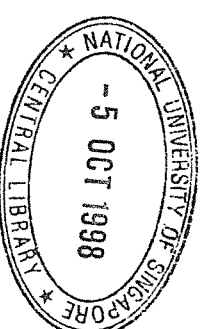


Indian Traffic

*Identities in Question in Colonial
and Postcolonial India*

Parama Roy



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nialism is an arresting exercise, one that surely calls for a gloss, however brief. For this I turn to Dipesh Chakrabarty, whose compelling discussion of the "failure" of modernity in postcolonial India, albeit about a later and quite different moment in colonial history, resonates with the one under consideration in this chapter. In "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History," he speaks persuasively of the differences between a bourgeois and a colonial (in his case, Indian) modernity. Among other things, he calls our attention to the "antihistorical and antimodern" elements in the latter; he takes note for instance of the "devices of collective memory," including subaltern and elite constructions of "'mythical' pasts/futures," which were deployed by (colonial) Indians in the process of claiming subjecthood.⁵⁵ What the instance of the *Personal Narrative* would suggest is that such modes of remembering/foretelling are also, (perhaps) paradoxically, a staple of the teleology of a bourgeois (and colonizing) modernity, which demands the "premodern" and "mythic" as a condition of the narrative of history and universal reason. Burton must remember an Arab past in order to imagine a British imperial futurity.

TWO

Discovering India, Imagining *Thuggee*

I am a Thug, my father and grandfather were Thugs, and I have thugged with many. Let the government employ me and I will do its work.

CONFESSION OF THE THUG BUKHTAWAR IN JAMES SLEEMAN,
THUG, OR A MILLION MURDERS

He had met hundreds of other Deceivers, and the notes were a complete tale of all he had seen and heard and done, of all the Deceivers who had engaged in any action, with their descriptions, habits, and homes; of each murder, and how it had gone, and how it might have been prevented—or improved upon. The words could be read for either purpose, according to the spirit of the reader.

JOHN MASTERS, *THE DECEIVERS*

At the time that Burton was impersonating Mirza Abdullah in the bazars of Sind, another important narrative of disguise, surveillance, and racial crossing was being written in the subcontinent, this one under the auspices of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department of the East India Company's government. This was the narrative of the exposure and extirpation of a form of hereditary criminality called *thuggee*; it was to form a significant constitutive component of the authoritarian and interventionary reform of the 1830s and 1840s and to contribute to the still-emerging project of "discovering India." "It was with the flourish of mystery unveiled and mastered," writes a contemporary historian, "that a group of officers of the Political Department had lobbied for special operations against [a] 'murderous fraternity' and for special laws to deal with it."¹ It is that tale of *thuggee* that this chapter will take up, at least in part as a counterpoint to the Burtonian record of the Englishman as native. It examines the phenomenon designated *thuggee* by colonial authority in nineteenth-century India, a phenomenon whose emergence, codification, and overthrow was to become perhaps the founding moment for the study of indigenous criminality, as a problem of impersonation, visibility, and the transactions of reading. I use the example of *thuggee* to explore one of the various and often mutually discontinuous kinds of identities that were created, fixed, or rendered ambivalent for Indian colonial subjects. In approaching the problematic of *thuggee* in the colonial context through the optic of identity formation and subjection, I broach a nexus of concerns that cohere around the epistemes of representation and

knowledge: the problematic of the formation of colonial knowledge, the contested, changing, and uneven definitions of law, order, criminality, and reform in early-nineteenth-century India, the theorization of colonial identities (Indian and British), and the discursive problems associated with generating the moral subject of the civilizing mission of British colonialism.

This chapter has three sections, with significant amounts of overlap. The first examines the official records of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department (first established in the 1830s), a cluster of documents that I have perhaps rather arbitrarily designated the *thuggee* archive. This includes first and foremost the files on *thuggee* and dacoity in the India Office Library and the National Archives of India. Also incorporated in this *thuggee* archive are the works (*Ramaseena, or a Vocabulary of the Peculiar Language Used by the Thugs* [1836]; *Report on Budhuk Alias Bagree Dacoits and Other Gang Robbers by Hereditary Profession* [1849]; *Report on the Depredations Committed by the Thug Gangs* [1840]) of William Henry Sleeman of *thuggee* fame, as well as of other officials associated directly or indirectly with the anti-thug campaign: James Sleeman, *Thug, or A Million Murders* (1920); Charles Hervey, *Some Records of the Crime* (1892); Edward Thornton, *Illustrations of the History and Practices of the Thugs* (1837); and the anonymously authored *The Thugs or Planners of India* (1839), an abridged version of the *Ramaseena* for an American audience. This inventory of *thuggee* materials also includes a number of biographies, fictionalizations, and nonofficial accounts of the "discovery" of the phenomenon and its eradication: James Hutton, *A Popular Account of the Thugs and Dacoits, the Hereditary Carriers and Gang-Robbers of India* (1857); A. J. Wighman, *No Friend for Travellers* (1959); George Bruce, *The Strangers: The Cult of Thuggee and Its Overthrow in British India* (1968); Francis Tuke, *The Yellow Scarf* (1961); and Philip Meadows Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug* (1839). These are collectively designated the archive in this chapter, despite the incommensurability in their generic status; this has been done because there appears to be very little significant difference between one text and another in this collection. Each seems to repeat the others in an uncanny fashion; each narrates the same incidents in almost exactly the same rhetorical mode; and each looks to W. H. Sleeman's productions as the founding texts of the *thuggee* narrative. (Meadows Taylor's novel differs from these only in its focus on a single thug and its accumulation of additional [fictional] detail.)

The second section focuses on the special juridical procedures that had to be instituted in order to deal with some of the most intractable problems associated with a bizarre and enigmatic variety of criminality. The final section provides a reading of the 1952 work on the thugs by John Masters, *The Detectives*, a novel that was popularized in the 1980s in a film of that name by Merchant Ivory. What sets this novel apart from the rest of the archive is the turn it gives to the always already familiar narrative of *thuggee* through its fo-

cus on the tensions of the investigating subject and its interest in the *English* impersonation of Indianness and Englishness. It allows us a way of (re)visiting and (re)inflecting the *thuggee* archive through its stress on the colonizing male's desires and identifications, and thus forms an apposite corollary to the accent on Indian impersonation that informs the discourse of criminal law.

At this point I should add a note about the limits of the enterprise undertaken in this chapter. In the first place, I do not wish to furnish another account of *thuggee* or to enter the traffic in competing narratives of what might have constituted a material thug organization or practice. Nor am I interested in reinscribing the practices of the thugs in the register of subaltern insurgency, though, given that subalternity is most properly construed as a *relational* rather than an essential category,² I am not unwilling to grant the thugs' subaltern status. I am certainly sympathetic to Ranajit Guha's model of reading subaltern insurgency (as a "turning things upside down") through the texts of counterinsurgency.³ But, given the exclusions listed earlier in this paragraph, for me to read *thuggee* as resistive, anticolonial, proto-nationalist, or even antistate may be philosophically not discontinuous with the reading practices that produced the thug as a demonized and completely irrational entity. My object here is not to recuperate a subaltern consciousness, even one that is acknowledged to be ineluctably discursive, "a theoretical fiction to entitle the project of reading,"⁴ though I concede that the question of "subaltern consciousness" cannot be completely bypassed.

I shall confine myself instead to examining the performative subjectivity of the thug, as it is constructed in the discourse of *thuggee*, as a way of teasing out, extending, and transforming some of the implications of representation, mimicry, and visibility in the colonial context. What I will engage are the models of reading that are provided by the *thuggee* archives—how they are formed, consolidated, or (partially) interrupted. And what I do argue is that the reading of the uncovering of *thuggee* as an enabling moment for the colonial state in its quest for the consolidation of judicial power needs to be, if not displaced, at least complicated, by the acknowledgment that *thuggee* forms an especially intransigent moment within the colonial construction of criminality; it is a moment that confounds and unsettles the received wisdom about identity formation, truth production, and meliorative possibilities in early-nineteenth-century India. What I also argue is that the discourse on and around *thuggee* can be instrumental in opening up our present understanding of the theorization of colonial identity, especially as it engages questions of familiarity, visibility, and reproducibility. The text of *thuggee* provides, for instance, a point of entry into a wider range of mimic desires, identifications, and positions than someone like Bhabha explicitly engages⁵—for instance, the colonizer's fascination with going native, the

English mining of Englishness, or the indigenous mining of indigenous subject positions—as well as foregrounding questions of class, gender, and sexuality.

THE THUG

The first thugs were not arrested by the British until 1799, after the defeat at Seringapatam of Tipu Sultan, one of the most potent threats to the expansionist ambitions of the East India Company; it was not evident to the British at the time, though, that the stranglers were thugs or hereditary killers. The first mention of the law-and-order problem posed by thugs occurs in 1810, in the commander-in-chief's instructions to sepoy prosecutors in 1810, in the dangers of traveling at night and carrying large sums of cash instead of bills of exchange;⁶ but *thuggee* as a significant social arrangement or discursive formation does not feature in this caution to the sepoy. Thornton reproduces some correspondence between British magistrates and police officials of the Western Provinces in the years 1814–1816 on the subject of thugs; at this point knowledge about them appears very fragmentary, with no reference to shared religious rituals or language or an idiosyncratic form of murder. It appears that the notion of *thuggee* as a system rather than a disarticulated set of violent acts was first broached in 1816 by Dr. Richard Sherwood, who wrote an essay detailing its genealogy, organization, and argot for the *Madras Literary Gazette*.⁷ It proved, however, enormously difficult to compel belief in the existence of such a fraternity (this was to remain a problem in the decades to come), even among British political officers, magistrates, and law-enforcement officials. Meadows Taylor describes the capture of large numbers of thugs in Bundelkhand and Malwa in the 1820s, an event that failed to "[excite] more than a passing share of public attention."⁸ It was not until Captain W. H. Sleeman undertook the exercise of decoding and exposing *thuggee* in 1830, after the unexpected confession of the captured bandit Feringheea, that a grand narrative of *thuggee* began to emerge.

Despite this relatively recent discovery, however, *thuggee* as praxis and as identity was always represented as being of almost inconceivable antiquity, conceived in the precolonial past and sanctioned by long duration and popular Hindu mythology; if not textual doctrine. A. J. Wighman, echoing his nineteenth-century predecessors, asserts that though evidence of the existence of *thuggee* is first found in records of the late thirteenth century, "it is obvious that they must have been well-established at a much earlier date."⁹ Some writers, like Sherwood, traced its origins to the Arab, Afghan, and Mughal conquests of India of several centuries earlier; James Sleeman and others traced the thugs back to the times of Herodotus. The thug Feringheea is said to have claimed that the sculptures at Ellora, which included repre-

sentations of all the professions on earth, featured a depiction of a thug plying his deadly trade.¹⁰ All the reports without exception demonstrate a tenacious need to generate a creation myth, to locate not just a point of discovery but a point of origin, and to establish a precolonial genealogy. But at the beginning, as Geoff Bennington has said about national histories, is also the myth of a beginning; and the origins of *thuggee* keep receding into a more and more distant historical/mythological point of inauguration.¹¹ In fact, several of the accounts end up locating its beginning in a Hindu myth of creation.

