Mrs. Moore—she did know." (263)

But must the facts of the case remain "left in air," if "not a muddle," still "a mystery" (263)?

Fanning her along the labyrinthine "paths of truth," the punkah wallah serves as a final "Oriental guide," uniting truth with its problematic twin, beauty (228, 144). As Adela

aestheticizes the untouchable subject, she revises her portrait of the Indian man.[95] Though naïve, this ethical aesthetic locates justice in the untrained subject's ability to perceive and respond to beauty across cultures. Scarry argues that an experience of beauty may be a first step toward justice: an embodied call to redress injury to a beautiful yet wronged subject (*On Beauty and Being Just*). Yet this model risks miscasting the wronged subject *as* object. Beauty is a subjective experience, as tangible yet fallible as Adela's encounter in the cave. It is also a cultural construct. However Adela craves to grasp his beauty, the punkah wallah remains (to the witness and to the assembly he fans into being) unvoiced and untouchable. He is a functionary in the physical realm, as well as the ethical and epistemological: a human instrument who, circulating the ambient "air," enables touchable subjects to crystallize their latent thoughts. Part of the "something that she did not understand," he "took hold the girl and pulled her through" (230). Even when the court empties, this untouchable "divine" (217), "unaware that anything unusual had occurred," will "continue to pull the cord of his punkah, to gaze at the empty dais and the overturned special chairs, and rhythmically to agitate the clouds of descending dust" (231). Here, the law's most sacred institution, blind justice herself, is a performance built on dust.

Given the fundamental uncertainty of fact *and* the bias of imperial law, as well as beauty, the community requires a new paradigm for mediating knowledge: one that is never entire, but provisional. Godbole posits a theory:

> I am informed that an evil action was performed in the Marabar Hills . . . My answer to that is this: that action was performed by Dr. Aziz. . . . It was performed by the guide. . . . It was performed by you. . . . It was performed by me. . . . And by my students. It was even performed by the lady herself. When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the universe. Similarly when good occurs. (177-78)

[95] In another moment of visual clarify, Adela sees Aziz in court and begins to doubt her story. Her first impression is of Aziz's beauty: "a strong, neat little Indian with very black hair, and pliant hands. . . . and though he was 'guilty' no atmosphere of sin surrounded him. 'I suppose he *is* guilty. Can I possibly have made a mistake?'" (220). Thus may a moment of visual clarity *disenchant* posited assumptions, leading toward a more reasonable doubt.

Fielding and Adela at last agree, not just of her case, but the "universe" itself: "They had not the apparatus for judging" (263).

Like the fragmented accounts of the Marabar, at the chaotic break-up of the trial, "afterwards each person gave a different account of the catastrophe" (230). It is not that a true set of facts prevail. Adela asserts nothing; she only "withdraws" all claim to fact—which amounts to "renouncing her own people" (230-31). Aziz remains "the prisoner," but he is not specifically declared innocent. He is "released without one stain on his character" (230)—how the court can guarantee this promise is the real mystery—but his outlook on the world is changed. Uncertainty is a luxury unavailable to him. He *knows* he is innocent; he must find a new home where guilt is not presupposed.

A More Hybrid Justice

Forster contrasts Anglo-Indian justice with the more fluid, hybrid law of Aziz's new home, the Hindu state of Mau. There, at the annual Gokul Ashtami festival, to honor Krishna's birth, the Rajah will pardon and release a single, random prisoner. Thus, Krishna will "leave the palace, escorted by the whole power of the State, and pass by the Jail, which stood down in the town now. As He did so, troubling the waters of our civilization, one prisoner would be released" (298). Structurally, this ecstatic, eleventh hour release echoes Aziz's more perfunctory release in Chandrapore. After Aziz's trial, Indian spectators had formed an ecstatic procession with the desire to free more prisoners:

> Where was the procession going? To friends, to enemies, to Aziz' bungalow, to the Collector's bungalow, to the Minto Hospital where the Civil Surgeon would eat dust and the patients (confused with prisoners) be released, to Delhi, Simla. (233-34)

The aims of the Chandrapore procession are confused, but the state of Mau channels such chaos for a productive end. If the Raj strives to muzzle all dissent, to discipline India through an airtight legal system, then the festival at Mau will reclaim the crowd's hybrid, unruly voices as socially and politically therapeutic.

Although its ruler is Hindu, Mau models the prison ceremony on a Muslim rebel who once took arms against it:

> His mother said to him, "Free prisoners." So he took a sword and went up to the fort. He unlocked a door, and the prisoners streamed out and resumed their previous occupations, but the police were too much annoyed and cut off the young man's head. Ignoring its absence, he made his way over the rocks that separate the fort and the town, killing policemen as he went. (295-96)

In this tale, the rebel is the just man, restoring prisoners to productive roles in society. The legend casts the police and the state as short-sighted. The prisoners' reintegration into society prefigures Aziz's own integration—medical practice renewed—into this native state. The headless saint frees *all* prisoners, regardless of faith, or even guilt or innocence, in a grand vision of liberty and mercy.[96]

The rebel's sainthood crosses religions—not unlike the shrines of *Esmiss Esmoor* or the Tank of the Dagger—to be "worshipped by the few Mohammedans who live near, and by Hindus also" (266, 296). If Aziz once "scorned" these hybrid shrines—here, "even Islam was idolatrous"—"soon he didn't mind, like Akbar. After all, this saint had freed prisoners, and he himself had lain in prison" (296). When Mau starts freeing its *own* prisoners, at the Krishna festival, it too is non-sectarian. The hybrid mercy of Mau—Muslim saint twinned with Hindu state—is a model for a less stratified community. If democracy prizes pluralism, multiple voices, and most of all flexibility (see Forster's *Two Cheers for Democracy*), these elements prevail in Mau much more than in British Chandrapore.

[96] Most of the prisoners for whom he sacrifices himself are presumably (like Mau's current prisoners) Hindu (298).

Each time a prisoner is released, however, it throws doubt on the mechanics of law: either the court cannot discern guilt from innocence, or, regardless of guilt, *any* prisoner deserves mercy. As he watches the festival, Aziz recalls that he too has "lain in prison" (296). At the climax, the state reasserts its authority, as "all the guns of the State went off," crowned by "a rocket from the Jail garden." If Aziz finds the Hindu festival too "fanatical," it is a productive disorder; for the prisoner's release not only echoes his own, but the syncretic, mystic chant that triggered it. As the procession approaches the Jail, its collective, wordless "sob" may seem "to confirm" its fanaticism, but it also *vocalizes* the sorrow of *every* prisoner—himself included, "as though the lips of a giant had parted"—to achieve mercy for one (310). Diverse voices are thus channeled into a pragmatic, extralegal end, disquieting "our civilization" in order to sustain it (298). The festival's overflow of emotions parallels the monsoon waters: uncontrollable, dangerous, yet vital to the life of the region.

Forster describes his own experience of Gokul Ashtami in his memoir, *The Hill of Devi*:

> At the Jail there was a great crush, for a prisoner was released—a lady who had murdered her husband, and has been pulling up weeds in the Palace Garden for me in consequence. Her expression was beautiful as she flung herself before H.H. and the Dewan. The expressions of most people were beautiful that day. (111-12)

In real life, the identity of the criminal defies stereotypes. The "lady's" religion is unknown, but she is not a meek, self-immolating widow, nor is she particularly confined or segregated. We see her working for the Maharajah, though Forster wryly claims her labor is "for me." The causality that he assigns to this chain of events is satirical, implying that Forster himself is the beneficiary of an act of murder (she works "for me in consequence"). Similar to his anecdote of the policeman carrying a load of bananas, his humor deflects the anxiety an outsider might feel for having so easily appropriated Indian labor. The woman's "beautiful" expression is mirrored both in her fellow-prisoners and in the spectators. As mutual performers in the festival, crowd

and prisoner echo and feed one another's ecstasy. So too in Forster's novel, "Smiling, with downcast eyes, the prisoners discussed with the gentry their chances of salvation. Except for the irons on their legs, they resembled other men, nor did they feel different" (*Passage* 298).

If we seem to have strayed far from our original jurisdiction in Chandrapore, we find that justice, too, must be willing to adapt with travel. The inability to "identify" even the guide to India, much less forge a passage *to* it, is the final irony. Forster's Anglos are only ever passing *through* India: even Fielding, devoid of all English "roots," "travels light" enough to leave his Indian "brother" behind (121, 116). But Forster's unnamed Indians turn the trope of the primitive back upon their masters, appropriating the symbol of the English matriarch, in an anti-colonial demand for justice. Adela's confession renders her, "a broken," "mad," "machine" (230), but her Indianized compatriot, Esmiss Esmoor, goes further by subverting Western conventions *of* confession. Hybridized as Hindu goddess, she resists imperial discipline (and detection) to initiate new forms of confession: local "cults" that, ever "hiding," ever mobile, elude imperial intelligence. Thus hybridized, a "legend" of the exceptional Englishwoman inhabits the landscape. Traveling orally, summoned by relics and offerings (*of* the land, in "earthenware saucers," as well as in it), she evades imperial discipline by "hiding in rubbish heaps and moving when no one is looking" (256-57). She becomes a ghost, an undocumented migrant, recalling earlier, pre-Mutiny times: "when Europeans still made their home in the country-side and appealed to its imagination, they occasionally became local demons after death—not a whole god, perhaps, but part of one, adding an epithet or gesture to what already existed" (257).

The novel's painful parting scene demonstrates that India cannot be a Briton's home—"not yet," "not there"—as long as he is its occupier (322). Nor does Mrs. Moore live on except as a vague memory or a local demon. Perpetually constituted by travel, the Englishwoman's

body is “committed to the deep,” forever en route between East and West (256). Yet her hybrid forms, equally liminal, also make her *part* of India, suggesting that the British presence in the subcontinent—hybridized beyond recognition, in person, in chant, or enshrined—must also be fundamentally changed by it.

Chapter 2

Doing the Police in Anglo-Indian Voices: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discipline in Orwell's Burma

This chapter explores the disciplinary matrix of the police in George Orwell: scenarios where "justice" is enacted on the ground, either by law enforcers or the civilians and soldiers who provisionally assume their powers. In the wake of Forster's trial of Anglo-India, Orwell indicts the empire with equal spectacle in his novel, *Burmese Days* (1934), and in his essays, "Shooting an Elephant" (1936) and "A Hanging" (1931). All recreate his disillusion serving in the Indian Imperial Police from 1922 to 1927, in what was then the province of Burma. How, after all, can we read Orwell's later distopias of the totalitarian police state, yet neglect his own work policing the imperial state? For it is as a policeman that he is most the anarchist. Soon after resigning from the police, Orwell "worked out an anarchistic theory that all government is evil, that the punishment always does more harm than the crime and that people can be trusted to behave decently if only you will let them alone" (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 146-47). Though he later dubs this view "sentimental nonsense,"[97] the brazen injustices that pervade his colonial writing display his struggle to find a middle ground between anarchy and a crudely- or unequally-applied law—which to him is no better than Fascism. Whether writing as civilian or as cop, Orwell's most complex imperial personas *disidentify* with the empire they serve, to perform an alienated and ironic testimony against it.

He details his disillusionment in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), a book ostensibly about unemployment and poverty in England's industrial north. But it is not all coal miners and slagheaps. Part socio-economic critique, part travelogue, part memoir, Orwell's ethnography of

[97] Orwell goes so far as to assert the need for "a harsh criminal law" to "protect peaceful people from violence" (*Road* 147).

one time, place, and class contains a psychoanalysis of himself in another. Tracing his "road from Mandalay to Wigan" (121), he is "haunted" by his place in the imperial power structure:

> For five years I had been part of an oppressive system, and it had left me with a bad conscience. Innumerable remembered faces—faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fist in moments of rage (nearly everyone does these things in the East, at any rate occasionally: orientals can be very provoking)—haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate. (147-48)

Orwell's reversion to racial stereotypes (the "orientals" above) is equally provoking, but the account is designed to highlight his own guilt. The culpable party, here, is "my fist." Of course, he also assumes that "everyone" will be read as *every white European (probably male)*. He tries to shake off the more repugnant forms of power that this identity entails (though he never questions his own power to speak or to publish):

> I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants . . . At that time failure seemed to me to be the only virtue. Every suspicion of self-advancement, even to "succeed" in life to the extent of making a few hundreds a year, seemed to me spiritually ugly, a species of bullying. (148)

How can an Englishman "submerge" himself in the Burmese cause? In his other ethnographic forays, like *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), Orwell strives to live, as it were, like a native. But in Burma his privilege is written on his skin. He cannot escape that skin, but he can escape the place where it turns him into a tyrant. It is only a temporary escape, but in the meantime, he sublimates his critique of racism abroad into a critique of class at home:

> It was in this way that my thoughts turned towards the English working class. It was the first time that I had ever been really aware of the working class, and to begin with it was only because they supplied an analogy. They were the symbolic victims of injustice, playing the same part in England as the Burmese played in Burma. In Burma the issue had been quite simple. The whites were up and the blacks were down, and therefore as a matter of course one's sympathy was with the blacks. I now realized that there was no need to go as far as Burma to find

> tyranny and exploitation. Here in England, down under one's feet, were the submerged working class, suffering miseries which in their different way were as bad as any an oriental ever knows. (*Road* 148-49)

Orwell's analogy is too pat. Injustice may be "symbolic," but it is also real, and racism is never "an analogy." Structural biases of race and class arise from specific conditions and ideologies; they often intertwine, but they are not interchangeable. Nonetheless, there is a psychological truth to Orwell's account—of the way we become *aware* of injustice, however imperfectly and incompletely, from a position of relative power. And if Orwell's socio-economic fight began as a way to sublimate the overwhelming problem of race, he later perceived their connection: that Empire *used* racism to support its also-violent and -unbalanced economy at home. His political development thus resembles that of another ex-colonial, Leonard Woolf, who served in the Ceylon Civil Service from 1904 to 1911.[98] In time, both men recognized these diverse spheres of injustice—local and global, political and economic—to be deeply, causally entwined.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on Orwell's first novel, *Burmese Days*, before returning to his nonfiction. *Burmese Days* displays how the cultural fears of Anglo-India *use* colonial law to produce not only the criminal body but also a fictional "revolution"—and finally that revolution's very real suppression. The novel's outlook is brutal and bleak. I will conclude with Orwell's nonfiction, where he searches for a just response to colonial brutality.

"An Unbreakable System of Tabus"

Burmese Days turns the ethnographic idiom of "mysterious ritual" back upon the empire, exposing a disciplinary culture that operates through an "unbreakable system of tabus" (51, 69).

---

[98] Woolf continued to believe in "law and order," but his work "from the inside of the administration . . . of what is called justice produced in me an ineradicable and melancholy disillusionment with those whose duty it is to do justice. . . . Too often one watches the line between the criminal and the policeman or the judge growing thinner and thinner" (*Growing* 79). Woolf did not tell this personal story until decades after he began his political and economic critiques (e.g., *Economic Imperialism* and *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, both 1920).

Orwell paints Anglo-Indian culture in all its exploitative, absurd, and perverse detail: the whitewashed enclave of the club and hybrid domesticity of the bungalow; the masculine trophies of game hunting and "sacrifices" to sport (74); the mating rituals of sahib and memsahib; and the "fetish" of whiteness itself (48). The icons of metropolitan popular culture (fashion, music, magazines) are mercurial exports. Rather than revitalize colonial backwaters, they produce a stale mimicry of metropolitan clichés: "our dear old swinery of gramophones and billycock hats . . . And all the forests shaved flat—chewed into wood-pulp for *The News of the World*" (42).

These are the words of Orwell's anti-hero, the timber merchant John Flory. Flory sees the Raj as a predatory police state: a bureaucracy of thieves and mercenaries. As a raider of that land himself, he perceives the complicity between imperial trade and imperial law:

> The official holds the Burman down while the businessman goes through his pockets. Do you suppose my firm, for instance, could get its timber contracts if the country weren't in the hands of the British? Or the other timber firms, or the oil companies, or the miners and planters and traders? How could the Rice Ring go on skinning the unfortunate peasant if it hadn't the Government behind it? The British Empire is simply a device for giving trade monopolies to the English—or rather to gangs of Jews and Scotchmen. (40)

Flory's casual "gangs of Jews" is disturbing,[99] but he does make the case that the work of Empire is to underdevelop Asia. Britain has quashed local industry, from consumer goods ("Where are the Indian muslins now?") to the tools with which Britannia rules the waves ("Now you couldn't build a seaworthy fishing boat") as well as the land (once, "the Indians cast guns that were at any rate up to the European standard. Now . . . you can't make so much as a brass cartridge case in the whole continent") (41). In short, India and Burma are cogs in the colonial capital machine.

[99] See Bluemel for Orwell's "unfortunate habit of classifying Jews as sahibs" (158) by drawing an analogy between European colonialism and the role of Jews and Arabs in Palestine (156). Orwell's friend, the Zionist T. R. Fyvel, recalled Orwell's view that, "In the twenties, anti-Jewish references were not out of order. They were only on a par with the automatic sneers people cast at Anglo-Indian colonels in boarding houses" (qtd. in Bluemel 157).

And Flory is also—if not equally—trapped. As he sketches Flory's biography, the novel's narrator adopts the political voice of Orwell's essays. He addresses a "we" (those back "in England") and then a "you," asking us to imagine the self-censorship of colonial life:

> But even friendship can hardly exist when every white man is a cog in the wheels of despotism. Free speech is unthinkable. All other kinds of freedom are permitted. You are free to be a drunkard, an idler, a coward, a backbiter, a fornicator; but you are not free to think for yourself. Your opinion on every subject of any conceivable importance is dictated for you by the pukka sahibs' code.
>
> In the end the secrecy of your revolt poisons you like a secret disease. Your whole life is a life of lies. (69)

The narrator's voice is more intimate here than elsewhere: Orwell puts "you" in his shoes to provoke your righteous outrage. But despite his liberal attitudes, Flory is a hapless anti-hero within Orwell's satiric tragedy—able in thought, but not in deed, to rise above the system in which he is complicit.[100] For "it is one of the tragedies of the half-educated that they develop late, when they are already committed to some wrong way of life." So it is only now that Flory "grasped the truth": "The Indian Empire is a despotism—benevolent no doubt, but still a despotism with theft as its final object" (68). The novel dramatizes how this "unbreakable system" (69) insidiously corrupts the morality and will of the individual—that is, its violent and self-destructive effects on the Burmese, Indian, and British alike.

Orwell admired *A Passage to India*,[101] and *Burmese Days* is a more caustic indictment, a decade later and hundreds of miles east, of a land that held considerably less sway in the British imagination. Burma was administered as part of the Raj until 1937, when it became a Crown Colony. Despite a pretense of self-rule (a new Burmese constitution and elected assembly), in

[100] The locals' pronunciation of Flory's name, "Mr. Porley," is fitting.

[101] He writes: "*A Passage to India* is not the perfect novel about India, but it is the best we have ever had and the best we are likely to get, for it is only by some improbable accident that anyone capable of writing a decent novel can be got to stay in India long enough to absorb the atmosphere" (*Collected Essays*, 1: 232). "Atmosphere" suggests the novel's autoethnographic qualities, but Orwell's "we" is oddly limiting. Either he is equating "India" with Anglo-India, or "we" is confined to Westerners, not the Anglophone world. At the time Orwell made this claim (1936), Mulk Raj Anand had already published two English-language novels.

practice, Burma's separation from India meant that political reforms granted to one colony need not be granted to the other. Orwell published his novel before the split, but Burma's peripheral status was clear throughout the era. Here on the edge of the Empire, and of World War, not only did the dissolution of Empire seem inevitable, but Burma was conspicuously exposed to Japanese attack—an attack that would, when it came, open the door to the whole subcontinent.[102] It was the last bit of red on which the sun never set, that is, until the rising sun of Eastern empire made its vulnerability clear. In 1937, Maurice Collis, the former district magistrate in Rangoon, described Burma as a strategic buffer: "We took Burma because it was a weak State which could not defend itself and was therefore a danger on our Indian frontier, for if we had not taken it some other European nation would have done so" (216). The Raj treated the Burmese people as an afterthought:

> The Burman became steadily less important industrially in his own country. In the capital, Rangoon, he was nobody. The stigma of poverty beat him down. Government House never thought of patronizing his festivals or his drama, of honouring his monks or—following the Vice-regal analogy in India—of giving its ceremonial some Burmese colour. (219)

In *Burmese Days*, nearly all of the characters, whatever their ethnicity, strain at their peripheral status.[103]

At this point, a summary of the novel's action is in order. It is 1926. Flory is the cynical timber merchant who despises empire yet cannot bring himself to abandon it. What passes for

---

[102] Burma was peripheral to the First World War—when Flory "dodged military service" for this "blowsy country, remote from danger" (67)—but now the periphery is key. Ironically, the novel's Indian doctor sees the Japanese as greater pillagers than the Brits: "What would happen to the Burmese forests if the English were not here? They would be sold immediately to the Japanese, who would gut them and ruin them" (40).

During World War II, Orwell opposed immediate independence for India or Burma. In 1941 he wrote, "Any transference to foreign rule—for if the British marched out of India the Japanese and other powers would immediately march in—would mean an immense dislocation . . . If India were simply 'liberated', i.e. deprived of British military protection, the first result would be a fresh foreign conquest, and the second a series of enormous famines" (*Collected*, 2: 99). He advocates for Dominion status and "partnership on equal terms until such time as the world has ceased to be ruled by bombing planes" (100). For more on the colonial context in World War II, see Bayly and Harper's *Forgotten Armies*.

[103] Orwell sets the novel in Kyauktada, a fictional district based on his final posting to the town of Katha, on the Irrawaddy River. Here, even the capital city is a distant daydream: "Oh, the joy of those Rangoon trips!" (65).

controversy in this spiteful community is who will be elected the token "native" to the European Club—a Club which Orwell has already revealed to be in physical and moral decay. The prime candidates: an earnest and Anglophilic Indian doctor (Flory's only friend, Dr. Veraswami) and a scheming Burmese magistrate (U Po Kyin). This Machiavel orchestrates a fake rebellion and blames it on the doctor. The ragtag rebels are vastly out-armed and outnumbered. An Englishman kills one of them; he is killed in revenge; and another Englishman, itching for a fight, attacks a local boy. Now the Burmese really do go on the march, and it takes the combined efforts of Flory and Veraswami to restore peace. But their heroism is short-lived, as Flory is humiliated, the doctor, though blameless, is disgraced, and the judge wins the hollow token for which he has long schemed. I will explore these events as they reveal colonial attitudes toward race and rebellion, "mutiny" and massacre, as well as the role of the civil and military police.

While Forster's novel revolves around a single, "unspeakable" native crime [*Passage* 187), Orwell's gathers around the layered, proliferating charges of prison-break, mutiny, and murder. Like Forster's Dr. Aziz, Orwell's native protagonist, Dr. Veraswami, suffers from oblique yet damning assaults upon his moral, professional, and political "character" (45). The slanders launched against him are more insidious than any physical attack. To be accused is, for the native suspect, to be guilty. But each alleged crime is a red herring—window-dressing in U Po Kyin's campaign to be elected to the European Club: that "spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power, the Nirvana[104] for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain" (17).

As a mask for corruption, this "remote, mysterious temple!" will be the climax of the judge's criminal career. Thus, "Po Kyin, the naked gutter-boy of Mandalay, the thieving clerk and obscure official, would enter that sacred place, call Europeans 'old chap', drink whisky and

[104] U Po Kyin's purely transactional model of Buddhism deflates it of spirituality or sacredness. His wife has more benevolent ideas about how to attain merit (15-16), but as a whole, the novel undermines religion of all sorts, including Christianity (18, 40, 43).

soda and knock white balls to and fro on the green table!" (143). He begins his ascent by ingratiating himself with a petty representative of the law he would one day represent: "How proud we were," his wife recalls, "when the young English police officer came to our house and sat in the best chair and drank a bottle of beer" (15). But ultimately, perversely, "Policemen and magistrates are natural enemies," each grappling for a slice of state power (137). It is a model of law that sees not justice but power—and a zero-sum notion of power at that. Po Kyin's formative memory is of British red-coats "marching victorious into Mandalay" (5). Recognizing their superior firepower, his "ruling ambition" is not to oust them, but "to become a parasite upon them" (6). This grotesque, absurd ambition exposes the ritual absurdity not of his own, but of colonial, culture.[105]

As we have seen, the work of colonial law is not to identify the criminal, but to produce him—to construct a category of criminality in which any nonconforming, overreaching native may be fit. More even than in Forster's India, the motivating force in Orwell's Burma, here on this periphery of the periphery, is for more power—more grounds, that is, for *performing* power. The mildest transgressions are met with severe punishment—and even invented from whole cloth to justify new forms of discipline. In *Burmese Days*, it is the arbitrator of justice (the villainous judge) who spins the wildest charges, conjuring up a whole "rebellion to show" his onlookers, and thereby maximize his power. Indeed it is all a show: "I am raising this rebellion merely in order to crush it" (139). Why is Orwell so attuned to the performative rituals of empire? Where laws are an alien imposition, they acquire legitimacy only in their repeat performance.

[105] Both the Burmese magistrate and European Club use each other as signs of racial progress: the Club, to signify its liberality; the judge, his assimilation and rise to power. "Knocking white balls to and fro" works as a metaphor for the judge's manipulation and emasculation of white officials upon his own green, Burmese playing-field (143).

With an urgency that equals their own marginality, the agents of Orwell's imperial backwater manufacture not only native guilt but native criminality. Police brutality is condoned not just "on the Q.T." (112), but in public. Thus, when the editor of the *Burmese Patriot* is arrested, the "small riot" staged by Burmese nationalists is newsworthy for being "suppressed by the police with the death of *only* two rioters" (111, my emphasis). In the case of crime or unrest, the police have little incentive either to find the right culprit or to protect civilians. There is an inherent tension between their role as enforcers of colonial order and as solvers of crime or keepers of the peace. By stripping the last vestige of liberality from the police and courtroom, the novel casts the law itself as villainous.

In *The Novel and the Police*, Miller shows how nineteenth-century novels oppose "the world of delinquency" to "the middle-class world of private life" (6). These worlds are not separate, but interdependent, for "the indignation to which delinquency gives rise" also "helps secure a proper (relieved, grateful) appreciation of *the* [*middle-class*] *standards themselves*" (6). But what of middle-class standards when they travel abroad? In *Burmese Days*, the domestic situation is far from conventional; the European community consists of five single men, one combative married couple, and their niece. Middle-class norms are upheld less at home (both Flory and the married man are visited by Burmese mistresses) than in the Club. With this motley crew serving as Britain's representatives abroad, it is all the more essential to maintain cultural norms—and to tighten the cordon against interlopers. But the Club, that bulwark against deviancy, contains constant reminders of it. The Club Secretary, Macgregor, is the district magistrate, and the first person the reader meets at the Club is Westfield, the superintendent of police. Miller writes: "The world of delinquency encompasses not only the delinquents themselves, but also the persons and institutions supposed to reform them" (4). A Londoner

would be mortified to admit the police to his home, lest he be tainted by that delinquency,[106] but at the Club they rub shoulders every day. The boundary of delinquency and respectability is more permeable in a colonial milieu, which makes the eventual exclusion of Flory all the more acute. By betraying social norms, Flory, like Forster's Fielding, becomes a cultural (and de facto racial) exile and delinquent.

The novel's most sympathetic native character, Dr. Veraswami,[107] is Indian—so the debate over electing a native Club member is also about *which* native is most worthy—and who is truly native: a Burmese Buddhist or an Indian immigrant. Orwell has little time for religion: U Po Kyin's perversion of Buddhism serves mainly to underscore his own villainy, and Hinduism (the doctor's religion) comes up only in passing, as a barrier to Flory befriending his wife: "she, a pious Hindu, had refused with horror" (47). The novel's only Muslims are silent servants (74, 99), perhaps reflecting the town's isolation—but striking, also, given the normalization of anti-Muslim violence in contemporary Myanmar. This xenophobia is less religious than ethnic in nature; the Rohingya are derided as "Bengalis," i.e., immigrants and intruders. Historically, it was "the invasion of foreign capital" and the British demand for cheap labor that stimulated Indian immigration to Burma (Collis 219), and it was often easier to scapegoat those Indians than to openly blame the British.[108] In his memoir, *Trials in Burma* (1937), Collis writes:

> The national spirit in Burma, which was the counterpart of what was driving the Indians to offer themselves for imprisonment, paradoxically set the Burmese

[106] In the popular novel *The Lodger* (1913), even as London is being terrorized by a Jack the Ripper-style killer, the police are not welcome into respectable homes. A detective muses, "Just think of it! Everybody to let the police go all over their house, from garret to kitchen, just to see if The Avenger isn't concealed there. Dotty, I calls it!" The woman he is speaking to is indignant: "I'd like to see them dare come into my house"! (Lowndes 152). This revulsion is not class-specific; the speaker here is a retired maid.

[107] Indeed he is the *only* character not corrupted by greed or cynicism. But when it comes to the British, Veraswami's generosity is misplaced—and it makes him rather a flat character. As an ardent Anglophile, he is a foil against whom Flory can express ideas that would not be tolerated at the Club.

[108] British tactics in World War II only furthered Burma's internal divisions, especially in Rakhine state, where "the retreating British armed some [Rohingya] Muslims to fight against the [Buddhist] Rakhine, who largely sided with the Japanese" ("The Rohingyas," par. 11).

> against the Indians, who were foreigners like the English and the Chinese. Many Indians in Burma were prosperous and influential, and not all the sufferings of the compatriots in India for the general cause of freedom could make the word "Indian" sound sweeter in Burmese ears. (138)

Of course, Orwell's villain is motivated not by ethnic rivalry but by personal ambition. Yet it is helpful to recognize Burma's internal divisions as we meet the novel's diverse cast of characters.

Producing a Criminal Body

In Forster, we saw how the expectations of colonial law produced the Indian criminal category; in Orwell, we see how it produces the criminal body. Europeans are primed to see the native body as preconditioned, indeed begging, for punishment. In the opening Club scene, Macgregor laments, "The old type of servant is disappearing . . . In my young days, when one's butler was disrespectful, one sent him along to the jail with a chit saying 'Please give the bearer fifteen lashes'" (29). This image, conjured up by no less than the district magistrate, becomes emblematic of the Raj as a whole: the apparatus of law is used to discipline native labor and in turn to uphold the façade of Anglo-Indian domesticity. When conversation lulls, Club members turn to "the old, never-palling subject—the insolence of the natives, the supineness of the Government, the dear dead days when the British Raj was the British Raj and please give the bearer fifteen lashes" (34). Here, the Burmese criminal is produced (and reproduced) not just through the modern spaces of delinquency (police, Panopticon, prison) but through his race. In all its recursive, carceral logic, it is the dual marks of the suspect's race and his *past delinquency* that testify to his perpetual guilt.

