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ON 15 OCTOBER 1929 the Straits Times of Singapore carried an article on Hugh Clifford's impending and unexpected departure from the colony, and his stepping down from the position of Governor of the Straits Settlements and Governor General of the Federated Malay States. "The people of this country are losing," the article remarked, "one of the ablest administrators Malaya has ever known, a man who has probed deeply into that part of the life of the country which so few of us know at first hand." Clifford's career in colonial government read "like a heroic adventure story" while his actions introduced "romance even into the prosaic pages of the Malayan Civil Service List."1 The article encapsulates two of the central concerns of Clifford's literary career, his retrospective reconstitution of his own life through his fiction as a romance, and his construction of an "author function," in Foucault's terms, which privileged his role as an intermediary, transcribing the results of his investigations into Malay life for a largely metropolitan audience.

In this chapter, I give an account of Clifford's life and literary career, one which cannot pretend to present a neutral "chronicle"2 but which may serve to displace some of the romantic hagiography of most previous biography.3 Next, I examine Clifford's own perceptions of writing, and in particular of writing one's own life, as a form of discipline. In Clifford's texts, writing emerges as another Foucauldian technology, one that enmeshes with those of power and of the self: textual regulation parallels the regulation of the colony and of the individual body.

Hugh Clifford: A Life

Hugh Clifford was born into an aristocratic, West Country Roman Catholic family, the Cliffords of Ugbrooke, in 1866. His father, Henry Hugh Clifford, like many second or third sons of the aristocracy, pursued an army career, and ultimately rose to the rank of Major-General. Clifford's mother, Josephine Anstace, was a highly intelligent woman and a gifted writer: she published three stories in Dickens's journal All the Year Round and was praised by him4 as a writer with talent and potential. In retrospect, Clifford's parents had a conventional Victorian middle-class marriage in which the woman sublimated her own
personal growth into making a home and supporting her husband's career. It also suffered from hypocrisy: when Hugh was ten years old the family moved to Dinan, in Brittany, and Hugh and his younger brother, Harry, returned to school to attend a Roman Catholic preparatory school at Primrose Hill, in Coventry. They did not see their father, and were told that he was "sick": he had, in fact, eloped with a servant girl, with whom he would have three children. 5

By the Christmas of 1878, after participating in the Zulu wars in South Africa, Henry Clifford seems to have been reconciled with his wife. They visited Ugbrooke, the country seat of the Clifford family, accompanied by Hugh and his elder sister Emily. The first visit to Ugbrooke was an event that would remain impressed upon Clifford throughout his life. The vast estate, with its many tenants, seemed an ideal social order sealed off from the outside world, and Clifford drove around the estate with his father visiting the tenantry:

It seemed to me ... as though I had suddenly become a part of a great family-congregation, of the existence of which I had up to that time been ignorant. It imbued me, even at that very early age, with a tremendous sense of responsibility. . . . There was no binding contract, it is true, between the men at "The Big House" and the man or woman at the farm or cottage, securing the latter in the ownership or in the enjoyment of the land that had nonetheless been tilled by no other family for generations. But, if Widow Troubridge found herself in difficult circumstances owing to the sudden death of her husband, the bread-winner of the family, it was at once recognised by the Head of the Clan—to which he, no less than his own sons, daughters and cousins belonged—that she must be tided over the evil period and maintained in effective ownership of the land to which she and her children were held to have a very strong traditional and sentimental claim. 6

One can see here the germs of an aristocratic paternalism which Clifford would apply to the governance of the Malay States, and also a clear gendering of roles. The Head of the Clan is male and women ancillary to the process of breadwinning: on the visit, Clifford would recall, his father took him "shooting with him, and walked me off my legs, my clothes were shabby beyond belief." 7 Such a muscular manliness characterises Clifford's memory of his father: he would write, retrospectively, of his father's "singularly handsome" features and boast of his defeating a member of the supposed martial races "by beating a picked Zulu in a 10 mile race." 8

From September 1879 to 1883 Clifford studied at Woburn Park, a private Catholic school. He initially seemed to be destined to follow his father in a military career, and in 1883 passed the preliminary and advanced examinations for entry into Sandhurst. 9 His father's sudden death in April 1883, however, may have caused him to alter his plans. Offered a cadetship in the Protected Malay States by his father's first cousin, Frederick Weld, then Governor of the Straits Settlements, he accepted, and in August or September 1883, at the age of seven-
teen, he arrived in Singapore; on September 21 he officially joined the Perak Service, posted initially to Kuala Kangsar as private secretary to Hugh Low, Resident of Perak.

Low and Weld both represented masculine role models to Clifford, and yet they both acted out very different styles of colonial masculinity. Weld, an aristocrat like Clifford, had followed a political career in New Zealand and Australia before being appointed Governor of the Straits Settlements in 1880. He was an administrator, with no deep knowledge of Malay culture, and his appointment of Clifford might be thought of as a form of socially-sanctioned nepotism. Responsible for paternalistic policies in New Zealand which led to the confiscation of Maori land, Weld “lived in a perpetual cloud of sentiment and patriarchal goodwill towards the peoples in his charge, and this expressed itself in an obsessive interest in the Malay states. His despatches and published letters do not reveal any great interest in the busy, sophisticated and unromantic commercial population of the Straits Settlements.” Weld’s lack of interest in commerce was a common contradiction in the gentlemanly order of a colonialism often forced to “follow trade,” and Clifford inherited this contradiction from him. The young cadet clearly regarded Weld as a father-figure, the “finest gentleman that I have ever known,” and Weld in turn placed considerable trust in his young relative.