The thugs, as they are represented in nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial representations, were a cult of professional stranglers who preyed on travelers—though never on Englishmen—as an act of worship to the popular Hindu goddess Kail. They were represented as hereditary killers drawn from all regions, religions, classes, and castes, united by their devotion to Kail and the act of strangulation, which was, in this reading, quite literally sacralized. The thugs were bound to their calling—and to each other—by shared signifying systems: a language, a belief in the divine origin of the practice, and a dizzying array of minutely observed rituals, prohibitions, and superstitions. The *thuggee* system functioned as a quasi-religious fraternity that, paradoxically, would accommodate just about every Indian. It was defined as a compelling and characteristically Indian form of social (ir)rationality, and the practice was represented as resting upon an interlocking network of constitutive contradictions.

Though the thugs robbed their victims and the confessions usually demonstrate a very lucid recall of the division of the plunder, *thuggee* was not conceived as having any economic base, particularly because those involved in it appeared to have fixed abodes, peaceful occupations, and a respectable place in the social and caste hierarchies during those times when they were not engaged in killing and plunder. While Sherwood does speculate, albeit briefly and unevenly, on the proximate material causes of *thuggee*, the question becomes progressively leached out of subsequent, and more hegemonic, exegeses of *thuggee*. All the writers on the subject are insistent, to greater or lesser degrees, that the thugs must not be regarded as exigent, dispossessed, or rebellious subjects; they are unlike the bandits of folk myth in being devious, unmarried ("cowardly" is the adjective most often used), and almost obscenely respectable.¹² They are characterized instead as hereditary killers whose "joyous occupation" was, paradoxically, not only a matter of caste duty and therefore ontological necessity but also a prime instance of unalienated labor. By the time we come to James Sleeman's hagiographic account of his grandfather's exploits, the act of strangulation has not only been uncoupled from the usual motives for murder but has acquired a quasi-ibidinal charge: "The taking of human life for the sheer lust of killing was the Thugs' main object: the plunder, however pleasant, being

a secondary consideration. . . . Here was no body of amateur assassins, driven to crime by force of circumstance, but men of seeming respectability and high intelligence, often occupying positions of importance and responsibility in their normal lives, secretly trained from boyhood to the highest degree of skill in strangulation."¹³ Sleeman is not alone in this reading of the combined erotic and religious investment in murder. Taylor, in *Confessions of a Thug*, hints at the homoerotic subtext of a thug's murder of a handsome lad; and George MacMunn explicitly couples the left-hand Tanturism (including exorbitant and unauthorized sexual acts) of Kali worshippers with behaviors like *thuggee* and nationalist violence:

The murder trials that have followed on the sedition and secret murder cult in Bengal, and indeed throughout India, show in their records how the Hindu student depraved and often injured by too early eroticism, turns to the suggestiveness of the murder-monger, and worships the nitro-glycerine bomb as the apotheosis of his goddess [Kali]. . . . The student and the assistant editor of the rag, that but exists to inflame students and pays its way by advertising the potent aphrodisiacs among them, are the nidus of the bomb-cult.¹⁴

Katherine Mayo also locates the worship of Kali, premature and excessive sexual activity, and acts of anticolonial terrorism within a single perceptual grid.¹⁵ This confluence of violence, illegitimacy, and homoerotic desire is to resurface in *The Decifiers*.

Some twentieth-century scholars of colonial history have sought to posit an alternative, materialist histories of the phenomenon called *thuggee*. Hirshal Gupta traces the development of *thuggee* or banditry in the early nineteenth century to the success of the East India Company's expansionist policy, speculating that a significant number of people captured as thugs by the Thuggee and Dacoity Department in the 1830s and 1840s were erstwhile soldiers or officials in the employ of rulers whose states had recently come under British control. These people were among those who had lost their employment or fallen from favor as a result of the annexation or reconfiguration of the Indian princely states.¹⁶ Sandria Freitag on the other hand points to the displacement of peripatetic groups as a result of the ousting of local settled rulers who had traditionally provided some protection to such groups and to the establishment of the land-revenue-based state as a possible explanation for the instances of collective acts of violence. She also glosses the violence of dacoits—as of similar groups—as bids for power and upward social mobility that would have been acknowledged as such and accommodated by precolonial Indian state formations.¹⁷ Stewart Gordon argues that the large number of marauding groups that were jockeying for political power in Malwa (where most of the thugs seemed to be based) in the late eighteenth century posed a threat to the stable sources of revenue in the region and necessitated the creation of external sources of revenue.

Those designated thugs were "locally recruited, locally based" marauders hired to plunder outside the neighborhood, as it were, in order to make up for revenue that might have been lost to larger marauding groups.¹⁸

As I have already mentioned, Englishmen were never targeted by the thugs; a few of the written accounts attribute the unsolved murder of a Lieutenant Maunsell (or Monsell) in 1812 to thugs (as does the film version of *The Decifiers* [1987], which opens with that killing), but most of the *thuggee* texts point to the fact that the British had no personal investment in the problem. Almost unfailingly these accounts point to the antithug campaign as exemplary instances of the active benevolence of British rule, so often unjustly maligned or compared unfavorably with indigenous rule. James Sleeman, who is particularly apoplectic on this issue, argues that twentieth-century Indian demands for independence were in effect a call for a return to the days of *thuggee*: "Had this small handful of British officials, scattered like poppies in a corn-field, shown the slightest timidity in grappling with this gigantic task, they would surely have fallen victims to the Thugs at the outset, in which case millions of Indians alive to-day would never have been born, including possibly those who now agitate for a restoration of the conditions under which Thuggee thrived and batten[ed]."¹⁹

Colonial accounts thus represent *thuggee* as outside a realm of political and economic rationality (since it is religiously sanctioned, grounded in caste, and linked to exorbitant pleasures). Nonetheless, as the obsessive invocations of the Mutiny of 1857 and of the Bengal revolutionaries of the twentieth century indicate, *thuggee* was simultaneously addressed (even if not overtly acknowledged) as a peculiarly potent threat to the authority and benevolence of the empire in India. "To the colonial regime," writes David Arnold, "crime and politics were almost inseparable: serious crime was an implicit defiance of state authority and a possible prelude to rebellion; political resistance was either a 'crime' or the likely occasion for it."²⁰ Freitag points to the departures of British police action from those of their Mughal predecessors; while the Mughals delegated responsibility for containing collective crime to local functionaries, the British felt such corporate criminal behaviors were nothing other than a defiance of the state itself.²¹ She points to the fundamental distinctions, in terms of both the allocation of resources and the formulation of legal procedures, that the Raj made between crimes committed by individuals ("ordinary crime") and those committed by collectivities ("extraordinary crime"):

Elaboration of legal codes and police establishments to deal with individual crime conveyed the impression that "the rule of law" had been introduced into British India; yet the annual compilation of crime and police statistics makes clear the minimal state resources committed to policing individual crime. Unless such crime grew alarmingly in a short period, or its policing fell

significantly short of what came to be seen as the norms of efficiency (for an inefficient force), the state did not reckon individual crime to be of great importance. By contrast, however, the British perceived collectively criminal actions to be either directed against, or weakening, the authority of the state. As a consequence, the British repeatedly felt the need to launch centralized police forces against "extraordinary" crime and viewed their inefficacy as a measure of the Raj's impotence.²²

The *thuggee* records (including the confessions of thug approvers) endeavor to provide—through the dominant tropes of ritualized, religiously ratified, and libidinally charged slaughter—a tightly knit, seamless, and self-validating account of an exceptional Indian criminal practice. Yet, even as the record invokes the unvarying trademarks of thug practice, it inescapably registers the provisionality of its own categorization. The thug's signature—murder by strangulation, using a (silk) handkerchief—does not appear in every act labeled *thuggee*; swords and poison feature as agents of destruction quite as much as the talismanic *rumal* (handkerchief). Such wide variations along a continuum of criminal activity were to lead, after the 1830s, to an expansion of the provenance of *thuggee*: the term came to include all kinds of organized and corporate criminal activity (including poisoning and the kidnapping of children) that was understood to be hereditary and/or itinerant. The confessions also seem to demonstrate that at least some thugs were initiated into professional practice not in adolescence or early manhood by older male family members but later in life, most typically in response to a situation of financial exigency.

Not only was it difficult to isolate certain crimes as the acts of thugs, it was never easy either to establish the exceptional and profoundly aberrant character of *thuggee*. The common complaint in all the *thuggee* accounts without exception is that the activity of the thugs seemed to mesh with, exacerbating ease into existing indigenous networks of wealth and power, since they were supported by zamindars (landowners), Indian princes, law-enforcement officials, merchants, and even ordinary people. As Freitag suggests, "among organized criminals the thugs may have been the group most thoroughly embedded in local society."²³ The worship of Kali (also called Devi, or Bhawani) could not easily be coded as an eccentric religious practice either. Though some narratives do interpret the thugs' invocation of the goddess on the scaffold as proof positive of guilt ("Their invocation of Bhawani at the drop was a confession of their guilt, for no one in such a situation invokes Bhawani but a Thug, and he invokes no other deity in any widespread adoration of Kali across regions and religions, among those identified as law-abiding as well as those constituted as criminal."²⁵ Finally, while Thug beliefs and rituals, especially those enacted at the start of an

expedition, were elaborately detailed, it was also asserted that in India expeditions in quest of plunder were qualitatively no different from expeditions undertaken for territorial aggrandizement; rulers and robbers alike took the auspices after the Dashehra festival, before setting out on their *bada-shahi kam* (kingly work).