Burmese Days introduces us to the police in a sordid, anonymous interrogation scene. The scene is not vital to the novel's main plot or protagonists, but it does establish what Orwell might call "the atmosphere" (*Collected Essays*, 1: 232). Under the gaze of Superintendent

Westfield, a native Sub-inspector locates the suspect's guilt in the mere inkling that he is "an old offender!" To once "have been in prison!" is his surest ticket back (74). For the police to expose the crime, they must first "expose his buttocks"—and the scars thereon *prove* (in the inspector's gleeful, syllogistic "therefore") his guilt: "He have been flogged with bamboos. He is an old offender. *Therefore* he stole the ring!" (75). Historically, too, coercion was a standard mode of "producing confessions." The Indian Police Commission ordered by Lord Curzon chronicled this culture of abuse in a 1902-03 report:

> Suspects and innocent persons are bullied and threatened into giving information they are supposed to possess. The police officer, owing to want of detective ability or indolence, directs his efforts to produce confessions by improper inducement, by threats and by moral pressure. . . . Sometimes suspects, whom the police officer does not desire to report as under arrest, are kept for days together under so-called "surveillance", which is nothing less than unauthorised confinement or restraint, a system which affords serious opportunity for malpractices. All this is done to secure evidence in support of the view which the police officer from time to time holds regarding the case. (qtd. in Gupta 204-05)

Not surprisingly, "The public do not regard [the Inspectors] as honest," because "success rather than honesty has been the qualification for promotion" (ibid.).[109] And success is measured by arrests rather than accuracy.

Two decades later, as an officer in the Indian Imperial Police, Orwell was complicit in the same abuses. In fact, it was his job. In *Road to Wigan Pier*, he recalls a scene that he witnessed alongside an American missionary: "One of my native sub-inspectors was bullying a suspect. . . . The American watched it, and then turning to me said thoughtfully, 'I wouldn't care

[109] The Police Commission pushed for reforms, but cruelties and malpractice persisted. Anandswarup Gupta calls it as "an expensive exercise in futility" (251): "The Commission had gone through their labours with the fullest possible consciousness of the political, military and financial compulsions of an alien administration. They left no one in any doubt as to the disgraceful condition of the police obtaining at the time. Lord Curzon had himself observed that a government 'which places the preservation of internal order and the detection, prevention and punishment of crime in soiled or incompetent hands cannot escape severe reproach'" (250). Despite this self-awareness on the part of would-be reformers, I would argue that it was the administration's "alien" nature that accounts for its failure. Ultimately the Raj cared more for "the preservation of internal order" than for "the detection, prevention and punishment of crime" (250).

to have your job.' It made me horribly ashamed" (146). In this context, the moral wasteland that is *Burmese Days* reads as an act of penance. The novel's most zealous racist, a "tiny" man named Ellis (20), endorses the police methods of coercion, asserting, "Bambooing's the only thing that makes any impression on the Burman" (112). While Ellis's pun only captures his own impressionability (to racism), his conclusion is in one sense correct—that torture *works*—to engender, not the truth, but terror, submission, and (in every sense) conviction.

In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry defines "the structure of torture" as "the conversion of real pain into the fiction of power" (27). Torture is the coupling of two acts: "a primary physical act, the infliction of pain, and a primary verbal act, the interrogation" (28). It is by conjoining the two—the production of pain and the production of information—that the inflictor of pain establishes power. The confession that results may be true or false. Indeed, the content of "the Question" does not exist outside of the physical pain it accompanies; whatever "motive or justification" may be offered, its meaning cannot be disentangled from its "brutality" (29). Scarry dissects the language of the interrogation as a peculiar and unstable "conflating" of "the modes of the interrogatory, the declarative, the imperative," plus their "emphatic form," "the exclamatory" (28-29). In Orwell's scene, the interrogation exists not as questions but as declarative exclamations, almost ecstatic in nature: "You stole the ring!"; "You are an old offender!"; "You have been in prison!" (*Burmese Days* 74). These declarations quickly turn into imperatives: "Turn round!"; "Bend over!" The Sub-inspector's "roars" reinforce his seemingly-disjointed commands, as he moves from one to another "on an inspiration" (74). Although physical violence is relatively mild in this scene, it is pervaded with intimations of past and future abuse. As the Sub-inspector "bellows" commands (74), "The suspect turned his grey face in agony towards Westfield, who looked away" (75). It is a gesture of supplication and denial

that confirms the English policeman's control over the scene, even as his own hands remain clean. Westfield does not wait for the suspect's confession. He simply concedes, "moodily" and casually, "All right, put him in the clink" (75). Here we see the exercise of power in two modes: zealous intimidation (the threat of flogging) and disinterested neglect, as Westfield finally "lounged away . . . with his hands in his pockets" (75).

British law constructs and conscripts the native body—projecting it across the body politic—as a site of extralegal discipline. It is these criminalized bodies that bind together the disciplines of the law—including corporal and capital punishment—and of state medicine. At the center of this intersection stands the native doctor. Just as the European Club "co-opts our native member" in order to cover its essential bigotry (233), the state co-opts a native medic. Dr. Veraswami is the town's "superintendent of the jail" (137) who supervises floggings and hangings. Not unlike Orwell's role as policeman, the doctor's role as civil servant goes against his personal and professional ethics.[110] Physicians in interwar Britain helped launch a Hippocratic revival which stressed humanism over the interference of the state in the practice of medicine (Cantor 280-81). That revival must have bypassed the colonies. This doctor is enlisted into a system of state abuse.[111] Veraswami's care for the individual is overwhelmed by his unflagging yet abstract "faith in British justice" (Orwell 40)—a justice which, in practice if not in theory, values colonial power over colonized persons—and the pressure he faces, both internal and external, to conform to British expectations. Despite the doctor's revulsion, his "faith in

[110] From a 1924 translation of the Hippocratic Oath: "Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will do so to help the sick, keeping myself free from all wrong-doing, intentional or unintentional, tending to death or to injury" (Jones 23-24). This is the "Christian" version of the Oath, from a Cambridge scholar; whether or not Veraswami took the Oath himself, as an Anglophile, we would expect him to gravitate to this text.

[111] It would be unfair to compare Veraswami to a Nazi physician, but it is useful to see how such figures justified themselves. Timmermann writes: "In Britain, interwar Neo-Hippocratism was mainly concerned with the individual. In Germany, however, in the wake of losing the First World War and in face of economic hardship, parts of the educated élite began to value the survival of the collective, the *Volk*, more highly than that of the single individual" (302).

British justice was so great that even when, at the jail, he had to superintend a flogging or a hanging, and would come home with his black face faded grey and dose himself with whisky, his zeal did not falter" (40). Yet his ashen face betrays him, mirroring the pain of the flogged and terrified suspect in the scene I have just discussed: a "grey, timorous face," "in agony," as he "Bends over!" for inspection (74-75). And like the prisoner's body, "the notched and ink-stained table of the police station" is a palimpsest of bureaucracy and abuse (74).

Despite Veraswami's faith in British law, his role as middleman makes him supremely vulnerable to that law and all its surrounding rumors and allegations. The same perverse "logic"—and the same magic "therefore"—that damn the novel's first prisoner work to reify and proliferate the doctor's alleged crimes. Once Veraswami is accused of "conniving" a jailbreak (after the escape of a prized dacoit[112]), he is dubbed "capable of anything" (137). Macgregor slips seamlessly from suspicion (that the doctor was bribed) to guilt (certainty that he is also seditious): "And *therefore*—perhaps the logical sequence was not quite clear, but it was clear enough to Mr. Macgregor—*therefore* the charge of sedition . . . the main charge against the doctor, became much more credible" (137, my emphasis).[113] And these charges are banal compared to the rape, sodomy, and sorcery dreamed up by the doctor's enemy. U Po Kyin reasons, "It was necessary to attack his reputation from every possible angle" (136), and Orwell revels in the absurdity as much as his villain, who spins charges of "extortion, rape, torture, performing illegal operations, performing operations while blind drunk, murder by poison, murder by sympathetic magic, eating beef, selling death certificates to murderers, wearing his

[112] There is more prestige in capturing a dacoit than in "common thieves" (75).
[113] Macgregor's certainty echoes that of Forster's Superintendent McBryde: "Everyone knows the man's guilty, and I am obliged to say so in public before he goes to the Andamans" (*Passage* 218). Both men have faith in the legibility and transparency—"it was clear enough to Mr. Macgregor"—of native guilt (*Burmese Days* 137).

shoes in the precincts of the pagoda,[114] and" finally (the precision of the crime is as damning as its perversion) "making homosexual advances on the Military Police drummer boy. To hear what was said of him, anyone would have imagined the doctor a compound of Machiavelli, Sweeny Todd and the Marquis de Sade" (136): a sadist, that is, who perverts the noble goals of martial discipline and (in the drummer boy) native submission. In a damning final stroke, the judge accuses the doctor, "anonymously," of being "in league" with the most "notorious scoundrel and bribe-taker" of all: himself (137).

Rise of the Colonial Murder

Far more perverse than any alleged crime are the cultural narratives that demand native guilt: the entwining melodramas of rape and mutiny. Given the "power of European women" within this closed community, the most damning charge against the doctor is a hint, to the presiding memsahib, that he "was inciting the natives to abduct and rape the European women—no details were given, nor were they needed" (137). For "to her mind the words 'sedition', 'Nationalism', 'rebellion', 'Home Rule', conveyed one thing and one only, and that was a picture of herself"—here she echoes lurid images of the Mutiny—"being raped by a procession of jet-black coolies with rolling white eyeballs" (137-38). Unlike Forster's more nuanced portrait of white sexuality, Orwell's Englishwoman is absurdly, grotesquely vile. Her vision borrows from the most vicious stereotypes of the African diaspora and a more generalized myth of the black (or brown) rapist.[115] Her associative model of crime—moving fluidly from sedition to Home Rule to rape—imagines all cultures to be as insatiable as her own. She imagines a people

[114] The doctor is thus damned as both criminal and (to his fellow-Hindus as well as many Buddhists) profane. His alleged beef-eating recalls the sepoys' revolt over rifle grease, casting him as not just seditious, but a hypocrite to the spirit of that rebellion. The accusation of torture comes closest to the mark, but that is an act he performs for the *state*: supervising the floggings meted out by colonial jailers.

[115] See Angela Davis's formative study of this myth in America: "Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist."

incapable of ruling themselves without also demanding to rule and possess others. Her vision of non-white races is equally associative, borrowing tropes which, in the same period in the United States, were used to justify racism both within the law (Jim Crow) and through an extralegal system of terror (through lynchings, cross-burnings, the Klan).

After picturing this scene of rape, Orwell's paranoid memsahib imagines her own murder with equal relish. Fearing a riot, she can be found at the Club, "twittering to the tune of 'We shall all be murdered in our beds'" (244). The memsahib reduces murder to a cliché, but for Orwell, murder was at once a trope and a reality. In 1946 he described a sea-change in how the English experience this crime (or the idea of this crime) in the essay "Decline of the English Murder." "Our great period in murder," he writes, "our Elizabethan period, so to speak, seems to have been between roughly 1850 and 1925" (9). He goes on to name nine real-life "murderers whose reputation has stood the test of time" (9) and, in their infamy, spawned an explosion of writing—novels, melodramas, "criminological treatises," "reminiscences by lawyers and police officers"—enough to "make a considerable library. It is difficult to believe that any recent English crime will be remembered so long and so intimately," both because "the prevalent type of crime seems to be changing" and "because the violence of external events has made murder seem unimportant" (10). The traditional English murder is sensational yet contained, producing a frisson of fear, without the danger. Its decline can be traced to the rise of a modern style of killing: the abstracting, mechanized death epitomized by the World Wars. Orwell articulates this new style of violence in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, a book/essay he wrote during the Blitz. It begins: "As I write, highly civilised human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me" (*Collected*, 2: 56). This anonymous brand of death flies in contrast to the traits we associate with killers, for the perpetrators are "kind-hearted law-abiding men who would never dream of

committing murder in private life" (56). Killing is no longer confined to predictable or even identifiable killers. But in the colonies, with racial and cultural lines so clearly drawn, perhaps it can be.

I would argue that the decline of "the English Murder" is what engenders, in the thrill-starved English psyche, the *rise* of the *colonial* murder. By imagining colonized peoples as criminal, the British could justify their own domination. They had, of course, been doing so for centuries, but their inventions were becoming, at least in some cases, more psychologically complex. Through the memsahib's titillating nightmares in *Burmese Days*, Orwell questions the basis of these racialized fears. Ironically, this fear only succeeds in imprisoning her more tightly, both physically and culturally, for "in cases of riot the European ladies were always locked inside the jail until everything was over" (244). Orwell's portrait of the white woman's neuroses is far less subtle than Forster's, who at once gave them shape and enhanced their mystery in the constrictive Marabar Caves. Doris Lessing would go further to psychologize the colonial woman, in southern Africa, in *The Grass is Singing* (1949). It is there that we see the long-feared colonial murder more fully imagined. The novel begins with a news clipping headed "MURDER MYSTERY" (1), then digs backward to the killing's complex causes. Colonialism and murder continued to entwine in popular discourse both at home and abroad. In *Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell describes an unemployed miner who "spent too much time reading newspapers" and "discourses for hours about such things as the Yellow Peril, trunk murders, astrology, and the conflict between religion and science" (8-9). If Orwell finds these topics tedious, they are but a popular form of the elite discourses of the day: Orientalism (the Yellow Peril was its most paranoid expression), criminology (the 1934 Brighton trunk murders, where forensic evidence was hotly disputed), the esoteric mysticism of a figure like Annie Besant (who also championed

women's rights and Indian independence), and the theories of race and evolution that helped inform the colonial project.

Burmese Days invokes the fears of rape and murder only to deflate them—and the women who espouse them.[116] Once Orwell deflates the hackneyed rape/murder conceits ("We shall all be murdered in our beds" [244]), we grasp the absurdity of the most modern charge against the native: "the charge of sedition, which was the main charge against the doctor" (137). Like Forster, Orwell identifies native nationalism as quintessentially modern. Yet the ways in which their characters *resist* oppression are fundamentally different. In Forster's novel, the more indiscriminate the arrests, the firmer the community's coalition against the imperial state. The arrest of a single man thus provokes not only urban strikes and a "Hindu-Moslem entente," but, at the most visceral level, Aziz's empathy for *any* prisoner, since "he himself had lain in prison" (*Passage to India* 266, 296). In Orwell, however, the capricious, proliferating rumors and arrests work not to unite, but to fragment native psyches and communities. Even when characters grasp the power of collective action,[117] they do not put it in motion: U Po Kyin, because he seeks only to aggrandize himself; Dr. Veraswami, because he admires the British too much to defy them.

We have seen how Orwell's doctor is co-opted into floggings and hangings at the jail, to the point of violating his own code of ethics. If we look more broadly at the mechanisms of colonial law, we see how colonial policing not only condoned abuse; it systematically produced new forms of abuse, due to the power gaps between white and native policemen, and between the

[116] With the relative dearth of European women in colonial outposts, Orwell demands that each of his woman characters assume the burden of stereotype. Here, it is another white woman, the newcomer Elizabeth, who articulates European prejudice in pseudoscientific form, having learnt from a magazine "that a person with a sloping forehead is a criminal type" (119). While it is difficult to generalize, in metropolitan novels there is at least less pressure for women to conform to a single type. We can thus contrast the memsahib's hysteria in *Burmese Days* with the calm and resourceful Mrs. Bucket in *Bleak House*: "a lady of a natural detective genius" (Dickens 627).
[117] Longtime Anglo-Indian Mrs. Lackersteen compares native demands to socialist and class-based movements in Europe, lamenting "these dreadful Reforms, and the insolence they [the natives] learn from the newspapers. In some ways they are getting almost as bad as the lower classes at home" (29).

police and public. Ironically, the Raj's attempt to control native subordinates only corrupted and diminished that control. In *Police Power and Colonial Rule*, David Arnold asks: how hegemonic was the system of colonial policing? How much did the native ranks truly conform to the colonial mission? In short, "How effectively subordinate were the subordinate police" (37)? He concludes that the Raj, far from hegemonic, "had neither the capacity nor perhaps the inclination to enforce a more vigorous system of control over the police rank and file." This failure stemmed not just from financial constraints, but a "self-fulfilling" resignation to corruption—and further, the "pragmatic utility" of that corruption, to better intimidate and discipline the public (66-68).

Despite the Police Commission's goal to recruit natives of "proper stamp" (Gupta 200),[118] the job's meager pay (and the blind eye of many an officer) unleashed all brands of extortion, bribery, and bias. Most of all, it was "the predatory nature of the subordinate police" (the constables who held most of the posts and did most of the work) that alienated them from the public (Arnold 64). Within "official circles," Arnold writes,

> There was an enduring conviction that the police were innately corrupt, cowardly, vicious and mean, and that nothing the state could do (such as giving them higher wages) would change this. Such fatalistic pessimism was inclined to be self-fulfilling, for a body of men treated with such disdain, denied responsibility and adequate remuneration, could not but sink into the mire. (67)

With no stipend for room, board, or uniform, a constable might defray personal expenses with state funds[119]—e.g., money allotted to the jail. Funds came on a per-prisoner basis, therefore the more inmates he arrested, and the less he fed them, the better. Thus, in *Burmese Days*, the constable's wife snags a "profit" by feeding inmates cheap rice and "watery *dahl*," and siphoning

[118] The Police Commission lamented that their recruits were often "untrained and ill-educated" (Gupta 202).
[119] Arnold writes: "Low wages not only kept away desirable recruits. They were also a cause of heavy indebtedness among constables and an inducement to extortion and bribery" (51). Not willing to *pay* for the incorruptibility of its native recruits, the Raj *was* willing to turn a blind eye: "Economizing on constables' pay was an easy way of keeping down state expenditure, and, as long as enough constables were somehow found to do the job, there was little inducement to face the consequences of state parsimony" (66). Allowances were finally raised in 1921 (for travel, rent, water, scavenging, and the upkeep of uniforms) (57), but there was still ample incentive for corruption.

the remaining stipend for herself (75). Flory calls out the entire system as inherently corrupt: "Of course we keep the peace in India, in our own interest, but what does all this law and order business boil down to? More banks and more prisons—that's all it means" (41). "Creeping round the world building prisons," he concludes: "They build a prison and call it progress" (42).[120]

Inventing Mutiny

From 1930 to 1932, Burmese peasants initiated a series of uprisings known collectively as the Saya San Rebellion. By this time Orwell was back in England. It is unclear how closely he followed the rebellion,[121] but it is precisely the event that his novel's European enclave most fears. In *The Return of the Galon King*,[122] Maitrii Aung-Thwin examines contemporaneous accounts of the uprisings. Despite the notoriety of specific events (which were given dramatic names like "The Tharrawaddy Outbreak"), Britons refused to believe that peasants would rebel, en masse, unless they were being controlled by a scheming, centralized leader:

> Officials seem to have unanimously attributed the uprising to the periodic rise of a pretender king who captured the imagination and support of a receptive peasantry. What might arguably have been interpreted as a series of spontaneous and diverse expressions of peasant activism was effectively contained by the idea of a single movement, centrally organized around the persuasive influences and manipulative designs of a dynamic leader. (Aung-Thwin 76-77)

Saya San did make ingenious use of traditional imagery (2-3), but British fears of a single, charismatic conspirator were overblown. Orwell makes a parody of such fears in the scheming character of U Po Kyin. The judge not only initiates the revolt; he manipulates the local peasants

---

[120] Flory regrets that the doctor "would not recognize the allusion" (42)—which, Orwell leaves us to discover, is to the portrait of Roman imperialism in *The Life of Agricola*, where Tacitus describes the plundering of colonized lands, including ancient Britain. Flory's allusion thus highlights Britain's trajectory from colonized to colonizer. Tacitus and Orwell—both of them servants of an empire—portray the colonized as the nobler of the two.

[121] Most of Orwell's references to South Asia during this time are to "India." The exception is "A Hanging."

[122] Within Hindu and Buddhist iconography, the *galon* is "half-man," "half-raptor," and "the celestial vehicle of Vishnu." In British Burma, the myth of the *galon* "devouring" its enemy, a snake or dragon, "was evoked as a metaphor for the colonial situation" (Aung-Thwin xi).

to risk their lives for it. To bring home his deceit, Orwell treats U Po Kyin like a medieval Vice character—except this villain confesses to his wife rather than soliloquize to the audience. The effect is the same, however: giving readers a transparent view of his motives, and rendering him less a person than an agent of chaos. He confides, "I said that I had *started* the rebellion, not that I was taking part in it. It is these fools of villagers who are going to risk their skins, not I" (139).

Why would British officials gravitate to the theory of a single manipulative leader? In telling the story of—and justifying their response to—the uprisings of 1930-32, the goal of Burma officials was "to meet administrative demands related to the acquisition of emergency powers" (Aung-Thwin 77). Emergency powers are a useful tool: in the act of claiming a *lack* of control, officials are able to justify more control than they would normally, legally, be granted. The Special Powers acquired by Burma officials in 1931 were based on a model from 1925 Bengal, "enabling police to detain without trial those 'persons suspected of offenses'" and authorizing "special tribunals that could try 'terrorists' and 'revolutionaries' under certain sections of the India Penal Code" (78). In Orwell's book, it just so happens that the Burmese rebel and the magistrate who oversees British justice are the same person. U Po Kyin invents "my own rebellion" in order to enhance his own power by suppressing it (138).

While Forster's native judge was torn between English law and local justice, Orwell's *appropriates* alien laws to mask his own ambition. As a colonial middleman, "his methods were simple. Even for the vastest bribe he would never sell the decision of a case because he knew that a magistrate who gives wrong judgments is caught sooner or later. His practice, a much safer one, was to take bribes from both sides and then decide the case on strictly legal grounds" (6). The strictest adherent to British law is thus its most corrupt. Locals are aware of U Po Kyin's

transgressions—the doctor tells Flory that this "crocodile" is a serial rapist (45)—but they live in fear. After all, he discredits the doctor simply by projecting upon him his own crimes.

The judge is effectively the head of an organized crime racket. He controls both the law and the local criminal element. Orwell describes his parasitism upon his neighbors: "If any village failed in its tribute U Po Kyin took punitive measures—gangs of dacoits attacked the village, leading villagers were arrested on false charges, and so forth" (7). When the police arrest one of the dacoits, the judge assists in his escape. In doing so, he invents yet another crime to blame on the doctor, while unleashing one more criminal upon the public.[123] Pointing once more to the corruptibility of law enforcement, the warder is susceptible to bribes because he is "homesick for the brothels" (136). The judge weaves a net of lies to deflect his own guilt: any accusation he "discredits" "with strings of suborned witnesses" and "counter-accusations" (7). It is thus that the law produces, rather than eliminates, both crime and criminal; the more charges and counter-charges the better (or the busier) the law. If "tolerant" Britons can co-opt the native civil servant (like Forster's judge) to serve themselves, another native (Orwell's judge) now appropriates British law itself.

As the British are simultaneously *producing* and *disciplining* native criminality, their best agent is the native judge. In performing this juggling act, Orwell's judge also manages to simultaneously manipulate the British and his own people. In crafting the character of U Po Kyin, Orwell expresses Britons' worst fears of Burmese and Indian leaders: that they manipulate the naïve native majority as well as the Europeans they claim to serve. Orwell has internalized his culture's greatest fears, even as he rages against its political and economic abuses.

---

[123] These abuses work on both a private and a public level. The jail-break also undermines Flory's courtship of Elizabeth. The convict was to have cured a leopard-skin for Flory to give her, but in his absence it comes out a stinking mess (217). Here the book reveals yet another economy of exploitation: a trophy of colonial masculinity that relies on native prison labor.

The greatest fear in Anglo-Indian culture is the fear of an extreme and overwhelming alterity, as expressed in theories of criminal castes or tribes, and in tales of mutiny. It follows that the greatest dream of Anglo-Indian masculinity is to suppress a mutiny. In the effort to project power, not just any crime will do. Orwell's policeman, Westfield, "loathed running in" those same "poor devils of common thieves" (75). His imperial romance demands a formidable cast(e) of foes: either a fiery revolutionary or one of the criminal types anatomized by ethnographers and criminologists. But Westfield, "Would you believe it," has "never fired my gun at a fellow yet, not even a dacoit"[124]—never found a Burman who would "break out and rebel properly" (112). He longs for a bloody, Kiplingesque romance of "Dacoits, rebels—yes; but not these poor cringing rats!" (75). Rising above such "common thieves" are the more systemic, identifiably-South Asian criminals of caste, tribe, or profession ("dacoits") or, in the conspiracy theory of modern empire, nationalist revolt ("rebels"). Each category invokes a conspiratorial enemy indelibly woven into local society, thus making the entire culture suspect.[125] Given the law's predilection for a certain *type* or *class*, a certain *body* of criminal—"not these poor cringing rats!"—it takes scant help from U Po Kyin to set suspicions against his rival (Dr. Veraswami) afoot (75). A rebel mastermind—who also happens to be Westernized and insufferably middle class[126]—is just what the policeman ordered. Orwell observes: "The merest breath of suspicion

[124] Both anthropologists and police defined dacoits as a class of bandit. Like the homicidal thug, they rove through colonial and detective fiction as disordering figures of criminal alterity.

[125] Westernization (imitating the West) and rebellion (resisting it) are obverse sides of the colonial coin, which finally merged in the nationalist movements.

[126] Of the middle-class Indians within the civil service, Arnold notes that "their education and social origins" "made them a target of European suspicion and resentment. At a time when middle-class nationalism posed the greatest threat to British rule, European officers were inclined to regard their middle-class subordinates as over-educated upstarts, as potential rivals to their own institutional and political pre-eminence, and were not sorry to see them humiliated or proved cowardly or corrupt" (80). Arnold is referring to the police, but the same applies to Orwell's doctor as superintendent of the jail. When Veraswami is blamed for the prison-break, dacoity, rebellion, and middle class professionalism all come together in suspicious minds. For "a jail superintendent who will take bribes is capable of anything" (Orwell 137).

against his loyalty can ruin an Oriental official." So it is not "a question of any overt act of disloyalty," but "was the doctor the *kind* of man who would hold seditious opinions?" (135).

The trick is to give officials, and the public, "the *kind* of man"—and of conspiracy—they want. At first, with "not the ghost of a rebellion anywhere" (112-13), the white policeman can but grumble, "All these kid-glove laws—got to keep them, I suppose, if we're fools enough to make 'em" (112). "At the first threat, or rather hope, of trouble" (111), Westfield sets "out bent on slaughter," yet still "can't find any rebels. Only the usual village Hampdens who won't pay their taxes" (148).[127] With such a ready audience (hungry for a "proper" sort of revolt), U Po Kyin is happy to oblige (112): to concoct for his white spectators, "my own rebellion. I arranged it myself" (138). He not only produces a sham criminal (the doctor) but (as in Duncan's *Set in Authority*) flocks of suborned witnesses: "The whole town was divided into two factions, with every native soul from the magistrates down to the bazaar sweepers enrolled on one side or the other, and all ready for perjury when the time came" (111). Like his "useful reputation for impartiality" (7), it is the performance that counts: once the rumors begin, "I must have a rebellion to show, must I not?" (139). Spinning lies as wild as any Falstaff,[128] the judge's minions "raise the cry of rebellion as Sensationally as possible," while he "directs operations from a safe distance" (224-25). All it amounts to are six "deluded" men (plus the magician) in a "ruined" hut in the jungle (224). U Po Kyin's "official report" is a piece of colonial fiction: a "Conglomeration of lies written out in readiness days *before the occurrence*" (225). It is a Kiplingesque jaunt of mutiny and containment, all the more insidious for its false hero.

---

[127] John Hampden was a revolutionary in the English Civil War. Flory should give Hampden more credit; he used the issue of unjust taxes to rally resistance to the Crown.

[128] U Po Kyin is Falstaffian so far as he is a fat, disordering, self-aggrandizing figure in a self-serving relationship to the English Crown. He too inflates the tally of his foes (225) and claims victory despite "lying low until the danger should be over" (254). But Falstaff has the capacity for joy, loyalty, self-deprecation; Po Kyin is simply malicious.

Orwell presents both communities as susceptible to conspiracy theory. British paranoia helps foster "a whole crop of rumours about a projected native rising," and among the Burmese, "A *weiksa*, or magician, was said to have appeared from nowhere and to be prophesying the doom of the English power and distributing magic bullet-proof jackets" (111-12). Orwell is borrowing from Burmese folklore: "Before Burmans of the country class went into a fight they always paid a magician to make them bullet- or sword-proof" (Collis 141). But he is also echoing Britons' oversimplification of this folklore. As they sought to suppress the Saya San Rebellion, and to define its causes, the British generated "a counter-insurgency prose that presented tattooing, wandering monks, and various aspects of spirit worship as subjects understandable within the context of terrorism" (Aung-Thwin 78). Thus, "elements of rural life" were "read as warning signs indicative of rebellion" (Aung-Thwin 79). Here, we see culture not only being criminalized, but being identified *with* and *as* terrorism. If we expect Orwell's magician to be a homegrown leader—a rural shaman with local ties—instead, his *weiksa* is a sham, a "clever fellow" from Rangoon who "toured all over India as a circus conjurer" (139). Orwell thus affirms the British narrative of Burmese rebels as "superstitious peasants, duped into believing that [Saya San] could protect them with invulnerability tattoos and spells as only a king of Burma and 'quack doctor' might do" (Aung-Thwin 130). Collis describes how the imbalance of power played out: "Queer little battles of this kind occurred all over the country. Men advanced upon machine-guns chanting formulas; with amulets in their hands they ran upon regular troops. They pointed their fingers at aeroplanes and expected to see them fall" (212-13).[129] Orwell's white men lack machine guns, but they do have accurate rifles. One rebel falls dead and the rest are caught without the reader having any sense of why they rebelled in the first place. Orwell deflates the rebellion—and the idea of rebellion—as soon as it begins.

[129] Collis's attitude to the Burmese is sympathetic but paternalistic (see 217).

