

Eastern Figures

Orient and Empire in British Writing

Douglas Kerr

東方
帝國
書寫



Eastern Figures

Orient and Empire in British Writing

Douglas Kerr



香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press
14/F Hing Wai Centre
7 Tin Wan Praya Road
Aberdeen
Hong Kong

© Douglas Kerr 2008

Hardback ISBN 978-962-209-934-0

Paperback ISBN 978-962-209-935-7

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Secure On-line Ordering

<http://www.hkupress.org>

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound by Kings Time Printing Press Ltd., in Hong Kong, China



Hong Kong University Press is honoured that Xu Bing, whose art explores the complex themes of language across cultures, has written the Press's name in his Square Word Calligraphy. This signals our commitment to cross-cultural thinking and the distinctive nature of our English-language books published in China.

"At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed."

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Hinterland	9
	Hunter in the grass: A Kipling story	9
	Something in a cave: <i>A Passage to India</i>	14
3	Conversions and Reversions	23
	Kipling and the missionaries	23
	Liberal and conservative ideas in British India	33
	Kipling's creed	46
4	Crowds	53
	Outnumbering: Western individuals and Eastern crowds	53
	Playing to the crowd: <i>Lord Jim</i> , performance and hypnotism	65
5	Nature and Some Naturalists	79
	In the wilderness: Leonard Woolf and others	79
	George Orwell and the natural history of Burma	102
	The Borneo rhinoceros: Redmond O'Hanlon's belated travels	114
6	Contacts and Transgressions	117
	On the beach: Denationalization and Stevenson in the Pacific	117
	In the bush: Clifford and going native	129
	In touch: Gender and regeneration in Maud Diver's romances	142
	Contact and contagion: <i>Nightrunners of Bengal</i>	153
7	Travellers to War	159
	China 1938: Auden and Isherwood	159
	Indochina 1973–75: James Fenton	177

8	Figures of Rule	191
	Anarchy in the East: Burgess and the Malayan trilogy	191
	Law and order: The British and the rule of law	197
	Other orders: Contesting local jurisdictions and practices	206
	Hard cases: Conversations between ruler and ruled in Scott, Coates, and Woolf	214
9	Not Knowing the Oriental	223
	Useful ignorance: Orientalism and Cromer's <i>Modern Egypt</i>	223
	What Strickland knew: Kipling's policeman and dangerous knowledge	230
	Not knowing the oriental	237
	Bibliography	241
	Index	253

Introduction

This is a book of literary history which examines the relationship between British writing and Asian people and places in the colonial period and later, by considering a number of tropes in texts which form part of an attempt to represent and understand the East. The scope of my study embraces Lord Macaulay and Redmond O'Hanlon, but it draws its examples chiefly from work by British writers of the late nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century, a period when the British empire reached its fullest extent, and when writing about the East was extremely rich, varied, and contentious.

Each of the texts discussed here has as one of its topics the relation between East and West. In much of the Earl of Cromer's *Modern Egypt*, or in Hugh Clifford's memoir of the 'heart-breaking little war' in the Pahang region of Malaya, or in Flora Annie Steel's *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, this topic is foregrounded and obvious enough. Each of these works ponders diegetically the question of East and West. But what about a fictional work — a work like Rudyard Kipling's short tale 'The Story of Muhammad Din', for example, in which an English narrator tells of his fondness for an Indian child, the son of one of his household servants, who falls ill and dies.¹ It is a slight tale. No portentous consequences hang upon the death or survival of this child, and the characters are not dressed in any rhetorical panoply signalling that they stand for something grand or abstract beyond themselves. And yet we can feel sure that this is not just a sentimental anecdote about a particular Indian infant, but that the story told is also Kipling's way of telling his readers something that matters about how he sees this relation between East and West, India and Britain (or Anglo-India). It can also be assumed that all of Kipling's readers — Indians, English, or anyone

1. Rudyard Kipling, 'The Story of Muhammad Din', *Plain Tales from the Hills* [1888], ed. H. R. Woudhuysen with an introduction and notes by David Trotter (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 250–53. The story first appeared in the *Lahore Civil and Military Gazette*, 8 September 1886.

else, then and now — will have recognized this dimension of the tale. This is a way of saying that a tale like ‘The Story of Muhammad Din’, while going about its particular mimetic business as every story does, also participates in the British discourse about the East, even though the represented world in the story is confined to a single house and garden. If all Western writing (and painting, photography, music, film) about Eastern places and people is understood, and read, at one level as being about the relation between East and West, then every representation has potentially a quasi-allegorical dimension, as a trope in that Western discourse of the East. These tropes may be seen to have a figural as well as a literal meaning. I will be using the word *figure* to indicate an important and recurrent trope of representation, which can be shown to function not only as an element in the text in which it occurs, but also symbolically in the discourse, pointing beyond itself not to the East, but to a way of understanding the relation between East and West.