Hence at least two contesting readings emerge: one defines the thugs as a community apart, existing in enmity against law-abiding, scrutable, and locally anchored subjects; the other identifies them as natural to indigenous society, aided and abetted by all, and mirroring and reproducing that society's values. The uneasy fit between the contextualizing move and the essentializing one was productive of an aporia, which could only be resolved by invoking that most powerful of all Indological epistemes—that of caste.²⁶ All the contradictions and the seemingly endless heterogeneity of the subject category of the thug are subsumed within that category, which is reified as coherent and inflexible and emptied of any possibility of subjective freedom. Once *thuggee* as social alliance was taxonomized as homologous to, if not identical with (and the slippage from homology to identity occurs without any apparent discursive strain), a caste, the thug could simultaneously inhabit what had earlier been discrepant subject positions: he could simultaneously be an exceptional criminal and a representative Hindu, or Indian, since in the colonial imaginary the territory of Hinduism is often coextensive with that of India.²⁷ Even this reconciliation was not without its tensions, of course, since *thuggee* as a philosophical system and a social formation seemed to work strongly against the grain of the received colonial view of India as irrevocably fractured along the fault lines of caste and religion. Nor was the caste explanation completely adequate to the great and, as it seemed, illogical hybridity of *thuggee*. As a socioreligious formation *thuggee* seemed to colonial investigators to be aligned with popular, indeed demotic, forms of Hinduism in its reverence for Kali, except that it attracted a large number of Muslim adherents, who seemed to pay homage quite unproblematically both to the goddess and to the strictures of the Koran. Here it is important to point to the varied, contingent, and often irreconcilable constructions of Hindu tradition in colonial discourse; the representation of Hinduism in the discourse of *thuggee* is, for instance, quite discontinuous with that which is operative in the discourse on sati, which was formulated in a roughly contemporaneous moment. In the case of sati, as Lata Mani has argued, colonial officials made energetic and systematic attempts to establish Hinduism as a religion of the book; and Brahmanical readings and textual authorities were privileged over custom and local religious and social practice.²⁸ But in the instance of *thuggee*, Hinduism is defined entirely as and by custom. Moreover, at the popular or subaltern level, Hindu and Muslim forms of worship and systems of belief may well have been less distinct than

they were to become (especially for more elevated castes and classes) later in the century. The whole question in fact of Hindu doctrine and praxis and its relation to thug identity is notoriously murky and ill defined.

Further complicating this discursive construction of *thuggee* was the fact that professional thugs cultivated the appearance of the most civic-minded of citizens and were conscientious about the discharge of familial, social, and religious obligations. The very characteristics that made them successful con men—their polish, their social and rhetorical skills, their extraordinary capacity for duplicating identities—also ensured their immense respectability in civil society. But what rendered *thuggee* particularly elusive and frustrating to British observers was its relative invisibility, its skill at camouflage, and the difficulty of establishing it as a pervasive yet eccentric form of lawlessness. Thug murders were typically performed without shedding blood and without using identifiable offensive weapons of any kind: they were performed far from the victims' homes, and the bodies were carefully buried. Because of the care exercised in the killing and the disposal of the corpses (victims were buried with great dispatch, and their graves were filled with rocks to keep out any marauding animals) and the hazards attendant upon travel in nineteenth-century India, these murders generally failed to register as murders. Local landowners, rulers, and policemen connived at these murders for their own benefit, or because they were prompted, it was argued, by the heavy demands of superstition; and the peasantry, we are told, simply ignored the bodies that occasionally appeared in fields and wells. This raised the question of how far the circuit of criminality actually extended: if local officials and the police tolerated and even encouraged *thuggee* and ordinary folk made no complaint about it, who could be said to remain unimplicated in it? Under the circumstances, everything and everyone was liable to suspicion, since the system of *thuggee* was both remarkably inclusive and remarkably discreet in its operations. Hence British *thuggee* inspectors were in the discomfiting position of focusing on crimes that no one else acknowledged, certainly not (from the evidence of these writers) most Indian princes or zamindars or even common folk and generally not even the majority of the British magistracy or the civil service. British scholars of *thuggee* were thus involved in a detective project hobbled by an almost-fatal lack of empirical detail. All natives were potentially thugs, since the system of *thuggee* was remarkably inclusive; and the most seemingly innocent objects, like handkerchiefs or *gur* (unrefined sugar, ritually consumed at the commencement of an expedition), could participate in a diabolical signifying system. And while British ignorance of *thuggee* (at least until the 1830s) might contrast favorably with Indian knowledge—and therefore complicity—it was susceptible of more objectionable interpretations; in Masters's novel, there is the danger that British "ignorance" of

thuggee can be read by the natives in a particularly unflattering light: "In the nine years of the English Company's rule nothing had been done against the Deceivers. But William realized now that most Indians knew at least of the existence of the Deceivers; and, knowing, they could not believe the English did not also know; therefore the English officials too were sharing in the spoils; so what was the use of informing?"²⁹ (In the film version, the Indians have good reason to be suspicious: George Angel Smith, the exemplary servant of the East India Company, has full knowledge of the activities of the thugs and profits from it.) Here it is not simply the natives who are the object of investigation, codification, and supervision; an alternative modality of interpretation is imaginable, in which colonial authority is itself open to variant readings, including those it has not authorized.

All these factors made the retrieval of information and the policing of *thuggee* particularly vexing. And creating an archive and standardizing reader response was not easy either. Through each *thuggee* expedition and each act of *thuggee* was performed by the book, attended by minutely detailed rituals and scrupulously observed omens, and was immediately identifiable as such to those who could read the signs, it was not immediately visible as such to those who could not or did not see *thuggee* as a semiosis. Even in the 1860s, when knowledge about *thuggee* had been codified, circulated, and reproduced and was underwritten by wide-ranging institutional and legal support, Charles Hervey complained that his subordinates were yet imperfect readers of the complex and mysterious text of *thuggee*,

some correctly recognizing Thuggee in instances which were palpably the deed of experts, although death should not have taken place; others only doing so where death had resulted; some classing certain murders as cases of "Thuggee" without reference to the means resorted to in the perpetration thereof; others who wholly pass by cases of poisoning whether followed by death or not, although they bore evidence of being the acts of class criminals; some who restrict their notice to selected cases only of its occurrence, passing by other similar instances; some who endeavour to distinguish between different degrees of poisoning, some calling "murder by poison" *Thuggee* [*sic*], others not doing so[.] . . . others who lump all such kindred offences under round numbers without any narration of the attendant circumstances, contented only with quoting against them the sections of the Penal Code under which they were triable or were tried.³⁰

With all the discrepant valences of this discourse, one factor remained crucial in the determination of *thuggee*: the idea of hereditary criminality. This was not a particularly novel reading of corporate criminal activity in colonial India; as far back as 1772, the dacoits of Bengal were strenuously and repeatedly characterized not as individual or collective subjects responding to socioeconomic transformations engendered by the sudden

ascendancy of the East India Company or indeed to any other material circumstance, or even to chance, but as fulfilling a hereditary calling, if not a genetic predisposition.³¹ And, as Sanjay Nigam has convincingly demonstrated, the colonial reification of caste as coherent and inflexible, combined with the received notion of hereditary criminality (most fully exemplified in the instance of *thuggee*), was to have a long and ominous history in colonial and postcolonial India; the Criminal Tribes and Castes Act of 1872 was to designate (without any possibility of appeal) a number of vagrant and impoverished "communities" as "criminal by birth" and thus subject to surveillance, control, and attempted rehabilitation.³² I am struck here by the considerable (though not complete) overlap of this discourse with Michel Foucault's description of the emergence of the homosexual as a distinct ontological category in the nineteenth century:

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature. . . . The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.³³

Because *thuggee* was such a slippery issue, a kind of legal, disciplinary, and discursive apparatus was brought to bear on it that did not occur in the case, for instance of sati, another retrograde and horrific practice apparently authorized by Hinduism. This is not of course to assert that sati as a discursive formation was unproblematic for colonial administrators and reformers; Lata Mani has pointed that the abolition of sati in colonial India was preceded by its legalization and has drawn attention to the valorization of the "voluntary" sati in colonial and nationalist discourses. But *thuggee* was not so much spectacular—as sati was (at least until 1829)—as invisible. As a result it was much more difficult to discursively track its trajectory and to determine the success of the pacification. Sati was abolished in 1829, and there are no official records after that date of the practice; it was presumed that it had simply been legislated out of existence. But in the instance of *thuggee*, such faith in the efficacy of legislative sanction is much more uncertain.

In the juridical domain, *thuggee* was defined as an "exceptional case" in the name of a colonial contingency, since *thuggee* by definition was exorbitant to standard law-and-order discourse and marked at all points by immoderation.³⁴ This enabled the establishment of a discursive and juridical system that was entirely self-referential and self-validating, in which it was sufficient to be identified as a thug or "hereditary criminal" through an

approver's testimony, without actually being convicted of a specific crime, to be liable to arrest, trial, and, almost inevitably, conviction. I will return to this shortly.

Knowledge of *thuggee* as an essence then had to be constructed, crucially, around an absence; and all the confessions, all the subject effects produced by the testimony of approvers, were a strenuous effort to recover a "consciousness," a consciousness that would provide the foundation for the revelations that ratified the antithug campaign. But if *thuggee* was as far-reaching and as subtle as W. H. Sleeman and his associates insisted, and if thug ontology and practice was determined by birth, how could an Englishman ever hope to know the whole truth and nothing but the truth? How could one verify the confessions of the approvers and establish checks over their control of the official record? Thornton registers exasperation at the contaminated nature of the confessions: "Few things are more difficult to a native of India than to tell the truth, under any circumstances; and the confessions of criminals, in all countries, may be expected to contain a mixture of truth and falsehood. The deposition of Moklal is not consistent with the rest; nor even with another statement made by himself, made in conversation with Captain Sleeman."³⁵ He also cites (as do other accounts of *thuggee*) the instance of an approver who functioned as a double agent, beguiling his English employer into believing him committed to the capture of thugs while providing information and English passes [documents authorizing unimpeded travel within, and between, designated territories] to his criminal comrades.³⁶

While James Sleeman claims that W. H. Sleeman and his colleagues, in the 1830s, "resolved that this trade of Thuggee should no longer be any more a mystery than tailoring or carpentering, began to initiate themselves into all the secrets of the craft, and were soon, in their knowledge of the theory of the profession, little behind the professors themselves,"³⁷ the "secrecy" of *thuggee* never disappeared as a threat. W. H. Sleeman—speaking of course with the superior wisdom of his newfound knowledge—records a state preceding revelation with combined horror and incredulity:

While I was in the Civil charge of the district of Narsingpore . . . no ordinary robbery or theft could be committed without my being acquainted with it; nor was there a robber or a thief of the ordinary kind in the district, with whose character I had not become acquainted in the discharge of my duty as magistrate; and if any man had then told me, that a gang of assassins by profession resided in the village of Kandele, not four hundred yards from my court, and that [in the] extensive groves of the village of Mandesur, only one stage from me . . . was one of the largest Beles, or places of murder in all India; and that large gangs from Hindustan and the Deccan used to rendezvous in these groves, remain in them for many days altogether every year, and carry their dreadful trade along all the lines of road that pass by and branch off them,

with the knowledge and connivance of the two landholders by whose ancestors these groves had been planted, I should have thought him a fool or a mad man; and yet nothing could have been more true.³⁸

Indeed, the entire discourse of *thuggee* is troped by figures of darkness, mystery, inscrutability, unpredictability, and unexpected menace, even as W. H. Sleeman and his assistants are inserted into a heroic narrative of battle against evil. "Secrecy is indispensable" for thug ceremonies, and "[a]n impenetrable veil of darkness is thrown over their atrocities";³⁹ "danger was everywhere, unseen and unexpected"⁴⁰ for the Englishmen involved in the anti-*thuggee* enterprise (even though Englishmen were known never to be attacked by thugs); they were like "men isolated in the midst of a dangerous, trackless and gloomy jungle, without map or compass";⁴¹ and "[the] old Thug Associations, which have been now effectually put down in all parts of India, . . . would assuredly rise up again, and flourish under the assurance of religious sanction. . . . were the strength of the special police, employed in the suppression, hastily reduced, or its vigilance relaxed."⁴² Once again, Foucault on the discourse of sex and sexuality is apropos: "What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret*."⁴³