The dreaded and longed-for "native rising" punctuates *Burmese Days*, first as historical memory (of the 1857 "Mutiny"), then in the judge's staged rebellion (duped peasants in the jungle), and finally in a real riot—which (as we will see) begins as the villagers' demand for justice and ends less with a bang than a whimper. The empire-hating Flory dreams of mutiny: "you long for a native rising to drown their Empire in blood" (69). But Orwell does not link the idea of rebellion with an ideology of nationalism. He makes a few asides about a paper called the *Burmese Patriot*, but he mocks the editor as uncommitted to the cause (111). Nationalism in Burma manifested itself differently than in India, but there were overlaps. In 1930 Sen Gupta (the mayor of Calcutta and a leader in the INC) came to speak in Rangoon, where he was arrested. By this time, "The Burma Government knew that a national spirit was about, but had no clue to the way in which it might manifest itself" (Collis 138). Collis was District Magistrate of Rangoon at the time; he saw Burmese nationalism more fully than Orwell ever did (and Indian nationalism too). But for Orwell, nationalism is a fake, a power play, a farce. In 1944 he went so far as to call Gandhi another "superhuman fuehrer" (*Collected*, 3: 149): "a charismatic leader," in Bluemel's words, "able to sway millions of Indians, the majority of whom were either power hungry nationalists or duped victims" (160). The rebels of *Burmese Days* certainly fit this model: peasants duped by the power-hungry U Po Kyin, all playing to the Britons' greatest fears. As we continue, my discussion will move from that fear (of "mutiny" or "massacre") that governs the British community, including how that fear is manipulated by the novel's villain, to how the real threat is the British reaction to, and suppression of, any form of dissent.

With "mutiny" so ingrained in the Anglo-Indian psyche, it takes the faintest rumors of unrest to launch an array of illegal and extralegal calls—for martial law, torture, bribery, false arrests—anything "to get these fellows hanged" (*Burmese Days* 240). Even as the English

policeman cautions, "Got to keep our own bloody silly laws," he is caught up in the bloodlust, eager to arrest anyone—that is any native—to give a show of force (112). Against the judicial skepticism of Forster or Orwell—who are mindful that the law is not always just—the policeman's pragmatism is retributive. "Unconsciously quoting" a Dickens character, he asserts, "Much better hang wrong fellow than no fellow" (240).[130] While Orwell critiques the cycle of race-revenge from both ends, he portrays the Burmese side as a fitter balance of an eye for an eye. The only Burmese in the novel to kill a European kills the *right* fellow: the British forester, Maxwell, who, "*too anxious* to use his Rifle," shot dead their unarmed kinsman. The Burmese lack any legal recourse for the death; the white shooter cannot be held liable for the killing—at least not, the doctor reminds us, "from the point of view legal" (224). The reader does not witness the act of revenge, but we see the evidence in Maxwell's body, "cut almost to pieces with *dahs*" (237). While an apparently minor event in the novel, it is this single white death[131] that sparks English bloodlust for a whole host of "wrong fellows." Taking the law into one's own hands is permissible, here, so long as those hands are white.

Maxwell's body falls at the intersection of two key plots. When his body is paraded in, it interrupts the Club election, which had first set the chain of violence in motion. The vote makes a farce of the electoral process. When Veraswami is proposed, Ellis throws in an extra black ball for the absent Maxwell, then spills the white balls to the floor (236). Orwell had set up the Club

[130] This is Sir Leicester's "debilitated cousin" in *Bleak House*, who "only hopes some fler'll be executed . . . far better hang wrong fler than no fler" (631-32). Dickens mocks the man's reactionary views with his slurred speech. Bernard Shaw uses the same sentiment to describe the efficacy of revenge: "The Baronet's cousin in Dickens's novel, who, perplexed by the failure of the police to discover the murderer . . . said 'Far better hang wrong fellow than no fellow,' was not only expressing a very common sentiment, but trembling on the brink of the rarer Salvationist opinion that it is much better to hang the wrong fellow: that, in fact, the wrong fellow is the right fellow to hang." Shaw calls this "the primitive idea of justice": "partly legalized revenge and partly expiation by sacrifice. It works out from both sides in the notion that two blacks make a white, and that when a wrong has been done, it should be paid for by an equivalent suffering" (preface to *Androcles and the Lion,* xxiv-xxv). Orwell's white policeman, with his imprecise and retributive mode of justice, is just as "primitive."

[131] It is unclear if Orwell knew this detail, but the Saya San Rebellion also resulted in the death of a single Forestry officer (Aung-Thwin 2). According to Collis, the rebels killed the Englishman so his ghost would fight on the Burmese side (210).

as a space of rigid rule-following, but it is also (as relates to the rule of law) a space of lawlessness. It is the European's own private state of exception. Maxwell's death is the net result of their rule by force and exclusion. To justify their revenge, Anglo-Indians memorialize Maxwell for his symbolic status as a white man:

> Maxwell's death had caused a profound shock in Kyauktada. It would cause a shock throughout the whole of Burma, and the case—"the Kyauktada case, do you remember?"—would still be talked of years after the wretched youth's name was forgotten. But in a purely personal way no one was much distressed. Maxwell had been almost a nonentity—just a "good fellow" like any other of the ten thousand *ex colore* good fellows of Burma—and with no close friends. No one among the Europeans genuinely mourned for him. But that is not to say that they were not angry. On the contrary, for the moment they were almost mad with rage. For the unforgivable had happened—*a white man* had been killed. When that happens, a sort of shudder runs through the English of the East. Eight hundred people, possibly, are murdered every year in Burma; they matter nothing; but the murder of *a white man* is a monstrosity, a sacrilege. Poor Maxwell would be avenged, that was certain. But only a servant or two, and the Forest Ranger who had brought in his body and who had been fond of him, shed any tears for his death. (237-38).

Maxwell remains a cipher in the text, but we see that he, like Flory, never fit in to Anglo-Indian society. Also like Flory, his death is mourned only by a handful of natives. What the sahibs do at Maxwell's killing is simply to close ranks—against natives, yes, but more urgently, against less-than-pukka whites.

States of Exception

In 1922, the scholar and future-Nazi Carl Schmitt opened his book *Political Theology* with a definition: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (5)—that is, he who decides *how*, *when*, and *why* to override the rule of law. "A state of exception," the translator George Schwab notes, "includes any kind of severe economic or political disturbance that requires the application of extraordinary measures" (n. 1). Schmitt writes that the sovereign "decides *whether* there is an extreme emergency as well as what must be done to eliminate it. Although he stands

outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it" (7, my emphasis). In *State of Exception* (2005), Giorgio Agamben explores the use and abuse of this theory, calling it a "no-man's-land between public law and political fact, and between juridical order and life" (1). Agamben writes in the context of the War on Terror—a time of indefinite detentions and black site prisons—but he draws lessons from history. A totalitarian state takes its power from the state of exception. Thus, "from a juridical standpoint the entire Third Reich can be considered a state of exception that lasted twelve years" (2).[132] He clarifies: "The state of exception is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept" (4). It "constitutes . . . an emptiness of law" and a corresponding "fullness of power" (6).

What is the significance of the state of exception to the British Raj? In a 1937 letter, Orwell writes, "We like to think of England as a democratic country, but our rule in India, for instance, is just as bad as German Fascism, though outwardly it may be less irritating" (*Collected*, 1: 284). Britain ruled its colonies by overriding its own rule of law. Sometimes they justified their excesses by proclaiming Martial Law, a State of Emergency, or Special Powers, sometimes simply by choosing *not* to prosecute white offenders when the victim was darker-skinned. The state of exception is not the breaking of a law or the writing of a new one; it is the rule of law being drowned by a rule more powerful.

We have seen how Burma's marginality makes its officials all the more anxious to assert their power. In *Burmese Days*, the real desire of the police is likewise for more power—if not the

[132] In 1940, Walter Benjamin warned: "the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" ("Theses," Thesis VIII). Agamben uses a different translation: "the state of exception . . . has become the rule" (6).

power of law, the power of guns. The "clipped and soldierly" cadence[133] of the novel's backwoods policeman (19) betrays his martial ambitions: "Eleven years of it," he grumbles, "not counting the War, and never killed a man. Depressing" (112). Coveting the mandate to kill, he wills the rebels to "have the guts to show a bit of fight for once. Then we'll call out the Military Police, rifles and all. Plug a few dozen of them—that'll clear the air" (112). Westfield's exterminatory instincts echo Kurtz's desire to "exterminate all the brutes!" in *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad 50). But instead of homogenizing imperial brutality, Orwell's novel splits the figure of the white policeman into the Civil and Military. The crude racism of Westfield (the all-talk civil policeman above) is unremarkable next to Lieutenant Verrall, the sadistic Military Policeman (203), who fulfills the fears and fantasies hitherto only spoken of.

As the military police march in, to preempt "the long-rumoured rebellion" (223), it is Verrall who enacts all the perverse aggressions of his provincial colleagues. Both Verrall and his 100 sepoys are hollow tributes to the theory of martial race. Martial race theory was an amalgam of theories on racial taxonomy and on "climate, which was conflated with civilizational determinism" (Sundaram 49-51). It owed something too to circumstance. India's mountainous northwest was where British troops had experienced the most fighting, where they perceived the greatest foreign threat, and where they began to recruit a preponderance of their Indian troops (Tan 29-30, Sundaram 50).[134] Britons made major geopolitical decisions based on this one racial theory, but in practice, it gave the lie to the overarching theory of European superiority. Verrall's elite squad of Sikh soldiers stands in stark contrast to the knock-kneed, scrawny Brits (Orwell

[133] If an Englishman's accent is everything, then the "spiteful cockney voice" of another character, Ellis, betrays both his class and his ambitions (21). He is one of Hannah Arendt's abject, "superfluous men," "spat out" by the motherland, even as he strives to represent British masculinity abroad (151, 189).

[134] From the late 1890s to the start of World War II, "martial race theory was codified in a series of official 'recruiting handbooks'," which "mirrored the more comprehensive ethnographic surveys of the time" and were rooted in "essential notions of caste character" (Dirks, *Castes* 178-79).

25, 19) who would be hard to mistake for any martial race.[135] By exporting sepoys and policemen from one region of the subcontinent to another, Britons sought not only to exploit their martial skills, but to shield their Indian forces from local structures of indigenous authority or political unrest. For Verrall, mobility is power; for sepoys and policemen, it diluted their ability to organize or integrate into indigenous power structures, whether local or national.

Verrall wastes his noble Sikhs and Rajputs (like his Arab mare) in sport. His first act is to arm 50 sepoys not with bayonets, but with sickles, to clear the maidan for polo. To him, they are "no better than coolies" (202). Verrall loves power, but he hates the insular culture on which his power depends: "He knew the society of those small Burma stations—a nasty, poodle-faking, horseless riffraff. He despised them" (202). He is a marginal nobleman, on the margins of empire, whose lifestyle and work in the police is rooted in exploitation:

> By the method of seldom paying a bill until a writ was issued against him, he managed to keep himself in the only things he seriously cared about: clothes and horses. He had come out to India in a British cavalry regiment, and exchanged into the Indian Army because it was cheaper and left him greater freedom for polo. After two years his debts were so enormous that he entered the Burma Military Police, in which it was notoriously possible to save money . . . (201-02)

[135] More hardy than the English are the "jolly round-faced Gurkha boys, pining to use their kukris on somebody" (Orwell 112). Likewise, in Thompson's *An Indian Day*, an English officer admires the Gurkha soldier: "He comes from a country that is its own master. His crowd aren't under our thumb." And their status is a compliment to *him*: "As an officer of Gurkhas, he had risen to a plane where he was accepted as every inch a white man" (18). The romance of the martial races reaches even the peaceable Flory, who wears the sign of the Gurkha, "a battered Terai hat" (Orwell 17).

The British gestured toward a grand, unifying theory of martial race by importing symbolism from one race to another, e.g., the Scottish Highlander. In *Burmese Days*, the Military Police are headed by a Gurkha boy playing the bagpipes (36). The novel is sprinkled with ironic asides about Scottishness because the once-colonized Scots now bear the imperial flame. For how Scotland became absorbed into the national imagination—and the colonial project—see Linda Colley, esp. 117-32, "A Scottish Empire?" Having themselves been incorporated into Great Britain, the marginalized Scots ventured out, in disproportionate numbers, in the name of empire. "Having more to win and less to lose, Celtic adventurers were more willing to venture themselves in primitive conditions" (129) on "the coal-face of its [Britain's] empire" (126). From the origins of the East India Company, "It was India . . . that the Scots made their own" (128). In Orwell, the bagpipes that serenade Britain's Burmese subjects are symbols less of Pictish alterity than of English law.

Verrall is able to weave his disreputable path through the Raj's armed branches because there were simply so *many* of them,[136] all competing for a share of power. The coercive tactics of the Raj left the jurisdictional borders of these forces more fluid—and more competitive with one another—than their British counterparts. Nineteenth-century officials admired the paramilitary model of the Irish Constabulary, though they lacked the resources to rule India's vast territory with such a heavy hand (except in the most "lawless" regions).[137] Later generations preferred to militarize the police more covertly. The Police Commission of 1902-03 advised dissolving the Military Police, except in the unstable border districts of Burma, Assam, and the North West Frontier (Gupta 216). (It is no surprise that Orwell's Verrall would eventually be displaced to Burma.) But the goal of the Commission was not to *dis*arm the servants of the law, but to arm *all* of them:

> They condemned the division of the force into unarmed and armed branches . . . and desired that the police force should be homogenous; that all its members should be taught the use of arms and instructed in drill; and that this knowledge must be kept up by periodical training at headquarters, or by regular drill and target practice at their police stations. The idea . . . was that if, "every constable is trained to the use of arms . . . it would be possible to mobilize in each district a comparatively large force of armed police, capable of dispersing effectually even large masses of non-military men." (Gupta 217)

On the "difficult question" of militarizing the police, the Government of India agreed that they should be equipped "to deal both promptly and effectually with tumults and local disturbances without the aid of the military arm," but cautioned that "a special armed police force, with semi-military training but not under military control, and without that sentiment of faithfulness to the salt which is so strong in a soldier, might, if at all numerous, become a source of real danger in

[136] The British Army in India, the Indian Army, the Armed Reserves, the Military Police, not to mention the regular civil police.
[137] For the influence of, and comparison between, the Irish and Indian police, see Arnold, 25-28, 100.

times when our troops were engaged on the frontier, and *the feelings of the people were excited and disturbed*" (qtd. in Gupta 235, my emphasis).

But it is not "the people," however excitable, who pose the "real danger," but "our troops" themselves. Britain's most notorious abuse of the rule of law was the Army's massacre of Indian civilians in Amritsar on 13 April 1919. Amritsar was the ultimate imperial sin: imperial troops open-firing on unarmed civilians who had no outlet of escape. The peaceful demonstrators were gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh, a walled public garden. Within ten minutes, the soldiers fired 1650 rounds, killing at least 379 and wounding 1500. These are the official figures—history told by the winners; survivors estimated anywhere from 500 to 1000 or more dead (Rai 28, Fein 20, Draper 96). The "Butcher of Amritsar" was Brigadier-General Dyer, who ordered the open-fire, but the men with the rifles were 90 Indian Army soldiers of the same martial races, Gurkha and Baluchi[138] (Gupta 362), that the British loved to parade about. The crowd they fired at was majority Sikh,[139] another martial race. Why such an extreme response to a peaceful crowd? British confidence in the loyalty of the martial races was under threat. The Punjab supplied "a disproportionately large number of troops, both Sikhs and Muslims, for the Indian Army, as well as many members of the police force. Widespread demonstrations in the Punjab, therefore, were likely to provoke excessive anxiety" (Judd 260). That women and children were among the dead gave the lie to British masculinity's claim to defend the "weaker" sex.[140] Dyer's armored,

---

[138] Baluchis are not enumerated among the military's 16 martial races (see Sundaram 85n. 36), but they are part of a valued group (Muslims) from a valued region (the northwest) for military recruitment. MacMunn commends their "sturdy record of war in their own hills" (187)

[139] Amritsar is the Sikh holy city, and it was the day of their new year festival. The British prohibition on assembly was unrealistic.

[140] Three days earlier, an English missionary woman was "knocked off her bicycle, physically assaulted and left for dead in the gutter." Judd reads Dyer's "ruthless massacre" as "yet another example of the European male's tendency to violent overreaction in response to a physical threat to a white female" (260). Writing in 1925, when emotions were still high, Thompson admits his culture's obsession with defending British womanhood (*Medal* 109) even as he insults Indian attitudes toward women. European chivalry, he says, however hypocritical, "has done infinitely more to purify and ennoble life than all the *satis* that ever took place" (110).

machine gun-mounted cars never fired—not for lack of trying, but because they could not fit through the Bagh's narrow entrances—but they did block the main entrance, thus trapping the crowd amid the rifle fire. The scene grimly foreshadows a series of equally emblematic massacres, from Dublin's Bloody Sunday (1920) to Tiananmen Square (1989), where states used military force upon their own subjects.

Amritsar was the climax of a season of political tumult: Gandhi's civil demonstrations and the far-from-civil military crackdowns that followed. Two weeks before the Massacre, the people of Delhi observed a *hartal* (strike), and the police and military open-fired on a mass procession, killing several (Gupta 361-62). Early on the day of the Massacre, "the Punjab Government applied to the Government of India for exceptional powers": to suspend the work of criminal courts and to establish martial law in Lahore and Amritsar (362). Public meetings were banned, but it is unclear how many of the thousands who gathered at Jallianwala Bagh that afternoon even knew of the ban. Martial law was not officially declared until two days later (363). This hasty proclamation was surely, in part, to protect Britain's reputation for the rule of law (Metcalf 229). The crackdown could now be justified, at least retroactively. Throughout the coming months, "repression was in full swing, with shootings, hangings, [and] bombing from the air" (Gupta 364). "Public floggings and humiliations" added to the public's outrage and distress (Judd 258). Forster might well have called *this* crime—not rape, not mutiny, but martial law—"the unspeakable limit of cynicism" (*Passage* 187), as it reveals the limits placed by the Raj upon the humanity of its subjects. In the retrospect of 1925, Edward Thompson wrote that the Anglo-Indian community must feel they had "made fools of themselves," but that really, "we were all responsible" (*The Other Side of the Medal* 97). If the horrific specter, for the Briton

abroad, is *native* mutiny, then the equally haunting (but more real) terror, to the Indian or Burmese, is martial law—that is, another *British* massacre.

We must compare the martial law of 1919 to the suppression of the 1857 Rebellion: acts of "wild justice" which would more fairly be described as "cold-blooded murder" or even "extermination" (from period accounts of the "Mutiny," qtd. in Thompson, *Medal* 51). In his critique of Mutiny histories, Thompson singles out Jallianwala Bagh as "the working of the Mutiny-trained or Mutiny-obsessed mind" (*Medal* 94).[141] Amritsar was more than a historical rhyme or echo; Dyer's guns expressed a paranoia that had been building since, and was a direct result of, 1857. It is worth revisiting the words of Sir George Campbell, Provisional Civil Commissioner during the 1857 Rebellion: "I have often heard of 'martial law,' and have known a good many occasions on which energetic people demanded 'martial law,' but to this day I have never been able to make out what it means, unless it be a general leave to any military person to kill anyone, take any property, or do anything else he pleases" (qtd. in Thompson, *Medal* 56). Campbell calls martial law "terrible engines" that must be used with extreme care and self-control (ibid.). When men in power lose self-control, their "exuberant severity" (ibid) implies a form of pleasure in the act of punishment. This emotional response resonates with Amritsar as well. Young describes the Amritsar Massacre as "nervous violent repression" (*Postcolonialism* 296)—that is, aggression born of fear.

Anglo-Indians condoned the Army's "excesses" in the name of public order. One day after Amritsar, an official announcement referred to the slaughter simply as "these excesses," and warned that the Governor-General "will not hesitate to employ the ample military resources at his disposal to suppress organized outrages, rioting or concerted opposition to the maintenance

[141] But Thompson is under the same cloud of misinformation as the rest of the British public: conflating the gathering with a "fanatical" and murderous Sikh "mob" (*Medal* 95).

of law and order" (qtd. in Gupta 363). In the doublethink of the imperial liberal, one may confess to vague, extralegal "excesses," yet endorse the killers as representatives of "law and order." Scarry shows how such an abstract vocabulary of violence produces an attitude of distance and disavowal: disavowal both of the victim and of one's own responsibility. Thus, the act of "injuring" is "relegated to a still visible but marginal position," by calling death "a 'by-product' of war" (72)—or in this case, the "excesses" of an occupying army. Casualties occur, as if agent-less, "on the road to another goal": an abstract goal such as "freedom," "authority," "territorial sovereignty" (74), or "law and order."

Defenders of the massacre resorted to conspiracy theories. The Lt. Governor of the Punjab painted General Dyer as the victim: "he had the rebel army before him" (the unarmed crowd of men, women, and children?) and was "isolated in the middle of a great city seething with rebellion" (qtd. in Metcalf 228). Officials alleged that the Indian demonstrators were part of a "far-fetched conspiracy to subvert law and order by demonic anti-imperial forces tersely described as 'Bolsheviks and Egyptians'" (Judd 259). Dyer described his actions as a warning: it was not "a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect, from a military point of view . . . throughout the Punjab" (qtd. in Metcalf 228). It was a military response to a political problem that was given a retroactive legal defense. And Dyer's "moral effect" was fear.

Still raw in the collective memory, when the Massacre resurfaces in *Burmese Days*, it exposes the British as the real butchers of men. Orwell's Club members make a living martyr of General Dyer, memorializing him as a "poor man! Sacrificed to the Paget M.P.s" (33). "Pagett, M.P." is a Kipling character transformed into cultural shorthand: a liberal Brit with no practical

experience of India.[142] Homebound Britons were, in general, more horrified by the massacre than Anglo-Indians (Metcalf 229). Orwell captures this divide in his first Club scene, as one man laments: "Poor old Dyer! That was a dirty job. Those cowards in England have got something to answer for" (32). Native Britons have grown soft, in this view, striving to "reform" the empire.[143] Orwell's characters go so far as to *invert* the ideal of sacrifice and the taint of cowardice: it is the still-living Dyer, not the hundreds dead, who are "sacrificed" (33); and the "coward" is not the general who fired on unarmed civilians, but those who demand accountability (32). So endemic is the doublethink that the placid Macgregor, "who detested bloodshed and martial law," nonetheless laments Dyer's "sacrifice," while Flory, sickened, sits in silence (33).

The legacy of Amritsar shaped interwar debates about imperial power. It left such a scandal that Britons shied away, officially, from martial law, even as they delegated new security duties to the civil police.[144] Ironically, Orwell's civil policeman, Westfield, scorns "all this law and order" as "the ruin of the Indian Empire." When "beggars of natives know the law better than we do," "nothing save a full-sized rebellion, and the consequent reign of martial law, could save the Empire" (32). Gandhi, though his name is never spoken, embodies this native "knowing of the law," and it was his non-violent *Satyagraha* campaign that set the stage for Jallianwala Bagh—by giving the British an *excuse* for martial law. Starting in March 1919, one month

---

[142] Kipling satirizes "Pagett, M.P." in verse and in the story "The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P." The poem dubs him a "travelled idiot who duly misgoverns the land" (35). In the story, he is a Radical who sympathizes with the Congress movement, even as his friend, who has served in India for 20 years, points out its flaws. The character achieved a life outside of Kipling's texts (a life big enough to acquire at least two misspellings). Thompson makes a reference to "Padget, M.P." (*Medal* 17) that is similar to Orwell's.

[143] Despite Dyer's disgrace, the public donated £26000 to the "Dyer Fund." Thompson is less critical of Dyer's actions than of Anglo-India's "hysterical" defense of those actions (110). Dyer is no longer a man but a symbol, and the money is a "subconscious" reprimand to reformers: "a slap in the face for that fellow Montagu! A Jew Secretary of State for India! We'll show him what we think of his so-called Reforms!" (114). The casual antisemitism is of an order with Orwell's characters.

[144] For the "post-Jallianwala Bagh restriction on military policing," see Arnold, *Police* 118-20, 124.

before Amritsar, the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Act granted the Raj unprecedented "security" powers to arrest, confine, and prosecute "anarchical" offenses, without appeal (Gupta 361). Invoking a state of emergency, in the sense of Agamben, the Act was soon supplemented by the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, popularly known as the Rowlatt Act.[145] By extending the powers that the Raj had acquired during the Great War, the Rowlatt Act treated India as a perpetual war zone—in a perpetual state of emergency and thus of exception. It is a perverse feedback loop: the stronger the regime's suppression, the more people heed Gandhi's call for mass demonstrations, and the more of them are punished under the new powers.

The Anglo-Indians of *Burmese Days* advocate just this sort of rule by force. Indeed, if "mutiny" does break out in this extralegal context, the loser will not be the attacked (the British) but the attackers. Of the novel's ill-fated rebellion, one Burmese civil servant marvels, "They are foolish those villagers. What can they do with their *dahs* and spears against the Indian soldiers? They will be shot down like wild animals" (138). Here, the "native" is split between the Burmese villager—"superstitious peasants" (138)—and the Indian soldier—the transient, half-alien agent of the British. U Po Kyin knows his false rebellion will spark a clampdown. "Of course," he says complacently: "If there is any fighting it will be a massacre" (138).

By aligning the work of the Raj with the slaughter at Amritsar, Orwell indicts the clampdown—against *any* form of dissent, real or manufactured—as another potential massacre. Just as bayonets and nooses helped round up the "mutineers" of 1857, such primitive weapons continue to rule the twentieth-century Raj. Flory sums up his compatriots as "dull, decent people,

[145] In forcing through the Acts of 1919, the Government ignored its own intelligence, which held "that statesmanship rather than good police methods were required to deal with" the increasingly-tense "political situation" (Gupta 360). A related decree, the Indian Official Secrets Act (1923), is still on the books in India and Myanmar. Today, the leaders of Myanmar use it to punish journalists who expose government wrongdoing. (In 2018, two journalists were sentenced to seven years for their work investigating the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims. See Wa Lone et al. and the Reuters page "Detained in Myanmar.") The suppression of the press has a long precedent. During British rule, the crackdown became official when an old Official Secrets Act was amended, in 1904, to punish "newspaper criticism 'likely to bring the Government or constituted authority into suspicion or contempt'" (Gupta 194).

cherishing and fortifying their dullness behind a quarter of a million bayonets" (69). The judicial aesthetic of this decent people, however, is like Foucault's pre-modern scaffold: a spectacle of slaughter.[146] Ellis gorges himself on lurid pipedreams of revenge, ranting, after Maxwell's death, "Just suppose this had happened in a German colony! The good old Germans! They knew how to treat the niggers, Reprisals! Rhinoceros hide whips! Raid their villages, kill their cattle, burn their crops, decimate them"—and, in a final echo of 1857, "blow them from the guns" (241).

Like the memsahib's nightmare of rape, Orwell uses white attitudes toward the law to parody the madness of racism. Ellis dreams of the still-deferred "real rebellion—martial law proclaimed and no quarter given!" (241). His vision aestheticizes slaughter, cinematically and sadistically: "Lovely, sanguinary images moved through his mind. Shrieking mounds of natives, soldiers slaughtering them. Shoot them, ride them down, horses' hooves trample their guts out, whips cut their faces in slices!" (241-42). His fantasy manifests itself in a paranoid, insane attack on five innocent high school boys.[147] Showing how easy it is to manipulate the law, the attack is excused by eye-witnesses (three natives who "lied in perfect unison") as self-defense: a "version of the story" that "Ellis, to do him justice" (who does justice to no one) "probably believed" (243). The attack shows how paranoia inevitably produces the violence it fears.

Imperial paranoia becomes more dangerous when it manifests in official policy and with real guns at its disposal. When the Military Police arrive at the rebel base, the "long-rumoured rebellion" is neither spectacular nor cathartic (223). Verrall is bristling with weapons, "carrying fifty sepoys armed with rifles besides Civil Police" (224). But unlike the rebels of 1857, who at least had their Army rifles, this rebel "armoury" is flimsy: one damaged shotgun; six triggerless

---

[146] See Foucault's "The body of the condemned" and "The spectacle of the scaffold" for the public use of torture and execution to "ritualize" the power relations between state and subject (*Discipline and Punish*).

[147] After being half-blinded by Ellis (242), one boy is treated with a "poisonous concoction" by a Burmese doctor, which blinds him fully (244). It is an ironic case of colonial hybridity in which an eye for an eye (he is effectively attacked both by European and Burman, tradition and modernity) truly does leave both eyes blind.

homemade guns (requiring a nail and stone to fire); "eleven dummy guns carved out of teakwood"; and some Chinese firecrackers (225). Orwell's scene does not live up to its billing—how his characters have imagined it, that is, through popular fiction or war stories. Maxwell is primed for action—"*too anxious*," in the words of Veraswami, "to use his Rifle" (224). Maxwell, a civilian, fires the only shots in the scuffle, killing one fleeing, unarmed "rebel." As Veraswami describes the action, his prose becomes still "queerer" in his tortuous attempt to excuse the white man: "From the point of view legal, all is well for Mr. Maxwell, because the men were undoubtedly conspiring against the Government" (224).

The upshot of the conspiracy theories is that villagers finally do take the law into their own hands, marching to the Club to demand justice. The "riot" that at last erupts (255) is not a bloody revolt, but the public's attempt to instate a new, more equitable relationship with the ruling class. It is a trial-by-crowd in which Ellis stands accused of the boy's blinding. Just as Ellis once demanded torture and "reprisals!" (241), now it is *his* body that is demanded in retribution. The Burmese spokesman reasons, "there is no justice for us in your courts, so we must punish Ellit ourselves. Send him out to us here" (247). The speaker's mistake ("Ellit") does not undermine his message; rather it renders Ellis a more vague and insignificant person than ever. At his core Ellis is an angry racist whose natural wit (27) is dwarfed by his sense of grievance. Ellis is everything we expect in a riot—a hothead devoid of logic—whereas the spokesman for the Burmese crowd is cool, logical, precise: "The boy whom he struck this morning has gone blind. You must send Ellit out to us here, so that we can punish him. The rest of you will not be hurt" (246).[148] It is only when Macgregor insults their representative that the

[148] The speaker's English is impeccable; he simply is not bothered with Ellis's name.

crowd becomes chaotic.[149] We can compare the eruptive, righteous energy of the crowd—like an "angry giant" (245)—to the scene of prison release in *A Passage to India*: a collective, wordless "sob," "as though the lips of a giant had parted" (Forster 310). Forster's scene is driven by a spiritual energy, but it is also tied, through ritual, to the state: the Rajah releases one prisoner in a performance of mercy and of social release. Orwell's scene too is one of social release. But the release here is truly chaotic. This demand for justice is attached to no institution or authority; there is no practical path toward restitution, but the crowd moves forward anyway.