The essential parameters of the writings examined here are an Eastern object of representation, and a Western modality or point of view. The child Muhammad Din is a character, a human image in a story, the representation of an Indian person. He is also figurative, in that we construe his friendship with the English narrator in the story as in some way representative of a way that relations between India and the ruling British can be imagined and understood, or were imagined and understood by Kipling at least. He is also an instance of a trope of infantilization which is fairly common in the British imperial imagination, by which subject peoples are thought of as immature and incomplete, and therefore in need of protection and control by a more historically adult people, which is how the British thought of and represented themselves. And this is the point about Muhammad Din, that the image of the Indian child, or of India as a child, elicits or evokes a cluster of related images. These include the environment he lives in (a household in India belonging to an Englishman), the benign English adult who patronizes him, and also his own Indian father, his natural parent, who lacks the knowledge and resources that might perhaps have saved the boy's life if applied in time. We can find traces of these same figural *dramatis personae*, though with a different and redemptive narrative and a provisionally happy ending this time, almost a century later in James Fenton's poem ‘Children in Exile’ (1983), about refugee Cambodian children, fleeing from their lethal patrimony under the Pol Pot regime, and forming tentative surrogate parent-child relations in the West. The child, then, is an ‘Eastern figure’ in my sense.

As a matter of fact, there is not a chapter here on the figure of the child (though there might have been). But there is one about the Eastern crowd, and this can furnish another example of what this book is looking for. Asia is often first and most vividly experienced by the outsider, whether intrepid trailblazer or belated tourist, in the form of a crowd. The crowd is a figure of the East which

comes into focus through difference: to see the East as a crowd means, for the Western observer, to think of himself or herself as outnumbered; surrounded by a sea of indistinguishable foreign faces, the interloper is made acutely aware of his or her singularity by contrast, a heroic or beleaguered individuality. Or perhaps foreigners, arriving in the East with a sense of their own singularity sharpened by their travels, see the people they have come among as both legion and uniform, the overwhelming fact of these people's difference from himself or herself blinding the traveller, at least at first, to any difference or particularity among them. It hardly matters, and may not be possible to say, which comes first, the image of the singular West or the collective East, because they adduce each other and neither means much without the other. But the figure of the Eastern crowd is already halfway to becoming a *story* about East and West; one of the chapters that follow will trace that story through a number of examples.

Each figure considered here then contains a relationship of difference, yet never a static and rarely simply a conflictual or polar one, but always in some sense a mutual constitution, in which each is disclosed, precipitated and modified by its other or others. If the East occurs in the figure of a jungle, this is reinforced by, and brings into focus by contrast, memories and feelings about Western instances of both natural scenes and a modern urban habitat. The relationship is constitutively dialogic but not simply binary. The figure of the missionary, for another example, relates by difference to a number of figural partners or interlocutors — the convert, the unconvertible, and the apostate, the rival priest of a local religion or another church, the secular educator or official with whom missionaries often had an uneasy relationship, even the natural scene which must be converted to grace.

'Rule', the subject of a chapter here, is a figure that is not confined to concrete images like the policeman or the governor or the courthouse, but is dispersed in various institutions and ideas under whose aegis the Europeans — but particularly the British — in the East were pleased to think of theirs as a culture of law, and their imperial activity as guaranteeing and bequeathing the rule of law to Asia. It is a figure which encouraged them to imagine and represent the East as, by contrast, essentially lawless, or subject to rival corrupt, decayed, or barbaric customs and jurisdictions. (The implications of this figure still reverberate perilously today.) I want to show how the operation of these figures in the Western imagination of the East generates narratives about and dialogue between these figural partners — literally so in many cases, such as in the chapter on figures of rule, which ends with three face-to-face conversations between rulers and ruled. Each of these figures has its own history, and while this book will examine each in texts which embody it in what seem to me to be particularly interesting ways, it will also suggest something of the figure's fortunes in other earlier or later representations.