This very obscurity, this elusiveness that characterizes the thug as discursive object, could and did function as an enabling moment for the colonial law-and-order machine. Since it could never be decisively established—given the terms of the discourse—that *thuggee* had been extirpated, the need for endless vigilance was ratified. The moral viability of the civilizing mission, indeed the very ground of its possibility, is the never-satisfied, endlessly proliferating need for reform. In the case of *thuggee*, colonial officials were confirmed in their belief that the work of civilizing is never done. Thus many writers warn repeatedly of the dangers of celebrating the demise of *thuggee* prematurely; in 1893, Charles Hervey, successor to Colonel W. H. Sleeman of *thuggee* fame, was still chasing after thugs. These officers point not only to the hypnotic lure of *thuggee* for its practitioners but also to the fact that native policemen and landlords are only too anxious to conceal evidence of thug crimes from credulous British officials overeager to congratulate themselves on the cessation of this practice and overoptimistic about the all-encompassing vigilance of colonial power. *Thuggee* never really goes away as a *present* problem as sati might be said to do; it may almost be said to function as a trope for all that is uncontrollable in the law-and-order situation. In fact, the construction of hereditary, pervasive, and socially or religiously sanctioned criminality inaugurated in the discourse on *thuggee* reappears throughout the nineteenth century in the discourse on dacoits,

buddhaks, *diatoora* poisoners (all of whom came to occupy the same criminal category as the thug), and specifically designated criminal tribes and castes.

How else might we understand this absence or unknowability that tropes the discourse of *thuggee*? Certainly this simultaneous fear of and pleasure in the duplicity and omnipresence of the thug deserves some consideration, especially in light of the questions it raises about the status of knowledge, subject positions, and representation in the colonial state. Bhabha's model of the emergence of shifty civil subject of the colonial polity through mimicry can be extended here, it seems to me, to some of the other possibilities of mimicry in the colonial theater.⁴⁴ The situation of the thug is analogous to but certainly not identical to that of the not quite/not white native—the thug after all is not mimicking colonial ontology—though his capacity for traffic in identities and positions is staggering. The instance of *thuggee* intimates, I think, that the colonized subject's mimicry need not necessarily have the colonizer as its focus in order to function as menace; mimicry, even if it is mimicry of indigenous subject positions, frustrates the colonial desire for homogenized, duplicable, and knowable native subjects in whom subalternity is sought to be reproduced through the authorized version of mimicry. If there is one thing that characterizes the thug of the archives, it is the multiplicity and unpredictability of his manifestations. As we have seen, it was what was perceived as this faculty for disguise and invisibility that had to be criminalized by the laws designed to convict thugs; theoretically there was no such entity as an honest thug, and many so-called thugs were convicted who were, according to the official records, engaged in "honest labour." There is an ongoing and strenuous endeavor in the discourse of *thuggee* to interpellate the thug as an essence, a move which attests to the anxiety of rupture that subverts the totalizing epistemologies of colonialism. Yet the thug as discursive object is strikingly resistant to such fixity; he is all things to all people. If native identity can be staged, can be plural, then what are the implications for colonial authority and colonialism's project of information retrieval? *Thuggee*, I would suggest, introduces a disturbance in the paradigm of information retrieval that often seems dominant in texts like *Kim* and *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah*, as well as the notion of native authenticity and ontological purity that is a governing trope of colonial discourse. The thug, through his capacity for disguise and impersonation and his skill at negotiating multiple and competing identities, usurps the colonizer's privilege of complex subjectivity and of movement between subject positions and thus can be read to assume some control over both the construction and flow of colonial knowledge. So he never becomes fully naturalized as the disciplinary subject or, in other words, the knowable subject, of the colonial polity. And *thuggee*, later re-

ten as dacoity, continues to function within the law-and-order context in the colonial and postcolonial state formations as a trope for the unruly and unreformable energies that cannot easily be accommodated to the needs of the civilizing mission.⁴⁵

THE LAW

The writings and reports of W. H. Sleeman, which form the core texts around which the tale of *thuggee* is orchestrated, represent a concerted and monumental effort to illuminate and classify the obscurity of *thuggee*. Sleeman emerges, in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century accounts of *thuggee*, as the hero of his own story. Even those works, like George Bruce's *The Strangers* and James Sleeman's *Thug, or A Million Murders*, that purport to be histories of the thugs rather than biographies, present the account of *thuggee* as coextensive with the life of Sleeman. Sleeman emerges from these texts (and his own, of course) as an exemplary figure in nineteenth-century criminal and judicial procedures, who undertakes a self-appointed messianic task of uncovering and reading. Nothing in his story happens by chance. The discovery of the scope of *thuggee* as a result of Feringheea's confession is (re)written as an inevitability in the task of reconstructing *thuggee*, and Sleeman's anti-*thuggee* efforts traced back to the moment of his arrival in India in 1809. All of Sleeman's life and work before 1830 is thus written as a prelude to the climactic scenes of thug hunting and as a preparation for reading the mysteries of this esoteric Indian cult. Sleeman above all is transformed in this telling into an almost Saidean figure of knowledge; he is the *shikari* (hunter) who, with his gift of languages, long residence in India without being "Orientalized," and experience in war and in settling newly conquered territories, can present an ideal model of the exegete. Though a crime like *thuggee* is quite literally inconceivable to those "living under an efficient government," Sleeman is no Inspector Clouseau, no naive Englishman who stumbles unaware upon a vast organized conspiracy. He knows what he is looking for; indeed, Tucker's biography imagines Sleeman becoming the butt of his colleagues' jokes during his early years in India because of his eagerness to "discover" *thuggee*.⁴⁶ In this telling, *thuggee* remains Sleeman; indeed, it is as old as India itself. Yet the text of *thuggee* remains unread until Sleeman, the reader-as-savior, provides the hermeneutic key to the mystery. He establishes the exceptional quality of *thuggee*, distinguishing it from outlawry, banditry, and other illegalities necessitated by privation; he establishes the story of *thuggee* as a moral narrative and embeds it in the culture of an Orientalist India.

The man whose ideal was, like that of a Sherlock Holmes, "to be everywhere, and to see everything,"⁴⁷ proved phenomenally successful—in his own terms—at cracking the code of *thuggee*. He showed a remarkable car-

pacity—far greater than that of Sherwood or even that of the few officers who had harassed the thugs in the early decades of the century—to globalize and codify discrete accounts of crimes in different times and places into a metanarrative of hereditary crime. On the evidence of approvers, he created gigantic and detailed "family trees" of captured and uncaptured thugs that provided copious details of each man's crimes, place of origin, place in the caste hierarchy, and personal and professional antecedents; he also mapped out all the *hills* (places of slaughter and burial) in central India. Every thug could then be located on Sleeman's gigantic grid, and information and operations were centralized. The local knowledge of the approvers now became part of a giant signifying chain. For the thug, there was no escape: his history and his nature were always already known to the all-seeing eyes of the colonial bureaucracy and criminal-justice system; his experience formed a narrative even before he made his confession and was in no way dependent on it. As Amceer Ali says in *Confessions of a Thug*, "The man unfolded a roll of paper written in Persian, and read a catalogue of crime, of murders, every one of which I knew to be true; a faithful record it was of my past life, with but few omissions."⁴⁸ Sleeman also prepared a dictionary of Ramasee, the secret language of the criminal fraternity, with a vocabulary made up entirely of descriptions of criminal actions. This linguistic, geographic, and genealogical grid left out little that was germane to the needs of criminal justice in colonial India:

I have, I believe, entered in this vocabulary every thing to which Thugs in any part of India have thought it necessary to assign a peculiar term, and every term peculiar to their associations with which I have yet become acquainted. I am satisfied that there is no term, no rite, no ceremony, no opinion, no omen or usage that they have intentionally concealed from me; and if any have been accidentally omitted after the numerous narratives that I have had to record, and cases to investigate, they can be but comparatively very few and unimportant.⁴⁹

The doctrine of *thuggee* was not simply a novel yet apposite way of reading Indian criminality at a moment when the pressures to reform the East India Company by reforming India were particularly marked. The consequences of the discovery of *thuggee* were, in other words, not simply a philosophical reconstitution of Indian criminality. *Thuggee* also gave rise to a veritable cottage industry of policing and surveillance techniques, as well as ethnographic documentation. Like the system it purported to study, the discourse on *thuggee* was totalizing in its scope. In the juridical domain, *thuggee* was defined as an "exceptional case"; this enabled the establishment of a radically new machinery of arrest, conviction, and punishment in thug trials. The production of penal truth in thug trials proved, as we have seen, notoriously difficult. Since thugs were peripatetic operatives, who always com-

mitted their crimes far from home and disposed of their plunder quickly, evidence was not only destroyed but questions were raised about jurisdictional authority. Local functionaries were not just uncooperative; many were allegedly bound by a utilitarian calculus to thug gangs. In addition, the relatives of the putative victims displayed no zeal in the punishment of crime or the redress of wrongs; the vast majority refused to identify those missing as murdered at all. This uncooperative behavior was attributed to their fatalistic acceptance of all disasters (including, apparently, cholera, poisonous snakes, and sudden death). Even when thugs were captured, convicting them was rendered even more troublesome by the fact that Muslim criminal law disallowed the testimony of approvers.