When the cursed-at, stone-pelting crowd lays siege to the European Club, "none of them thought to blame Ellis, the sole cause of this affair; their common peril seemed, indeed, to draw them closer together for the while" (248). Like the memsahib's eager "twittering" about murder (244), what they fear most is "*missing* a chance like this!"—a chance, that is, to "slaughter them in bloody heaps" (248, my emphasis). What ensues is a mock-heroic charade that finds Flory the unlikely hero. Club members shout out scenarios: "If only one of us could get to the police lines!"; "A British officer to lead them!" (249). The one who acts is Flory. Swimming across the river to take command of the Military Police, he dispels the crowd by actively *refusing* an Amritsar-style open fire. Ignoring Macgregor's order to "open fire at once!" and Ellis's "to aim low! No firing over their heads. Shoot to kill" (250), Flory orders the sepoys "to fire high, right over the people's heads" (253).

Flory's escapade—an Englishman commanding native troops against a native threat—is the ironic dénouement of the whites' Kiplingesque fantasy: a fancy lost to Westfield (despite his dreams of rebels) but prophesied in Verrall (rumors that "a company of Indian infantry with a

[149] Anglo-Indian officials were obsessed with suppressing public assemblies. In 1931 Burma, officials sought to "prohibit 'drilling' among village associations," hoping to cause the breakdown of certain forms of rural community (Aung-Thwin 78). Orwell's crowd suggests the pointlessness of such attempts at suppression, but also his own suspicion of any large, impassioned gathering.

British officer in command would be sent" [112]) and the calls for "A British officer!" moments before (249). For once, Flory takes both action and responsibility. He strives to pacify the crowd, and he feels answerable for the results: "Make them understand that," he insists of his order to fire high (253). The policy of General Dyer was just the opposite: to attack while abdicating responsibility.

For Douglas Kerr, the scene exemplifies the supremacy of *race* over the rule of law. The bizarre scene "reads like a cliché from an adventure story for boys," yet it also reveals British assumptions about race and authority (313). Kerr asks, "What, after all, was John Flory doing giving orders to a contingent of Indian military police . . . ? . . . Flory is a civilian—not in the sense of a member of the ICS, but a person of no military experience or civil authority. No policeman in London would take orders from such a person" (312). When the subahdar[150] announces, "The sahib will give the order!" (*Burmese Days* 253), sahib "is an ethnic designation, and Flory's race is the trump card that over-rules all other hierarchies when he is among non-Europeans" (Kerr 312). Like the Burmese members of the police force, the Indian sepoys "are a disciplinary force whose capacity for decisive action seems to be paralyzed, until a European tells them what to do" (313). Their "immediate obedience" shows that "membership of the racial oligarchy made every Englishman in the East semi-official" (318). This reading is true of the scene itself. But the long-term result of the riot is not to elevate Flory, or any other Englishman, but merely to temporarily reshuffle the power dynamics within the European community and to elevate U Po Kyin as the real local authority.

Let me propose a second answer to Kerr's question, "What . . . was John Flory doing giving orders" (312)? I want to ask not why do the MPs obey, but why did Orwell put Flory in

[150] I read the Rajput subahdar less as a representative of his race than as another petty official who prefers to bully the public rather than take responsibility (not unlike the British).

this position in the first place? Flory's orders to shoot over the crowd's head are superior, both ethically and practically, to General Dyer's at Amritsar. The peaceable result *proves* that Flory's hatred of Empire is *right*: that restraint is necessary because the alternative, rule by violence, only begets more violence. I say *prove* in so far as an ethical point can be proven—not by the logic of deduction, but by the less-violent, less-deadly results.[151] Flory's method works; Dyer's was disastrous. The lesson holds even if Flory has unconsciously succumbed to Empire's racist and sexist assumptions and, as we shall see, fails to live up to his own ideals.

Ironically, each side's attempt at "justice"—the crowd, to try Ellis for his crime; Flory and Dr. Veraswami, to preempt a massacre—is overwhelmed by the insidious and absurd status quo. The doctor "tries to restrain" the crowd (another unlikely hero, he emerges with grazed knuckles and torn necktie), but it is the cowardly judge, U Po Kyin, who steals the show, as, with "martial air," he "hurries forth to grab a share of any credit that might be going" (254). He can thus have his rebellion and quell it too. The illogical demands of the law are satisfied when the real policemen return to town:

> Westfield and Verrall came back early in the morning, bringing Maxwell's murderers under arrest; or at any rate, bringing two people who would presently be hanged for Maxwell's murder. Westfield, when he heard the news of the riot, was gloomy but resigned. *Again* it happened—a veritable riot, and he not there to quell it! It seemed fated that he should never kill a man. Depressing, depressing. Verrall's only comment was that it had been "damned lip" on the part of Flory (a civilian) to give orders to the Military Police. (256)

But the major complaint among the British is that Flory did not take liberty *enough*—that he did not use deadly force. As the short-lived "hero of the hour," he notes that, "The only fly in the ointment is that I told the police to fire over the crowd's heads instead of straight at them. It seems that's against all the Government regulations" (257). "Regulation" thus demands the white man be *un*regulated in his use of force. Fittingly, Verrall is unregulated in the extreme. Departing

[151] My reasoning is inductive: the fruits of empire are violent, therefore empire is wrong.

in a flurry of "irregularity" (267), he leaves "a nice mess" for his successor, a corruptible and "crass youth," "rollicking," "chuckle-headed," and irresponsible. "I'm the new Military Police bloke, you know" (265), he asserts, and the farce of power rolls on.

With such sorry excuses for officers, the narrative of police heroism is best told in death. Girt round by glittering "white walls," the novel's English cemetery unites the colonial frontiers of law, army, trade, and medicine, in their own, inevitable decay (134). Amid an amalgam of timbermen, office drones, and soldiers, one gravestone spins the Kiplingesque tale of the Imperial Policeman: "'Sacred to the memory of John Henry Spagnall, late of the Indian Imperial Police, who was cut down by cholera while in the unremitting exercise of' etc., etc., etc" (239). But this scripted martyrdom is a sham: the policeman died a degrading death, "after his second go of delirium tremens" (239). Thus is the policeman's tale of addiction and madness[152] sanitized for the public: "cut down," if not in the line of duty, then by a bacterial foe, on the frontline of tropical medicine.[153] The hackneyed record on the gravestone grossly distorts the individual's public role, not to mention his private self; like the Club, it turns the English into parodies of themselves. In the end it is the locals who will decide how and if the English are remembered. The cemetery is overseen not by mourners but by vultures, perpetually "flapping from their dung-whitened branches" (183).

And the cemetery will be Flory's final home. His suicide, like all the deaths we witness, is senseless and ignoble. Again the doctor is the unlikely hero of the hour, rearranging the scene to appear accidental: "Your master was my friend. It shall not be written on his tombstone that he committed suicide" (282). In this final act of service to his friend, "Dr. Veraswami had proved

---

[152] Despite the heroic narrative, alcohol is a lethal imperial foe (21, 39), causing the body to dis-order itself.

[153] In *Colonizing the Body*, Arnold identifies cholera as the most disordering of epidemic diseases. Its erratic spread "opened up fissures in society," even between the colonizer and colonized. Thus, "cholera was a highly political disease, one that seemed to threaten the slender basis of British power in India and to stand at the critical point of interaction between colonial state and indigenous society" (159).

with all his medico-legal skill that the circumstances pointed to accident"—even though the primary "result" of Flory's death is that the doctor, losing "the glory of being a white man's friend," is "ruined" (283). Despite the intimacy between Flory and Veraswami, there is not the mutual longing of Aziz and Fielding. Flory seeks "a friend" "who would love Burma as he loved it and hate it as he hated it" (72). No one does. Ultimately, his public shame[154] overrides the very real service he could be to his friend. Thus the doctor's "agony" at discovering Flory's body: "he seized the dead man by the shoulders and shook him as though mere violence could bring him to life" (282). Indeed, all of Flory's intimates are hurt, emotionally and materially, by his death. His faithful servant sets up a teashop with his inheritance, but it "fails" (284); Flory's mistress winds up at a cheap brothel where she is kicked and beaten, and "perhaps more bitterly than any of the others, she regrets the good time when Flory was alive" (285); and Flory's only loyal friend besides the doctor, his spaniel Flo, he shoots in the head as a prelude to killing himself.

This final scene between dog and master confirms the selfishness of Flory's act; it reads as a murder-suicide. We pity Flory, but it is hard to forgive his cruelty: Flo is "stricken with terror" at his uncharacteristic aggression, as he "flung her into the room" and she "whined for forgiveness. It hurt him to hear it" (280). We are left a gory scene, with Flory's final thought not of his victim(s), but of himself: "Her shattered brain looked like red velvet. Was that what he would look like?" (281). The pathos Orwell devotes to the dog, however warranted, also detracts from Flory's human victims. Ma Hla May had accused Flory of treating her "like a dog" (153),

[154] Flory's hypocrisy is revealed by his Burmese mistress—publicly, in church, in the presence of the other woman in his life (who is white). Of course, Ma Hla May can only shame Flory by also shaming herself. Urmila Seshagiri writes, "While rape and prostitution are naturalized and otherwise unpunished in the world of this novel, being publicly humiliated at the hands of a traditionally-abject native woman is cause enough for Flory's suicide" (114-15). Ana Moya traces Flory's self-destruction to his inability to reconcile anti-imperialism (through which he rejects his own dominance) with masculinity (through which he feels entitled to dominate). Flory is "caught in the same discourse that he is critical of"—i.e., the "discourses of power" that govern race and gender (103).

"like a pariah dog" (273), but we never see her after the scene in the church; the narrator merely sums up her decline (285).

But Flory's "real epitaph" among the English is less forgiving than Veraswami's simple "my friend" (282): "Flory? Oh yes, he was a dark chap, with a birthmark.[155] He shot himself in Kyauktada in 1926. Over a girl, people said. Bloody fool" (283). However he is remembered—"accidental death," "dark chap," "Bloody fool" (283), or as the doctor has it, "my friend" (282)—it is an epitaph not just for him, but his liberal vision of interracial friendship—and Orwell's own shattered vision of the liberal imperial project.

The Empire as Executioner

Orwell's time in the Imperial Police led to a dramatic personal transformation. Yet *Burmese Days* is not interested in the police as human beings, but as the purest expression of the white community's *power.* But not all of Orwell's colonials are coldblooded. In his essays he questions how that power affects the psyche of the policeman—who is not unique, after all, but merely the sharp end of the colonial spear, the clearest manifestation of the power that "*every* Englishman in the East" is conscripted to perform ("Shooting an Elephant" 4, my emphasis).

By exposing the hypocrisies of British liberalism, colonial life provoked a crisis, in liberals, to reassess their ideals—hence Forster's pragmatic bent and Orwell's struggle between socialist ideals and practical politics.[156] In Orwell's nonfiction, even the police are plagued by

[155] Flory's birthmark, this darkness, lowers his status among whites. To them it is a racial taint that confirms his ideological taint: his "Bolshie" and "Booker Washington" sympathies (33-34). The public memory of Flory's darkness makes his demise seem inevitable, in this context where "The whites were up and the blacks were down" (*Road to Wigan Pier* 148).

[156] Like Forster, Orwell respects the tradition of British liberalism. In a 1939 essay, "Charles Dickens," he praises his subject as neither a "bourgeois" nor "proletarian" writer, but "the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is generously angry—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls" (*Collected*, 1: 414, 415, 460).

doubt, distaste, self-censorship. The pukka sahib's code stifles critique—first, within one's self, then by inhibiting alliances with likeminded critics. Anti-colonial colonials find it nearly impossible to bridge this silence. Orwell recalls one encounter, when it takes an all-night journey (a train to Mandalay with a fellow-civil servant: "a stranger" "whose name I never knew"), to initiate honest dialogue—dialogue that hones and nourishes their critique, yet ends as soon as they unboard. After "half an hour's cautious questioning," to find "the other" "safe," the exchange is at once furtive and cathartic, anonymous and "intimate":

> . . . and then for hours, while the train jolted slowly through the pitch-black night, sitting up in our bunks with bottles of beer handy, we damned the British Empire—damned it from the inside, intelligently and intimately. It did us both good. But we had been speaking forbidden things, and in the haggard morning light when the train crawled into Mandalay, we parted as guiltily as any adulterous couple. (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 145)

In this secluded chamber they have after all betrayed their (wife? mistress? mother?) Britannia. If it is so difficult to privately, provisionally connect, imagine how intolerable the consequences of *publicly* denouncing this all-consuming, all-assuming empire. Orwell writes of "unbreakable" "tabus" (*Burmese Days* 69). These taboos do not sanctify the Raj, but fortify it "as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in *saecula saeculorum*, upon the will of prostrate peoples" ("Shooting an Elephant" 4). When the disillusioned colonial perceives the net of taboos in which he is caught, it may be too late to escape. Even the anti-colonial colonial is called on to represent British culture—or be sacrificed to it—abroad.

Orwell is consistently critical of empire, but in most of his nonfiction, he treats it from a distance or in service of some other argument. In contrast, "A Hanging" and "Shooting an Elephant" are deeply personal, foregrounding his own doubts and failures. "As for the job I was doing," Orwell writes,

> In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. . . . But I could get nothing into perspective. . . . I did not even know that the British Empire is dying . . . All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. ("Shooting" 3-4)

After this grim introduction, "Shooting an Elephant" is a semi-farcical tale of a young Orwell being pressed into service to kill a rogue elephant—an act he does not want to perform, but the inevitability of which helps to illuminate the nature of imperial power—and its attendant ethos of robust masculinity. When we finally meet the elephant, it is no longer a threat. Orwell shoots him "to avoid looking a fool" (12). The essay dramatizes the conflict between the private and the public self—a divide made razor-sharp by the fact that he is in a racially-stratified country in service of the occupying state. He resolves to act rationally—not to shoot unless in self-defense—but he is overwhelmed by expectations:

> Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives", and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. (8)

Here, the white man does not merely wear the *mask* of tyranny; he *becomes* the tyrant. Yet Orwell portrays himself as subject to the will of "the natives," not the other way around. It is a stunning reversal of power, but it is disingenuous given the political reality. We must also note what Bluemel calls Orwell's "discomforting color-thinking." She observes that the "despicable prejudices" of Europeans in *Burmese Days* "are linked to their hatred of black skin"; yet the narrator too uses "adjectives of blackness" without irony (156), just as Orwell describes the

"sneering yellow faces" in "Shooting an Elephant" (3). Bluemel continues: "In *Burmese Days* and elsewhere, race emerges as an ancient, essential category synonymous with color, and thus visible and containable, subject to surveillance and policing" (157). In "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell's role as both white man and policeman traps him in the language and taxonomy of color. I would argue that this "color-thinking" is also what dooms Flory and Veraswami's friendship in *Burmese Days*; both are trapped by the categories and expectations of the white community.

In "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell satirizes the role of hero-policeman through his excruciating hesitation to *act*. This "puppet" is the portrait of ambivalence. "I had got to shoot the elephant," he says—"But I did not want to shoot the elephant. . . . It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him" (8). Even his rifle is pitiful. To do the job he has to borrow a friend's elephant rifle, a "magical," "beautiful German thing" (10). The German gun takes down the animal, but it is Orwell's rifle—the petty, everyday violence of the state—that completes the job. Striving to extinguish the "great beast's" "dreadful noise," he uses his own gun to "pour shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression" (11). At once gruesome and absurd, the creature's murder becomes a tragic farce of racial and political "theatre" (9). And when at last Orwell commits that murder, the elephant's "tortured gasps" seem to embody all the petty tortures of the Raj (11).

Alongside Orwell making a spectacle of himself is the essay's spectacles of violence. The elephant's is not the only death. Also dead is the man he trampled: an Indian coolie, "ground" "into the earth"—an earth not quite his home—by the mammal's giant foot. Orwell reduces his ravaged body to a grotesque object: a freshly "crucified" corpse "sprawling in the mud," his skin "stripped" "as neatly as one skins a rabbit."[157] Here is "something the children ought not to have

[157] There is a similar scenario in *Burmese Days*. Flory recalls killing a tiger, "a mangy old man-eater who had killed one of his coolies" (162). In practical terms, the execution of the *inhuman* native protects the *human* public. But this

seen" (6)—though the Raj might as easily kill their own families. The man is devalued both by locals (he is an immigrant) and Europeans (he is expendable). Orwell's peers "said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie." The last words Orwell grants the man are brutal and ironic: "afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant" (12). It is a retroactive legal defense whose irony Orwell directs squarely at himself—and the law he represents. The colonial state is predatory by nature—it exploits coolies for their labor—but the law shifts the blame for that violence onto the elephant, which the state now has an excuse to kill—thus robbing *another* worker of his livelihood (the elephant's owner) and promoting a robust image of "the white man with his gun" (8).

We may wish Orwell to direct his pity as much at the man as at the beast, but this is "Shooting an Elephant," not "Death of a Coolie." Orwell's focus is on his own culpability, so he must foreground the pain of the creature *he* killed—"the thick blood welling out of him like red velvet,"[158] "powerless to move and yet powerless to die"—and on his own powerlessness to end it. He is "not even able to finish him . . . In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die" (11). Over the course of the "agony," he imagines the elephant "in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further" (11). It is as if Orwell is once again displacing his sense of guilt and injustice (as he once displaced the plight of the Burmese upon the English working class) by imagining some noncolonial alternate reality. This vision is noncolonial not in a political but a biological sense: no longer does man dominate beast. Here the beast is free from man's killing machines. It is an

---

is a public made vulnerable by colonial interference; this is one of "*his* coolies," and Flory fixates on the details to an objectifying extent: "the panting, slobbering noise as he devoured the coolie's body" (162, my emphasis).

[158] Cf. the death of the dog Flo in *Burmese Days* (261).

act of conscience achieved through imagination: empathy. But if Orwell is with the elephant in his mind, in the real world, he removes himself from responsibility, leaving the creature to die slowly.

The subject of "A Hanging" (1931) is more somber still, as Orwell describes the hanging of a convict in a Burmese prison yard: the moment he first "realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man" (15). But this epiphany is fleeting, at least within the structure of the essay. The dismal procession to the gallows produces a comic and community-building response in the diverse group of onlookers and enforcers. "Shooting an Elephant" sets its narrative course as comedy but ends as tragedy; "A Hanging" simply *is* a tragedy, but it is experienced as comedy by those in power. As tales of reluctant execution, the two essays invert the trope of the roving native killer, featuring instead a bumbling English gunman, who kills to uphold his pride, and an imperial hangman, who kills in the name of the state. Before we look more closely at "A Hanging," it is worth seeing how Orwell portrays the relationship between execution and justice in two other pieces of nonfiction.

The Road to Wigan Pier argues that however "humane" the law may appear, its colonial enforcers commit "a double oppression." Orwell writes: "Not only were we hanging people and putting them in jail and so forth; we were doing it in the capacity of unwanted foreign invaders. The Burmese themselves never really recognized our jurisdiction. The thief whom we put in prison did not think of himself as a criminal justly punished, he thought of himself as the victim of a foreign conqueror" (147). The imperial policeman is doubly "haunted," both by the "concealed" "guilt" of "every Anglo-Indian" (144) and by the "secret horror of what they do" (he should say what *we* do) that is shared by law officers everywhere ("policemen, judges, prison

warders," "even in England") (147). In this formulation, the imperial hangman is a double criminal (an invader and a murderer), and the gallows is the site of legalized murder.

Indeed it is the specter of the gallows—and its guardian, the hanging judge—that embody for Orwell Englishness itself. In his ambivalent portrait of "the English genius," *The Lion and the Unicorn*,[159] he argues:

> The gentleness of English civilisation is mixed up with barbarities and anachronisms. Our criminal law is as out-of-date as the muskets in the Tower. Over against the Nazi Storm Trooper you have got to set that typically English figure, the hanging judge, some gouty old bully with his mind rooted in the nineteenth century, handing out savage sentences. (*Collected*, 2: 62)

The hanging judge is the shrouded, occult state agent who gives the lie to British liberalism—including the milder, paternal face of modern empire, as embodied by Bentham, Mill, or Macaulay. For Orwell, it is not always the judge who is "savage," but "the law," whose "obscene" demands the public condones. He writes:

> In England people are still hanged by the neck and flogged with the cat o' nine tails. Both of these punishments are obscene as well as cruel, but there has never been any genuinely popular outcry against them. People accept them (and Dartmoor, and Borstal) almost as they accept the weather. They are part of 'the law', which is assumed to be unalterable.
>
> Here one comes upon an all-important English trait: the respect for constitutionalism and legality, the belief in 'the law' as something above the State and above the individual, something which is cruel and stupid, of course, but at any rate *incorruptible*. (*Collected*, 2: 62)

Despite such cruelty, he goes on, "In England such concepts as justice, liberty and objective truth are still believed in. They may be illusions, but they are very powerful illusions" (63). England is an imagined community. Orwell scorns the illusions on which it is built, but he does not utterly condemn them; they may help to win the war *and* have a society worth preserving in peacetime. He concludes that the judge is not evil but an ambivalent enforcer of contradictory values:

---

[159] *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* is a slim volume published in early 1941. It makes the case that Britain can win the war by 1) promoting the best of English values and 2) building a more just society both within Britain and in her colonies and dominions (a more just society is more likely to win).

> Even hypocrisy is a powerful safeguard. The hanging judge, that evil old man in scarlet robe and horse-hair wig, whom nothing short of dynamite will ever teach what century he is living in, but who will at any rate interpret the law according to the books and will in no circumstances take a money bribe, is one of the symbolic figures of England. He is a symbol of the strange mixture of reality and illusion, democracy and privilege, humbug and decency, the subtle network of compromises, by which the nation keeps itself in its familiar shape. (63)

In this reading, the seemingly-"unalterable," "familiar shape" of society is upheld by a delicate alchemy of "cruelty" and "decency" (62-63). The hanging judge is safe-keeper of an equilibrium that rests—not always, but at times and in part—on human sacrifice.[160]

When this strange concoction is exported to the colonies, the definition of what is just or civilized and what is just plain backwards is further confused. Hanging was, to many Indians, as alien and savage a ritual as their own customs appeared to the British. As we have seen in the Introduction, scenes of Indian hanging became emblems of the power (and hypocrisy) of imperial law, starting with the *The Hanging of Two Rebels* (1858) at the watershed moment of the Mutiny. In literature, the fear of hanging is presented as a means for the state to regulate public behavior. In *Set in Authority* (1906), Duncan contrasts an Indian man's desire to "punish" his unfaithful wife with his own "fear for the hanging": "Always now the Government gives the hanging for killing the unfaithful ones" (109). In Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1916), a youth boasts, to prove his toughness: "you know that even hanging has no terrors for me" (170). His boast is a cover for his fear of the man he is talking to; he has good cause to fear both.

The spectacle of hanging is equally powerful in Orwell's day, but now it is hidden in the prison yard. In *Road to Wigan Pier*, he writes: "I watched a man hanged once; it seemed to me worse than a thousand murders. I never went into a jail without feeling (most visitors to jails feel the same) that my place was on the other side of the bars. I thought then—I think now, for that

[160] René Girard explores the production of community through violence in *Violence and the Sacred* (1972) and, for Christianity's complicity in collective sacrifice, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (1978).

matter—that the worst criminal who ever walked is morally superior to a hanging judge" (146). Orwell is at once a "visitor" to the jail and a member of the carceral community—complicit in the punishment, yet disidentifying with his role.[161] This dual role of participant and observer—the insider outside—underlies Orwell's autoethnographic critique.

He details his experience more fully in "A Hanging." Here in the Burmese prison-yard, we witness the ritual performance of execution: a spectatorship that produces (provisionally, superficially, but still hierarchically) a multiracial community of killing. The cycle of killing is inexorable, Orwell intimates, from his opening portrait of "brown silent men" "squatting at the inner bars": "These were the condemned men, due to be hanged within the next week or two." Escorted out of his cramped cell (like an "animal cage"), the convict is reduced to a living corpse: "unresisting, yielding his arms limply to the ropes, as though he hardly noticed what was happening" (13). The prisoner's defacement—by the law and by the witnesses—climaxes as the hangman produces "a cotton bag" and "drew it down over the prisoner's face" (16). But if his ritual, defacing march to the death works to *strip* the prisoner of individuality—and humanity—Orwell's essay resists the anonymizing effects of power.

Orwell strives to humanize the empire's violence not through the abstracting lens of modern technology[162] or law, but the intimate contours of the body in pain. Orwell both *embodies* and *articulates* the native's pain—the "abominable noise!" of the hanging man (17)—

[161] Throughout his essays, Orwell disidentifies with the police and seeks to identify with the convict. See "Hop-Picking" (1931) and "Clink" (1932) in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 1.

[162] In "Rudyard Kipling" (1942), Orwell compares modern empire with that of Kipling's day, and the comparison is not entirely favorable. He critiques the "crude, vulgar," "mercenary" state of Kipling's India, then goes on to show how the Raj's primitive roots ("floggings, hangings and crucifixions") persist, and even escalate, in the guise of efficiency and order. As "vulgar" a "picture" as Kipling pens, his mercenaries are at least a "pre-machine-gun army," naïve to the mass slaughter of the approaching world wars (*Collected*, 2: 191)—or, the more efficient forms of massacre. After all, it did not take a Nazi Blitz to set off "highly civilised human beings . . . flying overhead, trying to kill me" (from *The Lion and the Unicorn*, in *Collected*, 2: 56). The day after Jallianwala Bagh, another crowd in Amritsar "was bombed and machine-gunned from the air" (Gupta 363). In Orwell's Raj, the police still flog and the hangman hangs, but they have new weapons at their disposal too.

more viscerally than did Forster, who did not depict prison directly, but *displaced* it in the prisoner's "shattered voice" (*A Passage to India* 232). Cut short in the "full tide" of life, Orwell's prisoner "was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. All the organs of his body were working—bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming—all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live" ("A Hanging" 15).

The races who live and serve in prison are as diverse as in the rest of Burma. The colonial hangman is not an imposing master of the occult (no "evil old man in scarlet" like the English judge), but a "servile," "grey-haired convict in the white uniform of the prison" ("A Hanging" 16). The jailers thus enlist the prisoners to punish themselves. Collis writes that most jailers in Burma were Indian or Eurasian (173). By moving native agents to different parts of the Raj, the British promoted divided loyalties. This divide-and-conquer strategy is the reason that the "martial races" often served in territories distant from the lands of their birth. In "A Hanging," it is "six tall Indian warders" who prepare the "puny" prisoner for his fate. Orwell describes the intimacy of this process: "their hands always on him in a careful, caressing grip" (13).

In this inversion of civility and brutality, the lone witness with the gall to "misbehave"—to shatter the rituals of jail-yard decorum and behave humanely—is a dog. Puncturing the pretense of civility, dog and prisoner (social pariahs both) intone a duet of "abominable noise!" (17) more compelling than the order-imposing, but "desolately thin," "bugle call" to the gallows (14). The dog is a Eurasian hybrid[163] and, like Orwell, an ambivalent witness. The dog does not distinguish by race or position: it is "wild with glee at finding so many human beings together," trying to lick the prisoner's face (14) and bond with the warders (17). It is the prisoner and the

[163] It is "a large woolly dog, half Airedale, half pariah" (14). Ironically, it is a Eurasian jailor who "tried to stone the dog away" (15) and whose foppish affectations make him a butt of the essay's humor (18).

dog who disrupt the order of the ritual. Once "the noose was fixed, the prisoner began crying out to his god": "a high, reiterated cry of 'Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram! not urgent and fearful like a prayer or cry for help, but steady, rhythmical, almost like the tolling of a bell." The man's voice is "muffled by the cloth," yet it transgresses the borders of the hood and "still persisted" (16). "The dog answered . . . with a whine," and the two produce a discordant, anti-imperial duet—"each cry another second of life"—that only the fatal mercy of the drop can end (16-17).

The killing spectacle surfaces in a cauldron of discord and paranoia. By its agonistic nature, this is a community forever punctuated by episodes of infraction and execution, subversion and containment; it is but one hanging among many. Even the decisive act of execution cannot stamp out the collective anxiety of empire; by giving the lie to the pretext of civility, it enhances it. Warding off the anxiety demands not only ritual, but humor—a dark, cathartic comedy that binds witness-participants together in a diverse community of killing. Once "the job was done," a jailer refers to the dead man as "our friend." It is "a homely, jolly scene" that overflows in laughter. Orwell recalls: "An enormous relief had come upon us now that the job was done. One felt an impulse to sing, to break into a run, to snigger. All at once everyone began chatting gaily" (17). As with the elephant, the spectacle makes a holiday of tragedy. The crowd demands a sacrifice, whatever the paradox between somber decorum and festive hilarity. The cacophony of dog and prisoner is encored by raucous, postmortem laughter. European and Asian alike, "Everyone was laughing," and even a Burmese magistrate "burst into a loud chuckling" (18). The safest way to express the anxieties of law is to laugh at the man—the condemned—who unsettles it. Humor is not the antithesis of fear, but, as Freud would say, its displacement. Beyond an act of catharsis, laughter is also a socially acceptable outlet for aggression, such as the jailers may feel toward their superiors—or indeed toward the prisoners,

whose very existence is the precondition for their own sordid and menial duties. The native jailer tells a grotesque tale of doctors who "pull the prissoners' legs to ensure decease" (18).[164] The doctor in this scene (a white army doctor) is not reduced to such stratagems, but he gripes at the inefficiency ("The man ought to have been dead by this time" [14]) and "pokes the bare body" (returned to a state of nature) to gauge its condition (17). The jailer's anecdote engenders chuckles ("Pulling at his legs!" the Burmese magistrate exclaims) and a communal toast of whisky: "a drink together, native and European alike, quite amicably. The dead man was a hundred yards away" (18).

In such incongruous asides, we can trace the provisional formations—and breakdowns—of the Raj's carceral community. Orwell marks these transitions in the inclusive or exclusive nature of his pronouns. He slips from "we" or "us" (denoting all officials, native or British) to an occasional "they": to designate guards, jailers, or superintendent (the officials most responsible for hanging, who allow him to skirt his own responsibility) (15) or the prisoners themselves (13, 17). The entity most alien, it seems, is the "he" or "it" of the condemned man (15, 17, 18). But Orwell's distancing of the prisoner broadens to a "we" (a more *human* we than the impersonal "we" of officialdom) when he and the prisoner share a an intimate space or activity—the walk to the gallows—or a shared *perception*—the prisoner too has "eyes" that "saw" (15-16). Indeed Orwell aligns himself more with the prisoner than with the hangman, who remains an indefinite "he" (16).