I do not propose to make any particular distinction between representations that purport to be portrayals of actual people and places and events, and those that are frankly imaginary. This is not to suggest there is no difference between fact and fiction. But my interest is in the way these representations are constructed; there is as much to learn from the 'character' of Christopher Isherwood, who was certainly a real person, as we see it in his China travel diary of 1938, as from the 'character' of Muhammad Din, who, as far as I know, never existed outside Kipling's imagination. It is representations that are examined here, and I am interested in the rhetoric and textuality of these representations, rather than in how accurately they might be said to correspond to an authentic original, wherever this might be found. In this way my project takes up the invitation of Edward Said, who in his examination of discourse about the Orient recommended attention first to its tropology. 'The things to look at,' he says, 'are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original.'² (Though I do not take issue with *Orientalism* until my final chapter, and though in dealing chiefly with the Arab world its Orient has a very different compass from my own, *Orientalism* is important to this book, which would not have been written without it. While the theoretical provocation of Said's book, published in 1978, continues to generate a huge literature, its methodological challenge has not been nearly so comprehensively met.)

I have found it useful to think in terms of *tropes*, not just as the figures of speech of classical rhetoric but in the wider application given to the term in the work of Hayden White.

Tropology centers attention on the turns in a discourse: turns from one level of generalization to another, from one phase of a sequence to another, from a description to an analysis or the reverse, from a figure to a ground or from an event to its context, from the conventions of one genre to those of another within a single discourse, and so on.³

In this wide sense these moves or 'turns' can include images and ideas, and structures such as emplotments. This study foregrounds the representational tropes which are my chosen figures, because they have seemed to me particularly powerful and interesting. But the field of this book is the totality of all kinds of tropes that form the basic grammar and vocabulary of the British discourse on the East. And I have been mindful that this book, in its turn, is a part of that discourse; I have no modality outside it.

2. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* [1978] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 21.

3. Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 10–11. See also Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 1–25.

The term *modality* is also used here in a fairly commodious sense. Modality is point of view.⁴ It is concerned with speakers' or writers' or narrators' attitudes and perspectives towards the propositions they express or the things they represent. In grammar, modality is expressed in modal verbs such as *will*, *may*, or *should*, carrying the speaker's judgement of things like necessity, possibility, certainty and uncertainty, permission and obligation; crucially, modality is also imbricated in the question of the authority with which things are spoken of. Modality is present in a sentence in the marks of who is (or is supposed to be) speaking and to whom, where, and when, and in judgements carried in diegetic comments like 'of course', 'unfortunately' or 'at last'. There is no representation without modality, the point of view or attitude — spatial and ideological — from which something is brought into vision and becomes an object. This book deals with a Western modality on the East. We know of Muhammad Din through the eyes, judgements and feelings of the English narrator, and behind him (for modalities can be multiple, and embedded) those of Kipling. We cannot know how Muhammad Din's story might have appeared to his father, and still less of course to the child himself, except that it would certainly have been different. Much of the business of postcolonial discourse has been a struggle over modalities, the effort of the colonized and formerly colonized to represent themselves and get their point of view across.

One way this book tries to navigate its daunting theme is by anchoring frequently in specific instances and the close reading of particular texts. Close reading, as Edward Said argued eloquently in a late essay, is fundamental to humanist enquiry, a procedure for doing justice to the specific and the general and moving between them, that 'will gradually locate the text in its time as part of a whole network of relationships whose outlines and influences play an informing role *in the text*';⁵ in the process, if it works, the text and the network bring each other further into the light.

My aim has been to build up a gallery of figures, each telling a story that glosses the grander narrative of the interaction between East and West that is likely to continue to be the most important theme of our modern history. The scope is broad, but not nearly as broad as the subject. My 'East' is a wide one, in geography and experience. It stretches from the Egypt of Lord Cromer to the Pacific of Robert Louis Stevenson, though its centre of gravity is in the Indian subcontinent, as it always was for the British. It might be argued that this is an

4. There is a useful description in Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (London: Longman, 1990), 302–03. See also the use of the term in Michael Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 64–79.

5. Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 62. Challengingly, Said also enjoins 'taking final comradely responsibility for one's reading' (66).

absurdly heterogeneous and unmanageable category. The British, however, were in the habit of speaking of 'the East' — or being or going 'out East' — as of a self-evident location, though it might prove in practice to be Cairo or Colombo; the word, like 'Orient' itself, suggests an intuition that in the imagination at least it was its own place. In political and commercial terms too, 'the East' was a vague but serviceable category, and a man (like Pip in Dickens' *Great Expectations*) working for an Eastern house of business might be in Smyrna or Batavia, while colonial civil servants, especially senior ones, were posted around Asia and expected to know how to cope, experience in Malaya being convertible into seniority in Ceylon, and so on. If the objection is still made that 'the East' is a homogenizing and artificial concept, a verbal gesture hopelessly inadequate to categorize or contain the experience of alterity supposed to constitute it, I can only say I agree: this is one of the principal strands of my argument.

The texts I choose to discuss all recommend themselves, in my opinion, for literary and historical interest, but of course they are a tiny fragment of the available literature; I cannot deny that good writers and texts have been left out, and those chosen for discussion reflect my personal feeling for the field. The figures selected are themselves diverse, but certainly not comprehensive; indeed there is an arbitrary quality to the choice, which indicates how my own reading has fallen into place, but also flags a resistance to the more familiar and rather formulaic patterns sometimes imposed on this kind of material. The sequence of the following chapters moves from relatively straightforward figures of imagery, like the Hinterland and the crowd, to more abstract figures which are kinds of story or storytelling; in the figure of rule, in a late chapter, my subject is not just forms of authority but something like the master trope of representation itself. But in truth to think about even an apparently simple figure, like the space of Hinterland, in this context is already to be involved in thinking about narrative structures, modes and genres — in this case the structure of mystery and revelation, the modes of realism and romance, the genres of topography, adventure, the psychological and supernatural tale.

These chapters are essays, attempts; they are inter-related but each can also be free-standing, and together they represent an incomplete methodological project. Plenty of other tropes could be summoned and examined, other texts adduced, and a far wider range of experience sampled. My examples have an overwhelmingly masculine modality, for one thing (there are historical reasons for this, though I admit that the arrival of Maud Diver, in Chapter 6, is a welcome change). I have nothing to say about Japan, for another (Japan appears simply too *sui generis* to sit comfortably in a British-oriented account of the East with its centre of gravity in India; it seems to require a book of its own).⁶ These and

6. Such as Ian Littlewood has written in *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1996).

other absences seem rather scandalous even to me, but a book twice this length would still be far from comprehensive; and I suppose that at least these omissions are an egregious proof of the difficulty (I would add, the undesirability) of trying to grasp such a fiction as 'the East' as a whole. There are enough examples, examined in this book, of the grim consequences of claiming a total and inclusive authority over the Orient.

In the pages that follow there is a cumulative if sometimes underground argument that counsels against a too monumental and unfissured idea of knowledge of the Orient. I have described these chapters as essays, but their sequence is not random. It begins with an account of the broaching of Hinterland, the step into the Eastern unknown. It ends with figures of ignorance, the recognition that the Hinterland always has its own Hinterland, and the East is a horizon that can never be reached. You trudge, lift your eyes, and it still lies ahead of you. The writing of this book has been rather like that too. It seemed fitting to end with the image of the young Kipling narrator in 'The City of Dreadful Night', poised atop one of the minarets of the Mosque of Wazir Khan in Lahore, contemplating the unknown life of the city before him and ready, just as the story ends, to begin his enquiries.

Earlier versions of parts of this book have appeared in the *Conradian*, *Contemporary Literature*, *English Studies*, *Essays in Criticism*, *The New Zealand Journal of Oriental Studies*, and in *W. H. Auden: A Legacy*.⁷ I am grateful to the editors for permission to re-present this work here in revised form. My thanks to the staff of the Hong Kong University Library and the British Library for always courteous and efficient service, and to the Hong Kong University Committee for Research and Conference Grants for support. This book has benefited immensely from the help and criticism of Julia Kuehn, and of Elaine Ho as ever. I would also like to thank my Hong Kong colleagues, especially Christopher Hutton and Tong Qingsheng, for their support, encouragement and patience.

7. *W. H. Auden: A Legacy*, ed. David Garrett Izzo (West Cornwall: Locust Hill Press, 2002).

Hunter in the grass: A Kipling story

How should we enter the Hinterland? Step by step, circumspectly, if at all.