The lack of independent witnesses, the unavailability in many cases of both bodies and booty—the sheer paucity of positivist evidence, in other words—could only be resolved in one way. The most important criminal conspiracy of the century (of all time, some of the authors claimed) could be adequately engaged only by a new conception of law. Many of the tactics adopted by those spearheading the antithug drive were not novel but had been pioneered earlier in Bengal; however, it was the Thuggee and Dacoity Department's use of these tactics that proved not only successful but replicable.⁵⁰ Since the law as currently defined made the complicity of individuals in particular crimes almost impossible to establish, specific criminal acts were no longer punishable as such. Instead, it was a subject position, or rather, an ontology, that was criminalized. It was enough to be a thug, without actually being convicted of a specific act of *thuggee*, to be liable to the extant measures of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department. As Radhika Singha wrote, "The strangest feature of this enactment was the use of a cant term 'Thugs' without explaining what precisely the offence of 'Thuggee' was. That such a term was acceptable at a time when a penal code upheld-ing precision and exactness was on the agenda is an indication of the success of a publicist campaign in official circles."⁵¹ Act XXX of 1836 directed that any person who was convicted of "having belonged to a gang of Thugs, [was] liable to the penalty of imprisonment for life; and [that] any person, accused of the offence, made punishable by the Act, [was] liable to be tried by any Court, which would have been competent to try him, if his offence had been committed within the district where that Court sits."⁵² (Act XXIV of 1843 extended the punitive sanctions of the *thuggee* laws to those found guilty of belonging to dacoit gangs.) Act XXX also dispensed with the last vestiges of Muslim criminal law (which is said to have provided greater protections for the accused and greater clemency for those standing trial Thuggee and Dacoity Department thought advisable for those standing trial as thugs) by doing away with the necessity for the *fatwa* (formal legal opinion) of the Muslim law officer. It applied with retrospective effect, and it established special courts for the trial of thugs—including those captured

outside company territory, within the kingdoms of the Indian princes—often with special magistrates appointed by the governor-general. It permitted the arrest of entire families, including women and children, as legitimate means of entrapping active (male) thugs; since *thuggee* was supposed to be a family affair anyway, transmitted in the genes and passed on from father to son, wives and children were also fit targets for the colonial state's punitive and corrective measures. The act admitted the testimony of approvers in lieu of the testimony of independent witnesses (which had been disallowed under Islamic law), a move which created a remarkable mechanics of truth production and conviction. (Act XIX of 1837, under the direction of Macaulay, did away with this "dual standard of evidence" in criminal law by making the testimony of approvers admissible in all courts of law, not just those prosecuting cases of *thuggee*.)⁵³ Yet it is by no means to be assumed that empiricism and observation were peripheral to the process, though it was observation of a very carefully demarcated kind; there is in the colonial archive an overwhelming weight given to the experiential dimension of the knowledge of such canonical figures as Sleeman. All disagreements encountered on the British side are attributed to inexperience, to the lack of a proper interpretive framework within which to place certain kinds of discoveries, or to a willful ingenuousness about the success of British rule.

The definition of *thuggee* as a form of hereditary, corporate, and religiously sanctioned identity allowed for no appeal by a thug convicted under its special decrees; in theory—and in practice—there was no such entity as an innocent thug. All those identified as thugs by approvers' testimony were automatically guilty, even if no specific crimes could be proved against them and even if there was no (other) evidence of their ever having associated with other thugs. Once the thug hunts began, criminal activity was not always necessary for arrest and conviction; even those "thugs" engaged in "honest labour" (a theoretical impossibility, given the terms of the course) were rounded up, tried, convicted, and imprisoned since the compelling, hereditary lure of *thuggee* was always latent in the thug. An overwhelmingly high proportion of those arrested were convicted, a fact which validated, the Thuggee and Dacoity Department believed, the thoroughness of its efforts and the justice of its cause.

Confessions were key to the discursive constitution of *thuggee*; not so much at the actual thug trials as in the manifold accounts of *thuggee* that were produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Meadows Taylor's novel, as far as structural organization is concerned, reads not very differently from the nonfictional official accounts of *thuggee*: a brief introduction followed by hundreds of pages of confession, interspersed more and more intermittently by the narrator's moral commentary. The confessional mode lent itself nicely to the narrative conventions and imperatives of the

nineteenth-century English novel, which encompassed both the Newgate novel and the spiritual autobiography.

One of the best approvers, Bukhtawar, provided a confession (which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter) that was a model for all thug confessions: "I am a Thug, my father and grandfather were Thugs, and I have thugged with many. Let the government employ me and I will do its work."⁵⁴ The confessions serve not to elicit what is not already known but to authenticate and authorize official knowledge of *thuggee* in general and specific crimes in particular, as well as to produce the thug as (colonial) criminal subject. For Foucault, the confession "transcend[s] all other evidence; an element in the calculation of the truth, it [is] also the act by which the accused accept[s] the charge and recognize[s] its truth; it transform[s] an investigation carried out without him into a voluntary affirmation. Through the confession, the accused himself [takes] part in the ritual of producing the truth."⁵⁵ In the eyes of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department, a failure to confess was evidence less of innocence than of hardness and an acquaintance with the byzantine ramifications of Indian criminal law.

And yet these confessions that dominate and drive all accounts of *thuggee* are not confessions as such, but approver's testimonies; the two, as Shahid Amin so appositely reminds us, are not identical. For while the confession proper seeks to dilute the guilt of the confessing subject, the approver's testimony, to be fully credible in the eyes of the law, must implicate its speaker as fully as possible in the illegality being described.⁵⁶

The fact that approvers' testimony was "tainted" and that they might either wittingly or unwittingly implicate the innocent was undeniably an issue, though anxiety on the score was aired only to be promptly shown up as unfounded. The *thuggee* records continually stress the ways in which the truth of each approver's testimony was tested against all the others. But even in these official accounts, it does not escape remark that the approvers' testimony regarding dates and other details do not always match,⁵⁷ though all discursive contradictions are always sought to be smoothed away. Bruce, who is the only one to raise overtly the possibility of the conviction of the innocent, blames not the system but its most visible instruments, the approvers: "Were innocent men convicted upon the evidence of revengeful informers? . . . Those Thugs who were no longer free to strangle on the roads may have conspired together to send victims to the gallows instead, for by killing in this way they could at once show Kali their continued devotion and save their own lives."⁵⁸ These testimonies were not required, under Act XXX, to be matched against the reports of independent witnesses or against the weight of circumstantial evidence; and none of the accused had the benefit of counsel, so the approvers were never cross-examined by anyone other than the officers of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department.

Even though the approvers were indispensable for forming the text of *thuggee* and for prosecuting thugs, their own status remained somewhat nebulous. On making "a full and ingenuous confession," an approver would be eligible to have his sentence of hanging or transportation commuted. But an approver could never be released, since the lure of the *rumal* made him irclaimable for honest society. It was also necessary that all approvers be convicted (not just arrested) thugs, since it was contrary to the nature of British justice to hold its subjects indefinitely without trial. How, though, could the government convict approvers when it had no evidence except for what they provided? The solution was to advise approvers to plead guilty to the general charge of being thugs, under the provisions of Act XXX, rather than to plead guilty to the charge of committing specific capital crimes (which could result in the death penalty); this would ensure their conviction, and then they could be held for life without questioning the authority that held them.⁵⁹ It was easier and more useful to hold approvers than to hang them; and they needed to be held forever in order to ensure the uninterrupted production of truths about *thuggee*. The above proceeding did away with the necessity of a regular trial (that is to say, one conducted under the special courts established by Act XXX) by having one whose outcome was known in advance; and it guaranteed that there would be no escape from the government's mercy.

Truth production and conviction was only part of the job of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department. Rehabilitation was also part of the program, though the official wisdom on rehabilitation was marked by considerable ambivalence. To be a part of a moral narrative, the antithug campaign could not be purely punitive in nature, especially in the instance of those prisoners who had not been convicted of particularly capital crimes. At the same time, if thugs were hereditary murderers who found the call to blood irresistible, they were not reformable subjects. The government's response to the problem of identity and rehabilitation was, even in its own terms, a markedly uneven and patently hierarchized one. Some of the most distinguished among the thugs were recruited into the police force. Some others were rewarded by W. H. Sleeman by being allowed to live near him with their families and followers in his compound, an arrangement about which Freitag observes: "The similarity between the spatial and psychological configurations of his compound and those of tag-landlord relations in a village is not coincidental."⁶⁰ Other thug approvers and prisoners and their families were settled in colonies and put to manual labor; from being dishonest and itinerant, they were compelled to be poor and settled. The focus of reform was the children of the thugs: they were taught various skills, though not taught to read and write (because it would make them dissatisfied with their condition). The sexuality of the sons of the thugs was

strictly regulated; they were not allowed to marry and breed a new generation of thugs. (A female thug was a rarity and was, presumably, a less potent conduit of the genetic material of hereditary criminality than was a male.)

Mature thugs, however, were less easily assimilable into a regime of morality and normalcy. Even captured thugs and informers emerge in the reports as notoriously impervious to all efforts at moral transformation. They repudiate repentance and reform, ascribing their cooperation entirely to pragmatic motives and describing their activities in professional terms, without the obligatory change of heart normally central to the confessional narrative. Not only that, they understand their present circumstances in terms of their failure to observe omens and follow proscriptions and to be fully professional about their work; the official success against themselves is simply the result of the East India Company's *iphal* (good fortune), not its moral or religious superiority or even its greater strategic skill. They seem to refuse in other words to be drawn into the moral narrative of the civilizing mission (though it must always be remembered that the production of the thug as unreformable subject was not necessarily contrary to the aims of the discourse on *thuggee*). The following is a typical exchange; the questioner is presumably W. H. Sleeman, the respondents thug informers:

Q: If Davey's displeasure visits all who punish Thugs, how is it that you all escape so well?

Moradun: Davey's anger visited us when we were seized. That was the effect of her resentment; she cast us off then and takes no notice of us now.

Q: And if you were to return to Thuggee, she would still guide and protect you?

Moradun: Yes, but what gang would now receive us?

Q: And are you not afraid to assist in suppressing Thuggee?

Moradun: No; we see God is assisting you, and that Davey has withdrawn her protection on account of our transgressions. We have sadly neglected her worship. God knows in what it will all end.

Q: True, God only knows, but we hope it will end in the entire suppression of this wicked and foolish system; and in the conviction on your part that Davey has really nothing to do with it.

Nasir: That Davey instituted Thuggee, and supported it as long as we attended to her omens, and observed the rules framed by the wisdom of our ancestors, nothing in the world can ever make us doubt.⁶¹

THE ENGLISHMAN

This section, on *The Deceivers*, John Masters's novel about *thuggee*, serves as a (deconstructive) supplement to the official narrative of the thug, in taking up some of the questions and figures that occupy a recessive status in that account. Here we see that if the thug of the archive provides one (admittedly slippery and fixed at the same time) model of staging identities, there

is another model that is crucial for a comprehension of the thug-English engagement. This model is the obverse of the process that generates the mimic man of colonial discourse; it is the lure of going native. The term here both resonates with and fails to correspond to the mimetic model provided by Burton in the last chapter.⁶² The will to mimicry governs (Indian) thug and Englishman alike, as we shall see in *The Deceivers*, where the plot is driven—as is the thug archive—by a fascination with the absent and never fully recuperable thug. In engaging this scenario, the novel also recasts the paradigmatic narrative of mimicry, in which the native may mimic the colonizer but without any access to essential Englishness, while the colonizer can trade identities freely, with no strings attached, without actually being interpellated as a colonized subject. *The Deceivers* makes manifest the precariousness of such self-possession.