Elaine Scarry describes the "display of weaponry" (in this case, I would say, the looming presence of the gallows) as working "to convert the prisoner's pain into the torturer's power" (58). She concludes that it is impossible, finally, to overcome the distance (real and figurative) from one end of the weapon to the other: between the power of the guard or torturer and the

[164] The extra *s* is Orwell's rendering of the man's speech.

prisoner's lack of power. If the guard's "attention begins to slip down the weapon toward the vulnerable end, if the severed attributes of pain begin to slip back to their origin in the prisoner's sentience," still he will never recognize that sentience. In other words, "If the guard's awareness begins to follow the path of the bullet, that path itself can be *bent* so that he himself rather than the prisoner is the bullet's destination"—so it is the guard, as witness, who suffers, for "having to *watch* those brutalities" (59, my emphasis).[165] But need we be so cynical of Orwell? Perhaps of Orwell as policeman, but not surely as human being and activist. Here he explicitly disidentifies with his "duties" and seeks to identify with the prisoner's reason and humanity. He has grasped what Scarry herself is critiquing—that "Power is cautious. It covers itself. It bases itself in another's pain and prevents all recognition that there is 'another' by looped circles that ensure its own solipsism" (59).

Despite the ritual with which the prisoner's body is produced, it is that same body that testifies—across culture and across law—to his shared humanity. Orwell subverts the category of native criminal, in "A Hanging," by not only omitting the man's alleged crime, but by testifying to that likeness. Just as he would anatomize the process by which the unwholesome, abnormal body is produced, in "How the Poor Die,"[166] it is here in Burma, in another foreign body, that he first faces the other's shared humanity. In *Road to Wigan Pier*, it is the prisoner's *face* that prompts his own sense of personal and national guilt. Britain is "a foreign conqueror"; therefore, "the thing that was done to him," a Burmese prisoner, "was merely a wanton meaningless cruelty. His face, behind the stout teak bars of the lock-up and the iron bars of the jail, said so

[165] To secure this position of power, the torturer must find a way to "deflect the natural reflex of sympathy away from the actual sufferer" (Scarry 58). Here, Scarry builds on Arendt's work in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1977). To overcome the "animal pity" the guard feels for the prisoner, the "trick used by Himmler" was to *redirect* that pity onto him*self*—whose terrible "duty" is to "watch" such horrid things (Arendt, qtd. in Scarry 58).

[166] In "How the Poor Die" (1946), Orwell compares an anonymous Paris hospital to prison (40-41) and its patients to "*a specimen*" (35) or "exhibit" in "some pathological museum" (37).

clearly. And unfortunately I had not trained myself to be indifferent to the expression of the human face" (147). Where words fail, the body may be eloquent. In "A Hanging," Orwell's senses are heightened as he walks the prisoner to the gallows. But it is only when the man strays from the path allotted to him that Orwell perceives him as an individual: when "he stepped slightly aside to avoid a puddle on the path." "Till that moment," Orwell writes, "I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man" (15). It is now that he strives to imagine the perceptions of the doomed man, who is perceiving everything for the last time:

> His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned—reasoned even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone—one mind less, one world less. (15-16)

And this world would indeed be mind-less, should "the law" remain (as Orwell says in *The Lion and the Unicorn*) so far "above the individual" (*Collected*, 2: 62) that it can only, finally, destroy him—whether by the gun or by gallows, or, more covertly, by effacing his ability to perceive, *as* an individual, the other.

Chapter 3

Reimagining Community in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*

Raja Rao shifts our focus away from law enforcers and onto the protesters. Set around the Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930, *Kanthapura* (1938) follows one South Indian village's awakening to the nationalist movement. Rao turns Orwell's cynicism for group politics on its head, showing how nonviolent resistance, as mediated through a nontraditional narrative voice, undermines colonial structures of power—and a certain set of traditional powers as well. Here, the "Red-man's" law (local idiom for the British) is justified only by his guns. When Indian nationalists resist that law, Rao's police and soldiers are reduced to stomping boots, lathis, and bayonets: apt synecdoches for the law—and plantation economy—they so insistently enforce. In confronting injustice, Rao's villagers cannot revert to strict bounds of religion, gender, or caste. Rather, they must transcend the divisive modes of sectarian power, to work toward an indigenized, feminized, and pluralist national community.

As villagers transform themselves from insular farmers into Congress Volunteers, their nonviolent resistance is met with frenzied and indiscriminate force. When the local leader of these "Gandhi's men" is imprisoned, Rao dramatizes the conflict between the "truth" and the "law," "the people" and "the police." Fully aware that "the Red-man's judges" are "not for truth, but for law"—"not for the brown skin but for the white," "not with the people but with the police"—Rao's hero refuses legal aid. Like Gandhi, he will be "his own advocate" until such time as "truth will . . . change" the system (86-87).

As that system's ambivalent enforcer, Rao's petty and imperious Muslim cop is (more even than Bhabha's fork-tongued mimic man) alienated from within indigenous society as much

as from without. Rejected by his Hindu countrymen, he adheres to Europeans that he may channel their power for himself. Denied a space to sleep, even, in caste-conscious Kanthapura, the alienated policeman elicits our indignation, if not our empathy—yet then transforms into an automaton of coercion. Bamboozled and beguiled by the *real* seat of local law—not the court but the plantation—native soldiers and police unleash themselves against the populace, little more than this cop's clones.

The disciplinary systems of Kanthapura are more fraught than Orwell's "unbreakable system of tabus" (*Burmese Days* 69). The disciplines of Kanthapura lie both within the village and without. To break or subvert the *external* discipline of empire, that is, villagers must revise the *internal* modes of discipline (caste and religion) that impede their unification. Only then can they fashion new, all-Indian coalitions against the colonizer. By witnessing to the atrocities of the Army and Police (including rape, the most symbolic yet real of colonial crimes) *and* the paternalism of nationalist leaders, Rao's female narrator envisions a community that exceeds—and reorders—both.

The Alienated Policeman

The novel opens with a tour of "our village" (1), which is Hindu, and of its mythologies, which are about to become more diverse. A traveling performer, "the famous *Harikatha*-man" (10), tells a folk epic that weaves together Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Muslim heroes. His *Harikatha*, or "story of god" (189n), is nationalist in nature, and it culminates in "the birth of Gandhiji" (10). The performer praises two millennia worth of leaders, beginning with the Buddhist convert, "Asoka, who loved his enemies and killed no animal," and ending with the Mughal Emperor, "Akbar, and many a noble king" (11). The orator does not name their

religions, but relies on listeners (like Rao's informed readers) to catch his allusions. Even if we first must do some research,[167] we can go back and experience the story fluidly, as the villagers do, with all its nods to diverse faiths, myths, and histories. Nonetheless, these tales are told in a Hindu form (the *Harikatha*) and, where myth is woven into history, it is Hindu myth.[168] For a rural Hindu village, it is perhaps the most legible means of creating a new myth out of the old—a myth of Gandhi, but also of India itself, as a coherent and continuous entity, capable of uniting diverse peoples under one leadership. This myth is the building ground for nationalism.[169]

What the *Harikatha*-man's examples have in common is that they are all more-or-less Indian—or at least Indianized.[170] He draws a stark line between these Indianized rulers and the subcontinent's latest invaders, the unnamed British. The storyteller implores: "O Brahma," "you have forgotten us so long that men have come from across the seas and the oceans to trample on our wisdom and to spit on virtue itself" (11). The god here is Hindu, but the message is universal. Gandhi is his exemplar: "Fight, says he, but harm no soul. Love all, says he, Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian or Pariah, for all are equal before God" (12).

It is this idealized narrative that immediately precedes the bitter clash to come—between Hindus and Muslims and between the public and the police. Until this point, Rao infers, relations with the police are calm. We see Moorthy, the venerated young Brahmin, talking quietly with the police jamadar (a petty officer such as a sergeant). Both are traditional local authorities, and they

---

[167] Rao added endnotes to the 1963 American edition. The notes are so extensive (10 pages for this 2-page tale) that they *de*emphasize the passing mention of each leader's religion, overwhelming us, rather, in each accumulating story. On the issue of audience, Rumina Sethi writes: "The absence of a glossary in the early editions helps us clarify the kind of audience—westernized rather than western—Rao must have first written for" (47n. 26). Alpana Sharma Knippling argues that the glossary "de-nativizes [Rao's] nativizations" (qtd. in Sethi's note above).

[168] In the middle of a list of historical leaders is the name of a hero (Dharmaraya) from the epic *Mahabharata* (11).

[169] Against an idealist reading of the *Harikatha*'s pluralism, I would pose Gauri Viswanathan's critique of "syncretism" (as in "cross-fertilization" between religious groups [par. 24]): "Does syncretism offer truly global possibilities for a merging of religious difference, or is it a code word for the incorporation and assimilation of 'minority' cultures into the culture of the dominant group?" (par. 5).

[170] In *The Discovery of India* (1946), Nehru describes how emperors such as Kanishka (of the Kushan Empire) "Indianized themselves" and "became patrons of Indian culture" (91). For Ashoka, see Nehru 85-88, and Rao, "My First Meeting with Pandit Jawaharlal," in *Meaning of Indi*a 39.

display a mutual respect. The scene plays out as a tableau, from the vantage point of the narrator, who does not overhear. The policeman confronts the *Harikatha*-man, who "looks just as though he was going to spit out, and we never saw him again" (12). The chapter ends with the expulsion of the *Harikatha*-man—along with his unbridled optimism for a pluralist India—as the idealistic but now "sorrowful" Moorthy, along with several other young men,

> threw away their foreign clothes and became Gandhi's men.
>
> Two days later, Policeman Badè Khan came to live with us in Kanthapura. (12)

So concludes chapter 1, as a new enforcer arrives to turn the community on its head. In the next sentence, however, the narrator contradicts her own statement as well as the folk epic's pluralist ideals:

> To tell you the truth, Badè Khan did not stay in Kanthapura. Being a Mohammedan he could stay neither in the Potters' street nor in the Sudra street, and you wouldn't of course expect him to live in the Brahmin street. So he went to Patwari Nanjundia and growled at him, and the Patwari trembled and lisped and said he could do nothing. (13)

The narrator is a Brahmin, who, in a prior "of course," sets forth her implicit belief in caste barriers: "Of course you wouldn't expect me to go to the Pariah quarter" (5). With this structure—moving from the idealist *Harikatha* to Policeman Badè Khan—Rao shows that it will not be enough to pledge, theoretically, to "Love all" (12); there will be work and sacrifice required. It is not only traditional leaders (like Moorthy) who need to transform themselves, but women (like the narrator) and the lower castes as well.

The intrusion on the Hindu village by this Muslim enforcer looks at first like a one-man Mughal invasion. Khan was a title given to nobility in the Mughal Court, and by now it was a common surname. The *Harikatha*-man has just sung the praises of one Mughal Emperor; are the villagers now facing the real thing? To explain India's mass Muslim conversions during the

periods of Tamerlane (at the end of the fourteenth century) and the Mughals (beginning in the sixteenth), popular Hindu belief held that the converts were Untouchables escaping their outcaste status. They would thus remain a polluting force, not just physiologically, but ideologically (as agents of a new religion) and, as a conquering empire, politically and militarily. Rao's most reactionary characters equate Islam with untouchability; it is a grave insult to be "mixing with Pariahs like a veritable Mohammedan" (36).[171] Rao at first seems to confirm this view of the Muslim invader[172]—by allying Badè Khan with a new, still more invasive empire, the British. But the novel will gradually complicate these sectarian and caste divides.

Already wary of the "mixing" of castes (35), Rao's traditionalists are hyper-vigilant against this Muslim in their midst. Throughout the Raj, sectarian divides were exacerbated by the relative preponderance of Muslims in the colonial police (Arnold, *Police* 40-44; Gupta 340, 400). Recruited as a so-called martial race (like the Sikhs and Gurkhas in Orwell) and viewed as "more loyal than the other communities" (Gupta 340), Muslim policemen stood out like a sore thumb in the mostly-Hindu far south where *Kanthapura* is set. Kanthapura is a fictional village, but it is based on Rao's home in the state of Mysore (now Karnataka). David Arnold's study of the police in the next-door state of Madras (also mostly-Hindu) finds that from 1900 to 1927, as the percentage of Muslims in the service increased, the percentage of Brahmins decreased, in both cases significantly (*Police* 86). He writes: "Such was the predominance of Muslims in some districts that senior police officers became worried about having 'an undue proportion of this class'" (41). This imbalance added to the friction between the police and the public, but, at the

[171] Despite Rao's long note on caste (187), he never discusses the word Pariah. The Anglo-Indian glossary, *Hobson-Jobson*, defines Pariah as "a low caste of Hindus in Southern India," but cautions that Europeans use the term too loosely: "The mistaken use of *pariah*, as synonymous with out-caste, has spread in English parlance over all India" (Yule and Burnell 678). The term would thus have a precise meaning to Rao's Indian readers, while still being legible, at least in a broad, elastic form, to a Western audience. That Rao does nothing to disrupt the Pariah/outcaste equation is a valid critique of the specifically-Hindu form his nationalism takes.

[172] Despite setting the novel in Mysore, Rao never mentions Tipu Sultan, likely because of his mixed legacy. Tipu fought the British, but he sometimes persecuted non-Muslims. See Shahane for a modern take on his legacy.

end of the day, British administrators were concerned with control: "part of the attraction of a strongly Muslim constabulary in a mainly Hindu province was that they had fewer affinities with the mass of the population than Hindu constables and were expected therefore to be more amenable agents of colonial control" (41). The British are content with their imported policemen, but without knowledge of or sympathy with the local community, in Kanthapura, Badè Khan is more harm than help.

There is a key difference between the Mughal and the British invaders. Rao notes that Akbar and his successors "Indianized themselves to a remarkable degree" (242n; see also Nehru 162-64, 262). The furthest the British went to Indianize themselves was almost purely performative, as in the Delhi Durbars of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Otherwise, their ambitions involved an ad-hoc mix of Anglicization (as in Macaulay) and pure dominance (collect the revenue and forget the rest). In Forster and Orwell, we saw how native professionals (doctors, lawyers, judges) may serve as agents or examples of Anglicization. In Rao, however, the most prominent servant of the Raj, the low-ranking Badè Khan, is a crude agent of dominance. Arnold's study of the Indian Police helps to explain Khan's position. Within the low ranks, there was little "ideological integration." Indian constables were

> agents of coercive colonial control rather than of a broader cultural hegemony. The colonial state had . . . only limited expectations of its police subordinates largely because it took such a low view of their mental capacities. Police constables learned by heart their duties and an elementary knowledge of colonial law from the *Constables Catechism*: they were not expected to have an intelligent understanding of their responsibilities. (*Police* 60)[173]

In *Kanthapura*, Khan is a force of dominance, not ideology. When I allude to Homi Bhabha's mimic man, it is not because Khan is mimicking the British. He is, however, a parody of authoritarian rule; any attempt to map him onto a British or a Karnatakan leader (i.e., someone

[173] The fact that officials called it a catechism belies an ambition, by at least one starry-eyed administrator, to indoctrinate constables more deeply.

the villagers might obey) produces gaps and "slippage" galore (Bhabha 122). He can map himself on neither community except in the in-between status on the plantation. Khan's motivations remain opaque. In most scenes he is a caricature of bluster, but in smaller gestures, we may infer his humanity—and perhaps a source of his aggression.

Khan is a bully, but he is not an automaton. He is at first an ambiguous figure, observing his surroundings while "distractedly smoking a cigarette" (19). Sent hither and yon to inquire about housing,[174] he is both anxious and resentful of his outsider status. When the Patel does not offer him a place to sit, much less to live, Khan waits uncomfortably at the edge of the veranda. As the Patel ignores him, Khan "spat nervously into the gutter and sat dropping the lathi-ring on the steps" (13-14). A lathi is a "heavy bamboo stick, often metal tipped, carefully cut to the height of a man." Rao notes that it is carried by many Indians, especially in the north, for protection (202n), but by now it was strongly associated with the police. It is at once a tool and a symbol of authority. By dropping the sign of his power, Khan momentarily resigns himself to the putdowns and vagaries of village life.

When we later encounter Khan, after his exclusion from Kanthapura, he is no longer the nervous newcomer; he has been transformed into a collection of appendages. Khan is lurking in the Brahmin quarter when the zamindar calls out:

> "Who's there, brother?" And there was no answer but a cough and a sneeze and the beating of a stick against the quiet branches of the pipal; and when Bhatta repeated, "Who's there, brother!" this time, firm and sharp, came the answer, "What does that matter to you?" and as Bhatta entered his courtyard, there fell on the figure a pale, powdery light from the veranda lantern, showing a beard, a lathi, and a row of metal buttons. (31)

Khan is reduced to a disembodied voice, a weapon, and a uniform. His beard marks him as a religious outsider (villagers are full of beard-related insults [58-60, 83]), and his metal buttons

[174] Constables were often left to find (and finance) their own quarters. They regularly complained about the lack of funds "for travel, food and accommodation," especially when "serving away from home" (Arnold, *Police* 55).

are a clear divergence from the simplicity and self-sufficiency of khadi, which was, for Gandhi and his followers, a philosophy embodied in material practice.

The native constable is at once empowered by his authority and disempowered within the colonial structure he serves. What Arnold calls "the predatory nature of the subordinate police" comes in part from that very subordination (*Police* 64). With motive, means, and opportunity to exploit the local populace, police *zulum* (oppression) was rife. Arnold writes: "the police found a certain pragmatic utility in police *zulum*. Officially, it might be reprehensible, but in practice it kept alive the idea of the police as an agency of dubious methods and unpleasant means"—an ideal scare tactic (68). As we see with Khan's arrival in Kanthapura, "The very fact that there was no permanent police presence in most villages, ensured that police intervention, when it came, was abrupt, brutal, and partisan" (ibid. 114).

Alive to the dangers of coalition-building, the Raj was happy to alienate the diverse segments of the Indian population. Arnold writes: "If corruption and intimidation alienated the public from the police then that served to prevent any dangerous collusion between them. Of what use to colonialism was a popular police force or one which saw its principal responsibility to the public and not to the state?" (*Police* 68). Khan's triple alterity—as Muslim, as non-local, as plantation-collaborator—only amplifies his threat (perceived and actual) to the public. Arnold notes the value to the police of the occasional rogue actor: for what is the "point in having a guard dog which did not occasionally growl of its own accord"? (68). Indeed, Khan's first utterance in Kanthapura is a growl (13). As the lone Muslim in this Hindu village, and its most direct agent of British law, Khan is variously, contradictorily, marginalized. His loyalties are quadruply split: is he first a Muslim? an Indian? a British civil servant? a Proletarian? Yet his final loyalty—to serve a state that he might better serve himself—is inexorable.

"The Law of the Place": The Village and the Plantation

In the figure of the Indian policeman, Rao embodies the predatory nature of both colonial law and the colonial economy. Khan will soon be subordinate not only to his superiors in the force but to the boss who oversees other workers—the most oppressed workers in the area—at the nearby coffee plantation. But his path to the plantation must be traced back to the village.

The arrival of Badè Khan provokes a rivalry with a traditional local authority, the Patel. A patel is a village chief whose role Rao compares to "a small-town constable" or "minor judge" (201n). Khan addresses the Patel as "the representative of the Government" (14), but it is a title that he too could claim. Their rivalry reveals a breach at the heart of imperial policy: one that helped the Raj, through the division of native leaders, divide and conquer. Rao shows that both new and old forms of indigenous authority are co-opted by the colonial system. Of the patel, he notes: "By using and perpetuating this traditional Indian administrative structure, the British undoubtedly prolonged the much-praised social stability of Indian village life; but at the same time they helped to aggravate the resentments of the villagers," especially "as the system shifted from its traditional place in the Hindu religio-cultural context to become a mere appendage of British colonialism" (201n). In the novel, the police and patel clash because they claim overlapping spheres of authority. Khan claims his "right" to local housing (14) because "the Government has sent me here" (13). The Patel counters: "the Government does not pay me to find houses for the police. I am here to collect revenue" (14). Their amateurish legal debate devolves into insults:

> "I am not a traitor. I am telling you what is the law!"
>
> "I didn't know you were such a learned lawyer too," laughed Badè Khan. . . . "You don't know who you're speaking to."

> "I know I have the honour of speaking to a policeman," the Patel answered in a singsong way. . . Badè Khan went down one step, two steps, three steps, and standing on the gutter-slab, growled at the Patel, "The first time I corner you, I shall squash you like a bug." (14)

Space is a valuable commodity in Kanthapura. By denying Khan space, the Patel asserts an inflexible and intolerant model of community. The Patel "hadn't even asked Badè Khan to seat himself," so throughout the dialogue Khan remains on the veranda—the border or threshold of the Patel's property (13). Khan's slow leave-taking and threat to "corner" the Patel (14) intimates that he will occupy the village space as he sees fit. We later encounter him prowling the streets, an unidentifiable "figure moving with slow, heavy steps" (31). Khan is too hotheaded to exert any coherent system of control; what he does sow is chaos:

> He began to grumble and growl, and he marched on, thumping over the heavy boulders of the street. At the temple square he gave such a reeling kick to the one-eared cur that that it went groaning through the Potters' street, groaning and barking through the Potters' street and the Pariah street, till all the dogs began to bark, and all the cocks began to crow, and a donkey somewhere raised a fine welcoming bray. (14-15)

Khan's aggression in the temple square seems to confirm his role as Muslim invader, but it also, ironically, brings a provisional unity to the caste (and species) divisions of Kanthapura. The next time Khan is spotted, he needs neither stick nor uniform; his beard, and his attitude of owning the streets, are identification enough:

> "The policeman," whispered Mota to Bhima. "The same who was seen the other day."
>
> "But he has no uniform."
>
> "They sometimes prowl about like this."
>
> They grew silent as they neared the platform. And when they had passed into the Pariah street they looked back and saw him jump down from the platform, and thump past the temple corner on to the Brahmin street. Oh, the rogue! (19)

The narrator is outraged at Khan's pollution of Brahmin space. The danger he poses, however, is to the *entire* community; an adequate response must come from a united village.

Villagers see the police as predatory—but temporary—trespassers. They speculate that Khan "was only a passing policeman," here to "squeeze money out of people . . . by terrorizing the ignorant. One has seen so many of these fellows. And once they have a rupee in their hand or a dozen coconuts or a measure of rice, they walk away and are never heard of again" (15). In this view, the police are a perambulatory force whose function is to strip the land of resources and the people of dignity. The Indian Police Commission of 1902-03 reported

> receiving endless narrations of the worries involved in a police investigation. A body of police comes down to the village and is quartered on it for several days. The principle residents have to dance attendance on the police all day long and for days together. Sometimes all the villagers are compelled to be in attendance, and inquiries degrading in their character are conducted *coram populo* [before the public]. (qtd. in Gupta 204)

It is a model of the police as mercenary (but only temporary) colonizers.

The police become doubly dangerous when they are allied with India's geopolitical colonizers, the British. Now, the function of the police is the protection of the white man and his commerce. In *Kanthapura*, in the words of one Congress Volunteer, "the Government is afraid of us, for in Karwar the courts are closed and the banks closed and the collector never goes out, and there are policemen at his door and at his gate and beneath his bedroom window, and every white man in Karwar has a policeman beside him" (159). What law are the police enforcing here? It is not order, civility, or peace (the protestors are nonviolent) but taxation and white rule. The Raj is a legal apparatus superimposed over the profit motive and adjudicated by race. But this model of the police as colonizers and the colonizers as police also *strips* the Raj of its power and mystique. Perhaps the British are but "passing policemen" (15). Rao's model of the village

as ancient and immutable[175] is empowering, as a mode of resistance, but reactionary and limiting as a model of the new, pluralist, national community.

Khan follows his partial-expulsion from Kanthapura by seeking a new home:

> Badè Khan went straight to the Skeffington Coffee Estate and he said, "Your Excellency, a house to live in?" And Mr. Skeffington turned to his butler and said, "Give him a hut," and the butler went to the maistris' quarters and opened a tin shed and Badè Khan went in and looked at the plastered floor and the barred windows and the well near by, and he said, "This will do," and going this way and that, he chose a Pariah woman among the lonely ones, and he brought along her clay pots and her mats and her brooms, and he gave her a very warmful bed. (15)

Khan's easy habitation of the plantation (including his appropriation of a low-caste woman) dramatizes the complicity of domestic, state, and economic patriarchies. Rao's "And . . . and . . . and" implies the inevitability of their collusion. Here, coolies are the sahib's commodity, and so are the coolies' daughters (58, 55). Even Khan, who is forbidden intimacy or friendship with village women, finds a provisional, coerced form of domesticity.

When the rootless policeman seeks shelter at the plantation, he is interpellated into "the law of the place" more surely than are its coolies. The plantation has its own code: "The sahib says that if you work well you will get sweets and if you work badly you will get beaten—that is the law of the place" (46). The coolies' dreams of upward mobility soon break under the lash, but Khan (a state actor) is on the spot to keep the capitalist wheels turning: "That is why, when Badè Khan came, the sahib said to himself, 'This will be a fine thing—a policeman on the spot is always useful'" (56). The policeman will now discipline not just the village (stamping out dissent) but the plantation coolies, ensuring their efficient production for a British master. Like the "city-bred" *maistri* (52), Khan is a precariously-classed middleman between master and coolie. Khan wields his power with zeal, but materially he is as low as the coolies, whose

[175] Sethi calls it "an ageless and static, depoliticized Indian peasantry which nationalist intellectuals would find attractive" (117). For Gandhi's championing of village life, in a modified form, see Sethi 75, 83.

transience and poverty—not to mention "gaunt" frame (82), mountain fever (108), and taste in women—he ironically shares.[176] Arnold notes: "it was not uncommon for those who had risen from the peasantry to a position of power over it, whether as policemen, soldiers or even bandits, to show no solidarity with the peasant, but rather to exploit them, whether for personal gain or in the service of others" (*Police* 65).

Asserting the discipline of both the state and the estate, Khan warns Moorthy, "Free man you may be in your palace. But this is the Skeffington Coffee Estate. And these are Skeffington Coffee Estate coolies" (58). Moorthy is trying to convert the coolies to the Congress cause. He counters Khan with a model of British liberty, though he does not name it as such: "Coolies are men, police sahib. And according to the laws of your own Government and that of Mr. Skeffington no man can own another. I have every right to go in. They have every right to speak to me" (58). Even as he invokes its principles, Moorthy calls it "your own Government" and Skeffington's Government, not his own. What use are the principles of liberty when enforcers do not recognize them? For the enforcer's "rights" are limited too; Khan is a bully, but he is not free. His crude model of authority would be enough to make Britain's idealizing, imperialist apologists blush. Khan's first defense is hierarchical—"I have orders"—and his final words cast him as territorial enforcer: "You will not cross this gate" (58). Neither will the coolies: for "nobody who sets foot on the Blue Mountain ever leaves it. That is her law!" (54).[177]

The British sahib who controls the Blue Mountain is a rapist both of the land and of its women.[178] When a Brahmin girl resists his demands, the sahib murders her father. Here he

---

[176] The wages of constables routinely "failed to compete with local rates for agricultural labourers and factory hands in many districts" (Arnold, *Police* 50). Badè Khan will not rise far above the coolies he disciplines.
[177] There is an implicit resistance in this assertion, which names the land based on topography (Blue Mountain) rather than possession (Skeffington Coffee Estate).
[178] Rao never uses the word rape, but he describes a coercive system whereby the sahib demands access to women, and he whips and docks the pay of the men in their lives who refuse.

breaks the law of caste (the father vows, "I am a Brahmin. I would rather die than sell my daughter") and makes a mockery of British law. The narrator relays the judicial farce in her characteristic style of mounting inevitability:

> and bang! The pistol-shot tears through the belly of Seetharam, and then they all come . . . this maistri and that butler, and they all say, "Master, this is not to be done." And he says, "Go to hell!" and he takes his car and goes straight to town to see the district superintendent of police and there is a case, and it drags on and on, and the sahib says he will pay one thousand five hundred rupees, two thousand rupees as damages to the widow and children. But he paid neither one thousand five hundred nor two thousand, for the Red-man's court forgave him. (55)

Rao gives us not even a comma between "Go to hell!" (which rejects local ethics and decorum—"this is not to be done"—in one cliché) and the cursory "there is a case." Sandwiched between the two events is the fact that the sahib went "straight . . . to the district superintendent of police"; that is explanation enough. We have seen how Forster uses the trial as a set-piece, but for Rao, the case is not worth an extra word. The mere existence of the case ("there is a case") presupposes the result. Rao spends more time on the proposed reparations ("damages to the widow and children"), but even that pragmatic outcome is denied. Long after his acquittal, locals "imagine" the sahib-rapist lurking in the grove (135), not unlike the predatory policeman he employs.[179]

By insinuating itself into local economies, the plantation engenders a cycle of debt, unpaid wages, and dependence (59). The police escort the coolies to the toddy booths, whose cheap liquors monopolize their wages (137). In a mode of subversion and containment, the toddy (strategically placed at tollgates, fairs, and plantations) proffers passing festivity at the cost of economic mobility. By encouraging coolies to buy liquor, authorities trap them within the

[179] The lurking predator motif parallels Rao's fabular images of snakes: the "flying snake" is "a sly fellow" (48), like the army's flying bullets (171), but the honest cobra is "frank in his attack," "never biting an innocent man (48-49).

manipulative laws and structures of "the place" (46).[180] Indeed, the police reap a double profit for the Raj: first, as intimidators; second, by charging for their services. When six new policemen enter town, accompanying them is a "punitive tax, for new policemen were there to protect us and new money had to be paid" (145-46).

As the capillary (and at times opportunist) agents of the state, the police enact their own form of colonization. As soon as one policeman occupies the place, they spread like a pandemic. The area's second policeman is effectively a clone: "now a young Badè Khan had joined the bearded one, and he too came to live with us, and he too took a hut and a woman and settled down in the Skeffington Coffee Estate" (117). Moorthy's homecoming is quelled by "a cordon of police" who "disperse" the villagers and silence the children's nationalist anthem (116-17). Villagers dismiss their legitimacy ("they've been up to tricks again") but admit their power: "They've come again . . . they'll bring us pain again" (116-17). Police suppression is reactionary; they spread from city to country, reacting to Congress, but one step behind. When villagers leave Kanthapura, they face the same oppression. Rao shows the unity of the struggle by using the same language for the experience of different locales: "And in Maddur there were policemen, and they, too, rushed to smite us," to "spit" and "kick" and "crush" and "bang" (177). Just as the Red-man's law turns police into clones and puppets, it renders *everyone* into anonymous categories, from underfed "Pariah-looking people" to the parasitic "sahib-looking people" (157-64).

