



Deaf Ears and an Accustomed Music: Colonial Criticism in Louis Couperus' *The Hidden Force*

Jenny Watson, Swansea University

Abstract: Louis Couperus' novel *The Hidden Force* (De stille kracht), published in 1900, is one of the most famous examples of Dutch colonial literature. In its own time, the book was considered scandalous because of its naturalistic portrayal of an Indies family torn apart by illicit affairs, jealousy and a series of unexplained events, and the novel's risqué reputation was given renewed attention when it was televised in 1974 (the drama contained the first nude scene in Dutch television history and was the subject of some controversy). This article puts forward a reading of *The Hidden Force* which focuses on another aspect of the novel which would have been potentially more contentious at the time it was published: its critical attitude to colonialism. Although other scholars have recognised the sense of doom which permeates the text and the ways in which Couperus signals the inevitability of the failure of colonialism, this has previously been linked to an essentialist perception of incompatibility between the Dutch and the Javanese. Here, the focus is on how the characters embody and discuss the shortcomings of the Europeans within the colonial system, suggesting that Couperus is communicating a view of imperialism as morally unacceptable rather than simply problematic.

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The Dutch colonial novel *The Hidden Force* by the *fin de siècle* author Louis Couperus is regarded as one of the most significant works of Dutch colonial literature. Despite this, it has garnered relatively little critical attention when compared to the other key Dutch colonial text *Max Havelaar* by Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker). While *Max Havelaar* (1860) had an undoubtedly greater impact at time of publishing and is still celebrated for being an early Dutch example of a critical text about colonialism, *The Hidden Force* has been overlooked in terms of what its critical position regarding the morality of colonialism might be. In a 1994 piece in the [104] *New York Review of Books*, Ian Buruma described the text as a masterpiece that had been 'largely forgotten outside Holland' but that sensed the decay of the Dutch empire in Indonesia with great sensitivity.¹ This chimes with the idea, which various critics have expressed, that *The Hidden Force* forms a prophetic vision of the future of colonialism through its doom-laden description of a colony in decline.² However, this essay will argue that *The Hidden Force* goes further than expressing a sense of decay and contains elements which make a case for a directly political reading, an approach which has been overlooked by critics focused on the provocative sensuality and supernatural elements the novel contains. In order to examine the critical positions which are expressed in the book and whether they constitute a critique of colonial rule, I will draw upon the work of the Victorian literature scholar Patrick Brantlinger, and more

specifically his definition of what constitutes the ‘imperial Gothic’ genre. I contend that, although *The Hidden Force* incorporates elements which make it appear to conform to that genre and sit alongside other popular supernatural thrillers from the *fin de siècle*, its message regarding colonialism sets it apart. *The Hidden Force* does not contain the positive view of colonialism that one would expect of a work of a typical ‘imperial Gothic’ literature, as described by Brantlinger, but rather criticises not just aspects of the Netherlands approach to colonial management but also the system of colonial rule as a whole. The ‘hidden force’ of the title is more than a spectre to thrill the reader, and functions at times as a power of vengeance and justice against the colonists. By refocusing on the nature of the criticism directed at the colonial system in the text, I aim to contribute towards a reinterpretation of *The Hidden Force* as a novel owing more to the politicised colonial literature of Multatuli than the populist entertainment literature of the late nineteenth century. Although Couperus’ attitude towards colonialism was to become more positive in later life, the vehemence of colonial criticism in his novel should not be discounted.

The Hidden Force opens in Labuwangi, a fictional town in Eastern Java,³ where the local resident Van Oudijk and his eldest son Theo and daughter Doddy await the return of his second wife, Léonie, and van Oudijk’s two other sons from his previous marriage, Rictus and René. Van Oudijk is shown to be a man of duty and familial sentimentality, who dotes on his wife and children despite their obviously less affectionate feelings towards him. As the story develops, Van Oudijk comes into conflict with the Javanese ruling Adiningrat family over the behaviour of one of the local regents and begins to receive anonymous letters which attack his reputation and that of his wife, whose infidelities with various men (including Van Oudijk’s own son Theo) are common knowledge in the community. As Van Oudijk struggles to maintain friendly relations with the local regents and ignore the poison-pen letters, which are hinted at as coming from his illegitimate mixedrace son, strange occurrences begin to frighten members of his household and the wider Dutch community. These apparently supernatural events seem to focus [105] on Léonie and her behaviour and she is eventually attacked in her bathroom by some invisible presence that spits on her while she is bathing. The ‘hidden force’ provokes a fearful reaction in the colonists and spreads discord in the community in Labuwangi, with much of the unease they experience reflecting anxieties inherent to the experience of colonialism. Eventually Van Oudijk feels incapable of resisting the ‘hidden force’ which he has been battling any longer and gives up his residency and career.

