Modern Subjects/Colonial Texts
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Published by ELT Press


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In 1905, at a club meeting in London, Clifford met a young doctor, a "fine-looking fellow" dedicated to the service of Empire. His name was W. Stewart, and he had been pondering, upon graduation, whether to join his father in a rural British practice or whether to venture further afield. His decision was made for him, he told Clifford, upon reading the author's story "In the Heart of Kalamantan," in which the young, sensitive Englishman, Gervase Fornier, is made into a man through being posted to a remote location in Borneo. Stewart's decision did not, however, result in a narrative with so tidy a conclusion. He was posted to Nigeria, and, in 1906, as Clifford noted in an annotation to the story, "while travelling in the Ibo country of Nigeria by bicycle ... he missed his road; strayed into hostile territory; was set upon, captured, abominably tortured, killed & eaten!" Clifford's breathless exaggeration of Stewart's demise, intended perhaps to impress Eve Hall, contrasts with its matter-of-fact re-presentation, fifty years later, by a young Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, in Things Fall Apart.

Clifford's stories would not, presumably, have generally had such a drastic effect upon their intended audience. The question of how they were read, of how they re-enacted nationalism, masculinity, and the government of the self for a reader remains, however, a vital one. In this chapter I first briefly examine how the process of reading Clifford's work would interpellate a metropolitan colonial subject. For the purposes of my study, however, I wish then to move to uncover a parallel process: the manner in which such texts circulated within a colonial community and produced incitements to modern subjecthood there. I will lay particular stress upon how writing such as Clifford's was taken up, critiqued, and re-articulated by an audience for whom it was not intended, but in whose self-construction it played a vital part: the English-educated Chinese community. An examination of this second process of reading will prepare the ground for the tentative genealogy of the evolution and self-nativisation of an elite English-speaking Chinese cultural community in Singapore that I provide in the concluding chapter.
CHAPTER 6 : HUGH CLIFFORD

The Metropolitan Audience

Clifford's novels and short stories, although mostly written before 1905, remained popular in both Britain and America from the last years of the nineteenth century until the early 1930s. The author showed, from the beginning, an astute appreciation of the market potential of his work. Most of his best-known stories were published in both British literary periodicals, such as Blackwood's Magazine or Cornhill, and their American equivalents, such as the Living Age. Clifford's awareness of the financial rewards of the larger American market seems to have grown over time: the collection The Further Side of Silence was specifically assembled for an American audience. In the late 1920s, A Free-lance of Today was re-published in the United States as Prisoners of the Forest, and at the same time a new collection of Clifford's short stories, Bushwhacking and Other Asiatic Tales and Memories, was published on both sides of the Atlantic. The publication of a collection of simplified versions of Clifford's stories as juvenile fiction in Britain in the 1960s is further tribute to their surprising literary longevity.

Most of Clifford's stories would, however, have first been read in British monthly magazines, and consideration of their reception and the manner in which they were read should surely begin here. Blackwood's, Macmillan's and the Cornhill underwent changes in editorial policy in the 1890s and early 1900s, but their essential character remained constant. They aimed for an educated middle-class, not a mass audience, and their monthly sales would have been somewhere between 10,000 to 20,000 copies: considerable, but nothing compared to the hundreds of thousands of copies sold by the more populist Strand, Pearson's and Royal magazines. While the political emphasis of the quality monthlies varied, their contents show a surprising regularity: fiction was mixed with philosophy, literary criticism, biography, applied science, history and current affairs. The issue of Blackwood's Magazine in which the third and final installment of Clifford's "Bush-whacking" appeared is representative. It contained one other fictional work—two chapters of Conrad's Lord Jim, a biography of Ruskin, and descriptive articles about submarine cables and the Royal Army Medical Corps. Andrew Lang's essay "The Evolution of Literary Decency" was included, along with two articles about the war in South Africa.

The articles in the issue of a magazine are linked by a similarity in subject matter that conceals a functional difference. Most are, either directly or indirectly, about the question of empire: submarine cables and military organization are as important to questions of imperial expansion and governance as accounts of the South African war. There seems, however, to be a functional split between the fiction and the non-fiction. The non-fictional accounts stress rationality, progress and causality: both Lord Jim and "Bush-whacking" celebrate an atavistic reversion to the primitive which in some way (more obviously with Clifford than with Conrad) still serves the moral, if not material purposes of empire. In a
sense, Clifford's and Conrad's fiction here has a similar function to the popular Gothic of the 1890s, celebrating not only the "fearful and exciting incursions of barbarity and, more significantly, the irruptions of primitive and archaic forces deeply rooted in the human mind" but also suggesting ways in which such primitivity might be managed and put to use. Lang's meditation upon decency is perhaps pivotal here: literature, if decent, becomes a means of managing and re-moulding the self in order to carry out the imperial project described in the non-fictional articles.

The topic of the utility of fiction, and its possibly deleterious effects upon readers, was a subject of impassioned discussion in the literary monthlies in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In retrospect, much of this anxiety can be traced to concerns about the regulation of the self. Condemnations of Emile Zola's naturalism were often motivated by a semi-conscious fear of Darwinist determinism, a suspicion that civilisation was nothing more than a veneer covering an innate savagery. This fear was often managed by recourse to nationalism, and especially the embodiment of the English nation in the figure of the gentleman. What fiction needed, Hall Caine wrote, was "not the liberty of the realism of the Third Empire in France, but the liberty of the romanticism of the age of Elizabeth in England." Rider Haggard also proposed a revival of romance to substitute "lofty hopes and longings" for naturalism's celebration of the "carnal and filthy." There are still subjects that may be handled," he wrote, "if the man can be found bold enough to handle them"; the forces exposed by naturalism could still be channelled by trained masculine processes of self-government. Dedicating Allan Quatermain to his son, Haggard expressed the hope that "he, and many other boys whom I shall never know, may, in the acts and thoughts of Allan Quatermain and his companions ... find something to help him and them to reach ... the state and dignity of English gentlemen."