If Weld was a representative gentleman and metropolitan colonial official, Low was something very different. He had been educated at a minor British public school and trained as a botanist. He came to Perak in 1877 at age 53, having spent thirty years in obscurity on the island of Labuan, off Borneo. Low’s first wife, Catherine Napier, was part Malay, and he had a Malay mistress after the death of his wife in Labuan. If Weld represents the metropolitan administrator, Low represents the old-school colonial official, immersed in Malay culture, acting out the role of a white raja. Isabella Bird, visiting Perak in 1879, was complimentary, noting Low’s “thoroughly idiomatic knowledge of the Malay language” and “sympathetic insight into the Malay character.” Her stress upon the simplicity of Low’s personal life contrasts strangely with her accounts of ceremonial in Kuala Kangsar: “[a] Sikh guard of honour of fifty men in scarlet uniforms” was, for example, arranged for the departure of their commanding officer, Major Swinburne. Emily Innes, a colonial official’s wife, was less impressed. Low’s lifestyle, she noted, was “luxurious”: he consumed “pâtés de foies gras and other luxuries from Crosse and Blackwell’s, iced champagne, and all manner of cool drinks.” Low’s commitment to Perak and his reluctance to return to England were, for Innes, quite unsurprising. “Living thus comfortably,” she noted, “and monarch of all he surveyed, he was better off and in a higher position than he could hope to enjoy in England, where, as everyone knows, even colonial governors are nobodies, unless they happen to have titles to fame other than their official rank.” Low’s sympathy for Malay customs, Innes felt, pro-
moted moral laxity and expediency: she criticised him strongly for not actively opposing debt-bondage.

Such descriptions, of course, are already highly mediated. Low's adopting of a lifestyle of lavish ceremonial which incorporated Malay elements was also part of a process of social and political control. His naming of his two pet apes "Mahmoud and Eblis," after the Prophet and the devil respectively, scarcely shows sensitivity to Malay sensibilities. Clifford himself participated in a narrativisation of Low's life—looking back in 1914 at the Malay states in the 1880s he comments that "across the gulf of thirty years which divides me from those days, it seems to me that there were giants in the land" and identifies Low as one of these giants. At least one of his stories, "A Tale of Old Labuan," is a retelling of a tale Low must have told him as a young cadet. Clifford furthermore seems to have shared Low's intense dislike of his son-in-law, John Pope Hennessy, a dislike which seems to arise less from personal experience than from Low's own accounts of his son-in-law.

To these two styles of masculinity was soon added a third. After three years in Kuala Kangsar in a variety of posts, Clifford, having passed examinations in Malay and acquitted himself well as a translator and interpreter, was dispatched by Weld on a mission to Pahang in January 1887. His brief was to persuade Bendahara Ahmad to accept the extension of the residency system from Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan to Pahang, by accepting a British agent at his court. Clifford, after crossing the peninsula on foot and by boat, reached Pekan, the capital, in March. Ahmad attempted to delay: he went hunting, and then insisted on spending a month in calling together a council of the district chiefs. Clifford insisted on an immediate answer, at one time waiting at the balai at the ruler's residence for more than twelve hours. Granted an audience, Clifford sketched the problems Pahang faced with mining concessions already granted, and held out the prospects of more Europeans coming. "It is not likely," he informed Ahmad darkly, "that these Europeans will all be men who will consider the customs, habits, prejudices and feelings of the Malays." Only a British agent, he argued, could keep such an invasion in check. In his persuasion, Clifford drew upon Johor's skillful balancing act in preserving its independence to argue for a treaty which would lead to much more direct British control than that exercised in Pahang's neighbouring state. "The Sultan of Johor," he added, "had seen the world, and knew the customs in force in all civilized countries (ādāt dūnīā), and ... he had signed an agreement at the Colonial Office." Finally, with few other options open, Ahmad demurred.

Clifford's perception of Ahmad was very much within the discourse of governmentality discussed in the first chapter. Due to his success in the civil war that brought him to power, Ahmad did exercise more direct political power than the rulers of many Malay states, but he would still have conceived of his function as the granting of nama and the maintenance of adat: hence Clifford's appeal to him
to follow the *adat dunia*, the customs of the world. A glance at the qualities Ahmad would have considered essential to a ruler show their incommensurability with the models of masculine authority embodied for Clifford by Low and Weld. From the nineteenth-century *Hikayat Pahang*, A. C. Milner notes that a (male) ruler was praised for being refined (*halus*), charming (*elok*), graceful (*manis*), and delicate, gentle, soft or tender (*lemah lembut*)\(^2\) : these are clearly not normative Victorian masculine qualities. For Clifford, Pahang’s want of government, its need for systematic inducements for self-improvement, was embodied in the lack of self-government of the sultan: governmentality thus became gendered. Pahang’s anarchy resulted from Sultan Ahmad’s rapacity, his failure to curb his desires. Ahmad’s failings as a ruler paralleled his failings as a man: in governing the state and in governing the self he exhibited the same deficiencies.

Clifford’s relationship with Ahmad was a prolonged one. From 1887 to 1899, he held a variety of official positions in Pahang, presiding over the crushing of indigenous Malay resistance from 1891 to 1894 and the incorporation of Pahang into the Federated Malay States in 1896. This period of his life provided the raw material for almost all of his fiction. Retrospectively, Clifford would narrate the years in Pahang as a time of youthful romance on a rapidly vanishing frontier:

> Until you have served your apprenticeship on the outskirts of the empire, breathed frontier talk, dreamed frontier dreams, you cannot realise the splendour, the magic, the thrill of that idea. For years you have heard tales without number of States beyond the border—fragmentary echoes of deeds that have their counterparts in the “Arabian Nights.” For years you have speculated with your fellows concerning all that goes forward in that dim back-of-beyond where no white man has hitherto set foot. Now and again you have caught a passing glimpse of the blue line of distant mountains which separate a nineteenth-century protectorate from a kingdom of the middle ages.\(^2\)

Retrospection heightened romance: the realities of Clifford’s everyday life in Pekan and later Kuala Lipis were substantially more mundane. The frontier was always elsewhere: in 1893, the events of which Clifford would later describe in such glowingly romantic terms, Pekan already had a small European population. From his 1893 diary it would seem that most of the then Acting Resident’s social life was already within the European community, and that a great deal of his working hours were spent processing paperwork. Clifford’s entry for August 18 is typically abrupt: “Working at papers all day. L[awn].T[ennis]. in the afternoon. Council in the evening.”\(^2\) Contacts with Malays seem largely to have been during office hours and as part of official business.