Although *The Hidden Force* is written in a realistic style and contains convincing psychological insights into its characters, its realism is combined with extensive use of supernatural elements including ghostly visitations and séances. This incorporation of occult themes reflects the trend for the paranormal which arose in the late 19th century and had a strong influence on popular literature, whilst the combination of the classically gothic supernatural threat and the naturalism of social dramas places *The Hidden Force*, with its scandalous undercurrents and interracial sex, closer to the genre Rosemarie Buikema and Lies Wesseling call the *homely Gothic*.⁴

In his acclaimed 1988 book, *Rule of Darkness*, Patrick Brantlinger studies the emergence of supernatural elements in colonial adventure literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including a chapter on the genre he calls ‘imperial Gothic’. Brantlinger coined this term, which has been used in many subsequent studies of the era, to describe the introduction of Gothic elements into adventure literature set in the colonies. His definition of

'imperial Gothic' and the collective sentiments that it expresses can be usefully applied to *The Hidden Force*, which contains many elements typical to this genre.

Colonial Anxiety and the Fear of 'Going Native'

The first key theme of 'imperial Gothic' which Brantlinger identifies is that of 'individual regression or going native'.⁵ The possibility of personal degeneration brought about by contact with people of 'lesser races' was a source of alarm to Europeans of the late nineteenth century and led to moves to segregate races and discourage interracial relationships.⁶ In *The Hidden Force*, the characters with whom the reader most associates this notion of degeneration are Van Oudijk, who eventually succumbs to his own weakness, and Eva Eldersma, the wife of his secretary, who is the most vigorous defender against 'going native'. Eva, who has been interpreted as an alter-ego of Van Oudijk, is the social leader of the Labuwangi Dutch community and organises entertainments for the local notables and their families.⁷ She is determined that the cultural vacuum she perceives in their community be filled with strictly 'European' activities and is fuelled by the longing she feels for her parents' artistic circle at home in The Hague. One of the habits she tries to cultivate in her fellow colonists is that of dressing formally for dinner: [106]

She introduced tails and white ties and she was inexorable [...] the poor men objected, gasping for air at first, and felt constricted in their stiff collars. The doctor declared that it was unhealthy, and the old timers protested that it was madness and contrary to the good old Indies customs.⁸

The colonists enjoy Eva's parties, despite the strictures of formal attire, but the measures she takes to maintain a European feel in her home and in the community are ultimately shown to be superficial and ineffective. The notion of 'dressing for dinner' as a signifier of the preservation of European values commonly expressed in discourse surrounding colonialism, encapsulates the way in which many behaviours of the colonisers only functioned as a veneer to disguise fundamental differences between colonial and domestic society. Keeping up appearances in the colonies was especially important because of the need to set an example to the colonised people but was also seen as serving to encourage the maintenance of the same standards at home.⁹ Couperus demonstrates most clearly the futility of the superficial endeavours by Europeans to differentiate themselves from their surroundings in the struggle Eva enters into to protect her sumptuously decorated home from the tropical environment, and the disintegration of her belongings:¹⁰

My garden is a swamp [...] White ants devoured my beautiful Japanese mats. A new silk dress suddenly has stains over it, for no reason that I can make out. Another is all unravelled, simply with heat [...] To console myself I took refuge in the *Feuerzauber*. My piano was out of tune, I believe there are cockroaches walking among the strings.¹¹

Eva's preference for European-style living and dislike of open-planned, airy Javanese housing, which makes her feel vulnerable, was an attitude which was taking hold around the turn of the century, with colonists returning to the traditional Dutch style of architecture.¹² Couperus appears to be responding to the increase in attempts to Europeanise the Javanese environment, and the incompatibility of this with the tropical climate.