The conception of reading as a masculine technology of the self, in which primitive passions might be aroused but then mastered, was common, and disagreements concerning individual authors were often framed within its overall terms. Haggard himself was thus criticised for an ungentlemanly indulgence in primordial savagery without adequate self-regulation. One reviewer condemned his "gloating delight in details of carnage and horror and ferocity for their own ghastly sake," and noted that his novels might have a negative "formative influence upon the gentleman of the future." When Edmund Gosse defended Zola, he noted that "men read novels a great deal more than is supposed." Novelists should not write for "timorous circles of flaxen-haired girls, watched by an Argus-eyed mamma," but rather "enlarge their borders," since it was from "men" who could appreciate, and master, the harsh struggles of life that "the first-class novel receives its imprimatur." Many literary works of the late nineteenth century flirt with the possibility of a dissolution of self-governance. In Conan Doyle's first detective novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, Sherlock Holmes man-
ages to maintain self-regulation through science, and the “temperance and cleanliness of his whole life,” despite Watson’s initial suspicions. The protagonists of The Picture of Dorian Gray and Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde are less successful. Clifford’s first collection of short stories was published in London at the same time as Bram Stoker’s Dracula, another novel in which atavistic desires and hungers are finally only banished by the drawing of the charmed circle of the bourgeois family around John and Mina Harker and their newly-born child.

Clifford himself considered his writing to have a regenerative function similar to that which Haggard proposed for romance. Most of his prefaces, and indeed many frame narratives in the stories themselves, make a clear contrast between an invigorated frontier masculinity and the passivity of the metropolitan reader, the “average stay-at-home European.” The stories themselves, however, draw the reader into complicity with the imperial pioneer. At times, Clifford’s narrator calls out to the reader in the second person, interpellating him or her as an imperial explorer or colonial civil servant. “Your pleasure in gazing on the beauties of this scene,” notes the narrator of “On Malayan Rivers,” “will not be diminished by the recollection that they have only once before been looked upon by the eyes of a White Man.” The reader is here invited into a vicarious experience of discovery with the author. Often, however, the function of the text is not merely to present a vista for contemplation, but to involve the reader actively in analysis and decision-making. This is true in particular in stories which contain supernatural elements: in these Clifford’s narrator rather coyly steps aside and invites the reader’s participation. Introducing a rather unlikely story in which the spirit of a giant merbau tree hypnotises an Englishman who is cutting it down, and makes him instead cut into his own foot, Clifford’s narrator commences by giving a potted biography of the man and an account of his psychological state. The purpose of this, he explains, “is . . . to enable the reader to form his own opinion as to the probability or otherwise of the story I have to tell.” Similarly, in “The Past of the Schooner,” the narrator presents the information “as it reaches me, and each reader must form his own opinion as to its truth or falsehood.” Such incitement to regulation is matched by a hope that the spirit of the frontier, of the man of the “outskirts,” will prove invigorating, catering “for the latent barbarism of the young with the amiable object of awakening in them a spirit of adventure which the circumstances of later life will render it impossible for the vast majority in any degree to satisfy.”

Comment upon Clifford’s fiction in book reviews often focuses upon issues of character and self-regulation. Reviewing Bush-whacking, Hugh Gunn noted that Clifford’s work provided “an excellent literary pabulum for the young men who are going forth to these outskirts in the public service.” Joseph Conrad criticised A Free-lance of Today because of its lack of delineation of Maurice’s character. The adventurousness Maurice showed, Conrad argued, “argues a certain depth of character, a certain firmness of fibre, a resolution that will stand
more than a shock or two—whereas that young man seems as nervous as a cat in his disappointment, in his disenchantment, in his horror. . . . In short, it seems to me you make him too savage and too squeamish, in particular instances, and too unthinking in general."24 The contradictions in Clifford’s texts, if detected, then, were often read as deficiencies: the ambiguities of Clifford’s writings, and their tortured overlaying of the government of the body, colony, and text, passed unremarked. For most British readers, it would seem, Clifford’s stories and novels did provide a means of self-realisation as imperial subjects.

The manner in which Clifford’s texts were received leads us back to the nature of the ambivalence of colonial discourse. If such ambivalence is purely textual, visible only to the present-day literary critic, then one might wonder, reprising Robert Young’s critique of Homi Bhabha, the value in locating it. Presumably all metropolitan readers did not read Clifford in the same way: some may have resisted the interpellation which the texts offer. Traces of individual reading practices are, however, difficult to locate, and even more difficult to extrapolate from. Clearly Clifford’s texts and others like them were read outside the context in which they were intended to be read, by individuals and communities placed at the interstices of colonial society. In the remainder of this chapter, I wish to move to the reception and reinscription of Clifford’s writings by a community to which he was hostile, and which, in his own vision of colonial order and British responsibility for Malay regeneration, had no right to exist: the English-speaking Straits Chinese.

Reading, reinscribing: The Straits Chinese

In 1887, not long after Clifford made his trip to Pahang, a young Straits Chinese man, Lim Boon Keng, departed on a much longer and in many ways more remarkable journey. As the first non-European Queen’s Scholar,25 Lim went to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, graduating with first-class honours in 1891. He returned to Singapore to become a member of the Legislative Council, and one of the leaders of the Straits Chinese Reform Movement, attempting to suture a renovated Confucianism to late-Victorian ideologies of progress and self-government. In 1921, he departed to become President of Amoy (Xiamen) University in China. Like Clifford, Lim found the culminating post of his career a bitter-sweet experience: his brand of reformed Confucianism was shunted aside by the more radical changes initiated by the May Fourth Movement.26 The young writer Lu Xun, among others, saw Lim as a reactionary.

In this study so far, I have explored how colonial discourse in Malaya attempted to produce a modern subject through a series of interconnected technologies. To Clifford and his contemporaries, the act of regulation of the self was analogous to the regulation of the colony, since both actions imposed discipline upon necessary natural forces, producing a free market of the soul in parallel
with that of trade. The contradictions of these apparent symmetries—the “hollowing out” of masculinity by the rise of the homosexual subject, the perceived usurpation of free trade by the forces of monopoly capitalism, and the colonial rule of difference—are also easy for a modern reader to locate and critique. In the last part of this chapter, I consider how this discourse was taken up, read, and re-inscribed in the Straits Chinese community, of which Lim was a member. Establishing a cultural space in the interstices of colonial government, the Straits Chinese reform movement members attempted to carve out a literary culture in English, based upon an internalisation, and yet also a strategic re-inscription, of self-disciplinary fiction.