The dialectical dependence of the fantasy of complete knowledge on the paranoid fear of native inscrutability is staged in this novel, where there is a suturing of the ostensibly antithetical figures of the English policeman and the thug approver. This novel allows for an examination of the tension between the received wisdom about *thuggee* and some of the marginal issues located at the pressure points of the official discourse. This novel tells the story of William Savage, a mediocre and distinctly unheroic English magistrate. Wracked by sexual and professional anxieties, an alienated subject of the British colonial machine in India, and sneakily sympathetic to such Indian customs as sati, he transforms himself into the exemplary colonial officer by taking on—albeit temporarily—the calling of the thug. At the urging of his young wife, Mary, he initially takes on the persona of the absent Gopal the weaver in order to save Gopal's wife from sati; he, however, meets the renegade thug Hussein and decides to continue as Gopal in order to track down the thugs. Once he assumes the role, he finds himself powerfully drawn to the practice and goes on to become a noted thug leader. He does not continue as a thug, of course—even though at one point Hussein suggests to Savage that the East India Company become a sponsor of thugs, like the other rulers of the land, with a little help from his newly (re)constructed Englishness and his friends, he returns to propriety at the end. (The Merchant Ivory film production is even more skeptical than the novel is of the progressivist teleology of the civilizing mission, as well as of its "success": in the film, George AngelSmith is led off in chains, but Savage, estranged from his wife and his Christian god and unable to prevent the sati that he has actually made possible, is destined to be perpetually haunted by Kali.)

The Deceivers considers the unspoken and unspeakable possibility that subverts so much of colonial discourse: what if identity can be unhinged from race and national origin? And if (racial/national) identity is unstable and subject to negotiation with each crossing of a frontier, then in the name

of what telos or destiny does Englishness speak? What if, as R. Radhakrishnan so compellingly asks, on the subject of diasporic, transnational culture, "identities and ethnicities are not a matter of fixed and stable selves but rather the results and products of fortuitous travels and recontextualizations? . . . Is ethnicity nothing but, to use the familiar formula, what ethnicity does?"⁶³ In the more lurid enactments of this alternative history, a Kuruz, representing the loftiest intellectual and ethical possibilities of the Enlightenment, can "go native" in the Dark Continent. But, closer to "home," there were, as Arnold has revealed, more troubling English subjects—those poor white orphans and vagrants (who were to have their own moment of glory in *Kim*) who lived lives not often distinguishable from those of lower-class Indians.⁶⁴ William Savage, the protagonist of *The Deceivers*, is located somewhere between these two subject positions.

Despite the putative restoration to wholeness, Englishness, and legality of William Savage at the close of the story, the narrative nonetheless opens up a space for investigating the "double and split subject" of the colonial enunciation, for what Bhabha calls—in the context of the nation's fissured enunciation—"dissemi-nation": "a space that is internally marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations."⁶⁵ As in the case of so many other Englishmen, Savage will have to turn to Indianness in order to return to or consolidate or improve his English self; in doing so, he will come back as a new and more English Englishman, but he will also, temporarily at least, be transformed into a border subject, changed by his experience of Indianness, surrendering illusions of full autonomy and Englishness in the crossing of boundaries. Here I invoke Burton again as a point of reference. Burton had an occasionally vexed relationship with national identity: his ancestry was partly Irish and Welsh, and he grew up on the Continent, only coming to live in England in his late teens. Yet for him identity, whatever guises it might assume and however far it might roam, is usually more persuasively anchored than is that of Masters's protagonist in an imperial Englishness. Burton can be, at different times, a West Asian merchant or a Muslim hajji, but his identities are clearly hierarchized and more manipulable than Savage's. While the success of his passing is always, in a sense, conditional upon his being a man from elsewhere/nowhere, he can also claim nativeness as his own production, wrenching an (imaginary) autonomy from the domination of necessity. Savage passes through Indianness en route to Englishness, but, unlike Burton, he cannot pass in and out without constraint. Indian-ness, while indispensable to Englishness, must also be violently cast out if Englishness is to be secure (d). In *The Deceivers*, identity is the locus of strain and contradiction. For Savage, identity cannot be expansive, assimilationist, and pluralist; each new identity competes with and displaces the last. That is why Savage can at the end afford to take no prisoners or recruit any ap-

provers from among his erstwhile comrades; the thugs whom he has led and who are now pursuing him must be wiped out in an act of punitive and frenzied brutality that not only precludes the need for approvers but also does away with any witnesses against, and rem(a)inders of, his own thug self.

The Deceivers stages, indeed foregrounds, the positionality and politics of that ordinarily self-effacing hero of thug narration, the investigator, and the plurality of determinations that produces him. In this context, Gayatri Spivak's cautionary reminders about the urgent necessity of disallowing the neutrality of the intellectual or investigator should be borne in mind. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she proffers a critique of the sanctioned myopia of the Foucault and Deleuze of "Intellectuals and Power," who are unable or unwilling to acknowledge the complicity of the intellectual in the mechanisms that produce representations of subaltern subjects and groups and who fail to recognize that subaltern subjects are constrained to fashion themselves in terms of already scripted epistemologies.⁶⁶ Her introduction to Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi" resonates with, and provides another useful point of entry into, this problematic of reading and engagement; the usefulness of deconstruction, she tells us, lies in "the recognition, . . . of provisional and intractable starting points in any investigative effort, its disclosure of complicities where a will to knowledge would create oppositions; its insistence that in disclosing complicities the critic-as-subject is herself complicit with the object of her critique; its emphasis upon 'history' and upon the ethico-political as the 'trace' of that complicity—the proof that we do not inhabit a clearly defined critical space free of such traces."⁶⁷ Where in the archives the English scribe was progressively effaced from the scene of the crime as well as the scene of writing, no such modesty is permitted the protagonist of Masters's novel. The novel accents above all his position of enunciation. He cannot be, as in the normative thug account, the neutral conduit of something clearly identified as a thug consciousness: the thug's voice cannot but inscribe Savage as both subject and object of his own discourse.

The central aspect of Savage's mission is not merely to bear witness; he must above all produce a record, transform that irreducible obscurity, that absence that is Indian corporate criminal activity, into what Spivak terms an "interpretable text." This of course was the primary gift of Sleeman and his associates to the criminal justice system in colonial India—to synthesize various and discrepant occurrences as a semiosis under centralized control; against *thuggee*—conceived of as a vast, well-articulated, and centralized conspiracy—could be opposed the concentrated power/knowledge of the state. What is required is a text and a model of reading that is reproducible in the different temporalities and contexts of the colonial polity in India. However, the novel intimates the limitations and complexities of authorial intention. Savage produces his account in a condition of profound subjec-

tive instability, opening his text up to multiple and mutually contentious readings: "He had met hundreds of other Deceivers, and the notes were a complete tale of all he had seen and heard and done; of all the Deceivers who had engaged in any action, with their descriptions, habits, and homes; of each murder, and how it had gone, and how it might have been prevented—or improved upon. The words could be read for either purpose, according to the spirit of the reader" (p. 223). Above all, Savage's account draws attention to the transactional nature of reading. What ought to be a classic of information retrieval and a master text on *thuggee* for colonial authority is also a text *for* other thugs, a manual for reproducing thug practice. Savage's text (within the text of the Masters novel), even though cast in the model of strict representational realism, is susceptible of an Other reading; its meanings are ambushed, deflected, and augmented en route to a destination it can never reach. The Thuggee and Dacoity Department strove to produce, in its extensive records on thug affiliation and activity, a text without nuances or fissures, something that was not susceptible of any misreadings or contesting interpretations. It sought, in its meticulous record keeping and its attempts to square all the approvers' testimonies with each other and make them speak with one voice, to produce a record that would have what was presumed to be the authority of material fact. But for Savage, at least, it is impossible to engage in such an enterprise without also inscribing his own complicity in his testimonial. In this respect, he does approximate the classic approver of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department, who cannot bear witness against others without simultaneously bearing witness against himself.

While the novel insists that only impersonation can yield the truth, it also illuminates the heterodox desires that underlie the exercise of going native. Moreover, this impersonation is quite detached from any agency on the part of William Savage and from any sense of originary identity. Forced into the disguise of the Indian weaver Gopal (by the *patal* [village headman] Chandra Sen) in an unwilling and ultimately fruitless attempt to save a would-be sati, he is recognized as an impostor by Hussein. Hussein is ideal material for an approver: he has brains, courage, and resourcefulness, and he is remarkably eager to undo the institution of *thuggee*, but his testimony alone is not enough to compel belief in the practice. So he recruits an Englishman to the anti-*thuggee* cause, knowing that only he can be fully convincing as a figure of knowledge. And this knowledge can only be acquired experientially, and by going outside the law as currently constituted, as Savage learns when he follows the more conventional methods of information retrieval. As Hussein says,

Several times some English official or other has got hold of information about us. Then he has chased us out of his district, and reported, I suppose. But

they've never worked together; and it always blew over. They'll never destroy us until one of them finds out everything, and forces the Lat Sahib [the governor-general] to believe everything, and plans a campaign to cover all India. And that one who finds out must fear Kali, or he will not understand her. But he must not love her. (p. 208)

Unable to ignore the thugs as the other English functionaries are ready to do, eager to discard the Englishness he so uncomfortably inhabits, and pressured by Hussein and Mary, Savage decides to continue as Gopal the weaver, who, as it turns out, is also Gopal the thug. For an unsuccessful and insecure man like Savage, wracked by anxieties about (heterosexual) masculinity and Englishness, it is the very abdication of authority involved in playing a thug that is peculiarly attractive; inhabiting the subject position of the most criminalized and most scrutinized indigenous subject holds out the promise of psychic satisfactions not ordinarily available to colonial authority.

The novel dallies with the idea (as many crime fictions often do, though less explicitly) of the fragility of the barriers that separate the custodian of law and morality from the criminal. It actually makes available the proposition (though it has to drop it at the end) that Savage is at heart a thug and that his initiation into *thuggee* by Hussein is no accident. He takes naturally to the trade, is attended by good omens, and enjoys a facility of thought, speech, and action that is alien to his English self. The idea of mimicry itself is transformed in his performance of it and begins to assume the contours of possession, if not those of originary identity. There is no difference for him between the mimicry of an identity and the identity itself.