Van Oudijk, the other character who must be considered when evaluating regression in *The Hidden Force*, is one whose trajectory truly reflects the notion of 'going native'. After the disturbances at his home subside, the resident undergoes a complete change in personality and retires suddenly from the colonial administration with a new indifference towards everything, 'an indifference that had gradually corrupted the very marrow of this once so robust and practical man [...] His soul was filled with a gradual blight, it was withering and dying'.¹³ He withdraws from public life and settles with a native woman in a rural backwater, resolved to accept his fate: [107]

The little brown faces were peeping round the corner. And he called to them, lured them in a friendly manner, with a broad fatherly gesture [...] 'It's a typical Indies mess you'll say: a quasi-marriage with the daughter of a coffee overseer, with the old woman and the little brothers and sisters included in the bargain [...] (but) it works very well. I vegetate here, drink good coffee, and they take good care of the old man...'¹⁴

His loss of faith in his own 'good sense and logic which suddenly appeared to (him) as the wrong theory of life',¹⁵ was caused by his struggle with the 'hidden force', with which he says every European finds themselves confronted in one way or another.¹⁶ Although at the time Van Oudijk believed that he had conquered the hidden force, 'because of his simple courage as an official, as a Hollander and as a man',¹⁷ he realises that he would be powerless against it a second time, after coming to believe the accusations levelled against his wife.¹⁸

However, Couperus' relatively positive portrayal of personal regression is atypical in the imperial Gothic genre. Although Eva eventually leaves the Indies demoralised, the greater awareness which she gains from her experiences suggests that becoming closer to the nature of the Indies has improved her character. Similarly, Van Oudijk's total decline into an exotic idleness, a typical nightmare scenario of colonialism, is not so straightforwardly portrayed in Couperus' novel.¹⁹ The resident, although fallen from grace, is content in his sleepy backwater and finds in his adopted native family an emotional succour that his legitimate family life never afforded him. More importantly, his self-awareness and awareness of the Indies is much greater than at any time previously and his philosophical acceptance both of his position and the power of the 'hidden force' echoes with the attitude of the native population, as seen through the servant Urip, whose submission in the face of the 'hidden force' appears to protect her from its wrath.²⁰ Viewed in such a way, the idea of 'going native' appears in a more positive light than one would necessarily expect in a work of 'imperial Gothic' literature. Critics such as Brantlinger have actually been criticised in more recent scholarship for overlooking this potential for a positive view of intercultural contact by focusing on 'anxiety' rather than the greater freedom or personal advancement of Western characters in colonial texts.²¹

Ethnic Intermingling and Society Unstuck

Although Van Oudijk's eventual withdrawal to live with a Javanese family could be read as an attempt by Couperus to cement the character's fall from grace, this is not straightforwardly the case. Instead it is interesting to look at Van Oudijk's relationship with Indonesian and mixed-race characters in more detail. In her excellent 1998 article on *The Hidden Force*, Pamela Pattynama identifies race and particularly the mixing of blood as being central to the novel's plot. 'Miscegenation' [108] within the resident's family, she claims, provides a way to

understanding the 'palimpsest narrative' within the book, and thereby the reason for Van Oudijk's defeat by the hidden force.²²

The complex racial hierarchies and intermingled social structures in which inhabitants of the Indies operated were devalued around 1900 in favour of an apartheid between whites and non-whites. Fears regarding the consequences of interracial relationships had grown in Europe over the preceding decades, with a popular scientific discourse shifting towards the conviction that white races might be weakened, or even destroyed, by mixing blood.

In the context of the imperial gothic, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* provides the ultimate representation of these fears. Aside from his villainous nature, the indiscrimination with which Dracula seeks victims and the resultant mixing of the blood of different genders, races and classes symbolically break down social boundaries.²³ The fact that the count does this at the heart of the British empire – simultaneously invading and corrupting the nation – makes him especially frightening.

In *The Hidden Force*, many of the central characters are of mixed race, including Van Oudijk's own children, and the glamorous seducer Addy de Luce. Critics have identified van Oudijk's disappointment in, and even hostility towards his children and their racial 'otherness', and Alfred Birney goes so far as to say that Couperus is writing about racism within the family through his description of the Van Oudijks.²⁴ Pattynama argues that he indeed hates their mixed heritage but that the fact that he chose and later chooses again to live with a Javanese woman as his companion reminds the reader of the previous acceptability of informal relationships between Dutch men and native women.²⁵ As the resident fights to remain in control, he suppresses his past, as represented by his children (and the rumours of his former wife's gambling activities), by distancing himself from all that is mixed race. However, his family's behaviour – offending decency with various illicit relationships and engaging in interracial sex, not to mention the quasi-incestuous relationship between his wife and son – demonstrate the resident's lack of control, with their transgressions against social norms signalling the threat of societal breakdown. Bas Heijne summarises the situation thus:

Outside the western context, not just social conventions but also morality, aesthetics and even human imagination, everything that comes under culture and civilisation, turns out to be based on nothing more than quick sand.²⁶