Clifford does, in the opening pages of his 1893 diary, give a proud summary of all the different places he visited during the year, but his accounts of travel around Pahang are matter-of-fact and devoid of the excitement with which he relates his lawn tennis victories or his shooting successes. It seems that he may also have participated in some of the hypocrisy of colonial life, keeping a Malay mis-
tress while planning marriage to a family friend in England.\textsuperscript{26} Certainly his summary of the year at the end of his diary is devoid of much romance:

Taking it by & large it has been bad. The only good times I have had were during my two short trips to S'pore in June & August. . . . I have made considerable progress with my dictionary, but have had little or no time for other literary work.

I have renewed my old friendship with F.A.S.\textsuperscript{27} — All this sounds fairly good, but there is a big But to add to it all—the trouble I hinted at last year is as bad as ever, & it tinges the whole. . . . of my life & takes the spirit & the enjoyment out of all I put my hand to. Life here is dull, but this makes it duller: exile is bad but this makes it worse—How long is it to last?

How long oh Lord? How long. Oh the little more! And how much it is! And the little less! And what worlds away!\textsuperscript{28}

For all Clifford’s romanticisation of Pekan and Pahang in his fiction, it is significant that when he came to fictionalise the capital of the state he named it “Pe­lesu”—a name, which he noted with retrospective glee, “means ‘sham, rotten, spurious,’ in Malay.”\textsuperscript{29}

Clifford’s life underwent two significant changes in the last five years of the century. He married in April 1896, while on home leave. His new wife, Minna, accompanied him to Singapore, and then waited while a cholera epidemic in Pekan subsided before joining him in Pahang. He also began to write and publish fiction.

Clifford had written anthropological notes and translations from Malay in the late 1880s and early 1890s,\textsuperscript{30} and had also worked, with Frank Swettenham, on a long and eventually abandoned project to publish a Malay dictionary. In the middle of the last decade of the century he began to move from the more scientific disciplines of anthropology and, especially, philology to write fiction. His first stories maintain an amateur anthropological pose, with a detached and knowledgeable narrator presenting “sketches” of traditional Malay life in Pahang to an audience on the more developed West Coast of the Peninsula. Largely descriptive in nature, the stories appeared first in the \textit{Straits Times} newspaper in Singapore, and the newspaper later published a collection of them in 1896, entitled \textit{East Coast Etchings}. Clifford had larger ambitions, however, than merely a colonial Malayan audience. In 1897, a much revised version of \textit{East Coast Etchings}, with added stories, was published in London as \textit{In Court and Kampong}. Clifford’s literary star rose quickly: in 1898 he published both a second collection of stories, \textit{Malayan Monochromes}, and a novel, \textit{Since the Beginning}: in the next few years he became a regular contributor of stories to popular literary magazines such as \textit{Blackwood’s}, \textit{Cornhill}, and \textit{Macmillan’s}. With a shrewd eye for profit, he also paid attention to the American market, often re-publishing a story first published in a British magazine on the other side of the Atlantic.
The peak of Clifford’s literary output came around the turn of the century, during his last years in Pahang, which included a brief and abortive governorship of North Borneo, and which ended in a protracted convalescence in England from 1901 to 1903. During his various visits to London, he became well-acquainted with Joseph Conrad, met Thomas Hardy, Edmund Gosse and corresponded with Rudyard Kipling. He gave talks at the Royal Colonial Institute and the Royal Geographical Society, and contributed letters to the press on various issues to do with colonial rule. More stories followed, as well as a second novel, *A Free-lance of Today*. Clifford’s writing of this time is more sophisticated than his early work, with more elaborate plots and narrative strategies, relying less for its effect upon the description of exotic cultural practices and landscapes.

Clifford’s literary productivity declined substantially after his appointment as colonial secretary in Trinidad in 1903. There is some evidence that the Colonial Office pressured him into reducing his literary output, since it was felt that it might interfere with his carrying out administrative duties: it is also likely that the increased workload gave less time for writing. A further reason, and ultimately perhaps the most important, however, was Clifford’s removal from Malaya and the mode of masculine government which it represented. In the next twenty-four years, he served in a variety of positions in Ceylon and West Africa, but he always conceptualised the social structure of the colonies he administered in terms of their difference from the Malay States. As a travelling administrator, he was now more like Weld than Low: he could claim no special authority derided from intimate cultural insight to relate his stories, and his most successful work is either retrospectively concerned with Malaya, such as the novel *Saleh, A Prince of Malaya* or historical fantasy, such as *The Downfall of the Gods*.