The Straits Chinese Reform Movement was closely associated with the Chinese Reform movement of the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Reform Movement in China arose as a result of the military humiliation of China by Japan that culminated in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonshiki, ceding Southern Manchuria and Taiwan. Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and other Confucian scholars-students at the Beijing Court submitted a memorial to the Guanxu Emperor advising that China modernise in order to prevent future acts of aggression. In 1898 the Emperor began to institute such reforms, but his initiative was quickly suppressed by conservatives loyal to the Empress Dowager Cixi. Kang and Liang fled: Kang’s brother, Guangren, and other reform leaders such as Tan Sitong were less lucky, and were executed. During many years in exile, some of which were spent in Singapore, Kang attempted to promulgate his own vision of Confucian modernity, originally expounded in A Study of Confucianism as a Reformer, in which the “new institutional and scientific elements” of Western thought” were tied to “antecedents in the Chinese tradition.”27

The reform movement in the Straits Settlements has been seen as a local reflection and repetition of Kang’s ideas, but, at least in the manner in which it was promulgated in the Straits Chinese community, it differed from the Chinese reform movement in two important ways. First, its leading exponents, Lim and the second Chinese Queen’s Scholar, Song Ong Siang, were Western-educated. Kang was a Confucian scholar of the old school: both Lim and Song were much more part of a colonial milieu. Second, Kang and Liang retained a lifelong loyalty to China and were exiled only because of their disaffection with the Qing government. Lim and Song were, in contrast, equally patriotic subjects of another nation, Great Britain, using extravagant pledges of loyalty to the Crown in order to demand equality before the law. To the Straits Settlements government, the creation of a loyalist, bilingual (in English and Chinese) local Straits Chinese elite was unlooked for and awkwardly dissonant with notions of separate development, in which the Malay and English races enjoyed a unique, mutually regenerative partnership. Using knowledge of English law gained from his study at the Middle Temple in London, Song argued that according to the Naturalisation Ordinance of 1867 “every child born in this colony, irrespective of the nationality of its par-

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ents, is a natural born British subject, and entitled to enjoy all the privileges which British nationality confers. Any attempt to restrict nationality racially, Song and Lim noted in an earlier journal editorial, would founder on the plasticity of the notion of race itself:

A Bengali Babu may claim Aryan kinship, and for all we know may have perhaps purer Aryan blood than those who had ancestors settling and intermarrying among the primitive savages of the primeval forests of Caledonia and Britannia. We write this to show the silliness of making distinctions, so far as loyalty is concerned, among the different races who claim the privileges of a British subject.

Refused permission to organise a volunteer corps of Straits Chinese by the Straits Settlements government, Lim, Song and others appealed over its head to the Imperial government and won permission for recruitment to begin.

The creation of a modern Straits Chinese subject for which Lim and Song so earnestly hoped would, they conceived, be brought about by an appropriation of and application of the very technologies of the self which regulated British masculinity and the reinterpretation of Confucianism in their terms. Central to this process was literacy in both English and Chinese, a literacy which enabled the appreciation of high cultural forms, especially literature. The names of organisations set up to regenerate the Straits Chinese—the Straits Philomathic Association, the Straits Chinese Literary Association, the Straits Chinese British Association—hint at the link between cultural literacy and cultural identity. In the pages of their jointly edited *Straits Chinese Magazine*, Lim and Song encouraged the habit of reading in English and the production of literary works as a mark of cultural achievement. Approving press notices published in the first volume, just after the magazine's launch, stressed the literary nature of the magazine as its most remarkable achievement. The *Straits Chinese Magazine*, indeed, might be seen as a direct counterpart of the British literary magazines in which Clifford published his short stories. It, too, mixed fiction with factual articles about healthcare, anthropology, and history. In its pages, one of literature's functions was also to express an atavistic underside to the modern Straits Chinese subject and to encourage the management and regulation of such atavism.

In exploring the type of masculine subjectivity created through the pages of the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, and to understand the manner in which it responds to the management of colonial masculinity in Clifford's work, it is perhaps best to begin with direct responses to Clifford's writings. Beginning in the late 1890s, the magazine's editorials responded to Clifford's portrayal of Chinese men, and criticized them as prejudiced, yet they also responded within the parameters of masculinity which Clifford's texts laid down. Clifford's second collection of short stories, *Studies in Brown Humanity*, contains a particularly virulent anti-Chinese story, "His Little Bill," in which a Chinese labourer, Lim Teng Wah, violently murders his supervisor who has refused to pay him his
wages. Lim’s pleasure in the murder and lack of concern over his subsequent fate allow Clifford’s intrusive narrator space to make comments concerning the degenerate nature of Chinese masculinity. The Chinese man, he notes, “is intellectually as debased a type of man as any in existence. . . . His pleasures are unspeakable things, into the nature of which it is best not to inquire too closely.”

Lim and Song could not let this pass. The opportunity to reply came after a Chinese man was acquitted of murder in a case in Pahang: the brief editorial note entitled “The Chinaman in Pahang” is worth quoting in its entirety:

The *Straits Times* has given to the public a full account of the recent trial at Pekan of the Panglima Raja Akob and his four Malay myrmidons for the murder of Lunet a Malay girl in the district of Temerloh. The original trial of the Chinaman Chow Lim before the Judicial Commissioner for murdering this same Lunet, his mistress, the capital sentence on him, the subsequent investigation of the witnesses for the prosecution and their revelation of a horrible conspiracy to swear away the life of an innocent man, the pardon of the Chinaman, and compensation to him for unjust imprisonment, the later trial of the real murderers before the same judge, their sentence, and the sentence on the Panglima pronounced in words which made a deep impression on the audience, furnish adequate materials for a Native States romance as sensational as any of the stories that we have read under the title “Tales of Malaya.” But for the subsequent revelations, the case of Chow Lim might have furnished another “study in Chinese psychology” and helped to throw more light “upon the workings of the mind of one of the lowest specimens of our human stock.” The author of “Tales of Malaya” has given us his estimate of the Chinaman. If such be also the estimate of the Pahang Malays we cannot feel a bit surprised at anything that may be done by them to the Chinaman in Pahang, for is not his life of no value whatever? We are glad, however, that even in that State, even-handed justice has secured a footing and spirited away such a mischievous notion.

The quotations here are taken directly from “His Little Bill.” In isolating Clifford’s quotes, Lim and Song turn the intellectual tables upon him. The application of the rule of law, of “even-handed justice,” will bring about a modernity in which all subjects are equal before it. Clifford’s prejudice is associated with Malay backwardness and atavistic reversion. The editors of the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, however, were optimistic if they thought that Clifford could not rewrite the case of Chow Lim into another exemplar of Chinese psychology.