Rao juxtaposes the punitive, predatory "law of the place" (the plantation) with the indigenous "law in our village" (46, 6). Village law is upheld by the Patel, a fierce yet "honest

[180] The villagers succeed in closing the toddy shops by appealing to common values. Shop-owners know that they too are being manipulated: "I am but a servant of the toddy contractor, and why should I see the police beat our women and men?" (144). Here, the shop-owner extends his idea of community to the coolies ("*our* women and men").

man": "our man" (6, 125). The Patel is loyal not to any higher authority, but to the village: "you know, the Tiger, his words were law in our village. . . he has helped many a poor peasant. And heavens! What a terror he was to the authorities!" (6). Rao contrasts the Patel, who is pugnacious yet compassionate, with the ruthless zamindar, who is as complicit as the maistri in the colonial economy. To punish tenants who join Congress, the zamindar raises interest and hides behind the law (77), but he is punished in turn when the most disenfranchised group, Pariah women, burn down his house and property (152-53). When the British want to break up the community, they bring in a new patel to collect taxes. As "revenue notices fell yellow into our hands," the exploitative structure is exposed like the nested figures in a Russian doll: first "the new patel came, and behind the patel came the policeman and behind the policeman the landlord's agent" (144).

When Congress members in Kanthapura work to organize the coolies, the territorial claims of the sahib extend beyond the estate and into the village. Escorted by soldiers and police, "the coolies of the Skeffington Coffee Estate were marched bent-headed through our streets to show who our true masters were, and we knew . . . they would be pushed behind the gates, for the white master wanted them" (147). Rao contrasts this naked display of power with the space it enters. The village is not a neutral territory; it has taken pains both to purify itself and prepare for a fight. Rao links the villagers' resistance to their Hindu practice when Moorthy warns: "the fight has really begun. And if the patel or policeman or agent should enter the house, take the sanctum bell and ring" (146). The bell that is designed to facilitate worship now facilitates another form of community-building. The villagers prepare for conflict by purifying their space. The narrator recalls: "when the thresholds were adorned and the cows worshipped and we went to sweep the street-fronts, what should we see by the temple corner but a slow-moving procession of coolies"

(147). This scene echoes the invasion of Policeman Khan, in particular his aggression in the temple square (14, 19). The insult is gravest (in the narrator's eyes) to the higher castes, as the coolies are marched through the streets of Brahmins, Weavers, and Potters. She does not yet mention the Pariahs. The Brahmin women are terrified and confused because Moorthy is absent, the bell, silent. When they climb up to the temple, they find the order of village life even further disturbed. The most marginalized villagers now lead the resistance: "from the top we saw below the Pariah women and the Pariah girls and the Pariah kids and the Pariah grandmothers, beating their mouths and shouting, tight squatting on the path to stop the march of the coolies" (147-48). The contest over the streets enlists the weak against the strong: from the coolies, who are used as pawns, to the Pariah children, who "ran behind the fences and slipped into the gutters and threw stones at the police" (148). When one boy is severely beaten, the symbolic contest over space becomes chillingly real. I will return later to Rao's depictions of violence and coalition-forming in this clash.

Politics and Purity

The "crimes" of Rao's Indians are far more political than Forster's or Orwell's—whose accusers *invent* rebellion where none exists. Rao's character Moorthy is the real thing. He preaches *Swadeshi*, or economic self-sufficiency, and passes out spinning wheels, the movement's symbol. He uses the language of purity and predation to win over skeptical villagers. Not only are foreign goods polluting (16); the profits "go to fatten some dissipated Red-man in his country" (17).[181] Spinning khadi is both practical and "as purifying as praying" (18). Moorthy puts his own twist on Gandhi's message with his "Don't-touch-the-Government"

[181] Combined with the idea of the Red-man as florid (185n), it is a carnivorous image even if the food in question is rice. Rao's imagery of predation extends to the Raj's Indian collaborators: "these fattened Brahmins who want to frighten us with their excommunications, once the Government has paid them well" (91).

campaign (60, 67). Village custom is to "outcaste every Brahmin who has touched a Pariah" (27); Moorthy proposes instead (in Rao's gloss) to "make the government an untouchable"—that is, renounce all government products (such as salt) and demands (such as taxes). Rao notes that Gandhi would reject this "innuendo" to caste defilement (217n). Sethi goes one step further to critique the analogy's troubling "paradox." If the government is untouchable, then Moorthy is equating it with the "victimized pariahs whose touch is polluting rather than the more suitable analogy with the victimizing brahmins" (111n. 1). Thus, Moorthy preaches against untouchability at the same time as he naturalizes it.

As villagers engage with Gandhian ideas, they must interrogate traditional notions of purity. Villagers express anxiety about this "strange age" of "modern education" (26), the intermarriage of Hindus and Muslims, and "the confusion of castes and the pollution of progeny" (27). The village's political awakening begins in a confused and haphazard manner. What is at stake seems far away; the first concern is how it will affect local social structures. Thus, we overhear gossip in which "this Gandhi business" (26) becomes "this Pariah movement" (27), and "this Gandhi affair" (34-35) becomes "this Pariah affair" (37).

Rao's Brahmins split themselves into two groups: "the orthodox" and "the radical" (Sethi 94). In the novel, these groups map neatly onto those who collaborate with the British and those (like Moorthy) who dissent. As a university man, Moorthy belongs to just the class of Indians the Raj relied on as "intermediaries. Brahmins especially, in the courts and countryside alike, played an indispensable role both in the collection of revenue and the administration of justice" (Metcalf 23). But Moorthy questions the status quo: first in the realm of politics; then, the orthodoxies of caste. When he is excommunicated, word spreads that "the Swami was paid by the British to do their dirty work" (89). Again, Rao inverts the language of pollution. Those who condemn

Moorthy's "Pariah-mixing" (35) are in fact the dirty ones. Orthodox leaders corrupt themselves by collaborating with the British. In the words of one Congress man, "The Mutt[182], brothers, is the best place for retired high court judges, police inspectors, and God-dedicated concubines" (89). By serving the Raj, that is, the agents of law and order have become its whores.

When Moorthy's Congress activity draws notice, a police contingent descends on the village. Again the narrator acts as our witness. Before, she observed the expulsion of the Gandhian *Harikatha*-man; now she witnesses another political act, the arrest of Moorthy. The former brought us the lowly Badè Khan; the latter ushers in a higher rank. The scene frames Moorthy as noble but silent victim:

> Over against the cracked wall Moorthy is standing, a bright light falling on his tight-lipped face, and the police inspector, a short, round man, is standing beside him, a notebook in his hand. In the middle of the room is a heap of books and charkas and cotton and folded cloth, and policemen in uniform are turning them this side and that, and trunks are laid open and boxes are slit through, and sometimes there is laughter. The voice of the police inspector is not heard. But now and again we see Moorthy's head nodding—he merely nods and nods and seems to smile at nothing. (83)

Here, the police collect the emblems of *Swadeshi* to document as evidence: books, spinning wheels (charkas), raw cotton, and the khadi product of Moorthy's labor. Their laughter flaunts their comradery in this display of power, but also, perhaps, anxiety or shame at arresting a peaceful man.

This first arrest crystallizes the support of Moorthy's followers and converts some of his doubters. To this point, their loyalty is more to the man than to Congress. Now, Moorthy is the symbol of the scene, but he is no longer its leader. It is a Pariah who leads the political cry and a mix of women and the lower castes who join him. Far from preventing this politicization, it is the police who precipitate it:

---

[182] A Hindu spiritual center.

> When Moorthy is seen on the threshold, the bright light of the police lantern falling on his knit face, Rachanna [a Pariah] calls out, "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" and the policeman rushes at them and bangs them with his lathi . . . and other policemen come and bang them too, and the women raise such a clamour and cry that the crows and bats set up an obsequial wail, and the sparrows join them from the roofs and eaves and the cattle rise up in the byre and the creaking of their bones is heard. (83-84)

Rao is at pains to show that nationalism is not an alien imposition. Gandhism enters Kanthapura organically; all the sounds of traditional village life (which once brayed and barked at the intruder Badè Khan) join in its defense. But Rachanna is not a native villager; he is a coolie who was kicked off the plantation (59-60). It is remarkable, then, that the villagers rise to his defense. Rachanna again raises the cry to Gandhi, "and when they come to arrest him, everybody gets round him and says, 'No, we'll not give him up'" (84). Thus is an outsider integrated into the village identity.[183]

The apolitical Patel is also converted to the political cause. In the instant the police move to "Bind this man!" (Moorthy), the Patel rushes in (83). His solidarity with the Pariahs is not ideological, but physiological. For much of the drama he "stood silent by the tamarind," but when he sees the police molest a Pariah woman, he "rushes down and, stick in hand, gives one bang on the head of a policeman" (85). Police brutality, combined with their call to "Disperse the crowd!", only makes the crowd cohere (85). If we might expect the police to restrain themselves, to maintain a show of order, "there was a tendency during the later years of British rule for such restraints to be discarded, simply because the political priorities of the state (such as combating civil disobedience in the early 1930s) appeared to demand it" (Arnold, *Police* 68). In his scenes of police violence, Rao shows how this crude exercise of power backfires. By parading the dissenters publicly "through the streets," Rao's police give the villagers a vision of themselves

[183] The narrator shows the start of the thaw when, despite her distaste for Pariah spaces, she includes Rachanna in the village collective: "and that is how Rachanna came to live with us" (60).

united against a common foe. Again, he naturalizes the scene within an agrarian Hindu milieu: "and as the morning cattle were going out to the fields, and the women were adorning the thresholds for a Kartik morning, Brahmins and Pariahs and Potters and Weavers were marched into the police station—seventeen men of Kanthapura were named and locked behind the bars" (85). In their dissent and in their punishment, the castes march together. The men gain a new collective identity as prisoners; the villagers, as dissenters.

Moorthy takes a page out of Gandhi's book in his stance on prison. "The Government takes advantage of our fear of jails," wrote Gandhi in 1921, but "we must seek arrest and imprisonment, as a soldier who goes to battle seeks death. . . . Civil disobedience then emphatically means the desire to surrender to a single unarmed policeman" (*Essential* 357). He thus maintains two seemingly-contradictory ideas: an extreme respect for civil order (surrender to a mere symbol of the law) alongside his extreme opposition to the laws in question. Moorthy similarly advises, "if these gentlemen want to arrest us, let them. Give yourself up to them" (Rao 84). Shortly after Gandhi's release from prison in 1924, he wrote that the satyagrahi prisoner is "a prisoner of war," and "if we act as such, we shall soon command respect. We must make the prison a neutral institution in which we may, nay, must co-operate to a certain extent" (*Satyagraha* 64). The satyagrahi is a peaceful warrior. The idea that the prison could be remade into "a neutral institution" is remarkable given who is holding the weapons (and the keys), but, Gandhi believes, the moral authority of the dissenter is enough to neutralize the power of the state. Rao sets Moorthy's arrest in late 1929, about six months before Gandhi's next arrest. Moorthy hopes that his behavior in prison will teach the authorities his stubbornness and the villagers his devotion.

Rao pokes fun at the overwhelming legalisms that the dissenter must navigate. At Moorthy's arrest, the villagers pray for help: "and maybe the gods would hear our feeble voices" (86). The ambivalent answer to their prayers is a bevy of lawyers and committees:

> The gods indeed did hear our feeble voices, for this advocate and that advocate came and . . . vakils and advocates and barristers came . . . and the students formed a defence committee . . . and merchants came . . . And when Moorthy heard of all this, he said, "That is not for me. Between truth and me none shall come." (86)

Moorthy insists on truth because he aspires to be a satyagrahi. Gandhi created the term *Satyagraha* out of the words for truth and firmness; "truth force" or "clinging to truth" are common translations. It is both a tactic and a philosophy; by insisting on truth, at all costs, through non-violence, the satyagrahi may even convert his adversaries.[184] Thus far in the novel, Rao has used the word only once (84). He does not need to. In word and deed, Moorthy is "holding on to Truth" as Gandhi advised (*Satyagraha* 3).

Moorthy's refusal to mount a defense infuriates local lawyers. Only Sankar, "the ascetic advocate" (96), supports his obstinacy, recalling, "how many of us did go to prison in 1921 and never touched the shadow of an advocate" (87). Despite the legal training of many nationalist leaders, there was also an impatience with lawyers for upholding a corrupt system. Gandhi wrote: "If pleaders were to abandon their profession, and consider it just as degrading as prostitution, English rule would break up in a day" (*Essential* 398). Rao's "ascetic advocate" seeks to purify the nationalist movement using the tool of language. He argues: "Though Kannada is good enough for our province, Hindi must become the national tongue" (98).[185]

---

[184] Satyagraha is distinct from "passive resistance." The latter is "a weapon of the weak," which "avoids" but does not forbid violence as the means to an end (*Satyagraha* 3, 6). Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong; it requires self-discipline and rejects violence (6). Its goal is not the suffering, but the conversion, of one's opponent; therefore the means are integral to the ends. Gandhi is asserting a different *kind* of force that can be derived through truth.

[185] For the role of language in relation to region and power, see Sethi 51-52.

Sankar sees the English language as a colonizing force which must be combatted by an equally-organized political movement:

> if by chance he used an English word, as they do in the city, he had a little closed pot, with a slit in the lid, into which he dropped a coin, and every month he opened it and gave it to the Congress fund. And if any of his friends should utter an English word in his house, he would say, "Drop me a coin," and the friends got angry and called him a fanatic; but he said there must be a few fanatics to wash the wheel of law. (99)

Rao himself was hardly a purist in the matter of language; the novel's English is infused with the rhythm and idioms of Kannada (see Rao's foreword and Sethi's chapter 1). Yet there is a poetic justice to Sankar's fanaticism, even as it clashes with Rao's own use of language. Sankar imposes a tax on Anglicization, using the proceeds to fight the English, even as Rao puts *more* English into the world, but as an expression of anticolonial ideas. On "the wheel of law," Rao notes that in India, "the wheel represents dharma, the unity of moral law," and it took on added symbolism, both economic and political, with Gandhi's embrace of the charka or spinning-wheel (*Kanthapura* 203-04n). The image of the law as a wheel is practical too. It is a simple machine designed to aid in our labors or take us to a desired place—and it must be washed to run smoothly. Rao notes that the symbol has added meaning in a "country of unpaved highways" (230n). Gandhi too links the ideas of dharma, travel, and self-rule: "The *swadeshi dharma* is thus the royal road for safeguarding both our *dharma* [religious duty] and *artha* [material welfare]" (*Essential* 269). Rao's image also recalls a scene in which a holy man tries to persuade Moorthy to accept legal aid. The man "speaks about the world and its wheels and the clayey corruption of men"—imploring Moorthy to *engage* with that wheel/law, however corrupt, if he is to live in the world—"but Moorthy always says, 'Truth, truth, and truth'" (86).

Another lawyer, Ranganna, has a more cynical and pragmatic strategy. It is the difference between resisting oppression from within an oppressive system and dismantling the system itself. There is a systemic gap, Ranganna cautions, between the truth and the law:

> "Judges are not for truth, but for law, and the English are not for the brown skin but for the white, and the Government is not with the people but with the police." And Moorthy listened to all this and said, "If that is so, it will have to change. Truth will have to change it. I shall speak that which truth prompteth, and truth needeth no defence," and Ranganna spoke this of corruption and that about prejudice, but "truth, truth, and truth" was all that Moorthy said, and old Ranganna, who had grown grey with law on his tongue, got so wild that he banged the door behind him and muttered to himself, "To the mire with you!" (86)

We have seen how Europeans naturalized racial divides with pseudo-scientific theories of history and race—so of course the law applies differently to "the brown skin" and "the white." Ranganna identifies this iniquity and translates it into local idiom: "The Red-man's judges, they are not your uncle's grandsons" (86). His adage relies not on an immutable notion of race, but a more quotidian notion of heredity—one built on intimacy and familiarity. Villagers echo the saying regarding the police in general (158, 176) and Badè Khan in particular (65). It is useful shorthand for describing the problem: the law is not *of* you; its enforcers do not respect your culture or worldview. But it is divisive if the goal is to unite *all* Indians against the Red-man's law. Badè Khan is "not my uncle's son" (65), but he is a neighbor and countryman; Gandhi would call him brother. The future of India is his future too.

Moorthy's trial is the novel's second. We saw above how "the Red-man's court forgave" the murderer/rapist who runs the plantation (55). Rao makes the contrast with Moorthy as stark as possible: the sahib's violent crime forgiven, the Congress man's nonviolent political crime punished. Again, we are not privy to details. We hear what the narrator hears, secondhand; the key thing is its effect on the village:

> we heard that the Red-man's judges had given Moorthy three months rigorous imprisonment. The whole afternoon no man left his veranda, and not a mosquito moved in all Kanthapura.
>
> We fasted. (100)

Fasting is a spiritual undertaking that the villagers turn into a political act. Moorthy's fast helps him develop a political action plan (61-68), and villagers fast at his arrest (86). Likewise, "the ascetic advocate" (96) fasts on the anniversaries of Gandhi's imprisonment, the death of the nationalist Tilak, and the Jallianwalabagh massacre (99). By fasting, the villagers choose an act with a specific national—and nationalist—meaning.

K. R. Srinivasar Iyengar calls *Kanthapura* "a veritable Grammar of the Gandhian myth" (312). Sethi describes the novel's "apotheosis of Gandhi into an avatar" (3). Yet Rao's villagers focus their devotion less on the distant Gandhi than on his follower, the homegrown Moorthy. The novel shows how both of these myths—the myth of Gandhi and the myth of Moorthy—are constructed and adapted to fit changing circumstances. But I read the novel not as the myth of a man, but the myth of the *village*.

In *Gora*, Tagore explored his imprisoned hero's ethical and psychological transformation. In *Kanthapura*, Rao focuses on prison's effect *not* on the privileged individual, but on the village collective. Like Tagore, he does not depict prison directly; rather, he expresses the villagers' memories and reimaginings of prison. Prison is less a physical space than a psychological prospect the satyagrahi must face. When they come home, it is not Moorthy, but the other prisoners who describe their ordeal. They distill their experiences into stories, full of dialogue and graphic descriptions—of abuse and humiliation, but also resistance (142-43)—to inoculate their neighbors against future hardships. The narrator uses a collective voice to relate the lesson: "And we said, 'So be it! If Seetharamu and Pariah Lingayya and Chandrayya and Ratnamma's husband, Shamu, can bear it, why not we?'" (143). The list of names conveys the specificity of

each story, but the lesson is universal. The village understands itself through stories—the goddess Kenchamma, the nationalist epic of the *Harikatha*-man—and here the narrator embeds another set of tales within the broader narrative. With their new identity as dissenters, villagers need not live vicariously in this world of epic battles and ethical choices; they have stepped through the fabric of myth and entered that world.[186]

Reimagining Community

The villagers' changing sense of identity is further shaped by the circulation of news. Early on, the educated widow Rangamma shares her knowledge with other women: "Oh, she told us so many, many interesting things—and all came from these white and blue papers, sister!" (29-30). But these "things" were wonders told from a distance. With Moorthy in prison and the police on the doorstep, current events take on a new urgency. Now, even the apolitical Patel subscribes to a newspaper. His political awakening is a predicament as well as an opportunity, which he expresses thus: "'Rangamma, Rangamma, I do not know how to read, but my little mosquito goes to school and, if he is worth the milk he has drunk, he will read it out to us,' and he too began to get the paper from Postman Subbayya, and evening after evening we gathered on Rangamma's veranda." The women gather "to speak about Moorthy, while our men sat at the village gate, rubbing the snuff or chewing the tobacco leaf, and it seems they said many wicked things about the Government" (92). The village is shaping itself into a new form of community. It is still spiritual (in the same sentence, the women hear instruction on the *Vedanta sutras* and "shape wicks for festivals"), but it relies on a new relationship with the outer world: an identity shared by all who oppose the "wicked" Government (92). This identity is both expansive (as befits the size of the Raj) but also, perhaps, more restrictive and particular. What does it mean, in

[186] Sethi calls it "an easy interchange between the world of men and the world of gods" (78).

this small village, to be Indian? Rangamma's papers share a nationalist vision (28); Sethi translates their titles as *Motherland*, *World of Karnataka*, *Brothers of a Nation*, and *Victory to India* (84n. 25). But it will be many chapters until Rao's characters use the word Indian to describe themselves.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson highlights the reading of newspapers as a ritual shared by the most disparate members of the modern nation. Each edition initiates a "mass ceremony," both unifying and powerful, because "each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion" (35). Rao's villagers rely on local, tangible affiliations to help them grasp this virtual community. The sharing of the paper becomes part of the oral tradition: of a piece with the discussion of Vedanta (7, 92) or the tales of our grandmotherly narrator. Villagers personalize the paper by calling it "Rangamma's blue paper" (91) and identifying it less with a political party than with the local postman. Saying it comes "from Postman Subbayya" (92) is less abstract, alienating, or intimidating than tying it to any outside organization.

The newspaper unites villagers with their urban neighbors. The city folk, they learn, admire Moorthy too. This knowledge of shared values makes villagers receptive to political messages from beyond their immediate circle. When the blue paper publishes Moorthy's picture, the villagers' veneration of Moorthy merges with their admiration of his status, his "work," and the technology/artistry that produced his image: "they all exclaimed, 'Oh, here he is—and so much like him too!' And then they all said, 'Our Moorthy is a great man, and they speak of him in the city and we shall work for him'" (76). Now, Moorthy's iconic status *within* Kanthapura is bound up in his status in the wider world, as represented by the newspaper. Sandwiched between

two passages about the blue paper, the narrator describes a vision in which Moorthy, a living symbol of Congress, emerges from the landscape: "And somewhere beyond the Bebbur mound . . . and the Kenchamma hill, out against the sky that rises over Kerwar, out over the river, there seemed to stand, as one might have said, the supple, firm figure of Moorthy, a Gandhi-cap upon his head and a northern shirt flowing down his waist" (91-92). It is whilst he is in prison that the narrator imagines Moorthy as part of an expansive national fabric. It is the novel's only mention of him in this style of dress. Her mythic vision is the product of his absence/sacrifice, mediated through her immersion in the news of the day.

If the villagers' attitude to the news seems naïve, they nonetheless use the paper to put local events in context. When there is a protest and arrest in the city, the narrator says: "And when the morning came the papers were full of it, and Rangamma's blue paper brought it all to us, and that is how we knew it all. And then we looked at each other and said, 'So that is how it is with Bhatta,' and everybody said, 'And so it is!' and Rangamma said, 'That is why Badè Khan was so often seen with him'" (91). They thus fit local characters (the greedy zamindar; the wily policeman) into a wider narrative: a conspiracy between Indian landowners and the law enforcers of the Raj.

Other sources of news are improvisational. One Congress member, who works on the plantation, "would sometimes go in a Skeffington Estate lorry, and he would sometimes slip through the evening and tell us about Moorthy and the case, and everybody said, 'The Goddess will free him. She will appear before the judges and free him'" (92). The villagers thus combine traditional forms (prayer to the local goddess) with modern means (the lorry), new alliances (across caste), and modern goals (nationalism). Their resistance depends on both formal and informal modes of knowledge-sharing.

What are we to make of villagers who move seamlessly from newspaper to hearsay to prayer? Anderson describes the novel as "a complex gloss upon the word 'meanwhile'" (25). Characters in a novel, like far-flung members of a nation or readers of a newspaper, proceed through time in a linear fashion, during one another's "meanwhiles," and they need not physically meet to belong to the same imagined community. But *Kanthapura's* sense of time is mythic and fluid: "the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men" (Rao vii). The plot is mediated through a single, limited narrator, who tells her village's struggles in epic terms, lending it the archaic feel of an oral history. Rao's villagers live in what Walter Benjamin would call "Messianic time, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present" (Anderson 24).[187] Like the *Puranas*, Rao writes, "We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us—we tell one interminable tale" (viii).

Gradually, however, the narrator references historical events in other locales—a "meanwhile" to the life of the village—at first, only in relation to local hero Moorthy (studying in the city; at a Congress meeting; in jail), but later, to other, anonymous Indians in distant cities. These outward-looking examples revolve exclusively around military and police violence. Just before the novel's climax, as villagers prepare to confront the police, Congress Volunteers tell them tales of Muslim satyagrahis in "a big city in the north called Peshawar," where soldiers and armored cars killed hundreds of demonstrators:[188]

> there the Government has always thousands of military men, and our brothers, the Mohammedans, one and all have conquered the city, and no white man will ever come into it. And they have conquered, sisters, without a gunshot, for all are Satyagrahis and disciples of the Mahatma. They bared their breasts and marched toward the machine guns, ten thousand in all, and bullets went through them, and

[187] Anderson is borrowing from Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940).
[188] Rao is referencing the Qissa Khwani Bazaar Massacre of 23 April 1930. However, he leaves readers to identify the context on their own, just as he does not gloss his reference to Jallianwalabagh (99). His endnotes more often refer to matters of language or culture than specific historical events.

> a hundred and twenty-five were shot through and through, and yet they went up and conquered the city. (160)

Here is Rao's "meanwhile." It is precisely when the village needs an idea of the nation that it expands its sense of community to the whole subcontinent. Muslims living 1500 miles away, who (if the expulsion of Badè Khan is any guide) would not have been welcomed, now enter the pantheon of local heroes—conquering a city through nonviolence. It is a return to the pluralist ideal of the *Harikatha*-man.

Rao's next line about Peshawar invokes another set of unlikely heroes: Indian Army soldiers who refused to fight the satyagrahis. Although sworn to serve the British, here they are "*our* soldiers": "And when our soldiers were sent to shoot them, they would not shoot them. For after all, sisters, these soldiers, too, are Indians, and men like us, and they, too, have wives and children and stomachs to fill as we" (160). Outside of Rao's foreword, it is the novel's first invocation of the word "Indian." Villagers perceive themselves as Indians *because* police and soldiers are attacking other Indians. The Volunteer's words highlight the complicity of Britain's *civil* institutions (the police, courts, and prisons) with military force: "the police will beat and the soldiers open fire, and millions and millions of our brothers and sisters be thrown into prison" (160). The diversity of distant survivors ("our brothers and sisters") opens the way for an expanded sense of self.

Rao's novel shifts between the Messianic time of myth and the simultaneous time of the nation.[189] He leaves us to navigate the novel's timeline through references to Hindu festivals (the seasonal cycles of an enduring, archaic village) but also national news.[190] Partha Chatterjee critiques Anderson's model for its Eurocentricity, arguing that anticolonial nationalisms in Asia

---

[189] Sethi calls it "a syncretic compound of material which is both historically valid and questionable. . . . Rao sees the fabulous as part of the venture of putting together an historical narrative" (109).

[190] Rao never gives a numeric year, but readers may deduce dates by combining their knowledge of seasonal festivals with that of Gandhi's activity in the period (in particular the Salt March of 1930).

and Africa imagined the nation *differently* than did their European counterparts (5). In nations such as India, "nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory" (6). Rao's novel is a prototype of this spiritual nationalism, combining as it does the modes of history and myth, the exploits of gods, lawyers, and policemen.

And in Rao's case, we need not dismiss Anderson out of hand. Rao spent much of the 1930s in France. He signed his Foreword to *Kanthapura* from Menton, France, November 1937[191]—that is, the French-Italian border during the build-up to World War II. This setting must have dramatized for him, from a new angle, what it means to belong to a nation. Rao was also a student of Irish literature—another nation making a long and painful extraction from British rule. His notion of nationalism fits Anderson's criterion regarding sacrifice (Anderson 7). Decades later, Rao reflected on the French Resistance: "And France is only France, when a man or woman is willing truly to die for an *idea*" (*Meaning* 49).

In his work on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century peasant insurgencies, Ranajit Guha identifies "transmission" as essential to the formation of an "insurgent peasant consciousness." Rumor is a powerful form of transmission because it levels the "distinction between the communicator and his audience. Absolutely transitive, rumor, as distinct from news, was an 'autonomous type of popular discourse'" (P. Chatterjee 162-63, citing Guha). Sumit Sarkar stresses "the role of rumour" in spreading the mystique of Gandhi, whose outsized influence clearly frustrated the British. A C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department) report of 1921 bemoans, "The currency which Mr Gandhi's name has acquired even in the remotest villages is astonishing. No one seems to know quite who or what he is, but it is an accepted fact that what he says is so, and what he orders must be done" (qtd. in Sarkar 182). The potency of the rumors

[191] Not all editions give this dateline in its entirety; the fullest version I have found is reprinted in *Meaning of India* 196.

worked in two directions: first, by disseminating Gandhism to remote areas, but also by allowing local leaders to harness that mystique for local ends (182). In Kanthapura, Gandhi's mystique is irrevocably bound up with Moorthy's, whether or not they ever meet or how often Moorthy wears his Gandhi-cap.

When the British banned two of Gandhi's journals, *Young India* and *Navajivan*, in 1930, his followers began to distribute them illegally. At first, their methods were improvisational: copying by hand or "on a cyclostyle machine which was secretly carried about the countryside" (Young, *Postcolonialism* 329-30). Though burdensome, it was also a democratizing process: activating networks of supporters around the country, passing on papers hand to hand. Despite Gandhi's critique of Western modernity (ibid. 320), he skillfully used modern technology, as well as his knowledge of national and global media, to reach a wider audience. Young describes how his articles "were syndicated without copyright throughout India and freely reproduced in most Indian newspapers; they were reported by Reuters to Britain, the States and elsewhere. . . . Few politicians of his time used the power of journalism to the same degree as Gandhi" (330). Gandhi's mass appeal is precisely what made observers like Orwell suspicious,[192] even as it aided his goal of national unity.

The most dramatic example of Gandhi's media savvy was the Salt March of 1930, whose progress the village of Kanthapura follows from afar. Sensitive to the sociology of his most loyal supporters, as well as his doubters, Gandhi chose stops without large Muslim populations (Young, *Postcolonialism* 332). Despite his pluralist ideals, he would not risk the publicity of a

[192] For Orwell, Gandhi's populism trumped his pacifism. Listing him alongside the likes of Hitler, Stalin, and Franco (remarkably, given that Gandhi had only just emerged from prison), Orwell reveals a deep fear for "the horrors of emotional nationalism" (*Collected*, 3: 149).

poor reception.[193] University students acted as advance scouts, "collecting data about each of the villages on the route from a questionnaire prepared by Gandhi" (Dalton 135). He gave "advance publicity" to the Western film companies in attendance and "timed the march to their advantage" (ibid.). Newsreel footage would air around the world. Rao's villagers do not see that footage, but they are awakened to the power of mass media. Rangamma calls the radio "the speech that goes across the air; and she told us, mind you, she assured us—you could sit here and listen to what they are saying in every house in London and Bombay and Burma" (29). Rangamma's image of unity—a community of subjects listening to an authoritative "they," from London to the furthest reaches of the Raj—would resonate with a certain strain of utopian imperialist, as well as those with more cynical ambitions of cultural hegemony. But if "they" present the Salt March in a positive light, Gandhi's political legitimacy will be affirmed on a world stage.

Villagers follow the March's progress from newspapers and word of mouth. They learn that the law does not have an adequate response to peaceful disobedience or to the press.