Clifford’s difficulty in finding new subject matter is illustrated in a series of letters he wrote to Theodor Clemens, a local acquaintance, while in Trinidad. “Among my own people out there,” he wrote of Malaya, “I was always treading upon ground of which I was absolutely sure; here I am confessedly at the best just groping in the dark”: he asked Clemens to cast a critical eye, informed by local knowledge, upon an article he was writing about Tobago for *Blackwood’s Magazine*. Even when Governor of Nigeria in the 1920s, he continued to define the issues of governance he faced in terms of those he had encountered in Pahang in the 1890s. The Northern emirates of Nigeria were, to Clifford, feudal counterparts of the Malay states: colonial officials should, in their dealings with indigenous rulers, exhibit what “I can only adequately describe as a certain chivalry of manner.” Gentlemanly conduct was metaphorized as romance, Clifford noting that “the shy confidence of a primitive Muhammadan people is hedged about by barriers as formidable as those which guarded the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty; and... if any attempt is to be made to scale or penetrate them, the initiative must come from the white man.” The metaphor of subject races as the
Sleeping Beauty awaiting the loving yet masterful regeneration bestowed by the European man is, of course, deeply indicative of Clifford’s imbrication of gender, government, and race. Yet it is also indicative of cognitive mapping, of a reinscription upon the territory of Nigeria of a metaphor which Clifford had previously used to describe Raffles’s role as the founder of Singapore. In “A Halt on the King’s Highway,” Clifford notes that pre-colonial Singapore had been an obscure, sparsely-populated island: “Then suddenly, as came the prince in the fairy tale to the palace where the princess slumbered, a man burst in upon the stillness of the island—a man with the restless brain, the foresight, the irresistible energy of a younger, sturdier race. And at his rough kiss the island awoke.” Unconscious metaphorical associations supplemented conscious connections: Clifford continued his advice to Nigerian colonial officials by quoting at length from his Malayan story “Up Country.”

Given the place of Malaya within Clifford’s conception of government and his self, he narrativised his appointment as Governor of the Straits Settlements in 1927 as a return from exile. On the voyage to Malaya, Clifford wrote to his friend Edward Clodd, he began recalling Malay words, and thinking in Malay; “my Subliminal Self . . . began to open all the pigeon-holes in which it had stored my knowledge of the Malay language.” His return to Malaya as Governor was the climax of “the greatest individual romance that any member of the Colonial Civil Service has ever been privileged to experience.” This romance was, however, soon converted into tragedy. In October 1929, Clifford left office suddenly and returned to London, ostensibly because of a breakdown in his wife’s health. It seems clear, retrospectively, that it was Clifford’s own mental and physical health which was in question. In 1930 he entered a nursing home in Roehampton, in which he was to remain until his death in 1941. Biographers have noticed a coincidence which, if it does not turn romance into tragedy, at least adds considerable post-colonial irony: his death coincided with the Japanese invasion of Malaya, an event which would trigger the eventual dissolution of the colonial system he had taken such care to introduce and to maintain.

The Government of the Text

Clifford was himself active in the rewriting of his own life: most of his stories are presented as something between truth and fiction, with either a first-person narrator whom the reader is encouraged to identify with Clifford, or intentionally transparent alter egos such as “Jack Norris.” Most of Clifford’s short story collections are prefaced by introductory essays which establish an authorial voice and the authority to narrate. All tales, such prefaces note, are “drawn from the life”: whether they are true or not, they are widely believed, and so “deserve to be better known by the men of the race which has taken the destiny of the Malays of the Peninsula under its especial charge.” Yet the tales are usu-
ally retrospective, often drawing upon incidents Clifford had experienced ten years or more before they were written: they form, mould and re-narrativise experience rather than merely recall it. Before we consider how Clifford rewrites his own life and creates an identity through fiction, however, it is first necessary to understand his own ideological suppositions concerning literature, and literature's connections to gender and government.

A useful guide to the conceptual framework through which Clifford read literature is provided by a series of pseudonymous book reviews he wrote for the *Singapore Free Press* in the late 1890s, the time at which he was beginning to write fiction. Clifford uses the name “the bookworm” as his signature, and covers a wide range of material in the reviews, from now-canonical authors such as Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling to popular writers such as Marie Corelli.

Clifford's book reviews are forthright in expressing views about the various novels and collections of poems submitted to him. In many ways his tastes are typical of an educated middle-class man of his time. While praising imagination, he is also very much concerned with factual accuracy and the observation of realist conventions. Thus Clifford's prime objection to "Ouida's" *The Massarenes* is to its author's "delightful exaggerations, impossible extravagances, and ... colossal ignorance of many things," especially regarding British society life and British rule in India. Clifford makes a similar, though much more inflected criticism, of Conrad's early work. While praising "the maturity of style" and "a mingled strength and delicacy, a mastery over words" which characterise *Almayer's Folly*, Clifford is keen to point out twin inaccuracies. Conrad's "complete ignorance of Malays and their habits and customs" leads him, Clifford feels, to faulty psychology, since, in his opinion, no "full-blooded Malay" woman would wish to revert to her own culture after coming in contact with that of the Europeans:

This shows a complete misunderstanding of the minds of those natives and Eurasians who have come into close contact with white folk. Their aspirations are strainingly, painfully, directed towards what they cannot but regard as the higher level of civilization, and in making them cherish a desire to revert to the beginnings from which they originally sprung Mr. Conrad has been guilty of a misdemeanour, a scientific crime no less heinous than that which would have been his had he made a light gas sink instead of ascend.  

Clifford's concluding comparison is not accidental here: for him culture can be explained with equal objectivity as one would describe a scientific experiment, the position of the observer having no influence upon the act of perception itself. The colonial administrator as writer has the same duty as a scientist: to record objective fact. In this sense, Clifford moves almost towards naturalism, to Emile Zola's comment that his novels were, in fact, scientific experiments, in which he merely placed the characters together, added the catalyst of circumstances, and watched them react.
Clifford’s aesthetics of reading, however, is governed by other factors than an approval of realist conventions. Central to his judgments about the texts he reads is a notion of propriety and taste, and this concept is clearly gendered. He is clearest in his conception of women’s writing, which is intimately connected to the social conventions of ladyhood: “Miss Wilkins writes with all her accustomed grace and finish, and there is a delicacy in her prose which is well suited to the charm of the subjects in which she delights. All her tales seem to have a faint scent of lavender and dried rose-petals clinging to them, an odour of long passed Summers, fragrant and soft, with the sadness that ever attaches itself to ‘the days that are no more.’”42 "Grace," "polish," and a notion of taste and refinement characterise the women writers of whom Clifford approves. Women should avoid verbosity, as well as overly sentimental subject matter: Marie Corelli comes in for reproof here. As the imagery of an English rural idyll which Clifford evokes to describe Wilkins’s work indicates, such delicacy and modesty of literary deportment is bound up with a national identity. Marie Corelli, the writer considers, properly belongs on the other side of the Atlantic, since “[v]ulgarity is the marrow of the bones of the American; refinement is the very blood that runs in our English veins.”43 In contrast, Mrs. Oliphant represents traditional English womanly virtues. “There are few women writers,” Clifford notes, “who have a wholesomer, purer record than Mrs. Oliphant, and while always writing as a lady might be expected to do, she never mistook the author’s chair for the pulpit, and never descended to the namby-pamby or the sickly sentimental.”44