For Clifford, the case did provide the material for a sensational romance. The considerable documentation that survives on this case indicates the extent to which Clifford rewrote the story to fit it into parameters of race, masculinity, and governance. The most barely factual account he gives of it is in the 1898 Pahang Annual Report: his description here is again worth quoting in its entirety, since it gives considerably more detail than the report in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*:
A Malay woman, who had been living in concubinage with a Chinese trader in a village in the Temerloh district, was murdered by her relations, after they had vainly tried to induce her to desert her paramour. The people of the village, headed by their Penghulu, then entered into a conspiracy to conceal the identity of the murderer, and, thinking that the Government would never rest satisfied until it had secured a victim, they arranged to accuse and swear away the life of a Chinese—not the woman's lover, but a casual hawker, who chanced to be in the vicinity—and succeeded so well that their victim was actually found guilty... by the Judicial Commissioner. This occurred in 1897, but, owing to the absence of His Highness the Sultan from the State, the sentence did not come before the State Council until some months had elapsed. In the meantime, a rumour reached the ears of some native Members of Council, and the hint then given was followed up. The real murderer was tried, found guilty, and hanged; the Penghulu, who had organised the conspiracy, was sentenced to imprisonment for life, and others of his most active accomplices were also punished. The unfortunate Chinaman, who had been the victim of this conspiracy, was released, and $1,000—an enormous sum of money for one in his circumstances—was awarded to him as compensation for all that he had suffered. This case is remarkable, as serving to prove how beset with difficulties is the administration of justice among a people capable of such close cohesion, and whose consciences can easily reconcile themselves to seeing a fellow creature put to death for a crime which he had never committed, if, thereby, danger may be averted from the real murderer, a professor of their own religious creed. It is noteworthy that some of the witnesses, who tried to swear away the life of the Chinaman, were brothers and sisters of the murdered woman. 33

It would be wrong, of course, to see this as a purely neutral account. Vocabulary such as "paramour" suggests medievalism; Malay intractability is ascribed to the "close cohesion" produced by Islam, and the concomitant refusal to enter the world of the free modern individual. However, in its concentration upon the difficulty of governing Malay subjects, and of encouraging them towards his vision of modernisation, it is very different from the short story Clifford subsequently produced, based upon the events.

That story, "The Wages of Sin," was included by Clifford in his third collection of tales, In A Corner of Asia. In fictionalising the incident, Clifford chose to make a few key changes. The story is framed with a conversation with one of his retinue of followers, "a Malay Raja of the old school" who, as a "warrior," shows a "natural enough" contempt for Chinese men engaged mostly in labouring and trade. 34 The Chinese trader is made more villainous, working upon the desires of women, the soft underbelly of Malay warrior society:

When the men-folk are in the fields, or in the jungles seeking gum and rattans, he women come to the shop and either contract debts which they and their husbands are powerless to meet, or else beg for trifles for which sooner or later the shopkeeper makes them pay in very full measure. Thus, presently, half the womenfolk in the village are in the power of the alien. Later, perhaps, some woman who has learned to love
and long for opium voluntarily takes up her abode with the detested foreigner, and her people, who are deeply in debt to him, dare not protest. 35

This is very much in keeping with Clifford’s projection of the sordidness of imperialism’s imbrication with commerce onto the figure of the Chinese man, preserving Malay society as a primitively energetic one which much be managed by the application of law—even, in Clifford’s eyes, to Chinese subjects. The resident Chinese man, here Ah Si, is also demonised by his refusal to support the alibi of the passing itinerant, Lim Chong. The story becomes less of a meditation upon Malay social cohesion, and more one upon an unmanly Chinese inscrutability.

Lim and Song read Clifford’s book and reviewed it in the Straits Chinese Magazine, doubtless horrified that a story which to them had dramatized Chinese victimisation had so easily become reinscribed as another exposition on Chinese psychology. I have already quoted from their review in discussing Clifford’s racialisation of masculine types, but the terms of their refutation bear a second glance:

The interest of the book is greatly marred by his description of the Chinese, which at once betrays his narrow-mindedness and total ignorance of the life of the Chinese as a whole. Mr. Clifford is an official in one of the small Native States and the Chinese with whom he comes in contact are mostly of the coolie class. It is evident, from what he said with regard to the Chinese, that the author knows little or nothing about this people, beyond his little Malay village. No man who has the slightest knowledge of the Chinese would agree with his view that the Chinese in the Straits are the lowest in the human stock. In this he certainly reveals his utter ignorance of ethnology, and his sad lack of scientific knowledge. 35

The article refutes Clifford here, but paradoxically does so within the very parameters through which colonial writers such as Clifford establish a masculine subjectivity. Clifford is lacking in objectivity: he does not possess the necessary tools which biology and ethnology would provide to absent himself from the scene. In addition, he is blind to the issue of class. Some Chinese, the writer of the review notes, are “of the coolie class”: others, he implies, are gentlemen, and thus worthy of notice.

The series of readings and commentaries which make up an intertextual debate between Clifford and the editors of the Straits Chinese Magazine thus mark the beginning of what Ashis Nandy has called a “shared culture” of colonialism. Lim and Ong refute Clifford, but they do so by creating a hybrid identity which draws upon the very techniques of self-discipline, the parallels between the governance of colony, self, and text, upon which Clifford based his vision of a revitalised British subject. Clifford hoped to regenerate the Malays, but the community which felt itself interpellated, hailed forth by the discourse of self-improvement, was one which the British did not look for, the English-speaking
Straits Chinese. The *Straits Chinese Magazine*’s contents recapitulate Clifford’s own concerns: the effect of the magazine is to incite the creation of a regenerate, modern, Straits Chinese male subject, one to who a racial energy has been restored, and on who carefully regulates and disciplines this energy.

The vehicle which Lim and Song chose to advance their vision of a modern Straits Chinese subject, the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, was always a marginal venture. The community it served was small, and the magazine folded after eleven years because of a lack of younger writers who were prepared to shoulder the burden of editorship. Lim himself wrote under a variety of pseudonyms to disguise the paucity of contributions. If the English-speaking Chinese community was small, however, its concerns were historically important: with multicultural accretions, it would become the ruling elite after independence and proceed to remake Singapore in its own image.