> The police do not know what to do, and suddenly they fall on a cartload [of salt] and the peasants say, 'Take it! Take it!' but the police say, 'You have broken the law,' and the men say, 'But we have broken it long ago, and the Mahatma broke it first,' but the police do not know what to answer, and they drag the men to prison, they drag them and spit on them and would have beaten them had not many and many a white man come to see the pilgrimage of the Mahatma. (121)

Satyagraha gives the lie to British law as universal. To ban the manufacture of salt defies both practicality and tradition. Here is the erratic and violent enforcement of a nonsensical law. The police reaction reveals the Raj's dependence on public perception. If the white men—proxy for an international Western audience—witness violence, where is the legitimacy of the civilizing mission? During the March, the nationalist *Bombay Chronicle* wrote: "Gandhiji's ideas are now

[193] Perhaps this strategy was shortsighted. The low proportion of Muslims within the Congress leadership surely harmed their attempts at outreach. Later this same year, the leader of the Muslim League, Muhammed Iqbal, proposed the creation of a separate Muslim state.

spread everywhere and cannot be banished or imprisoned. And if any *Satyagrahi* is imprisoned, the idea of *Satyagraha* becomes ten times more potent and attracts ten times more volunteers" (qtd. in Dalton 139).

We saw above how Muslim solidarity gave villagers a hint of a pluralist India. But is Kanthapura's coalition truly non-sectarian, or is Rao's implicitly a *Hindu* nationalism? In contemporary India, the rise of Hindu nationalism[194] intersects with the rewriting of history,[195] thus implicating educators, historians, and the tellers of mythic, popular histories like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee[196] or even Rao himself. Rao seems at pains to counterbalance the villainy of Badè Khan, but he drifts into other stereotypes to do so. Immediately preceding Khan's entrance, the *Harikatha*-man tells of "an ignorant Pathan who thought the Mahatma was a covetous man and wanted to kill him" (12). Any villager (or any reader of Kipling) would see in this scene the approach of a warlike Muslim frontiersman:

> He had a sword beneath his shirt as he stood waiting in the dark for the Mahatma to come out of a lecture hall. The Mahatma comes and the man lifts up his sword. But the Mahatma puts his hand on the wicked man's shoulders and says, "Brother, what do you want of me?" And the man falls at the feet of the Mahatma and kisses them, and from that day onwards there was never a soul more devoted than he. (12)

We have here a conversion scene. The warlike Pashtun submits to Gandhi's soul-force. The scene may be read as pluralist (Gandhism is compatible with all faiths) yet it seems that *this* man is in special need of converting. Is Rao's message for his readers, or for his naïve characters—to inoculate them against anti-Muslim prejudice? But he omits the danger of Hindu extremists, who posed the chief threat to Gandhi *because* of his outreach to Muslims and "untouchables." At the

---

[194] The ascendance of the BJP in 2014 corresponds to rising incidents of communal violence (Gowen and Sharma).
[195] See Romila Thapar and Asthaa Chaturvedi.
[196] Ray argues that Chatterjee's "need to eulogize a virile Hindu community in his elaboration of a timeless and pure Hindu India is echoed in the current polemical discourse of communalism that seeks to erect a Hindu nation via a systemic erasure of the body politic represented by the Muslim minority" (19).

time Rao was writing, the only major attempt on Gandhi's life (in 1934) was likely committed by Hindu extremists, as his assassination in 1948 most certainly was.

Iyengar notes the Gandhi-myth's resemblance to the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, where "the red-foreigner or the brown inspector of police who flourishes his lathi is but a soldier in ten-headed Ravana's army of occupation and oppression" (306). The demon-king is killed in the *Ramayana*, but when will India's latest invaders be defeated? *Kanthapura* envisions an epic resolution. During Gandhi's Salt March, Rangamma prophesies: "the gods will come down and dissolve his vow, and the Britishers will leave India, and we shall be free, and we shall pay less taxes, and there will be no policemen" (120). The construction "and . . . and . . . and" naturalizes the links between each element: the gods' support for Gandhi, the British exit, low taxes, no police. Rangamma is too savvy to believe there will be *no* police; rather, there will be no police according to the current model. Indeed, she will help to reimagine that model. One Brahmin "braggart" (5) dismisses Rangamma's vision: "'This is all *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; such things never happen in our times,' at which Pariah Rachanna gets angry" (120). For the Pariah, myth is not a fanciful story; it must be made real. How else will it help the downtrodden on earth?

In this context, Badè Khan is not a man but a symbol of occupation. Villagers envision the entire police force as his clones: "we close our eyes and we imagine Badè Khan after Badè Khan, short, bearded, lip-smacking, smoking, spitting, booted Badè Khan, and as we begin to imagine them, we see them rise and become bigger and bigger in the sunshine, and we feel the lathis bang on us" (122). But with familiarity, the problem becomes manageable, the policeman but a man: "now when we meet Badè Khan our eyes seek his lathi and we find it is smaller than we had imagined, and his shoes have less nails, and his lips are less thick" (122). It is the novel's

last mention of Badè Khan, but not the last of the police. Khan has been stereotyped first by the British (recruited for his martial abilities), then by the villagers, before they focus on a greater enemy.

As we saw in Orwell, martial race theory produced odd exclusions. Relegated to "non-martial" status were "high-caste Brahmins and Rajputs from the south and east" (Tan 29), in particular "ambitious Bengalis" whom Anglo-Indians scorned as "babus" (Sundaram 51, 85n. 39). The system allowed Anglo-Indian officials to denigrate *any* Indian, at will, for possessing too much or too little of these loosely-identified but highly-theorized traits. Jeffrey Greenhut observes: "The Martial Race theory had an elegant symmetry. Indians who were intelligent and educated were defined as cowards, while those defined as brave were uneducated and backward" (16). As an educated, southern Brahmin, Moorthy would be dismissed as bookish and duplicitous, lacking the nobility or courage of a martial race. But Moorthy is a justice warrior—and the women from his village are no less. Even the coolies from the plantation, weakened from their labor, act with bravery and purpose.

We saw in chapter 2 how the Rowlatt Act of 1919 treated India as a perpetual war zone—in a continual state of emergency and thus of exception. The Rowlatt Act "threw unjustified power into the hands of the police—leaving people to a state of *na vakil*, *na dalil*, *na appeal* (no advocate, no argument, no appeal)" (Gupta 361). With no room to advocate on one's own behalf, to argue for the rights of the community, to appeal to a common set of laws, there is no rule of law, and the state of exception is in full force. Moorthy sees himself as an advocate for his community—indeed, by birthright and education, he seems destined to be *the* advocate for Kanthapura. But soon his sense of community is wider. He is no longer bound to the village, but neither does the village need him. Villagers no longer need a single, male Brahmin leader. By

focusing on the village women, the novel shows how they become their own advocates.

A Feminized, Indigenized Police

The novel's most horrific acts are either visited upon or witnessed by the village women, and it is the women who retake their power in the end. With their village in disarray and formal authorities discredited, it is up to the women to assert a form of order different from that of the police.

Rao's narrator is a Brahmin matriarch who begins to doubt patriarchal norms. First, her peers question the male control of holy texts. The old man who used to read out the Vedanta dies, and the women are left to choose between stale repetition (a man who "can hardly read the texts he repeats morning and evening . . . !") or becoming interpreters themselves: "after all, sisters, why should not one of us read the texts and we comment on them ourselves?" (102). This spiritual awakening leads the women to the meditative and bodily practice of Yoga. Rangamma "showed us how to control our breath, and from that day on Nose-scratching Nanjamma, and Post-office-house Satamma, and Gauramma and Vedamma and I, and even Ratna, began to feel stronger and stronger, the eyes burned brighter in the sockets and the mind deeper in the spirit" (103). The women form their own Volunteers corps, which Rangamma conceives as a new form of policing—pioneered by Congress women in the city who "practice exercises like the police, and when meetings are held they all get together and maintain order" (103).

It is a singular positive reference to the police in a novel full of violence and corruption. The police are both the agents and the allegory of empire, but, as Rangamma says, that is not all that they can or should be. Rao's parable, "The Policeman and the Rose," is ambivalent at

best,[197] yet it acknowledges the role of law enforcement in upholding civility: "Voltaire said the civilized state '*est un état bien policé*'" (is a well-policed state) (113). Rao writes: "civilization is the cross-road where the policeman stands" (113). Badè Khan is laughable next to this ideal, but it is the ideal of Kanthapura's women in policing their village. With traditional power structures in flux, the women take on the responsibility of protecting their own local crossroad.

Rather than be absorbed by male leadership in Congress, Rangamma asserts local control over the corps. The name ("let us call ourselves Sevika Sangha" [Rao 105]) echoes that of the women's volunteer corps in Bombay, which organized India's largest women's demonstrations in the early 1930s, and also fought Congress to retain local control (Forbes 44-49). But the Bombay corps was a discriminating group, recruiting only women with "dignity and innate modesty," not the "low-class" or "leftist" (Forbes 47-48, quoting one of the group's leaders). Rangamma stresses the need for women to unite, but so far, she makes no mention of crossing caste barriers (103).

Despite some women's qualms ("I am not a man to fight, sister!"), Rangamma asserts, "Why, sister, you need not be a man to fight. Do you know the story of Rani Lakshmi Bai, and do you know how she fought for India?" (103).[198] Defying an essentialist model of gender, girls *and* boys emulate Rani Lakshmi Bai. They see no disjuncture between her status as woman ("sweet and young and bejewelled") and as warrior: "riding a white horse and looking out across the narrow river and the hills to where the English armies stand" (106). When a boy "says he wants to be the Rani," a girl counters, "'But I am the woman,' and he says, 'That does not matter'" (106). Rangamma settles the dispute by turning the signs of gender on their head. She tells the girl: "You will be Rani Lakshmi Bai once, and you will then put on a turban, and he will

[197] Rao's story (likely written in the 1950s) is a parable for the imprisonment of the soul. We are each constrained by an internal policeman, Rao writes, who commits "sanctified murders in the name of God" (113).
[198] Rani Lakshmi Bai died fighting the British in 1858 and soon became a symbol of nationalist struggle.

put a kumkum mark on his face and he will be Rani Lakshmi Bai" (106). In the period when *Kanthapura* is set, the leader of volunteers in Calcutta, Latika Ghosh, reminded women of their power: "Remember the tales our grandmothers told us . . . Women must remember they were the Shaktis of the nation. They needed to recall stories of brave Rajput queens who sent husbands and sons into battle and then prepared for their own death" (Forbes 53).

During the Salt March, the *Bombay Chronicle* noted "the impatience even of woman volunteers to be active combatants" (qtd. in Dalton 139). Gandhi praised the "rare courage" of such women but bids them "to remain outside the venue of the men's fight" (*Satyagraha* 259). Rather than wait for Gandhi's approval, the women of Kanthapura take matters into their own hands. Rao contrasts Moorthy's caution with Rangamma's fighting spirit.

> Moorthy says, " . . . I am a small man in the Congress, and I wait for orders." Then Rangamma says, "If you want to fight, sisters, let us practice the drill more often, like the men." (121)

Although they are "like the men," they are also practicing the drill so they can resist the men.

The police use sexual violence as a tool of power and shame. When villagers protest the toddy booths, policemen force water in the women's mouths, "and they lift up our saris and throw it at unnameable places" (140). The attempt to silence and intimidate escalates when villagers raise the political stakes (refusing to pay taxes), and a troop of police descend on the village. They greet one woman with the chilling, "Ah, you've come, my bitch, and your husband is in prison and you need some cooling down" (149). The women's refusal to be quiet sparks the men's rage. "Butchers, butchers, dung-eating curs!" the women yell when the police beat a young boy (148). The loudest of the women, Puttamma, is soon faced with rape. The scene begins as a sinister one-on-one, but it becomes representative of the entire force. A policeman trips her with the sign of his trade (the lathi); the women see him on top of her; and their next

sight is of "street after street filled with policemen . . . there's nothing to be seen but uniformed policemen" (149). Again we see an attempt to intimidate (the mocking endearment, "my dove") and silence (he gags her) (149). When the scene is retold, we learn that it was a Pariah, a coolie from the plantation, who defended her: "he had seen Puttamma and the policeman on her, and he had fallen upon the policeman and torn his moustache and banged and banged his head against a tree" (156). In another scene of collective action, men in hiding cooperate to bring her to safety:

> [Pariah Siddayya] had brought Puttamma back from back yard to back yard, and men helped him in this back yard and that, for many were there that were hid in the lantana growth . . . and that was how, when night came, rice and pickles and pancakes went up into the lantana growths. And when the beds were laid and the eyelids wanted to shut, we said, "Let them shut," for we knew our men were not far and their eyelids did not shut. (156)

With most of the upper-caste men in prison, we are left to conclude that these anonymous rescuers are low-caste. Under siege, upper-caste villagers find that their allies are more diverse than they once assumed. Just as the Muslim satyagrahis are "our brothers" (160), they hail the coolies as "our men" (156).

Rao represents a new generation of leaders in the character of a teenage girl. Ratna, who was "rough of tongue" and "ran like a boy" (31, 30), rallies the women during the police raid, addressing them as "sisters" and leading them to "refuge." The women are amazed, for "there's the voice of Rangamma in her speech, the voice of Moorthy, and she was no more the child we had known, nor the slip of a widow we had cursed" (152). Ratna's boldness is tied to her disregard for patriarchal tradition—in particular, the tradition that saw her a bride at age ten. When her elders scold her for not behaving like a widow, "she said that that was nobody's business, and that if these sniffling old country hens thought that seeing a man for a day, and this when she was ten years of age, could be called a marriage, they had better eat mud and drown themselves in the river" (30). Though she eventually tempers her language, the novel endorses

Ratna's "modern ways" (31), including her critique of child marriage as a transactional business, when it should be "nobody's business" (30).

As the women begin to resist the British, they must also confront more domestic forms of tyranny. At first, "our men" mock the women for "vagabonding about like soldiers" (105). One husband beats his pregnant wife; others complain they are neglecting domestic duties. The men's scorn reveals their anxiety over lost control. First, the colonial state robbed them of economic and political agency; now, in fighting that state, the women are (they feel) denying them status. The women are prepared to demonstrate in public to reclaim the political power the men have lost. The men distrust "this Sevi business" (105) as much as "this Pariah business" (27), but Rao illustrates the power of both—not just for the *cohesion* of community (as a silent workforce) but in its active *defense*—when Pariahs and women unite against the police.

Rao aligns domestic violence with state violence. As the women practice their drills, one makes the likeness explicit: "Sisters, last night I dreamt my husband was beating me, and I was crying and my bangles broke . . . and then when I saw him again, it was no more my husband, it was Badè Khan . . . " (106-07). Khan goes from being a foreign invader to a too-familiar abuser. As the women prepare to face their oppressors, their exercises are as much mental as physical. In what is essentially a form of exposure therapy, Rangamma directs, "imagine the policemen are beating you, and you shall not budge a finger's length." At first, the fantasy is too much: "we feel the lathis bang on us . . . and we cannot bear it" (122). But Ratna counsels, "Be strong, sister. When your husband beats you, you do not hit back, do you? You only grumble and weep. The policeman's beatings are the like!" (122). A petty policeman is the same as a wife-beater, she is saying, and you are stronger than both. It is an ambivalent form of empowerment, as it naturalizes domestic abuse ("*when* [he] beats you"), but it helps the women build resilience.

In *En-Gendering India*, Sangeeta Ray shows how the figure of the Indian woman—idealized as an "upper-class Hindu"—became a "contested site" in the colonial era (7-8). Both colonial and nationalist discourses battled over this figure, whose purity nationalists extolled, even as imperialists argued that she needed saving from those same Indian men (8-9). How does this problem manifest in *Kanthapura*? The novel's youngest nationalists balk at rigid gender boundaries. When the women fear going out during the police attack, Ratna (now about 16) dismisses, "Oh, don't be a woman" (154). Her disdain for her own child marriage suggests a defiance both of patriarchal Indians who would save her from herself (saddling her with a husband, scolding her unruly energy) and the patriarchal Britons who would save her from *them*. Ratna is utterly capable of saving herself. The one time she requires help, it is the women who come to her aid. It is another scene of attempted rape by a policeman. Taking these examples cumulatively, the novel suggests that if women need saving, it is from their own husbands (occasionally) and the agents of the British (frequently). Rao shows the empowerment of multiple generations of women, as, in a single scene, they prevent Ratna's rape and help another woman give birth (151-52). They collectively midwive the child and, as they flee to the temple, the re-empowered Ratna "takes the new child in her sari-fringe" (152).

The women appropriate the language of fraternity in order to disempower patriarchal authorities. When the police lock them inside the temple sanctum, they momentarily "forget" male authorities and reimagine the enclosure as empowering: "we forgot the Pariahs and the policemen and Moorthy and the Mahatma, and we felt as though we were some secret brotherhood in some Himalayan cave" (155). If this line seems to depoliticize their endeavor,[199] the women soon take their brotherhood into the streets. The image also recalls the nationalist

[199] To "forget" the lower castes would indeed be a betrayal. Reformers like B. R. Ambedkar saw Gandhi's critique of untouchability, but not of caste, as inadequate. See Dirks for the ongoing debate between Gandhi's and Ambedkar's ideas (*Castes of Mind* 234, 277, 300).

novel, *Ānandamaṭh* (1882),[200] in which Hindu monks take up arms against the British. Like Rao's women in their cave-like temple, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's rebel monks seclude themselves in a sacred, natural space (a forest monastery) to prepare for the fight to come. Chatterjee's novel features a woman warrior who joins the monks by dressing as a man. Rao draws on this theme of an occult "secret brotherhood" in the women's experience in the temple. It is the novel's only direct depiction of imprisonment, and it is an ambivalent one. The women are beleaguered, exhausted, ill, injured. "We cry and moan and beg and weep and bang and kick and lament" (154), yet they also sing, share stories, and gather their resolve.

In the temple, Ratna tells stories of women who disrupt the institutions and everyday life of the Raj:

> she told us of the women of Bombay who were beaten and beaten, and yet would not move till their brothers were freed, and the flag that they hoisted and the carts and the cars and the trains they stopped, and the wires that the white men sent to the Queen to free them, and the women of Sholapur who, hand in hand, had marched through the streets, for twenty-five of their men had been shot, and the policemen would not work and the soldiers guarded the streets . . . (154-55)

The protesters' ability to neutralize the police recalls Moorthy's desire to "convert" Badè Khan (65). The introduction of soldiers may restore order, but it betrays confusion and desperation: to fight nonviolence with violence makes the aggressor look weak.

As for "the women of Bombay" (154), Rao is invoking the largest and most robust women's volunteer corps to take part in the Civil Disobedience of 1930-32. Historian Geraldine Forbes ties women's empowerment in Bombay to the city's "cosmopolitan nature" and to "the presence of Parsis and Christians which accustomed people to the presence of respectable women in public places" (44). She argues that "it was only in urban areas that organizations were able to blend feminism and nationalism" (60). In contrast, "less-educated women" were more

[200] The most recent translation of Chatterjee's novel translates the title as *The Sacred Brotherhood*. Lipner persuasively defends this choice in his introduction (44-46).

likely to "respond to their 'dual duty'—to their beloved Gandhi and to their guardians who invited them (or ordered them) to join" (60). In Rao, even the progressive Rangamma presumes to command other women: "she only said we should all get together and stand and obey her, and that when the Mahatma will call us to act, we shall have to go out and fight for him" (103). The novel dramatizes women's empowerment, yet invokes the imperatives of hierarchy and duty.

Can Rao's fictionalized movement be described as feminist? Is Rao's own cosmopolitan experience coloring his story—offering village women a perceived solution, while their real-world counterparts are disenfranchised by gender, education, and caste? The novel is a reimagining of recent history—1930 as viewed from 1938—but it is also a model for the future. *Kanthapura* celebrates the simplicity of village life—which perhaps never quite was and never quite will be again—places it in a crucible of oppression and politicization, and extracts a set of egalitarian ideals that Rao believes are necessary in the ongoing nationalist fight.

Is Rao appropriating a female voice in service of a masculine movement? Rao chooses a woman narrator; that she is a devout Brahmin seems to fit the pattern Ray identifies: that "contested" and malleable figure of the upper-class Hindu woman (8). Nonetheless, the novel's leading women (the narrator, Rangamma, and Ratna) break the norms of the compliant wife or daughter. All three are widows. Nor do they easily conform to the nationalist iconography of Mother India (Rangamma and Ratna are childless). Perhaps Rao is intervening in the staging of the brown woman as "*object* of protection from her own kind" (Spivak 94). His women need no saving—certainly not *by white men from brown men* (the British narrative of saving Indian women from sati) (Spivak 92), nor *by brown men from white men* (that narrative, less interesting than *Kanthapura*, might read: Gandhi/Moorthy saved the women from the whites/plantation). As Rangamma predicts, they cannot rely on men, even Moorthy, to save them (107). Though the

narrator is Brahmin, Sethi argues, "she is also a gossipy, *puranic* narrator, and her credibility depends on the open quality of her storytelling which must resist brahminic orthodoxy and control" (96n. 53). Yet for all the expansive qualities of the storytelling, we barely hear the voices of any *non*-Brahmin women. They remain, in Spivak's words, "the historically muted subject" (91).

To the degree the village retains its original simplicity, it also retains its hierarchies, even as they are draped in heroism. The narrator's "we" still use "Pariah" as an insult,[201] even as they see individual Pariahs as heroes. Rao does not explore the psychology of the Pariah him- or herself; mass movements involving the peasant classes simply erupt, as if agentless, from the page. "Processions" form spontaneously, comprised of collective frustration and ovations. When Advocate Ranganna is arrested, "there is a huge hoarse cry, and ovation after ovation arises . . . and processions immediately form themselves . . ." (91). Rao's opening "there is" implies a spontaneous, collective voice, and the subsequent subjects—"ovation" and "processions"—carry greater weight than the people themselves. Rao displays a confidence in group politics not shared by other writers in this project—Forster, with his cautious "two cheers for democracy," Orwell, with his fear of demagogues, and Anand, with his fear of sectarian violence.

Kanthapura adapts its notions of respectability only under increased pressure from colonial authorities—and the example of low-caste locals. Traditional hierarchies are again disrupted when it is a Pariah who frees the other women from the temple/prison. She defies the rules of property and propriety to become the women's surprise savior: "when the door opened we saw Pariah Rachanna's wife Rachi at the threshold. . . . with dawn she had slipped to the patel's house and the women gave her a key and she had jumped over Satamma's wall and

[201] As the British prepare to auction off the villagers' fields, they see it as a lost cause: "and we all said, 'Only a Pariah looks at the teeth of dead cows. What is lost is lost" (162).

Temple Rangappa's fence, and falling on the main street, she had rushed up to the temple and unlocked it" (155-56). The Brahmins' fraught debate over allowing Pariahs in the temple (26-28) and their horror at pollution (71) is forgotten next to such acts of solidarity.

The final showdown with police and soldiers unfolds like the novel itself: the women hold puja and begin a religious procession; the police try to stop them, and the procession turns political; then they are joined by nationalists from other cities and religions, there to protest the taking of land by the British and by the Coffee Estate. The narrator describes a host of strangers who emerge from the landscape to help: "men in white jumped out, men at last from the city, boys, young men, householders, peasants, Mohammedans with dhotis to the knees, and city boys with floating Gandhi caps, and they swarmed around us like veritable mother elephants round their young" (165). The women assure the newcomers that they do not fear even the soldiers: "we said we too are soldiers, and we are the soldiers of the Mahatma, and this country is ours, and the soldiers are ours and the English they are not ours" (166). For the first time we see a pluralist community, all in the same space, and they turn their nationalist message to the Indian soldiers. The "city boys" try theory ("we are non-violent"), but it is the peasants who make their case tangible. They claim the land as their own, and the soldiers as part of that land:

> And a peasant voice from the back says, "It's we who have put the plough to the earth and fed her with water," and the soldiers say, "Hè, stop that, you village kids," and the boys say, "Brother, the earth is ours, and you are ours too, brown like this earth is your skin and mine," and a soldier shouts out, "Oh, no more of this panchayat—we ask you again, disperse, and do not force us to fire!" (168-69)

It is at once a highly localized claim (we fed this plot of land, so it is ours) and a nationalist one: you soldiers are like us, so we, like this land, have a claim to your solidarity.

The soldiers do not join the satyagrahis, yet there is a power in claiming and naming them as "ours." In "The Cave and the Conch," Rao describes the act of naming as "the merger of

the object in the subject. Therefore the object finally is 'I'." It is an act of appropriation: "playfully one names objects, just as a child makes a doll into its daughter by pure appropriation" (45). Rao is describing the naming of things; the idea of appropriating a *person* in the act of labeling them is a more troubling proposition. Yet the novel performs a version of appropriation with regards to the Pariahs and coolies, who are shown participating in the movement yet given little voice compared to the Brahmin heroes.

There is a nightmare quality to Rao's depictions of violence. When the police are overwhelmed and "soldiers open fire" (170-71), the scene is an undignified cacophony of noise and grappling bodies. All the "men" here are Indians—urban and rural, coolies and sepoys, Hindu and Muslim—and Rao refuses to distinguish one from another. Their vulnerable bodies make them the same: "There is such a confusion that men grip men and men crush men and men bite men and men tear men, and moan on moan rises and groan on groan dies out, while the ambulance men are still at work and men are bandaged, and shot after shot rings out and man after man falls like an empty sack, and the women take up the lamentation" (175). The accumulation of sensations overwhelms the scene. Rao builds verb upon verb ("shrieking and slaying, weeping, wounding, groaning, crawling, swooning, vomiting, bellowing, moaning, raving, gasping") and injury upon injury ("wounds in stomachs and wounds in breasts and wounds in faces, with bullets in thighs, and bullets in the toes, bullets in the arms") (175, 177).

This attack is the most culturally and geographically diverse scene in the novel. Villagers are joined first by Congress volunteers, and finally, by the coolies the British brought in to steal their harvest: the "Skeffington coolies, black with their white dhotis" and "the city coolies, white and bearded" (a welcome change after the insults to Khan's beard) (170). Even with a language barrier, the allies make themselves understood: "they say something to us and we do not

understand . . . and we say '*Mahatma, Mahatma, Gandhi Mahatma!*' and they put their mouths to our ears and say '*Gandhi Mahatma ki jai*!' and, 'Punjab, Punjab!'" (172). Sustaining violence together builds community—between "city boys and peasant boys," "peasant women and city women," men "with cut moustaches" and those "with long whiskers" (176). Out of the chaos, Rao mythologizes suffering into inspiration and resolve. Sufferers are not victims, but justice warriors whose resolve has been honed in battle.

In the end, the people of Kanthapura become refugees, making the long trek "over the Ghats" and through the jungle to a new village (177). Their leaders are scattered (Moorthy, Rangamma, and Ratna face prison [180]) so the remaining villagers make the journey of their own accord. The troubles of Kanthapura, they learn, are widespread—"And in Maddur there were policemen, and they, too, rushed to smite us"—but so is the solidarity of strangers (177). They are greeted as news-bearers and heroes, and their shared ordeal (the people of Maddur, too, lost men in the attack) strengthens ties within the region. The narrator describes the end of the journey:

> as dawn broke over the hissing river and the jungles and the mountains, we dipped in the holy river and rose, and men came to greet us with trumpet and bell and conch . . . They hung garlands on our necks, and called us the pilgrims of the Mahatma.
>
> Then we ate and we slept, and we spake and we slept, and when they said, "Stay here, sisters," we said, "We'll stay, sisters," and we settled down in Kashipura. (177-78)

It is, in effect, the geographic transposition of Kanthapura. And it is the women—witnesses to arrests, mass violence, the theft and destruction of their land—who remake the community. Caste remains a defining factor, but its norms and barriers have shifted. The Pariah woman who saved them from the temple, Rachi, is working as domestic help, but she is no longer considered polluting: "she comes now and again to the Brahmin quarters with her pounded rice and her dung

cakes" (179). Part of the remaking of community is telling stories, both old and new. Ratna represents modernity: after prison she is off to Bombay, where she and Moorthy will debate the philosophies of Gandhi and Nehru (181). The narrator's role is less glamorous, but equally powerful, as she weaves the tale of Kanthapura into the fabric of her new home. The children of Kashipura regard her as one of their own, but also as a representative of Gandhi: "'Aunt, aunt, aunt,' they always call us . . . and the children say, 'The Mahatma has sent us his relations. There is the aunt who tells such nice stories,' and that is me" (179). Like the novel itself, the narrator imagines a form of community that is rooted in location and tradition, yet reaches out to the whole subcontinent.

Coda

The Angels and Demons of History

In colonial as well as popular discourse, the trial is a performance of the power and the right to rule. When its underpinnings are exposed, as in Forster, even an unjust trial may bear productive fruit. If the law itself is dubious, the trial may yet become a space of dialogue and improvisation in which, occasionally, a more just and hybrid set of voices prevail. Orwell, however, undermines any faith we may retain in the institutions of the state. Every thing the Raj touches is a shoddy facsimile: not just the law, but the opposite of the law, the rebellion and dissent of popular politics. The law in Burma shored up a dismal timber industry, just as, in Rao's India, the police uphold an elaborate plantation system. For Rao, the very notion of the trial is preordained and pointless. His characters *need* popular politics to change the social and economic systems in which they are caught. Only the educated and moneyed elite have the resources needed to fight the law. If Rao's novel privileges these elites, it also reveals the intersecting set of obstacles faced by women and the lower castes. And the novel presages the identity politics and sectarian violence that Independence would not resolve.

Despite *Kanthaphura*'s pluralist ideals, there are intimations of the Hindu-Muslim split to come. Rao presents the violence inflicted upon the satyagrahi as brutal, yet productive, because it unites diverse communities against an occupying foe. Muslim solidarity inspires Hindu villagers who inspire other communities in turn. The violence of communalism and Partition have no such silver lining. Rao naturalizes the religious divide, but conflict was neither intrinsic nor inevitable within any of India's major faiths.[202]

[202] For communalism as a specifically *modern* form of false consciousness, see Bipan Chandra (18-33).

Whatever Rao's intent, the novel poses a question. How does one resist the divide-and-rule tactics of empire, even when those tactics seem to work in one's own favor (in this case, the too-close equation of India and Hinduism)? Spivak writes: "The definition of the British Indian as Hindu in Hindu law is one of the marks of the ideological war of the British against the Islamic Mughal rulers of India; a significant skirmish in that as yet unfinished war was the division of the subcontinent" (103). That division was formalized in the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan that accompanied Independence and whose border in Kashmir has yet to be settled.