Two novels by women writers are even given Clifford’s ultimate accolade, the reviewer noting that “the style is exceedingly masculine, strong, fine, and firm.”45 Upon closer examination, however, the questions of a masculine style and of the status of a male writer are hedged with ambiguity. The balancing act between taste and self-indulgence seems more difficult for a male writer. Clifford disapproves of Kipling, although he is not specific in his dissatisfaction; probably he dislikes the writer’s depiction of working-class colonial life and its transgression of middle-class notions of taste. His account of a collection of poems by Stephen Phillips is more revealing. On the one hand Phillips is metaphorically compared to an explorer, a mountain climber whose exploits are worthy of comparison with those of the great pioneers of English Literature. His “blank verse rises in places to heights which even Tennyson might with difficulty have scaled, and which certainly no man in our time save Tennyson alone could have aspired to surpass.”46 Such heights, however, make it easier to fall: the more explicit poems in the collection are “a real blot upon the purity of the work” and “out of accord with the refined, ethereal atmosphere which breathes through most of Mr. Phillips’s poems.” The ability to show restraint, for Clifford, is the true differentiation between a great writer, such as Tennyson, and a talented one, such as Phillips.
The male writer in Clifford’s reviews, then, begins to take on the attributes of manliness as government of the self discussed in the introductory chapter. Genius here provides a natural energy: such energy must, however, be carefully managed to avoid breaches in purity and refinement. This technology of the self, expressed in writing, may even contradict with the demands of the realism which Clifford endorses. In his account of Conrad’s work, Clifford praises the novelist’s “mingled strength and delicacy of touch, and a mastery over words.” However, he notes that Conrad’s descriptions are too realistic, “too detailed, the lights and shades are not washed in with sufficient dash and boldness.” Here Clifford expresses a further anxiety, one noted by Sussman, that technologies of the self expressed as strategies of textual management will prove too powerful, and that they will bind too closely the boldness of the natural genius.

Clifford’s investment in the idea of the male writer as genius, with all its associated ambiguities, is perhaps more early than late Victorian. He was an avid reader of Thomas Carlyle, and certainly absorbed his construction of the male writer as hero, his carving out of “a cultural role for aspiring male writers that was redolent with possibilities of power, comfort, and gratification” through taking on “the qualities of those he elevated into great heroes.” Clifford’s own references to his craft in his stories, if rather clumsily self-deprecatory, nonetheless echo Carlylean convictions: he refers to himself and fellow authors as “Knights of the grey Goose-quill” and, on another occasion, sees himself, with some bathos, as Perseus, commenting of his writing that “I must whip my Pegasus over break-neck leaps, must charge him through barbarous combats, and must tumble him head-over-heels into some ugly depths.”

Two ambiguities, however, make the genius as man of letters an ambivalent figure. Christine Battersby has noted that the male genius often possessed very feminine qualities: “[T]he driving force of genius was described in terms of male sexual energies. On the other hand, the genius was supposed to be like a woman: in tune with his emotions, sensitive, inspired—guided by instinctual forces that welled up from beyond the limits of rational consciousness.” Susan Casteras notes that this contradiction was often solved by a vision of the “genius as androgynous, with the feminized attributes of intuition, imagination, sensitivity, and “soul” grafted onto the harder male virtues.” It may be better to replace the analogy of grafting with management. Only a manly man could achieve the necessary management of these forces, could subdue them when rational necessity called: women, in contrast, could not. Yet the figure of the male writer is here dependent upon a prior femininity, and the continual representation of femininity, as we shall note in Clifford’s work, is necessary to the performance of the male author.

The second ambiguity concerning the male writer in Victorian England, as Mary Poovey has noted, was a contradiction about his relationship to profit and material gain. On the one hand he might be seen as heroic, as a Romantic descen-
dant of "leisured men of letters,"54 but on the other the new printing technology and serialisation made him peculiarly dependent upon the market55—his success was, above all, a commercial one. Clifford’s "author function"56 created through his works is one of a leisured or semi-scientific observer recounting matters of ethnographic interest, yet a substantial proportion of his work was produced during his protracted convalescence from 1901 to 1903, when he needed to provide for a family facing the real possibility he would never be fit to return to colonial service. Heroism for a writer is an expression and a management of the force of genius through the machine of the text: yet for Clifford there is always the suspicion that the force which pushes is not genius but commercial rapacity.

This suspicion, for Clifford, moves beyond the motives of the male writer to those of the administrator of the colony. Like writing, imperialism was haunted by the spectre of commerce. Just as in the case of writing, imperialism and profit were clearly imbricated: the idealised picture of the male imperial adventurer or administrator was someone who was above profit, who had higher goals. Much Victorian literature of empire manages this contradiction. In Rider Haggard’s She the motive for imperial adventure is displaced from financial gain to filiality. Joseph Conrad’s An Outcast of the Islands might be seen as a more complex meditation on the subject: it is Tom Lingard’s ability to administer, to call a river his own, which makes him “different to the other traders of those seas” and gives him “intimate satisfaction to” a “desire for singularity.”57 For Clifford, faced with the realities of a Pahang budget deficit, the contradiction was more immediate. In later life, he would try to manage it: in Further India he would argue that Portuguese expansionism in East Asia had been motivated solely by a brutal quest for profit: “In the past the East has suffered much at the hands of the Europeans, and the burden of our sins should press sorely upon us. The age of frank brutality has passed away for ever, and has been replaced by an age of philanthropy and humanitarianism.”58 Commercial rapacity had, Clifford argued, been succeeded by a benevolent imperialism with a commitment to racial regeneration.