The pages of the *Straits Chinese Magazine* mirror, and rewrite for a different community, the concerns of Clifford’s stories. They are concerned to produce a Muscular Confucianism, a modern, male middle-class Chinese subject marked by self-regulation. Lim’s article on “Physical Culture,” for instance, began with Juvenal’s motto “mens sana in corpore sano” so beloved by the Victorians. The Straits Chinese community, Lim noted, had “so absolutely neglected physical education that... the process of degeneration is fast playing havoc with the physique and vigour of the race.” Medical science, Lim felt, confirmed this: contemporary children were “not equal in stature, girth, weight, muscularity, physical endurance and stamina to their forbears of two generations ago.” Just like Baden-Powell, Lim advocated rigorous physical training to regenerate the “race of weaklings” which the Strait Chinese had become, along with education in both English and Chinese which would simultaneously reanimate the Straits Chinese body with racial energy and provide the means of its regulation.

Such “Self-culture,” as one correspondent in the magazine called it, led to an intimate concern with matters of health. The *Straits Chinese Magazine*, in very much the same manner as Clifford, urged each male subject to regulate his body through continual vigilance against a hostile environment. The magazine reprinted a lecture on “Diet and Exercise in the Tropics” given at the Tanglin Club by P. Fowlie, which was clearly originally directed towards a European audience, and which embodied many of the assumptions discussed early in chapter four. With similar concern for public hygiene as a civilising force, the editors applauded the introduction of the “Leper’s Bill” of 1897 noting that “[i]n almost all civilized countries, there are similar laws which prescribe regulations for the segregation or isolation of lepers.” The magazine reprinted David J. Galloway’s Straits Philosophical Society talks on latah and amok, presenting them as ethno­graphic spectacles of excess that served to confirm the normality of a self-regulated masculinity.
Medical metaphors continue in Lim’s discussion of the place of women in the Straits Chinese community. “Ignorance is infectious,” Lim noted, “and degradation is contagious. Keep your women in a low, ignorant and servile state and in time you become a low, ignorant and servile people—male and female!” The magazine strove to improve the education and position of Straits Chinese women, and vigorously supported the foundation of Singapore Chinese Girl’s School. The improvement of the status of women, however, was not conceived of as enabling women to pursue careers outside the home, producing a Straits Chinese “New Woman.” Rather, it attempted to establish a bourgeois domestic space, presided over by the woman, as a motor for communal regeneration. Education, argued Lew See Fah, would make young Straits Chinese women more suitable for marriage, “with their minds well equipped and with some of the accomplishments which the average civilized man expects to find in those of the gentler sex.” Such hopes were accompanied by exhortations to Straits Chinese men to take the lead in producing a modern, monogamous community: “Be yourself a true husband to your wife and an honourable and loving father to your children. And the measure of your restraint will be the measure of your domestic happiness. Instead of a temporary exhilaration in the caresses of a mistress or of an unfortunate woman, you will have the deep, constant and abiding devotion of a pure wife.” The extent of communal regeneration would thus be determined by men’s ability to construct a protected monogamous space in which women could carry out the work of the domestic sphere, a space very like the bedroom or sickroom in Clifford’s stories.

The status of women provided not only a means of regeneration, but also a ready critique of the colonial society which persisted in excluding the Straits Chinese. In one of the earliest rewritings of Confucianism as Victorian values, Lim noted that the place of women within Confucianism was more consistent with nineteenth-century society than was the status of women in either the New or Old Testaments:

Confucianism has done this much for women. It has proclaimed the sacredness of maternity; it has taught mankind to regard woman as the mistress of the home and the object of male protection and love. It has certainly discouraged giving women those liberties which are easily abused, and the fast living of people in certain high circles in Europe and especially in America which has lately been prominently brought to our notice bears out the wisdom of Confucius in having so early foreseen the inevitable result of license in the intercourse between the sexes. It must always be remembered that the restrictions imposed on the behaviour of women are necessitated by the interest of the family and that of women themselves.

For Lim, the Straits Chinese had taken on the baton of Victorian family values from an increasingly morally flabby and unregulated West. Many critiques of colonial society in the pages of the magazine pressed home this point. Commenting wassishly upon the visit of a European circus, one “Reviewer” noted that it
raised doubts over the "European conception of decency," noting that "cultured men and women in the box seats" were delighted "when a charming little woman in tights deliberately mounted upon a man, who put his head between her thighs." Similarly, an account of the arrest of an Englishwoman for attempting to "procure a girl under the age of sixteen years" noted the paradox that she was described in the colonial press as a "lady," an appellation denied even the most virtuous "Chinese or ... Indian woman." Taking up the tools provided to them by a colonial education, Lim, Song and others used them to open up the contradictions of colonial rule.

The most complex area in which a rewriting of colonial discourse takes place in the Straits Chinese Magazine is race. "[A]lthough its name indicates that it will mainly be controlled and carried on by Straits Chinese," its editors wrote in the first issue, "nevertheless within its columns will be discussed matters of interest to Straits people generally." The journal, they claimed, would address itself to a community of "Straits-born people . . . of all creeds and nationalities" through the medium of a common language at once rich in literature and extensive in use in Benedict Anderson's terms, it summoned this "imagined community" into existence. Song Ong Siang contributed an article on the Hikayat Abdullah, and there were additional essays on a variety of topics concerning Islam. The magazine, however, did not achieve its objective of inclusiveness, largely because of the contradictory place it negotiated for the Straits Chinese community within colonialism.

We have seen Lim's attempt to rewrite Confucianism as Victorian values, and to portray a return to Chinese tradition through the mediation of Western modernization as an act of communal regeneration. The measure of the Straits Chinese community's degeneration was thus its distance both from its Chinese roots and from acceptable nineteenth-century English modes of behaviour. The most visible aspect of the community's degeneration was thus its adoption of the Malay language and, especially among women, Malay dress. It was an easy logical step to unite these observations with observations by writers such as Clifford regarding Malay degeneracy. The Straits Chinese Magazine, indeed, published a racial physiognomy of "The Malay" by J. Roberts which repeated standard stereotypes: "The Malay is not an energetic individual for he does not love work and especially does he detest that labour which requires strenuous and persistent effort. Contentment is his greatest virtue, and unfortunately this virtue has grown to be his greatest curse. The labour of one day provides him only with the means for three of idleness." One Straits Chinese writer, Soh Poh Thong, following the logic of the stereotype, argued that "the tincture of Malayan blood in our veins is accountable for the loss of that untiring energy and that dogged perseverance which characterised our pioneer forefathers." The Malay language did not "posses adequate words to express abstruse reasonings and abstract ideas,"
and the sarong and baju gave one a "deshabillé aspect." Chinese clothes, in contrast, were more modest and refined.