An unsigned story entitled 'Bubbling Well Road', just 1500 words long, appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, an English-language newspaper published in Lahore in British India, on 18 January 1888. It begins with a geographical orientation. 'Look out on a large scale map the place where the Chenab river falls into the Indus fifteen miles or so above the hamlet of Chachuran.'¹ The tale that follows is a first-personal narrative about an unpleasant experience that befalls an Englishman when he enters a patch of tall jungle-grass, at a place called Arti-Goth, with the intention of shooting some wild pig for sport. We will follow this man, step by step. The story-teller does not give his name. Although we know that the author of this story was the *Gazette's* precocious assistant editor, the twenty-two-year-old Rudyard Kipling, it would be reckless as well as confusing to name the narrator Kipling. But he must have a name, so I shall call him Hunter.

'Five miles west of Chachuran lies Bubbling Well Road', Hunter continues, establishing his story's credentials by embedding it in a verifiable geography and in the normal tense for non-fictional description or topography.² Realism often establishes a shared epistemological regime with the map, the almanac and the calendar. 'Five miles west of Chachuran,' he repeats, 'is a patch of the plumed jungle grass, that turns over in silver when the wind blows, from ten to twenty feet high and from three to four miles square' (266). Hunter has the naturalist's

-
1. Rudyard Kipling, *Life's Handicap* [1891], ed. A. O. J. Cockshutt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 266. Page references in the text are to this edition.
 2. Kipling's Arti-Goth road is not to be confused with (but may be named after) the more famous Bubbling Well Road which ran through the International Settlement in Shanghai.

eye, he pays attention too to the aesthetics of the patch of tall grass, but he also takes note of its dimensions, much as a surveyor might appraise a piece of land. Pausing to explain that a *gosain* or priest lives in the middle of the patch, a sinister one-eyed figure of great age and feral habits, Hunter recounts how one day he decided to enter the grass with his gun and his dog, because local villagers told him that a sounder or herd of wild pig had been seen to go in there.

'To enter jungle-grass is always an unwise proceeding, but I went, partly because I knew nothing of pig-hunting, and partly because the villagers said that the big boar of the sounder owned foot long tushes [tusks]. Therefore I wished to shoot him, in order to produce the tushes in after years, and say that I had ridden him down in fair chase' (266). He enters the tall grass, in other words, because he is inexperienced, ignorant, vain and dishonest, in a quest for a sporting trophy which he wants to pass off in later years as the product of his bravery and skill; for killing a wild pig with a double-barrelled rifle is less risky and glamorous than pursuing it on horseback and spearing it — the sport of pig-sticking, particularly enjoyed by military sportsmen in British India. Hunter as narrator casts himself then in the role of the aspiring *miles gloriosus*, the boastful soldier who is really a coward, and prepares readers to see him humiliated and punished for this unsportsmanlike action. (Horseback sports are for the equestrian classes, which probably makes Hunter a class imposter too.) It seems we are in for a comedy of self-deprecation.

Hunter takes his gun and enters into the hot, close patch, accompanied only by his dog, who is called Mr Wardle after the sporting gentleman in *The Pickwick Papers*. But once man and dog are in the interior, things start to go wrong, in a manner familiar from more heroic explorer narratives. The dog can negotiate the thick grass tolerably easily, 'but I had to force my way,' says Hunter, 'and in twenty minutes was as completely lost as though I had been in the heart of Central Africa' (266).

Readers of this story in the *Gazette* would have been aware, like everybody else, that the last African expedition of the celebrity explorer Henry Morton Stanley (1887–89) was forcing its way through the heart of Central Africa even as they read, and had indeed been lost to the outside world for many months. The journey was to be memorialized in Stanley's book *In Darkest Africa*, published in 1890, the year of his triumphant return, but it also raised a scandal, with allegations of Stanley's ruthlessness and cruelty, his association with notorious slavers, and of the complicity of some of his officers in cannibalism.³ This was

3. Stanley was under orders from King Leopold of the Belgians. He traversed the continent from west to east, reaching Bagamoyo after an appalling journey of two years and ten months. See Iain R. Smith, *The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, 1886–1890* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972). See also Tony Gould, *In Limbo: The Story of Stanley's Rear Column*

the last great Victorian foray into the unmapped interior in the heart of Africa; it provides the heroic and haunting antiphon to Hunter's antiheroic adventure in the grass, his armed incursion into the Arti-Goth patch. And Central Africa is where Hunter might as well be, for if you are lost and far from home, one place is much the same as another. The place where he is, or the non-place (since we are off the map now), can be named with a word that was to enter the English language, from the diplomatic idiom of Bismarckian Germany, a year or so after this story was published: Hinterland.