Clifford’s Pahang stories, however, do not manage the contradiction so smoothly, especially if they are compared with the annual state reports produced for the Colonial Office. He produces, for instance, two diametrically opposed readings his visit to the Penjum Mining Company’s power station on the Sempam River in January, 1899. Clifford had visited the site before, in 1891,59 when the river was in its natural state, and in his Annual Report for 1898 he is wholly appreciative of the changes:

I was much impressed with the magnitude of the work which has been performed, and with the admirable manner in which the not inconsiderable engineering difficulties have been overcome. The power-station has been placed in a good site well above the flood level, and the fall obtained is 300 feet. . . . To anyone visiting the scene of these operations for the first time, it would appear that the place has been specially constructed

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for the purpose to which it is now being put, but as I first saw the Sempam river, nine years ago, when it was one of the wildest parts of a very wild district, I am able to see how skilfully the many obstacles have been overcome, and how ingeniously the natural features of the place have been made to adapt themselves to the requirements of the engineers.\(^6\)

Here management is all: natural forces are subject to a skilful and scientifically applied discipline which makes them available for social use.

Clifford himself, however, had long been concerned about the commercial rapacity of the company: one of his first actions on his expedition to Pahang in 1887 was to discuss the company's taking over of Chinese mines without compensation. "In Chains" describes the same visit as that noted in the report but gives a very different emphasis. The story mourns the loss of the frontier as a space of masculine adventure. It commences with an account of the state of Pahang in 1891 as "a living past"\(^61\) into which Clifford, "an influence shot straight out of the civilized nineteenth century" is "suddenly precipitated."\(^62\) This world, the narrator recalls, was a romantic one with the opportunity for heroism: with a Malay crew, he ran the rapids, and capsized, narrowly avoiding death at the falls. Struggling to safety, he recalls, he looked back at the river: "The insistent roar of the rapids filled my hearing; the wild beauty of the scene held me spellbound; but most of all was I impressed with the wonderful freedom, the vigour, the completely unrestrained savagery of the river. Here was a stream which for countless ages had dashed down this granite-bound pass."\(^63\) The frontier here offers the possibility of rejuvenation, of an infusion of primitive male energy into modern man. Yet Clifford's pleasure here comes from having achieved mastery, a dynamic stasis of fierce natural forces conquered by an urge to explore which is related to a civilising mission.

In "In Chains," the return to the Sempam, eight years later, takes on a very different meaning. The Clifford-narrator notes that "the supreme freedom of the river—the quality which for me had had so overmastering, so mysterious a charm—had vanished utterly. The stream was no longer the strong, unfettered vainglorious monster of my memory."\(^64\) The story finishes with a lament over the growing bureaucratisation and commercialisation of the life of the colonial administrator: both river and administrator "have shared the wild life" and now go "soberly, working in chains."\(^65\) The pride in the power station as a feat of engineering here is elided, as is the suggestion in the Pahang annual report that the Resident's governance of the colony has provided the economic foundation for such projects. The chains of one account are the ornaments of good government in the other.

For Clifford, then, there are clear analogies between the government of the colony, of the self and of the text. Each object of governance is suffused with an energy and a power which needs to be harnessed by a technology which will train
it, or channel it, into a useful form. Government of the colony should incite sub-
jects to grow in new, improving ways, to become enlightened and agents in their
own “regeneration.” Proper masculine conduct is also concerned with such disci-
plinary action: “it takes a pretty strong man,” of Clifford’s characters remarks,
“to study native life thoroughly . . . without getting his own ethics and morality a
trifle jumbled.”66 Again we here have a technology of scientific rationalism
which processes the raw excitement of colonial adventure: masculine strength
comes not in heroic action, but in self-regulation. Finally, writing, especially a
strong, masculine, style, requires a similar mastery to direct innate talent to the
correct ends.

Metaphorical connections between writing, government, and masculinity
are frequent in Clifford’s writing. In contrast to Conrad’s own manly self-
restraint, Clifford writes of the critical response to *Almayer’s Folly*, “the stay-at-
home critics, who judged the book solely from the point of view of its claims to
rank as literature, raved about Mr. Conrad and his work with all the extrava-
gance and wasteful use of adjectives which mark the writings of our penmen of
the latter years of our century.”67 Here verbal incontinence is linked to a lack of
manliness: like Kipling’s babu in *Kim*, the English critics cannot impose control
upon a stream of language. On another occasion, Clifford was to link writing to
colonialism. Discussing British reprisals after the Pahang disturbances, he noted
that “[t]he next few days are spent in burning miles of villages; in impounding
flocks of cattle; in writing the anger of the Government plainly on the place, so
that even an illiterate people may read it clearly.”68 Yet the analogies between the
three forms of government exist not merely on a metaphorical or comparative
level, but also on a structural level: they are implicit in the way the text is written
and in how it is designed to be read.

An example of this intersection can be seen in one of Clifford’s later short
stories, “In the Heart of Kalamantan,” written after his experiences as Governor
of North Borneo. The story’s protagonist, Gervase Fornier, a sensitive young
Englishman, occupies a post in the interior of Borneo to which he has been sent
by his superiors in a last effort to make a man of him. He is terrified by the canni-
balistic Muruts among whom he lives, and suspicious of the Dyak soldiers sta-
tioned with him. His only comfort is his nightly telephone call to Tom Burnaby,
who is stationed six days’ walk away. Burnaby, a fearless and experienced admin-
istrator, comforts and reassures Gervase.