Soh's comments are extreme in tone when compared to the majority of articles in the Straits Chinese Magazine, but they do indicate the dilemma which Song and Lim's creation of the modern Straits Chinese subject in turn created. Lim campaigned against Malay influences on the one hand, and decadent Westernization on the other. In a reinscription of Clifford's identification of Dandiness with Malay essence, Lim identified it with Westernisation. Many young Straits Chinese men, he noted, "starve the body in order to clothe it in costly garments, dandy shoes or fancy hats. The voluptuous and sensual indulge away to their hearts' content—wallowing in impurity and sinking into corruption without one ray of light to indicate the misery of their position, and they will continue in their wild and unnatural living until physical decay ends their sordid career." For the modern Straits Chinese man, the challenge was to follow a middle way between Malay atavism and Western decadence: his path could only be trodden by those willing to exert continual vigilance in self-governance.

Just as in the English quarterly magazines, so in the Straits Chinese Magazine, fiction provided the opportunity for a rehearsal of the qualities necessary for the governance of the self through a textual discipline. Lim and Song, we have seen, were keen advocates of literary production as a sign of cultural achievement. "The future of Straits-born people," an editorial noted, "depends to a large extent upon their ability to keep abreast with the progress of the arts and sciences." Reading was encouraged: the magazine published a "List of Works Relating to China in the Raffles Library, Singapore," perhaps the most obvious example of the community's retrieval of a racial past through the technologies of colonialism. A stress upon reading and the production of literature as a means of cultural enrichment continued after the demise of Lim and Song's magazine through the influence of the Straits Chinese Literary Association. Its journal, the Recorder, also praised book reading as inspiring a "noble intellect" and purity of character. Literature could be read as a kind of conduct-book to discipline the body: an editorial in the second issue advised young men "who seek a pure life to read and memorise Tennyson's poem "Sir Galahad," thus avoiding being "tainted by impurity." Such self-discipline, however, was increasingly deployed as intrinsically Asian:

The past fifty years have witnessed the adoption of numerous European methods in the East; but unfortunately the innovation has not always been advantageous. Whereas the Asiatics have been benefited in many ways, they have been taught habits of luxury and intemperance through their contact with Western people. It should be borne in mind that temperance and frugality have been regarded as two of the best traits in Asiatic character.
The work which Lim and Song began is here reaching fruition: Victorian values have become nativised as Asian values, and such values may be brought into one's life through the attentive reading of English Literature.

The *Straits Chinese Magazine* published many critical articles discussing both English and Chinese Literature. English writers were often introduced in terms of universals, stressing a common British identity but downplaying their racism. An article on Rudyard Kipling, for instance, praises "the glorious heritage over which the Union Jack holds sway" and is also quick to see Kipling's characters as models of masculine self-deportment: "no namby-pamby school-boys but real active living characters." The articles on Chinese literature are more concerned with cultural retrieval. Tan Teck Soon contributed a series of articles on "genuine Chinese authors" in which he attempts, through using Chinese characters and introducing the stylistic features of Classical Chinese writing, to introduce a deeper study of "Chinese belles-lettres" than can be gained from the "Romanized Malay of translations." The retrieval, however, was achieved through the lens of grammar, philology and the study of literature: the modern Straits Chinese subject came to know his own racial past through the technologies of colonialism.

The magazine published not only critical commentaries, but also original literary works. These are mostly short stories, supplemented by a few poems. Indeed, it was the "excellent literary style" of the magazine which excited most comment from the colonial press. The stories themselves follow the pattern of the critical essays, English stories being presented as exemplars of moral universals, Chinese stories in translation serving the function of regeneration through contact with the past. There are, first, a number of short stories written by Europeans that might have been published in any literary magazine in England. Bertie Armstrong's "Twixt Duty and Disgrace," for instance, is set on a P. & O. liner heading to Penang: its characters are all European. Kelwin Baxter's story "Nellie's Triumph" goes a step further: it is set entirely in the English city of Coventry. Second, many stories are translations, or more frequently, given the limited space, retellings of myths and folktales from China and other Asian cultures, thus performing the function of cultural revival and retrieval. "The Origin of the Sole and the Ring-dove", by "Nai Chun", is an example of this, retelling a Thai myth. Tradition and culture was quite consciously manipulated to achieve the social objective of regeneration: Lin Meng Chin's "Select anecdotes from the Records of Famous Women," is prefaced with a note that "the stories have become household words and they may be taken advantage of by the social reformer who is working for the emancipation of the modern Chinese women from the thrall of ignorance."

The most interesting stories, however, are those which attempt to provide something more than information and to incite moral improvement in the
reader. Some are have specific political targets. Lew See Fah’s “The Vision of Bong Khiam Siap,”73 for instance, tells the story of a immigrant from China who makes his fortune by a combination of hard work and an astute marriage into his employer’s family. He becomes prominent in the Chinese community, but remains a conservative, in particular claiming that the education of women is against Chinese tradition. At a meeting, he makes an impassioned speech which persuades community members not to donate money to a proposed girls’ school. He then has a dream in which he sees the consequences of education for women, and the potentially beneficial societal transformations it will bring about. The story ends in a direct appeal for funds for one of the reform movement’s most important projects, the founding of Singapore Chinese Girls School.74 A further story by Lew, “Lost and Found,”75 makes a similar direct political intervention, pleading for the right of Straits Chinese to be tried as British subjects in Straits Settlements court, and not to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Protector of the Chinese, and thus, indirectly, to Qing Dynasty China.