The word is almost a history in itself of late nineteenth-century European exploration, encroachment and land-grab. Its first citation in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is from the *Spectator*, 19 July 1890: 'The delimitation of the Hinterland behind Tunis and Algiers.' Its second citation, from the *Daily News* of 12 June 1891, reports Lord Salisbury's recognition of 'the very modern doctrine of the Hinterland, which he expounds as meaning that "those who possess the coast also possess the plain which is watered by the rivers that run to the coast"'. To describe a place as Hinterland might already be to make a territorial claim on it. By 1902, J. A. Hobson, the great critic of imperialism, could denounce 'a whole sliding scale of terms from "hinterland" and "sphere of interest" to "effective occupation" and "annexation"' as illustrations of a diplomatic phraseology 'devised for purposes of concealment and encroachment'.⁴ Hinterland is the 'back country' or interior, that uncertain territory that recedes away from the known and possessed. Hinterland extends 'our' sphere of property and knowledge and security, but extends beyond it, and is always to some extent disputed. We may assert our right over it, it may contain what we desire or fear, but it is an area of darkness — perhaps its heart, if it has a heart. Hinterland is a figure in the discourse of the late nineteenth-century European empires.

Two problems confront the hapless Hunter as he blunders deeper into the Arti-Goth patch. It is difficult to move, and it is difficult to see. 'There was nothing but grass everywhere, and it was impossible to see two yards in any direction' (267). Hunter's powers of mobility, survey, and control are being foreshortened; and dignity, the fourth pillar of colonial authority, collapses too. What seemed a paradigmatic colonial invasion starts to sound like an exemplary lesson in the limits of power and knowledge, but it is too late to go back. He has to sidle along a track which is barely in the realm of culture at all, for he describes it as a compromise between a native foot-path and a pig-run. Though obliged to walk a path trodden by beings of a lower order, he still takes its measure — it is barely

(London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979). Stanley's role as one of the models for Kurtz in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' is discussed by Robert Hampson in the Introduction to his edition of Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1995), xvi–xxvii.

4. J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Nisbet, 1902), 219.

six inches wide — perhaps in recognition that he is now in danger, as Kipling's English often are, of becoming engulfed in Oriental formlessness and incommensurability.

'Nonetheless it was a path, and valuable because it might lead to a place' (267). He struggles for agency and teleology: the path may lead to a place, and going anywhere is better than being nowhere. Encumbered by his rifle, which makes it difficult to shove aside the tussocks of grass before his face, he is obliged to progress backwards, to his own embarrassment. It is at this point, and just as he is preparing to back into an unusually stiff tussock, that he realizes that he seems to have lost the dog. He calls the dog three times — and receives a shock, for his words are repeated by a deep voice almost underneath his feet. He calls again, and, he reports, 'the underground echo assisted me'. The verb suggests that the echo is not just an acoustic repetition, but some kind of illocution. 'At that I ceased calling and listened very attentively, because I thought I heard a man laughing in a peculiarly offensive manner' (267).

Two things have happened to Hunter. First, his words have been returned to him in a different voice. Second, he has been laughed at. Here we find our first interlocation between West and East, and it is a peculiar one. The situation is quite complex. The unseen voice alarms Hunter, but in almost immediately identifying it correctly as an underground echo, he has acquired a piece of information that may well have saved his life; he is on the edge of a hidden precipice, and the echo has indeed assisted him, for without its warning he might have walked backwards over the edge. But if the echo warns him, the sound of laughter belittles him. This is no congenial merriment but a mockery, with its peculiarly offensive manner, and in the context the echo and the laughter are linked together, like text and commentary. The place is allowing him to listen to his own words, only to hear how ridiculous they sound.

Hunter is greatly disconcerted, his body experiences the laughter as a kind of illness, and his narrative makes a confused protest against it. 'The heat made me sweat, but the laughter made me shake. There is no earthly need for laughter in high grass. It is indecent, as well as impolite' (267). He locates the echo somewhere behind the tussock into which he was preparing to back, and drives his rifle 'up to the triggers between the grass-stems in a downward and forward direction', answering this 'indecent' challenge and travesty with his own aggressive masculine porrection (267). The story is rich in psychoanalytical resonances, both for Freudians and Jungians, but at this point it also comes close to indecent farce. 'Every time that I grunted with the exertion of driving a heavy rifle through the thick grass, the grunt was faithfully repeated from below, and when I stopped to wipe my face the sound of low laughter was distinct beyond doubting' (267–8). But it strikes a very specific historical chord too. The British in India were haunted by the memory of the uprising of 1857, and this adventure of an armed