One day Burnaby departs on an expedition to put down a local “rebellion,”
and is severely wounded by a spear-thrust. Since Gervase is so obviously depend-
ent upon him for comfort, he plays down the severity of his illness on the tele-
phone, and does not take a boat downstream to the hospital. It is only when
Burnaby dies that Fornier realises his sacrifice: this realisation prompts him to ac-
tion. He leads his Dyaks over the hills to Burnaby’s station in only five days, and
puts down an incipient challenge to colonial rule. He then supervises the build-
ing of a huge cairn so that Burnaby’s bones will not be desecrated by the Muruts. His superiors congratulate themselves that the experience has made a man of him, but they do not realise the extent of the sacrifice made by Tom Burnaby.

“In the Heart of Kalamantan” represents a complex reinscription of Clifford’s own life. The “Chief” who sends Gervase to his post is “a hard and strong man” who has “himself gone through the searching ordeal of long solitary exile among folk of an alien race.” He, like the narrator of “In Chains,” looks back with nostalgic retrospection upon “the joys and freedom of the rough, adventurous, peril-beset past” compared to the “office-pent but comfort-laden present.”69 In his annotations to a copy of Bushwhacking, Clifford identifies the Chief as himself while Governor of North Borneo.70 Both Gervase and Burnaby, however, are also partial self-portraits. Faced with the task of giving imaginative life to the relationship, Clifford falls back on his own most intimate homosocial relationship, that with his subordinate, Teddy Wise.71 Dispensing advice and reassurance to his junior subordinate, Burnaby reprises Clifford’s tutelage of Wise in Pahang in the early 1890s. Burnaby’s life is a different reinscription of the career of the “Chief”: he too has been “exiled at a very early age to a godforsaken cranny of the great East” and has lived there “for near a dozen years aloof from folk of his own race and colour.”72 Like Clifford, he has spent a year in England “recovering from dysentery” and then has returned “for a further tour of service in the tropics.”73 Gervase himself, however, is not merely a representation of Wise—he is also the young Clifford. His enforced march across country to Banat has close similarities to a forced march Clifford made during the Pahang “disturbances,” and which he later described in “Bush-whacking.” An incident in which Gervase imagines that a wagtail he sees while crossing the mountain is the reincarnation of his dead friend is a reinscription of an incident in Clifford’s own life. The complexity of autobiographical reinscription in the story is further augmented in its conclusion. Gervase’s strategy of cairn-building to discourage putative cannibalism is a re-invention of a story told to him by Hugh Low which he published as “A Tale of Old Labuan.”74

The pattern that these various autobiographical fragments form also aligns the government of the self with that of the colony and of the text. Gervase’s success as a colonial administrator is clearly textualised as rejuvenation of manliness, one that springs from a reinfusion of primordial energy which in turn is discovered through an intimate homosocial relationship with another man. His initial malady is not so much a lack of an innate masculine energy as an excess of controlling rationality: the techniques of discipline have choked off the sources of manly thumos, rather than channelling it in an appropriate direction. Thus Gervase is “by nature wedded to the soft and lovely side of life—to music, art, comfort—to all the concomitants of an advanced and fastidious civilization.”75 He reads widely, and has a vivid imagination: it is analysis spurred on by this imagination which results in his terror of his surroundings. The ideal imperialist, Clif-
ford hints, is one who exhibits Carlyle's blissful forgetfulness and devotion to productive labour, so much so that he continues fearlessly without realising the extent of the danger to which he is exposed.76

The relationship between Gervase and Burnaby also seems to be an inflated, unconscious parody of normative late-Victorian relationships between men. It is conducted entirely over the telephone, with no physical contact at all: the two men never meet. This is very much in accordance with late Victorian conceptions of masculinity, in which manliness became associated with disembodiment, as "a Cartesian mind while the more emotional and embodied qualities present in earlier forms of masculinity were displaced onto women and onto competing subgroups."77 In the colonies, such a division became more imperative, since "the civilized imperial mind had to be dissociated from the potential savagery and worrying sexuality of the human body."78

It is interesting, however, that the relationship between Gervase and Burnaby, as it develops, is metaphorised as a breaking down of barriers, and an opening up of a curiously gendered space. Gervase's appeal to Burnaby is "almost feminine in the quality of the claims" upon the older man: their relationship takes on "a softer, gentler quality"79 as Burnaby moves towards death. Gervase learns of the "tender side" of Burnaby's character, "each of them conscious of a closer bond and of a stronger affection for one another than either had been aware of before."80 The affection that grows between the men is seen as a natural force: "Like most men who are endowed with big natures, Burnaby had great potentialities of affection, but his life had hitherto been of a kind that precluded them from finding an outlet. They had, as it were, been pent up within him, but now, of a sudden, the presence of a weaker spirit had let loose the flood gates, and the 'love that is wonderful, passing the love of women,' had awakened in his heart, binding him to Gervase."81 This passage moves beyond the homosocial to the homoerotic, the relationship between the two men metaphorically represented as an insemination of fluid. Clifford is on dangerous ground here: in opening up the wellsprings of masculinity, he leaves open the prospect that the flow of male energy may not be inherently heterosexual. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the homosexual as "a life form, and a morphology,"82 manly thumos was the subject of greater suspicion, and repression and management of natural energy became even more urgent in order to achieve normative heterosexual masculinity. "In the Heart of Kalamantan" is haunted by an unconscious realisation that the passion which animates the two men's relationship may not be so far from the passions which animate the Muruts, "the lowest and most debased ... of our human stock" of whom "every man ... appeared to belong to some infinitely degraded branch of the female sex."83