In order to pass for an Indian or a thug (ultimately these two categories are collapsed, as we have seen in the other narratives of *thuggee*) Savage must slough off certain normative aspects of Englishness in the tropics—the militant Christianity, the revulsion against disease and cruelty, the reforming impulse. He must instead embrace what is described as the nondualistic moral economy of Hinduism that sees both creation and destruction as suffused with the divine. Needless to say, the psychic territory of "India" is always coextensive with Hinduism, despite the fact that Muslims as well as other religious groups are shown to practice *thuggee* as much as do Hindus; and this Hinduism is consistently and exclusively fetishized as blood lust and hyperbolic sexuality. As an Indian, and Hindu, and thug, Savage must participate in a series of paradoxes. He must be Indian, and thug, to return more securely to Englishness, and legitimacy; he must allow evil to be done in order to do good; and, since the contexts of legality are always shifting and are particularly in need of redefinition in India, he must go outside the law in order to uphold the law. Always relatively indifferent to the finer points of legal procedure and defendants' rights (here written as an inapt-

tude for "paperwork"), the antithug drive allows him to rethink the concepts of justice and legality in the colonial context, where it is notoriously difficult to punish crime anyway:

"What does justice mean? . . . 'Fair trial, the rules of evidence, no double hazard, no hearsay, and so on and so on? Or protection against injustice, against violence? The means, or the end? . . . Oh, I know we have no *evidence* about them yet. That's just what I mean. I tell you, sir, they cannot be run down within our rule of law. Indians aren't English. 'No man dies by the hand of man,' they think, so they won't give evidence because they are not angry with the murderers. They think men who kill are driven by God to kill. And there are too many jurisdictions, too far to go to give evidence, too long to wait. We've got to go outside the law to catch them, to prevent more murders." (pp. 128–29)

Caught between a colonial government and an Indian populace unwilling, for different reasons, to do what is necessary to end *thuggee* and pressed, moreover, by Hussein, Savage becomes Gopal again, only more completely in earnest this time. In his new role Savage discovers that passing for a thug involves a radical (re)contextualization of his once and future Englishness. Moreover, as Gopal he has to inhabit a role and a history that is already in place. Impersonation involves not freedom but strict adherence to a scripted identity; he cannot start afresh, or make himself up as he goes along. He discovers that as Gopal, he is already an expert stranger and strategist, destined to be "the greatest the Deceivers have ever known" (p. 218). And once he participates in the sacramental ritual of *gur-sharing* and tastes the transubstantiated body of the goddess, his allegiance and destiny are fixed. Savage is born to *thuggee*, as his comfort in his role of thug demonstrates; indeed, his story undoes the usual weighting of "self" and "role" in the Englishman's subjectivity, since he is more convincing (to himself, and apparently to Indians and Englishmen alike) and comfortable as Indian and thug than as Englishman and Christian. Hussein, who is more perceptive than he about the complexities of subject formation, reminds him that "free will" is an adjunct (or an illusion) of Englishness alone. Savage must find out that intentions guarantee nothing; not even the Englishman, once he has decided to play the Indian, can escape the formulaic constraints of Indian/thug ontology: "You are a Deceiver, from this dawn on forever. A strangler. Only stranglers may stand on the blanket: you stood on it. Only stranglers may take the consecrated sugar of communion: you took it. It doesn't matter what a man *thinks* he is. When he eats consecrated sugar on the blanket, in front of the pick-axe, he is a strangler, because Kali enters into him." (p. 182)

Such a script also demands of course that he confront his double, the original Gopal. In order to protect himself and in order to wrest some au-

tonomy for himself, Savage strangles Gopal and thus becomes Gopal himself. But strangling the "real Gopal" only makes him more fully Gopal, for he can now develop into his predestined role. From this point on, all paradoxes are held in abeyance. From being complicit in murder through inaction Savage proceeds to strangulation himself and becomes, in an extraordinary take on the man-who-would-be-king vision that tropes so much colonial discourse, a noted leader of thugs. Like Burton the Muslim, Savage the thug is characterized not simply by mastery but by an extraordinary surplus of subject effects. (Unlike Burton, though, he is tempted, and he is corrupted—although not irredeemably.)

The desire for Gopal, which is closely articulated with the desire to *be* Gopal, is mediated, interestingly enough, through the figure of the sati who frames the novel and who foregrounds the question of gender that has been bypassed or placed under erasure in the *thuggee* archives. I find the entry into *thuggee* through sati to be a particularly productive conjuncture for the problematic of mimicry, identity, and the colonizer's desire. The sati, most obviously, provides an occasion for access to Gopal. The sati has to be set up in the beginning so that Savage can play Gopal; and then it has to be deferred so that he can continue to play Gopal *and* go in search of Gopal. Her presence in the novel displaces homoerotic desire and returns Savage to heterosexuality. It also ensures his successful miming of Indianness and Englishness. But the consolidation of heterosexuality, masculinity, and Englishness demands not simply her presence but her death. She is insistently narrativized as a *voluntary* sati; she is a romanticized figure, whose sacrifice Savage has no desire to thwart. He desires her, and his desire for her takes the form of wanting her to die for him, which he ensures by killing Gopal. In this way, he can enjoy the satisfactions of Indian as well as English masculinity. As an Indian, he can have the woman die for him (and deliver him of his sexual anxieties); but being fully Indian also means that he himself must die, for the sati requires a dead husband. As an Englishman, therefore, he can distance himself from the violent implications of Indianness. The sati's death releases him from the exigent identity of the Indianness into which he had temporarily descended and frees him to enact the rituals of Englishness with greater plausibility. The most convincing Englishman—as indeed the most expert thug—turns out to be the mimic man after all.

AFTERWORD

Masters's novel serves in many ways as the most apt of epilogues to the colonial accounts of *thuggee*, given its excavation of the erotic/affective and metaphysical seductions of that institution—and of the thug—for English masculinity in the tropics and given its suggestion that the lure of the thug for the Englishman may be as compelling as that of *thuggee* for the (Indian)

thug. It charges the project of unveiling and chastisement with a profusion of guilty, even delirious, appetites and obsessions that call for continual incitement and consummation. It does not, of course, fail to play upon the received colonial narrative of *thuggee* as timeless Indian duplicity; but it also reconfigures it as an erotic tale of the fraternal, closeted, and homicidal desire that drives Indian and English impersonation. Perhaps most remarkably, it showcases the seamless self-referentiality of the discourse on *thuggee* (as evidenced in an archive composed of biographies, histories, novels, legal records, and rumors) by collapsing the thug and the thug hunter into a single figure; with a literalism quite unprecedented in any of the other texts it confirms that wherever there is an Englishman there is a thug.

THREE

Anglo/Indians and Others The Ins and Outs of the Nation

The subject of identities and traffic in *Kim* is best approached through in-direction. One approach is through Policeman Strickland (who makes his initial appearance in "Miss Younghal's *Sais*"), Kipling's first experiment in casting the impersonator par excellence. Strickland, though, is a curious figure, a not quite/not right disguise artist who exists in an oblique and complex relationship, not just to official wisdom but also to the extraofficial masters of impersonation. He recalls Sherlock Holmes's extraordinary capacity for being all things to all people; like that preeminent detective, he operates in the implicit belief that all knowledge is knowledge of criminality. He recalls Burton, too, in his often contentious relationship with official power and in the psychosexual nature of his investment in "going Fantee." Like these illustrious fictional kin, he "[holds] the extraordinary theory that a Policeman in India should try to know as much about the natives as the natives themselves,"¹ though, curiously, his own simulation of nativeness appears to be itself a simulation of a simulation of nativeness: "Now, in the whole of Upper India, there is only one man who can pass for Hindu or Mahomedan, hide-dresser or priest, as he pleases. He is feared and respected by the natives from the Chor Kathiri to the Jamna Masjid. . . . Strickland was foolish enough to take that man for his model" ("Miss Younghal's *Sais*," 51).

What kind of Englishman is Strickland, and what is the nature of the knowledge that he relentlessly seeks and obsessively embodies? How, indeed, is he himself known? Consider, for instance, the lines that introduce him:

He was perpetually "going Fantee" among natives, which, of course, no man with any sense believes in. He was initiated into the *Sat Bhui* at Allahabad once, when he was on leave. He knew the Lizard-Song of the Sanis, and the *Halli-Hutti* dance, which is a religious can-can of a startling kind. When a man

43. Silverman, "White Skin, Brown Masks," 26.
44. Patrick Brantinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 160.
45. Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *The Location of Culture*, 70–71.
46. Quoted in Brodie, *Devil Drives*, 89.
47. I am grateful to the anonymous readers of *boundary 2* for bringing this point to my attention.
48. Richard F. Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa*, ed. Gordon Waterfield (New York and Washington, D.C.: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966).
49. Many adopted Indian clothing, languages, cuisine, and living arrangements; some of them were known to have married Indian women and to have participated in local forms of worship.
50. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 78.
51. Said, *Orientalism*, 92–93.
52. See Mary Louise Pratt, "Conventions of Representation: Where Discourse and Ideology Meet," in *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1982* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982), for an analysis of the "master-of-all-I-survey" trope that distinguishes much nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel writing. See, too, James Clifford's description of Marcel Griaule's adoption of the "panoptic viewpoint [of the airplane] as a habit and a tactic" in ethnographic observation (*The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* [Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1988], 69).
53. Brantinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 162–63.
54. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," in *Race, Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
55. Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History," 18. Chakrabarty notes the utilization and success of these devices in some distinctly "modern" institutions and projects (like nationalism).

2. DISCOVERING INDIA, IMAGINING THUGGEE

1. Radhika Singha, "Providential' Circumstances: The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830s and Legal Innovation," *Modern Asian Studies* 27 (February 1993): 83.
2. Guha, "History of Colonial India."
3. Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983). Also see Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).
4. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Deconstructing Historiography," in *Other Worlds: Essays on Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1987), 204.
5. This is not to suggest that Bhabha forecloses on any of these other possibilities.
6. James Hutton, *A Popular Account of the Thugs and Dacoits, the Hereditary Carrovers and Gang-Robbers of India* (London: W. H. Allen, 1857), 90–91.

7. Reproduced in George Bruce, *The Stranglers: The Cult of Thuggee and Its Overthrow in British India* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 13–26.
 8. Philip Meadows Taylor, "Introduction," in *Confessions of a Thug* (London: Richard Bently, 1858 [1839]), 5.
 9. A. J. Wightman, *No Friend for Travellers* (London: Robert Hale, 1959), 15.
 10. See Francis C. Toker, *The Yellow Scarf: The Story of the Life of Thuggee Sleeman* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1961), 197–98.
 11. Geoff Bennington, "Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).
 12. Sandra Freitag argues that thugs were—in contrast to members of criminal castes and tribes—regarded as "admirable and awesome opponents." See her "Crime in the Social Order of Colonial North India," *Modern Asian Studies* 25, no. 2 (1991): 227–61. While some of this horrified admiration does inform Wighman and Meadows Taylor's representations, such admiration is more usually carefully repressed; there is, in fact, an interesting tension between the awe-inspiring (if damnable) thug of these texts and the contemptible figure that the other texts strenuously accentuate.
 13. James Sleeman, *Thug, or A Million Murders* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1933 [1920]), 5.
 14. Sir George MacMunn, *The Religions and Hidden Culls of India* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1931), 172–73. See, too, Meadows Taylor, "Introduction," 1:
- At the present time it [the novel] may deserve a more attentive study; recent events will have too well prepared the Reader's mind for implicit belief in all the systematic atrocities narrated. . . . It will scarcely fail to be remarked, with what consummate art such numerous bodies of men were organized, and for a long time kept absolutely unknown, while committing acts of cruelty and rapine hardly conceivable. . . . Captain Taylor's introduction . . . may . . . furnish some clue to the successful concealment of a rebellion, in the existence of which many of our oldest and most experienced officers, and men high in authority, absolutely withheld belief, till too late and too cruelly convinced of their fatal error.
15. Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927).
 16. Hiralal Gupta, "A Critical Study of the *Thugs* and Their Activities," *Journal of Indian History*, 37, part 2 (August 1959), serial no. 110: 169–77.
 17. Sandra B. Freitag, "Collective Crime and Authority in North India," in *Crime and Criminality in British India*, ed. Anand Yang (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 158–61.
 18. Stewart N. Gordon, "Sword and Scarf: Thugs, Marauders, and State-Formation in 18th Century Malwa," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 6 (December 1969): 403–29. It should be noted that Gordon does not ascribe the activities of the marauding groups to "Oriental anarchy" or oppose "marauders" to "states," arguing that both entities had the same ends in view and were using the same methods of legitimization, though with differing degrees of success.
 19. J. Sleeman, *Thug*, 108.
 20. David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras 1859–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3. He notes the transformation of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department into the Central Intelligence Department in 1904; this body shifted its initial focus on wandering gangs and criminals to "the collation of politi-