In addition to the violence and mass migrations initiated by Partition, questions arose about subjects' citizenship and legal status. In 1948, the two new governments participated in two large prisoner exchanges (see Chakravarty). Even behind bars, prisoners had become as refugees, seeking to swap the nation of their captivity. The Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto represents the arbitrary madness of Partition in a story about a special kind of carceral institution, a lunatic asylum. In "Toba Tek Singh" (1955), the guards and common murderers are as ignorant as the afflicted: "both the mad and the partially mad were unable to decide whether they were now in India or in Pakistan" (2). The instability of identity is signified by the indeterminate status of the fictional town, Toba Tek Singh, which lies "in between, on a bit of earth which had no name" (10). The arbitrary divisions are a "mystery" (5), much as Forster's characters experience the Marabar Caves. But this is not some ontological or epistemological puzzle. Just as the mystery of the cave threatens to isolate Dr. Aziz from his loved ones, the horrific "mystery" of Partition splits families and communities. Manto describes the earth as inexplicably "sliding" and "vanishing" under one's feet:

> Those who had tried to solve this mystery had become utterly confused . . . It was anybody's guess what was going to happen to Lahore, which was currently in Pakistan, but could slide into India any moment. It was also possible that the entire subcontinent of India might become Pakistan. And who could say if both

> India and Pakistan might not entirely vanish from the map of the world one day? (5)

Partition was—and is—not just a case of dividing space but of dividing time. If history, to Stephen Dedalus, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (Joyce 42), for the new citizens of India and Pakistan, it was as if the freedom-fighter's dream had been overlaid with the nightmare of psychosis. Salman Rushdie's magical allegories of the subcontinent, by turns rapturous and tragic, would explore this duality.

Divested, by and large, of its overseas colonies,[203] postcolonial Britain displayed signs of longing for its former place in the world. Both Rushdie and Amitava Kumar describe the Raj nostalgia of the 1980s, as viewers sat entranced over the television miniseries *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984). Characteristically, given the performative nature of empire, this nostalgia prioritizes the *aesthetics* of empire over the narrative itself. Both the series and its source material (Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* [1966-75]) are devastatingly critical of the Raj, specifically the intersection of racism and the law. Scott locates the sadistic behavior of the law's representative, Ronald Merrick, in the West's own monstrous fantasies (of domination) and repressions (of homosexuality, or indeed any non-normative sexual desire). The novels also reimagine the rape narrative.[204] That the story could be reduced to or remembered for its aesthetics is a warning, not only against nostalgia, but against centering our narratives of empire on Western subjects, however critical those subjects may be.

Rose-colored glasses are no more appropriate for the future than they are for the past. "The End of History" has not arrived as Francis Fukuyama predicted. Not only are liberal

---

[203] The UK's Overseas Territories are the far-flung exceptions. The Falklands War of 1982 demonstrated Britain's determination to hang on to its remaining acquisitions—with the byproduct of bolstering the Conservative Government in Westminster.

[204] The symbolic rape of the Mutiny narratives, which is imagined and destabilized in Forster, becomes real again in Scott. As in Forster, the wrong persons are blamed, conflating sexual violence with political subversion. But the consequences in Scott are both more brutal (for the accused) and persistent (the baby, who will be raised with neither mother nor father).

democracies under threat (see Luce, for example) from racism, tribalism, and exclusionary nationalist movements. We have already seen how the origins of liberal democracy (in the likes of John Stuart Mill) were never as liberal as its ideals.

Walter Benjamin warns us against a model of history as progress. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," he describes how the historian's "empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers." History becomes a "triumphal" yet sordid "procession":

> the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. (Thesis VII, 256)

Both the creation of art and the transmission of history are predicated on violence. The losers and the anonymous are out-voiced, despite their role in making art and history possible. Benjamin's allegory of "the angel of history" describes the angel's vision of the past as "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of this feet" (Thesis IX, 257). A storm blows the angel "irresistibly" "into the future . . . This storm is what we call progress." But what is progress if all it produces is a growing "pile of debris" (258)? The angel wishes to be more than a witness; he wishes to rectify: "The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed" (257). It is the inexorability of so-called "progress" that prevents a true reckoning with history.

Our faith in progress can prevent us from seeing how history, including the violence of history, lives on in our institutions and worldviews. Richard Rorty reminds us that historical events are highly contingent; we cannot take progress for granted (see Marantz). We see this

contingency most dramatically in the genre of the alternate history. In *The Plot Against America* (2004), Philip Roth helps us imagine the sense of fear and chaos that European Jews must have felt in the 1930s (which was in part a fear of the *unknown*) by giving us an alternate version of the U.S. with an anti-Semite in the White House. Roth's Jewish-American protagonists face a precarious and outrageous future, which is equally unknown, and thus fearful, to us as readers.[205] An alternate history is no mere fever dream; it can be a warning against present complacency. Indeed, *Kanthapura* performs a minor act of alternate history in inventing this common village's remarkable response to oppression. When Rao was writing in the late '30s, a Hindu-Muslim split was becoming increasingly likely. But within the fictional world, the village becomes an inspiration and talking-point for other Indians; perhaps their example will change history.

Rao offered us the myth of a pluralist, unified, future India. But within that myth are seeds of division and doubt. Today, India's identity as a pluralist, secular state is being tested. The essentialist worldview and exclusionary tactics of Hindu nationalism give cover to extremists. Majority rule can be a cudgel against minority rights. The courts have traditionally upheld India's secular principles, but not always.[206] Of course, the Indian National Congress has its own guilty histories. Indira Gandhi's "Emergency" (1975-77) put India into a massive state of exception, with the press and civil liberties suppressed. Ideally, in the hands of an independent judiciary, the rule of law is a bulwark against both executive overreach *and* communal divisions. But the rights of citizens also depend on *which* laws are on the books.

Colonial law did not leave with the British in 1947 and 1948.[207] We are perpetually reminded of that law's postcolonial legacy. In September 2018, within the space of three days, India divested itself of one particularly stubborn colonial law, while Myanmar

[205] See Roth's *Fresh Air* interview for more on this narrative choice.
[206] See Jaffrelot's discussion of "judicial forays into majoritarianism" (59-60).
[207] From India, Pakistan, and what is now Bangladesh in 1947 and from Burma, now Myanmar, in 1948.

repurposed another in order to clamp down on its own rule. The Supreme Court of India decriminalized gay sex, thus overturning a British ban from 1861,[208] while authorities in Myanmar used the 1923 Official Secrets Act to convict two journalists. The charge was unfounded; the reporters' real offense was to expose the military for ethnic cleansing.[209] For Westerners who denounce the Myanmar regime, it behooves us to admit that we, too, are implicated in legalized violence. If Western leaders wish to claim moral authority, they must reconcile with the past. Why not say, *My ancestors stole wealth from your ancestors, and they used "law and order" to justify that theft. It was wrong then, and it is wrong for you to use the same excuse now.* The reporters were released in May 2019, not because the courts overturned their conviction (they rejected all appeals), but in an act of "presidential amnesty for 6,520 prisoners. . . . It is customary in Myanmar for authorities to free prisoners across the time of the traditional New Year" (Lewis and Naing, par. 3-4). Like the prison-release in the princely state in Forster, a public act of mercy can help relieve social pressures. It gives an out to Burmese leaders who could not afford the precedent of acquitting the reporters, nor could they face ongoing international pressure.

Documenting the abuse of power is only a start. The witness's ethical response is not preordained or natural. We have seen in the U.S. that the sudden preponderance of police body cameras does not automatically prevent violence. Technology alone does not make vulnerable people safe. It takes law enforcers with some degree of intimacy and compassion for those they serve.

---

[208] Britain began liberalizing its own ban on homosexuality in 1967.

[209] Myanmar is experiencing two extremes in the realm of free speech. The government suppresses the press, while social media enables the spread of false stories about ethnic and religious minorities. Both extremes hurt the Rohingya.

One problem that has become more visible in recent years is sexual violence. We saw in Rao how violence against women can be naturalized, yet the women reclaim power by banding together. Today, communities throughout India are struggling to get their grip on the issue following a series of shocking and widely-publicized attacks, beginning with the fatal gang rape on a Delhi bus in December 2012. The fact that harassment and assault can occur in public spaces—that is, the very visibility of the problem—carries an added threat of intimidation (the belief that bystanders do not care, or that public space is not for everyone). What happens when cultural expectations around masculinity intersect with the inequities of class and urbanization? I am not trying, here, to criminalize culture in the style of a Mutiny narrative, but to point out the toxic elements facing human cultures worldwide. Police and prosecutors in every jurisdiction struggle to meet the needs of sexual assault victims. And the pressure to produce the right *kind* of victim, as we saw in Forster, inflicts its own kind of damage. Thousands of Indian women have taken to the streets to demand better, and grassroots campaigns to educate both boys and girls offer local solutions, rather than imposing an outsider's view (see Lal and Murphy). Not unlike the Volunteer Corps in Rao, the Red Brigade, founded in Lucknow in 2011, by and for women, patrols the streets and gives training in self-defense.

The problem of sexual assault is both legal and extralegal in nature. Recently, India has witnessed deadly retaliations against survivors, to intimidate and prevent them from testifying (see "Unnao"), as well as extralegal killings of the suspected perpetrators. Frustrated with the sluggish judicial process, a sizable and vocal portion of the public welcome such reprisals (see Pandey). In December 2019, activists in Hyderabad demanded the execution of four accused rapists (a harsh law and order approach) before themselves breaking the law. When protestors "tried to storm into a police station where the four accused were held," they were met with force

in turn (Ellis-Petersen, par. 14). It is an arms race in the use of force, but does it address the underlying causes? Renegade justice is hardly a solution to a systemic problem.

Fiction, including fantasy, can be a productive social force. It can promote empathy, imagine a better world, or prepare one for the challenges of the real world. Amitav Ghosh explores the workings of history and memory in *The Shadow Lines* (1988). The novel asks: how do the witnesses to history interpret and memorialize violence and upheavals? The narrator struggles to describe the riots he witnessed in 1960s Calcutta; there is no way to express the "terror" (216). All he can manage is a sense of geographic betrayal: "The streets had turned themselves inside out: our city had turned against us" (199). Ghosh describes this struggle of representation in "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi" (1995), about the anti-Sikh riots following the 1984 assassination of Indira Gandhi. "How was I to write about what I had seen without reducing it to mere spectacle?" he asks, "without recreating" real events "as a panorama of violence" (par. 74)? So accustomed are we to the aesthetics of violence that our ethical faculties are lulled to sleep. Ghosh wishes to portray not violence, but resistance, yet he struggles to find a form:

> When I now read descriptions of troubled parts of the world, in which violence appears primordial and inevitable, a fate to which masses of people are largely resigned, I find myself asking, is that all there was to it ? Or is it possible that the authors of these descriptions failed to find a form—or a style or a voice or a plot—that could accommodate both violence and the civilized, willed response to it. The truth is that the commonest response to violence is one of repugnance, and that a significant number of people everywhere try to oppose it in whatever ways they can. That these efforts so rarely appear in accounts of violence is not surprising: they are too undramatic. (par. 80)

The goal of this project has not been to mire readers in a legacy of violence and occupation, but to resurrect some of the just and humane responses to that injustice. Forster locates justice not in the state, but in willed, individual acts of generosity and compassion; Orwell damns the state

with all his might as he reads a shared humanity in the body of the condemned; and Rao would rebuild the state in the image of the satyagrahi, who convert their enemies and fight violence with the force of truth.

Bibliography

Ackerley, J. R. *Hindoo Holiday: An Indian Journal*. 1932. New York: New York Review of Books, 2000.

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005.

Anand, Mulk Raj. *Conversations in Bloomsbury*. London: Wildwood House, 1981.

---. *Two Leaves and a Bud*. 1937. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1983.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 1983. Revised ed. London: Verso, 1991.

Arnold, David. *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India*. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1993.

---. *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras 1859-1947*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1986.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951.

Aung-Thwin, Maitrii. *The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2010.

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. 1962. 2nd edn. Ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975.

Bacon, Francis. "Of Revenge." *Essays, Civil and Moral*. Ed. Charles W. Eliot. Vol. III, Part 1. The Harvard Classics. New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1909. 15-16.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U. of Texas P, 1981.

Battleship Potemkin. Dir. Sergei Eisenstein. 1925.

Bayly, Christopher, and Tim Harper. *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005.

Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." 1940. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1968. 253-64.

---. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." 1935. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1968. 217-51.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 1994. London: Routledge, 2004.

Bluemel, Kristin. *George Orwell and the Radical Eccentrics: Intermodernism in Literary London*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

British Rule in India Condemned by the British Themselves. London: The Indian National Party, 1915.

Burke, Edmund. *Speeches of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, in the House of Commons, and in Westminster-Hall*. Vols. 2-3. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1816.

Buzard, James. *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.

Campbell, Joseph. *Mythic Worlds, Modern Words: On the Art of James Joyce*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Cannadine, David. "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977." *The Invention of Tradition*. Ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. 101-64.

---. *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

Cantor, David. "The Name and the Word: Neo-Hippocratism and Language in Interwar Britain." *Reinventing Hippocrates*. Ed. David Cantor. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. 280-301.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.

Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra. *Krishnakanta's Will*. 1878. Trans. J. C. Gosh. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1962.

---. *Ānandamaṭh, or The Sacred Brotherhood*. 1882. Trans. and ed. Julius J. Lipner. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

Chaturvedi, Asthaa. "Sons of the Soil." Interviews with Shoaib Daniyal, Christophe Jaffrelot, and Nandini Sundar. *On the Media*, 16 Aug. 2019. Accessed 29 Oct. 2019.

Childs, Peter. "*A Passage to India*." *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*. Ed. David Bradshaw. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

Church Missionary Society. *The Missionary Registry for 1824*. London: Seeley & Sons, 1824.

Census of India, 1911. Vol. 1, Part 1. Calcutta: Superintendent Govt. Printing, 1913. *California Digital Library*. *Internet Archive*: ark:/13960/t5s75nm2h .

Census of India, 1911. Vol. 14: *Punjab*, Part 1. Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1912. *U. of Chicago Library*: http://storage.lib.uchicago.edu/pres/2014/pres2014-0779-1911-14-01.pdf .

Chakravarty, Ipsita. "Why an India-Pakistan prisoner exchange law of 1948 is still too relevant to scrap." *Scroll.in*, 8 Aug. 2015. Accessed 5 Dec. 2019.

Chandra, Bipan. *Communalism in Modern India*. New Delhi: Vikas, 1984.

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988.

Cohn, Bernard S. *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996.

Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. Bath: Bath Press, 1992.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Moonstone*. 1868. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Collis, Maurice. *Trials in Burma*. London: Faber & Faber, 1942.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1899. Ed. Paul B. Armstrong. New York: Norton, 2005.

---. *The Secret Agent*. 1907. London: Everyman, 1997.

Dalton, Dennis. "The Dandi Drama." *Rule, Protest, Identity: Aspects of Modern South Asia*. Ed. Peter Robb and David Taylor. London: Curzon Press, 1978. 133-44.

Das Gupta, Uma. "The Indian Press 1870-1880: A Small World of Journalism." *Modern Asian Studies* 11.2 (1977): 213-35.

Davis, Angela Y. "Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist." *Women, Race, & Class*. New York: Random House, 1981. 172-201.

Davis, Mike. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. London: Verso, 2001.

Desmond, Ray. *Victorian England in Focus: a selection of early photographs from the collection in the India Office Library and Records*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1982.

"Detained in Myanmar: The latest updates on two Reuters journalists in government custody." *Reuters*: https://www.reuters.com/subjects/myanmar-reporters. Accessed 3 Sep. 2018.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. 1853. New York: Norton, 1977.

Dirks, Nicholas B. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

---. *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Sign of [the] Four*. 1890. *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol. 1. New York: Bantam, 1986.

Draper, Alfred. *The Amritsar Massacre: Twilight of the Raj*. London: Buchan & Enright, 1985.

Duncan, Sara Jeannette. *Set in Authority*. 1906. Ed. Germaine Warkentin. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1996.

Ellis-Petersen, Hannah. "Protests escalate in India over gang-rape and murder of woman." *The Guardian*, 2 Dec. 2019. Accessed 6 Dec. 2019.

Esty, Jed. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.

Fein, Helen. *Imperial Crime and Punishment: The Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and British Judgment, 1919-1920*. Honolulu: UP of Hawaii, 1977.

Forbes, Geraldine. *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Politics, Medicine, and Historiography*. New Delhi: Chronicle Books, 2005.

Forster, E. M. *The Hill of Devi; being Letters from Dewas State Senior*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1953.

---. *Howards End*. 1910. New York: Norton, 1998.

---. "India Again." 1946. *Two Cheers for Democracy*. New York: Harcourt, 1951. 319-28.

---. *The Longest Journey*. 1907. Introd. Jeffrey Meyers. New York: Bantam, 1997.

---. *Maurice*. London: Edward Arnold, 1971.

---. *A Passage to India*. 1924. New York: Harcourt, 1952.

---. *A Room with a View*. 1908. New York: Vintage, 1989.

---. *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster*. Ed. Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983-85.

---. "What I Believe." 1939. *Two Cheers for Democracy*. New York: Harcourt, 1951. 67-76.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. 1977. New York: Vintage, 1995.

---. *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984.

Franken, Lynn. "Poor Terrestrial Justice: Bakhtin and Criminal Trial in the Novel." *Comparative Literature* 49.2 (Spring 1997): 113-27.

Frazer, James George. *The New Golden Bough: A New Abridgement*. Ed. Theodor H. Gaster. New York: Criterion, 1959. Originally published 1890-1915.

Froula, Christine. "Truth on Trial: Quantum Physics, Western Enlightenment, and *A Passage to India*." *Etudes Anglaises: Grande-Bretagne, Etats-Unis* 58.1 (Jan. - Mar. 2005): 15-30.

Furbank, Philip Nicholas. *E. M. Forster: A Life*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1978. 2 vols.

Freud, Sigmund. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. 1905. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1963.

Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3-18.

Gandhi, M. K. *The Essential Writings*. Ed. Judith M. Brown. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

---. *Satyagraha (Non-Violent Resistance)*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1951.

Ganguly, Adwaita P. *India: Mystic, Complex and Real.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990.

Ghosh, Amitav. "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi." *The New Yorker*, 17 July 1995: 35-41.

---. *The Shadow Lines*. 1988. New York: Mariner Books, 2005.

Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977.

---. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Meteer. Stanford: Standord UP, 1987.

Gowen, Annie, and Manas Sharma. "Rising Hate in India." *The Washington Post*, 31 Oct. 2018. Accessed 24 Feb. 2019.

Graff, Ann-Barbara. "Gender, History, and the Art of Mutiny: Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters*." *Clio's Daughters: British Women Making History, 1790-1899*. Ed. Lynette Felber. Newark: U. of Delaware Press, 2007. 43-68.

Greenhut, Jeffrey. "Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationship between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army." *Military Affairs* 48.1 (Jan. 1984): 15-18.

Grewal, Inderpal. *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel*. Durham: Duke UP, 1996.

Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. 1983. Foreword by James Scott. Durham: Duke UP, 1999.

Gupta, Anandswarup. *The Police in British India 1861-1947*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1979.

Herschel, William J. *The Origin of Finger-Printing*. London: Oxford UP, 1916. *Project Gutenberg*. Accessed 8 Feb. 2018.

The History of the Trial of Warren Hastings, Esq. Late Governor-General of Bengal, Before the High Court of Parliament in Westminster-Hall, on an impeachment by the Commons of Great-Britain, for high crimes and misdemeanours. London: J. Debrett, 1796. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Accessed 31 Aug. 2017.

Hutchins, Francis G. *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967.

Inden, Ronald B. *Imagining India*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000.

Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasar. *Indian Writing in English*. New York: Asia Pub. House, 1962.

Jaffrelot, Christophe. "The Fate of Secularism in India." *The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism*. Ed. Milan Vaishnav. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019. 51-60.

Jameson, Fredric. "Modernism and Imperialism." *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P, 1990. 43-68.

Jones, W. H. S. *The Doctor's Oath: An Essay in the History of Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1924.

Joshi, P. C., ed. *Rebellion 1857: A Symposium*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1957.

Joshi, Priya. *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. 1922. Annotated Student Edition. Ed. Declan Kiberd. London: Penguin, 2000.

Judd, Denis. *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 1996.

Kerr, Douglas. "Law and Race in George Orwell." *Law & Literature* 29.2 (2017): 311-28.

Khaldun, Talmiz. "The Great Rebellion." *Rebellion 1857: A Symposium*. Ed. P. C. Joshi. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1957. 1-70.

Kipling, Rudyard. "The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P." 1888. *Under the Deodars*. New York: Caldwell, 1899.

---. *Kim*. 1901. New York: Norton, 2002.

---. "Pagett, M.P." 1886. *Departmental Ditties*. New York: M. F. Mansfield, 1898.

Kumar, Amitava. *Bombay London New York*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Lal, Neeta. "India Steps Up Citizen Activism to Protect Women." *Inter Press Service*, 6 Dec. 2019. Accessed 9 Dec. 2019.

The Last Empire: Photography in British India, 1855-1911. Preface by Earl Mountbatten, texts by Clark Worswick and Ainslie Embree. New York: Aperture, 1976.

Lessing, Dorris. *The Grass Is Singing*. 1949. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.

Lewis, Simon, and Shoon Naing. "Two Reuters reporters freed in Myanmar after more than 500 days in jail." *Reuters*, 6 May 2019. Accessed 9 Dec. 2019.

Lipner, Julius J. "Introduction." *Ānandamaṭh, or The Sacred Brotherhood*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 3-124.

Lowndes, Marie Belloc. *The Lodger*. 1913. London: Methuen, 1949.

Luce, Edward. *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2017.

Lucenti, Lisa Marie. "Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*: To Defer that 'appalling moment'." *Criticism* 40.1 (Winter 1998): 75-97.

Macaulay, Thomas B. "Government of India." Speech to the House of Commons, 10 July 1833. *Macaulay, Prose and Poetry*. Ed. G. M. Young. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1952. 688-718.

---. "Minute on Indian Education." 2 Feb. 1835. *Macaulay, Prose and Poetry*. Ed. G. M. Young. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1952. 719-30.

MacMunn, George. "The Romance of the Martial Races of India." *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 80.4128 (1932): 171-93.

Majeed, Javed. "James Mill's *The History of British India*: The Question of Utilitarianism and Empire." *Utilitarianism and Empire*. Ed. Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005. 93-105.

de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. *Mottled Dawn: Fifty Sketches and Stories of Partition*. Trans. Khalid Hasan. New Delhi: Penguin, 1997.

Marantz, Andrew. "Against Free Speech Absolutism." *On The Media*, 11 Oct. 2019. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.

Marcus, Jane. *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Introd. Ernest Mandel. Trans. Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976. 3 vols.

May, Brian. *The Modernist as Pragmatist: E.M. Forster and the Fate of Liberalism*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1997.

---. "Romancing the Stump: Modernism and Colonialism in Forster's *A Passage to India*." *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899-1939*. Ed. Richard Begam & Michael Valdez. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. 136-61.

Metcalf, Thomas R. *Ideologies of the Raj*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.

Mill, John Stuart. *Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical, and Historical. Reprinted chiefly from the Edinburgh and Westminster reviews*, 1859. Vol. 3. Boston: W. V. Spencer, 1868. *HathiTrust*: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t2z31r15d . Accessed 13 Jul. 2016.

---. "The Negro Question." *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 41.1 (Jan. 1850): 25-31. *HathiTrust*: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044092641992 . Accessed 13 Jul. 2016.

Miller, D. A. *The Novel and the Police*. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1988.

Moya, Ana. "George Orwell's Exploration of Discourses of Power in *Burmese Days*." *The Road from George Orwell: His Achievement and Legacy*. Ed. Alberto Lázaro. Bern: Peter Lang, 2001. 93-104.

Murphy, Elaine. "The boys learning anti-sexism in India." *BBC Future*, 11 Nov. 2019. Accessed 13 Nov. 2019.

Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*. 1983. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1992.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. *The Discovery of India*. 1946. Ed. Robert I. Crane. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960.

Neill, Jeremy. "'This is a most disgusting case': Imperial Policy, Class and Gender in the 'Rangoon Outrage' of 1899." *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 12.1 (Spring 2011). *Project MUSE*, 10.1353/cch.2011.0003.

Nussbaum, Martha. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon, 1995.

Orwell, George. *Burmese Days*. 1934. San Diego: Harcourt, 1962.

---. *The Collected Essays, Journalism & Letters of George Orwell*. Eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. London: Secker & Warburg, 1968. 4 vols.

---. "Decline of the English Murder." *The Tribune*. 15 Feb. 1946. Rpt. in *Decline of the English Murder and Other Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965. 9-13.

---. *Down and Out in Paris and London*. 1933. New York: Harcourt, 1961.

---. "A Hanging." *Adelphi*. Aug. 1931. Rpt. in *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays*. New York: Harcourt, 1950. 13-18.

---. "How the Poor Die." 1946. Rpt. in *Decline of the English Murder and Other Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965. 32-44.

---. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. 1937. Orlando: Harcourt, 1958.

---. "Shooting an Elephant." *New Writing*. Autumn 1936. Rpt. in *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays*. New York: Harcourt, 1950. 3-12.

Owen, Wilfred. *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

Pandey, Geeta. "Hyderabad case: Why Indians are celebrating the killings." *BBC News*, 6 Dec. 2019. Accessed 7 Dec. 2019.

Parry, Benita. *Delusions and Discoveries: Studies on India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930*. London: Allen Lane, 1972.

Phillips, Jerry. "Cannibalism qua Capitalism: The Metaphorics of Accumulation in Marx, Conrad, Shakespeare, and Marlowe." *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 183-203.

Pinney, Christopher. *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1997.

Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession* (1991): 33-40.

---. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Rai, Satya M. "The Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy: Its Impact on the Political Awakening and Thinking in India." *Jallianwala Bagh Massacre*. Ed. V. N. Datta and S. Settar. Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 2000. 25-37.

Rao, Raja. "The Cave and the Conch: Notes on the Indian Conception of the Word." *The Eye of the Beholder: Indian Writing in English*. Ed. Maggie Butcher. London: Commonwealth Institute, 1983. 44-45.

---. *Kanthapura*. 1938. New York: New Directions, 1967.

---. *The Meaning of India*. New Delhi: Vision, 1996.

---. "The Policeman and the Rose." *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. 1963. Rpt. in *The Policeman and the Rose*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1978. 113-26.

Ray, Sangeeta. *En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000.

"The Rohingyas: The Most Persecuted People on Earth?" *The Economist*, 13 June 2015. Accessed 12 March 2018.

Roth, Philip. Interview with Terri Gross. *Fresh Air*, 11 Oct. 2004. Accessed 25 May 2018.

---. *The Plot Against America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Rushby, Kevin. "Imperial deceivers." *The Guardian*, 18 Jan. 2003.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta, 1992.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993.

---. *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India 1885-1947*. Delhi: Macmillan, 1983.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

---. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999.

Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. 1922. Trans. George Schwab, 1985. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005.

Scott, Paul. *The Raj Quartet*. 1966-75. London: Heinemann, 1984.

Seshagiri, Urmila. "Misogyny and Anti-Imperialism in George Orwell's *Burmese Days*." *The Road from George Orwell: His Achievement and Legacy*. Ed. Alberto Lázaro. Bern: Peter Lang, 2001. 105-19.

Sethi, Rumina. *Myths of the Nation: National Identity and Literary Representation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Shahane, Girish. "Tipu Jayanti debate: Akbar is the hero India should really celebrate." *Scroll.in*, 25 Oct. 2017. Accessed 31 Oct. 2019.

Sharpe, Jenny. *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Shaw, Bernard. *Androcles and the Lion*. 1912. *Androcles and the Lion; Overruled; Pygmalion*. New York: Brentano's, 1916.

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley. *The celebrated speech of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq.; in Westminster-Hall, on the 3d, 6th, 10th, and 13th of June, 1788, on his summing up the evidence on the Begum charge against Warren Hastings, Esquire*. London: C. Foster, Poultry, 1788. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Accessed 12 Sep. 2017.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1988. Rpt. in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. London: Routledge, 1994. 66-111.

Steel, Flora Annie. *On the Face of the Waters*. 1896. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1985.

Stephen, James Fitzjames. *The Story of Nuncomar and the Impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey*. London: Macmillan, 1885. Vol. I. *Internet Archive*: ark:/13960/t9862tm2j . Accessed 6 Nov. 2017.

Stokes, Eric. *The English Utilitarians and India*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1959.

Suleri, Sara. *The Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gora*. 1909. Trans. and introd. Sujit Mukherjee. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1997.

---. *The Home and the World*. 1916. Trans. Surendranath Tagore. London: Penguin, 2005.

---. *Selected Short Stories*. The Oxford Tagore Translations. Ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2000.

Tan Tai Yong. "Sepoys and the Colonial State: Punjab and the Military Base of the Indian Army 1849-1900." *The British Raj and its Indian Armed Forces 1857-1939*. Ed. Partha Sarathi Gupta and Anirudh Deshpande. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2002. 7-44.

Taussig, Michael. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Taylor, Philip Meadows. *Confessions of a Thug*. 1839. Preface by Nick Mirsky. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986.

Thapar, Romila. "They Peddle Myths and Call It History." *The New York Times*, 17 May 2019. Accessed 29 Oct. 2019.

Thompson, Edward. *An Indian Day*. New York: Knopf, 1927.

---. *The Other Side of the Medal*. 1925. New York: Harcourt, 1926.

Timmermann, Carsten. "A Model for the New Physician: Hippocrates in Interwar Germany." *Reinventing Hippocrates*. Ed. David Cantor. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. 302-24.

"Unnao: India woman set on fire on her way to rape case hearing." *BBC News*, 5 Dec. 2019. Accessed 6. Dec. 2019.

Viswanathan, Gauri. "Beyond Orientalism: Syncretism and the Politics of Knowledge." *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review* 5.1 (1996).

Wa Lone, Kyaw Soe Oo, Simon Lewis and Antoni Slodkowski. "Massacre in Myanmar: How Myanmar forces burned, looted and killed in a remote village." *Reuters*, 8 Feb. 2018. Accessed 24 Apr. 2018.

Wallas, Graham. "Jeremy Bentham." *Political Science Quarterly* 38.1 (March 1923): 45-56.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. 1953. 3rd edn. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958.

Woolf, Leonard. *Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904-1911*. New York: Harcourt, 1961.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs Dalloway*. 1925. New York: Harcourt, 1981.

---. *A Room of One's Own*. 1929. New York: Harcourt, 1981.

---. *The Voyage Out*. 1915. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

---. *The Waves*. 1931. New York: Harcourt, 1959.

---. *The Years*. 1937. New York: Harcourt, 1965.

Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995.

---. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

Yule, Henry, and A. C. Burnell. *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive*. 1886. Revised ed. Ed. William Crooke. London: Murray, 1903.