The best fiction in The Straits Chinese Magazine, however, does not merely present a political argument. Rather, it attempts, as Clifford’s does, to encourage the development of the reader as a modern, self-disciplining subject. Becoming a modern Straits Chinese, Lim wrote, involved the negotiation between being “completely Malayanised or Europeanised” on the one hand and “degenerate, maintaining old Chinese customs and notions even when China has been compelled to move on” on the other.76 The negotiation of this path called for an extreme of vigilance. One such story of moral improvement is “T. B. G.’s” “The President’s Ball.”77 The story is set at the “country seat” of the President of the Baba Club, an elite Straits Chinese organisation, somewhere in the interior of the island. The President’s sense of taste is repeatedly emphasised: he is “the type of the accomplished gentleman,”78 and, in furnishing his mansion, he has “spent lavishly, yet with a nice perception of order and discrimination.”79 The narrator’s comment that the President “had travelled in many foreign lands where European culture and refinement find readier acceptance than they do here”80 subtly insinuates that two other communities—nouveau riche Chinese immigrants and Europeans—are both deficient in European culture: it is the Straits Chinese who have the potential to represent true refinement.

The cultured community, however, is threatened by moral dissipation. The President has hired a number of “dancing girls” for the party, and his own partner, “a girl of Dutch extraction” is the “belle of the ball”.81 he, at least, is a bachelor, but many of the other club members are married. The dancing that ensues is to first European, then Malay music: “The other members of the Club then joined in, those who could dance to the strains of European music being given the preference. When the bandsmen showed signs of exhaustion, the Malay fiddle and drum were called into action, and the adepts in the art of Malay dancing then had their innings to their hearts’ content.”82 Becoming a modern Straits
Chinese subject, it emerges, requires the discipline not to accede to such pleasures, to avoid Malay atavism and European fin-de-siècle decadence. Paradoxically, however the text is strewn with cliched Anglicisms, which indicate an internalization of colonial masculinity as the regulation of the self, here demonstrated by the metaphoric use of “innings.”

The struggle for self-discipline is enacted in the story’s description of the President’s body: he wears “a dress shirt with gold links and studs set with diamonds,” a “Hyde Park collar and white silk vest” but “his queue still depend[s] from the back of his head.” In the course of an evening, the President moves from the feudal model of gentlemanliness to the nineteenth-century bourgeois one. Disturbed by the presence of the girls, the President initiates a discussion with his closest friend, Swee Tong, about the “sacred ties of matrimony.” Later his partner, Middy, confesses to him that she has “harboured the hope that we might marry and lead an exemplary conjugal life” having failed to see this, she resolves to see him no more. Moved by the declaration, the President softens towards Middy, enclosing her with “an embrace which made them feel that thenceforth would they begin to love one another with a love pure and holy, culminating in what they dared not at that moment conjecture.”

Though melodramatic, the story is nonetheless interesting in that it maps notions of respectable bourgeois Victorian selfhood—the ideal of the gentleman not as a feudal aristocrat, but as a bourgeois exemplar of conjugality and manly self-restraint—onto the social objectives of the reform movement. Communal regeneration, the story suggests, can only come with the confinement of women to the domestic space of the home. The President’s biblical denunciation of the dancing girls as “graves that have been whitewashed white and clean outside but inside are full of dead men’s bones” makes them metonyms for a Straits Chinese culture with the trappings of modernity, but in need of internal self-strengthening through the governance of the self. The story itself mimes this process, providing a seductive vision of the party and a lifestyle under the influence of both unchecked atavism and decadence before insisting on the necessity of domesticity.

Non-fiction in the Straits Chinese Magazine used its new moral order to criticise European immorality; fiction follows the same path. In several stories, Straits Chinese men displace European men as authority figures. In “Is Revenge Sweet?” by Wee Tong Poh, an obviously wealthy Straits Chinese doctor acts as an intermediary between Chinese “coolies” and the ironically-named Inspector Catspaw of the Gambling Suppression Department, who is clearly misled by informers, and obsessed by bureaucracy. The story is clearly modelled on detective stories like Conan Doyle’s, but Holmes’s panoptic vision is replaced by the equally panoramic vision of the Straits Chinese, based not so much upon ration-
ality and science as the knowledge which comes through occupying the interstices of colonial culture, and thus have knowledge of the lives of all cultural groupings.

Such displacement and irony has the potential to be developed much further. One of the most sophisticated stories, "Rodney’s Salvation" is a parody of the kind of colonial fiction written by Clifford, Swettenham, and other late nineteenth-century writers. The story is anonymous, and the reader’s initial impression is that it is written by an Englishman. The narrator seems English also: he is "home" now and meets the retired John Rodney there. Rodney is mysterious figure, with a romantically obscure past, his limbs partly paralysed as the result, apparently, of a stroke. One night, Rodney tells the narrator the story of his life “over our punch.”

The short story, so far, covers familiar territory. The framed narrative of adventure recounted in the urbane intimacy of the club, hotel room or even sick-room is very much a feature of colonial fiction of the period set in Malaya: Clifford we, have seen, uses it in “The Wages of Sin,” and “Simon Strange,” while Conrad famously pushes the form to its limits in Lord Jim. Somerset Maugham, thirty years later, perhaps gave the form its most smooth execution in stories such as “Footprints in the Jungle.” The effect, we have seen, is to produce a distance between European and the colonial landscape: moments of wild adventure are recounted in rational tranquility, and their significance dissected forensically by European observers and their interlocutors. A binomial opposition is thus established between Europe and Malaya, between control and license, present and past, and within the framework of this opposition a transfusion of primitive, atavistic, racial energy can often be made. Such a process, we have seen, is not without its ambivalences: “Rodney’s Salvation” explodes the colonial text from within by gradually amplifying these moments of contradiction until we lose faith in both narrator and protagonist.

In “Rodney’s Salvation” the form of the framed colonial tale is followed but the effect is undercut by two features of the narrative. First, the narrator himself seems carelessly celebratory of the obverse side of imperialism: rather than noting the moral motivation of colonial service and occluding and financial one, as Clifford’s heroes so readily do, he rather remarks that Rodney is “one of the thousands of Englishmen who make their “pile” in the East and come home to live on it.” This is scarcely flattering. Second, the doctor who diagnoses the true cause of Rodney’s paralysis is Chinese—Dr. Teck—despite the fact that the frame narrative is nominally set in England. Like the Straits Chinese Doctor in “Is Revenge Sweet?”, Dr. Teck usurps the role of the rational European interlocutor: he is a “great specialist in nervous diseases,” and the story later compares the doctor’s role to that of Sherlock Holmes.
The uneasiness introduced by the ambivalence of the frame narrative is amplified when Rodney begins to recount his own story. Rodney has achieved a company position in Bangkok largely through "family influence," and while there, he shows dislike for Thais and Europeans alike, although he reserves especial contempt for the European population:

As for the foreign population, it made me blush for my race. You know with what haughty and proper contempt the English conquerors of India treat their Aryan relative, how the British officer will practically on no condition give his hand to the man and brother though he favours him pretty frequently with his toe. Well, in Siam let me tell you, the English are, on the whole, toadies of a most contemptible description, just as they were in India before they had discarded the role of the meek tradesman.