Gervase's intimacy with Burnaby is interrupted, but not wholly destroyed, by the latter's death. Initially, the news of his friend's death, relayed to Gervase by a disembodied "native voice" on the telephone, prompts an emo-
tional release of energy: “Then it was that Gervase Fornier’s new-born manhood arose and spoke. His words rang down the wire firm and imperative; and the Malay, recognizing therein the tone of the master, listened submissively, and never so much as dreamed of argument or disobedience.”84 Fornier proceeds to inhabit the body of his dead friend, acting out the role of the imperial hero, the “born leader . . . whom other men would follow living, would die for, perhaps,”85 the very qualities which he has used to construct a mental picture of Burnaby. Manhood moves him without consciousness, almost, in his five-day trek across country. Attacking a party of Muruts who block his path, he runs at them, firing his revolver, “propelled by the promptings of sheer primordial instinct,” conscious only of “a furious rage that held him like a possession.”86

Having established himself at Banat, and carried out a punitive raid, Gervase re-establishes self-government. He employs Murut prisoners to build a cairn of stones over the body of his dead friend, to prevent any efforts at desecration and cannibalism. The regime established by him, his immediate superior reports to the Chief, “is worth all the theories of administration in the world.”87 The final scene of “In the Heart of Kalamantan” pictures Gervase sitting by the grave of Burnaby, “evening after evening, careless of an unprotected back, communing silently with the dead as though he still lived.”88 Governance of the self here becomes something more than management: it is an entombment, although an entombment which still preserves contact with an energy which can still be summoned, if necessary, to maintain the rule of law.

Such governance of the self holds out the possibility of cultural regeneration and self-improvement. Early in the story, Burnaby rebukes Gervase for the use of the word “savages” to describe the Muruts. “It is merely a question of diversity of prejudices,” Burnaby remarks. “The local natives are not cleanly, I admit, but neither were our ancestors. No self-respecting person ever took a tub . . . until about the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.”89 Such relativism, however, does not breed respect. The Muruts, in Burnaby’s terms, must begin to climb a ladder which the British have long since ascended, attempting the “transmuting,” but not the “eradicating” of “primordial instincts.”90 Gervase’s management of the colony, the ending of the story implies, begins this process, since the Murut tribes of the narrative present (which is some years after the events of the story), the narrator reports, are “now comparatively orderly and exemplary members of society.”91

Such governance is also enforced on another level, that of the structure of the text itself. The story begins with an omniscient narrator, one who can move at will into Gervase’s consciousness, but who can also stand aside and comment, rather intrusively, upon his situation and that of others. The reader learns, for example, that the Chief’s ploy of placing Gervase in a remote posting to make “a man of the fellow” is “ill-calculated.”92 Gervase’s fears concerning the Muruts among whom he dwells, the reader learns, are unfounded: “If he could only have
realized it, Gervase was almost as safe in the heart of Kalamantan as he would have been in a crowded London thoroughfare—in some respects even safer, for here he stood no chance of being obliterated by a taxicab driver with highly developed homicidal instincts." The effect of these authoritative narrational intrusions is to place the reader in a position of knowledge, a knowledge which is equated with power to govern the colony, to give the benefit of a narrator whose "curious experiences" have had success in the "management of turbulent tribes."

Such knowledge is enhanced by physiognomic descriptions of the two men, in which internal significance is mined from external observation. The opening scene of the story presents Gervase "[s]eated on the ground, his bowed back resting against the wall of the stockade." The reader is invited to read his body for signs of lack of manly vigour: his form, the reader is told, "was thin and wasted; the colour of his skin was sallow and opaque; premature lines had furrowed themselves on a face which should have been that of one in his first youth." Having been given practice in making meaning, of fitting various signs into a frame of colonial governance, the reader is finally told by the narrator how to assemble them correctly. A similar tactic is used to describe Burnaby. The reader is given clear, supplementary hints that his wound is more serious than he claims it to be, and finally given a view of the man himself: all this knowledge is denied to Gervase.

Upon Gervase’s reassertion of his manhood, however, the mode of narration changes. The journey from his post to Banat is focalised almost entirely through the young officer’s consciousness, without supplementary comment. Rather than knowing more than the protagonist, the reader comes to know less. His exploits in the interior are reduced to one paragraph, the reader directed to "the records of Kalamantan" and the "memories of certain Murut tribesmen" for further information. The narrator returns at the end, but only to emphasise Gervase’s superiors’ ignorance. His immediate superior cannot understand "the grip on the people" which the young officer has: the “Chief” mistakenly attributes Gervase’s success to his enforced isolation—neither knows of the relationship with Burnaby.

The effect of such a narrative strategy is to move Gervase from object to subject: he has, in effect, taken charge of his own history. Reinvigorated by a contact with the primitive, he now assumes the responsibility for self-governance, for the regulation of the masculine energy which as been restored to him. He is now capable of self-improvement, and need not be subject to a surveillance which earlier was necessary. He is now ready, indeed, for a career of colonial governance. If “In the Heart of Kalamantan” raises the spectre of a masculinity haunted by a homosociality which might slip into homoeroticism, it remains, finally, largely untroubled by it. The individual, modern subject is silent, sealed off
from the social body. The possibility of this modernity is, significantly, not offered to the Muruts.

This chapter has, I hope, demonstrated some of the parallels in Clifford's in the area of governance and discipline. Colonial governmentality, and its incitement of the colonized to a modern, self-regulating subjectivity, discussed in the opening chapter, is paralleled by the colonial official's own self-discipline, his harnessing the desires, wants and fears of his nominally primitive body which is reinvigorated by the regressive delights of the colonial environment. A further parallel to this is a textual discipline, in which the writing of fiction also becomes a heroic activity, one which also offers the possibility of both reinvigoration and control. These parallels are continually emphasised in Clifford's fiction: they are, as we have seen, unstable at times, but subject to a continual reinscription which attempts to erase ambivalence by insistent repetition.