- cal intelligence, relaying information about political leaders and organizations to the various provinces concerned" (p. 187).
21. Freitag, "Collective Crime and Authority," 142.
 22. Freitag, "Crime in the Social Order," 230.
 23. Ibid., 234.
 24. Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque* (Karachi and London: Oxford University Press, 1975 [1850]), 1: 153.
 25. Kali became a figure of increasing respectability in the nineteenth century; before this she was a deity adored (in Bengal at least) largely though not exclusively by tribal and other subaltern subjects, including thugs and dacoits. It is not clear if Kali was identical with other female deities addressed as Devi or Bhawani.
 26. See, for instance, Nicholas B. Dirks, "Castes of Mind," *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992): 59. "It is increasingly clear that colonialism in India produced new forms of society that have been taken to be traditional, and that caste itself as we now know it is not a residual survival of ancient India but a specifically colonial form of civil society. As such it both justifies and maintains the colonial vision of an India where religion transcends politics, society resists change, and the state awaits its virgin birth in the postcolonial era."
 27. This had not, of course, been entirely true for Burton, perhaps because of his sojourn in Sind or his early studies in Arabic. As might be expected, the particular discourse being engaged would determine the Hinduness, or otherwise, of the territory designated "India."
 28. Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions," in *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
 29. John Masters, *The Deceivers* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1952), 240. All further references to this novel will be incorporated parenthetically into the text.
 30. Charles Hervey, *Some Records of Crime (Being the Diary of a Year, Official and Particular, of an Officer of the Thuggee and Dacoite Police)* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1892), 1: 50-51.
 31. Ranjit Sen, *Social Banditry in Bengal: A Study in Primary Resistance, 1757-1793* (Calcutta: Rupa Prakashan, 1988), 2-3.
 32. Sanjay Nigam, "Disciplining and Policing the 'Criminals by Birth,'" *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27, no. 2 (1990): 131-64; 27, no. 3 (1990): 259-87.
 33. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 1: 43.
 34. Radhika Singha argues that "the introduction of laws dealing with ill-defined 'criminal communities' introduced certain fissures into the ideology of the equal, abstract and universal legal subject" ("'Providential' Circumstances," 86, n. 10).
 35. Edward Thornton, *Illustrations of the History and Practices of the Thugs* (London: W. H. Allen, 1837), 145-46. This frankness is relatively rare in the writings on *thuggee*; the issue of the genuineness of the confessions, though, is an issue in all, judging from the unflinching vehemence with which the method of conviction through approvers' testimony is defended as just, if not unexceptionable.
 36. Ibid., 374.
 37. J. Sleeman, *Thug*, 120.
 38. William H. Sleeman, *Ramaseena, or a Vocabulary of the Peculiar Language Used by the Thugs* (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Military Orphan Press, 1836), 32-33.
 39. Thornton, *Illustrations*, 70, 11.
 40. Wighman, *No Friend for Travellers*, 112.
 41. J. Sleeman, *Thug*, 106.
 42. William H. Sleeman, *Report on Budhuk Alias Bagree Dacoits and Other Gang Robbers by Hereditary Profession* (Calcutta: J. C. Sheriff, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1849), 2-3.
 43. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 1: 35.
 44. Homi Bhabha, "Sly Civility" and "Of Mimicry and Man," in *The Location of Culture*.
 45. See Mala Sen, *India's Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi* (New Delhi: Indus/HarperCollins, 1991) for an example of the way in which the colonial discourse of *thuggee* (in this instance, Tukar's *Yellow Scarf*) continues, in contemporary India, to frame the way in which certain forms of collective violence are understood by the law-and-order machinery of the state.
 46. Tuker, *Yellow Scarf*, 38.
 47. William H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, ed. Vincent A. Smith (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1915), 555.
 48. Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug*, 330.
 49. W. H. Sleeman, *Ramaseena*, 3.
 50. Freitag, "Collective Crime and Authority," 146.
 51. Singha, "'Providential' Circumstances," 84.
 52. W. H. Sleeman, *Report on Budhuk*, 173. The *thuggee act* had the following provisions:
 1. Whoever shall be proved to have belonged, either before or after the passing of this Act, to any gang of Thugs, either within or without the Territories of the East India Company, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, with hard labour.
 2. And . . . every person accused of the offence . . . may be tried by any court, which would have been competent to try him, if his offence had been committed within the Zillah where that Court sits, any thing to the contrary, in any Regulation contained, notwithstanding.
 3. And . . . no Court shall, on a trial of any person accused of the offence . . . require any Furra from any Law Officer.
 53. Singha, "'Providential' Circumstances," 136-37.
 54. J. Sleeman, *Thug*, 117.
 55. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 38.
 56. Shahid Amin, "Approver's Testimony, Judicial Discourse: The Case of Chauri Chaura," in *Subaltern Studies V: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).
 57. William H. Sleeman, *Report on the Depredations Committed by the Thug Gangs of Upper and Central India* (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1840).
 58. Bruce, *Stranglers*, 154.
 59. W. H. Sleeman, *Report on Budhuk*, 303-5.

60. Freitag, "Crime in the Social Order," 236. It is said that thugs had routinely existed in a symbiotic relationship with landlords, providing military protection and supplying booty from expeditions in return for land and respectability.

61. W. H. Sleeman, *Ramasevana*, 186-87.

62. I should add here that the phrase *going native* is vested in my paper with a multiplicity of valences; for instance, it encompasses both the colonialist desire to "pass for" the native and the condition that signifies racial regression.

63. R. Radhakrishnan, "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora," *Transition* 54 (1991): 106.

64. David Arnold, "European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7, no. 2 (1979): 104-27.

65. Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nations," in *Nation and Narration*, 299.

66. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" See Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, by Michel Foucault, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 205-17.

67. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Foreword to 'Draupadi,' by Mahasweta Devi," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1987), 180.

3. ANGLO/INDIANS AND OTHERS

1. Rudyard Kipling, "Miss Younghal's Sais," in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen, with an introduction and notes by David Trotter (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 51. All subsequent references will be incorporated parenthetically into the text as *PTH*.

2. See, for instance, Rudyard Kipling, *Letters of Marjorie* (New York and Boston: H. M. Caldwell, 1899).

3. Stephen Arata describes Kipling's penchant for the "unglossed allusion, the unapologetic gesture towards structures of feeling and experience which had no counterpart outside the enclosed world of Anglo-India" ("A Universal Foreignness: Kipling in the Fin-de-Siècle," *English Literature in Transition* 36, no. 1 [1993]: 12).

4. Gail Ching-Liang Low, *White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 191.

5. Rudyard Kipling, *Life's Handicap, Being Stories of My Own People*, ed. P. N. Furbank (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987). All further references will be incorporated parenthetically into the text as *LH*.

6. Quoted in Zohreh T. Sullivan, *Narratives of Empire: The Fictions of Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 93.

7. *Ibid.*, 112. The story does affirm the mutual love of Jellatuddin and his wife, but it is, of course, impossible to separate the fact of his marriage from the scenario of his (damnable but glorious) degradation.

8. Charles Carington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970 [1959]), 103.

9. Benita Parry asserts that "[i]f 'To be filled for Reference' both intimates and avers a challenge to British knowledge, then *Kim* (1901) confidently reaffirms its validity" ("The Content and Discontents of Kipling's Imperialism," *New Formations*, no. 6 [Winter 1988]: 54).

10. Irving Howe, "The Pleasures of *Kim*," in *Rudyard Kipling: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 35.

11. Mark Kinkade-Weekes, "Vision in Kipling's Novels," in *Kipling's Mind and Art: Selected Critical Essays*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964), 232.

12. J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Art of Rudyard Kipling* (London: Methuen, 1959), 21-22.

13. Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself and Other Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Thomas Pinney (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

14. For instances of Kipling's representation of the uncomplicated love between Anglo-Indian children and their adult Indian caretakers and companions, see his "Tod's Amendment," in *Plain Tales from the Hills*; and "Wee Willie Winkie" and "His Majesty the King," in *Wee Willie Winkie*, ed. Hugh Haughton (London: Penguin Books, 1988). See, too, "Simla Notes," *Civil and Military Gazette*, 29 July 1885 (reprinted in *Kipling's India: Uncollected Sketches 1884-88*, ed. Thomas Pinney [Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1986], 112-18).

15. James Harrison, *Rudyard Kipling* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 2.

16. It is precisely this lack of a tragic dimension that Edmund Wilson, "The Kipling That Nobody Read," *Atlantic Monthly* 167 (1941): 201-14 [reprinted in *Kipling's Mind and Art: Selected Critical Essays*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964), 30-31] has famously seen as the novel's most damning flaw:

Now what the reader tends to expect is that Kim will come eventually to realize that he is delivering into bondage to the British invaders those whom he has considered his own people, and that a struggle between allegiances will result. . . . But . . . the alternating attractions felt by Kim never give rise to a genuine struggle. . . . Nor does Kipling allow himself to doubt that his hero has chosen the better part. Kim must now exploit his knowledge of native life for the purpose of preventing and putting down any native resistance to the British, but it never seems to occur to his creator that this constitutes a betrayal of the lama. A sympathy with the weaker party in a relationship based on force has again given way without a qualm to the glorification of the stronger.

17. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 310.

18. Thomas Richards ("Archive and Utopia," 119-20) describes the ethos of Creighton's world thus: "Though everything in the novel takes place 'under the sign of War' (p. 128), it is the sign of war that is not yet war, the sign of a permanent state of emergency, the sign of a state apparatus maintaining political equilibrium, the sign of what Virilio has called 'the passage from wartime to the war of peacetime.'"

19. Rudyard Kipling, "The Phantom Rickshaw," in *The Man Who Would Be King and Other Stories*, ed. Louis Cornell (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 26.

20. I am indebted in a general way to Ronald Inden's *Imagining India* (Oxford, England, and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990), which does for Indological studies (with its fixation on caste) what Said has done for knowledge about the Arab