The narrative here is double-voiced: vocabulary such as "haughty" and the expression "favours him ... with his toe" conspire, given the context of the Singapore Chinese Magazine, to encourage the reader to read Rodney's remarks against their grain. The fact that the English have discarded "the role of meek tradesman" in India hints that the motive behind the formalisation of imperial control may be commerce, despite imperial rhetoric of "improvement" and "regeneration."

The ambivalence of the narrative continues in Rodney's condemnation of Bangkok and Siam. The city is, in his opinion, both physically and morally fetid and the Siamese morally degenerate. Again, degeneration is expressed in the treatment of women, and indeed the trading of women as a commodity, rather than their confinement to the home. In Bangkok, Rodney notes, there is "a great slave-trade in young women." "In my time," he then adds without any apparent self-awareness, "it was a large European firm that controlled the traffic." Having condemned the trade in one breath, Rodney then participates in it in the next: "Well, I need hardly say that in due course I followed the universal custom of the country and invested in a Siamese girl. She was a remarkably pretty specimen. Plump, dark-eyed, and youthful, she had the perfect poise of a Greek statue, and the luxurious lissomeness which belongs to the Oriental maiden alone."

Again, careful diction distances the reader from Rodney: the word "invested" refers back to the subtext of financial rapacity which underlies the first part of the text, and the inking of prostitution and commerce in opposition to monogamous matrimony: "specimen" parodies scientific discourse. The passage also has social referents: it excavates the continuing practice of concubinage among officials and unofficials in the Malay States, a source embarrassment to a colonial government concerned to uphold the appearance of a moral order.

After Rodney is demoted—he glosses over the reasons for this, a further hint at his unreliability as a narrator—his mistress takes the Englishman's money and attempts to poison him on, he notes "the Queen's birthday." Rodney lapses into a coma, and revives after a few days to discover that she and his Annamite "boy" have vanished, having first completely "cleared out" the house of furni-
ture and valuables. At this point the story raises a further aspect of the underside of colonialism—the fear of miscegenation. Waking from his coma, Rodney is told by a doctor that he must “live for your daughter of course. I found her in your house yesterday, locked up in a filthy cellar and almost starving.” The sudden interjection of the daughter into the story is disconcerting not just to Rodney but also to the reader: she has not previously been mentioned, and the reader’s first assumption is that she is his child by his Thai mistress. The motif of the Eurasian child hidden from sight is common in later colonial fiction: one thinks of Maugham’s “The Force of Circumstance.” In fiction contemporary with “Rodney’s Salvation,” including Clifford’s, Eurasians occupied an ambivalent middle space on the borders of the colonial community, as shown in the position of Nina in Conrad’s *Almayer’s Folly*. Again the story excavates an unpalatable truth of colonialism, one that it would rather elide or forget—its promise of equal rights to all subjects through tutelage and its continual denial of those rights as a justification for continued rule.

Having raised the reader’s expectations, the story continues with the implausible discovery that the child is in fact white, purchased by Rodney’s mistress as a slave. The reader becomes increasingly distrustful of the narrator, and the neat boundaries of the framed colonial narrative begin to disintegrate. In terms of narrative, the story makes a last gesture towards closure. The story finishes with an anecdote in which Rodney recalls a conversation in Singapore with an English Captain. The Captain in turn remembers leaving Bangkok on one Queen’s birthday and his drunken crew running down “a number of cargo boats filled with something like furniture.” Two “natives” were thrown into the water and the captain “let them drown”, since they had probably been robbing a house, and he feared legal “actions for damage and destruction.” Formally, closure is achieved, but the Captain’s callous racism throws the reader back to the arrogance of Rodney and the first narrator. The story emerges as “ambivalent” in Homi Bhabha’s terms, a replaying of a colonial text in a slightly dissonant key, so that its contradictions are amplified. Going beyond Bhabha, however, we might say that there is a clear sense of agency here. “Rodney’s Salvation” is not merely parodic, but an act of sabotage, a writing back to the colonial text which collapses the colonial short story from within.

A discussion of Lim and Song’s project has led us some way from Clifford’s works, and it is perhaps now time to return to them. Clifford’s fiction, we have seen, attempts to create the conditions of a colonial governmentality in which subjects will naturally tend towards self-improvement, a self-improvement within the context of colonialism. We have also seen for Clifford the synonymy of the government of the text, colony, and self, and the filiations between masculinity, race, and class. Clifford’s texts, however, are never stable: there are always fissures, gaps where symmetry is impossible, where contradictions prise the surface apart. In colonial discourse analysis, it is common to locate these fissures: the
postcolonial critic can proceed to examine them through the lenses of the many theoretical approaches available. A psychoanalytic critic might call these contradictions the unconscious of imperialism, while a post-Althusserian Marxist might call attention to the text's overdetermination, its contradictory, overlapping ideological layers. Both would agree, however, on the ambivalence of colonial discourse.

The majority of this study has attempted a reading on these lines. Three areas of contradiction seem to me particularly relevant to Clifford: Chatterjee's "rule of colonial difference," the occlusion of imperialism's relation to trade, and a post-Wildean anxiety about male homosociality. Yet to merely locate areas of contradiction is not enough. One needs to see how these contradictions were taken up, how Clifford's texts were read in both metropolitan and colonial societies, and what responses they produced. Clifford hoped for Malay regeneration: it happened, although not on the lines anticipated, through the beginnings of Malay nationalism, independence, and the transition from Malaya to Malaysia. What he did not foresee was the appropriation of his and others' ideas for the government of the self by the Straits Chinese, and the growth of an elite English-speaking Chinese culture in Singapore, a culture in which self-cultivation through the reading of literature was given a prominent place. In my conclusion, I suggest a tentative genealogy for the continuation of colonial governmentality in post-independence Singapore, the body of the colony transmuted into the body of the nation, yet still subject to the same technologies of control.