As well as revealing the colonial society's lack of control, the blurring and crossing of racial, sexual and gender boundaries by his family members constitutes a threat to Van Oudijk's very identity as a white male, and his vulnerability to threats like this mirror the colonial project's perceived precariousness in the face of racial mixing.²⁷ Reading *The Hidden Force* with an eye to today's debates on [109] multiculturalism, Birney summarises the problem Van Oudijk struggles with as being 'the inevitability of eventually turning into a mixed culture.'²⁸

Invasion Fantasies

Alongside this threat of destruction through racial dilution, the threat posed by the 'hidden force' which Van Oudijk fights against regularly takes on aspects of the second theme outlined by Brantlinger: 'an invasion of civilisation by the forces of barbarism or demonism'.²⁹ The fear of such an invasion is represented in the novel by several anxieties vocalised by the characters. Darkness, native magic, awesome natural forces and Islam are all focuses of fear for the colonists, who feel themselves beleaguered in various ways. Night is a key feature of the text as

a whole and images of engulfing darkness and protective light permeate the descriptions of the environment from the start. In the opening scene, which features Van Oudijk's journey from his home to the colonial club in central Labuwangi, Couperus aligns the resident with light and thus the traditional notion of the European as a purveyor of enlightenment and civilisation to which the resident adheres. He walks through the streets, accompanied by his *oppasser* carrying a light, 'whose glowing tip he waved from side to side so that the resident might be seen by anyone passing in the dark'.³⁰ The significance of the light as part of Van Oudijk's appearance of authority is reinforced by the *oppasser*'s behaviour with the light:

[...] an occasional Javanese, like a moving shadow, appeared out of the darkness, and then the *oppasser* waved the glowing point of his *tali-api* with great ostentation behind his master. As a rule, the Javanese understood and made himself small, cowering along the edge of the road and passing with a scuttling gait. Now and again, an ignorant native, just arrived from his *desa*, did not understand, but went by, looking in terror at the *oppasser* [...] When a cart approached, or a *sado*, he waved his little fiery star again and again and made signs to the driver, who either stopped and alighted or squatted in his little carriage and, so squatting, drove along on the further side of the road.³¹

Later, when the light which burns in the residency's verandah symbolically goes out, it is at the moment where the courage of the previously self-possessed Léonie and her lover Theo finally fails:

The moaning and sobbing was very distinct. Léonie looked white as a sheet and was trembling all over.

'Don't be scared,' said Theo. 'Of course they're animals.' [110]

But he himself was white as chalk, and, when they looked at each other, she understood he too was afraid [...] Suddenly both of them [...] were afraid, with a single fear, afraid as if of a threatening punishment. [...] two white children of this mysterious soil of the Indies, who from childhood had breathed the mysterious air of Java and had unconsciously heard the vague, stealthily approaching mystery like an accustomed music [...] a sudden draft blew out the lamp. And they remained in darkness a little longer...³²

The darkness is felt to press in upon the colonists, who are afraid of unrest among the natives and feel increasingly vulnerable as tensions mount, 'at night they locked and bolted their houses, had weapons ready, and they woke suddenly in terror, listening to the noises of the night'.³³ The fear of the night, as a foe which can only be kept at bay temporarily and with vigilance, reflects the attitude to the native population expressed in the book, namely that they are biding their time and will simply revert to their previous existence should the colonisers depart (or be evicted): 'down in its soul, (Java) had never been conquered, though smiling in contemptuous resignation and bowing submissively beneath its fate [...] the subjected man foresees events that are as yet remote [...] what is, will not always be'.³⁴ The sea-change that 'Java' foresees is the end of Western supremacy, a possibility anticipated with fear by many writers of imperialist fiction, who perceived a weakening of the European races, not solely linked to racial dilution, and feared the overthrow of their dominion by more physically powerful peoples.³⁵

To any colony, the native population poses a threat both because of their greater numbers and the degree to which they are relied upon. In *The Hidden Force* the Javanese population are portrayed as compliant and, even in the case of the regent's family, courteous but they are also privy to the private lives of the colonists, through gossip in the *kampong* (Léonie's adultery is common knowledge, as is the paternity of Si-Oudijk). The fear which drives the colonists to arm themselves at night is portrayed as a product of the rumours which abound after the haunting at the residency, as if the white population suddenly gains a heightened awareness of their precarious position once their figurehead Van Oudijk comes under attack. The centrality of self-belief to a successful colonial project is embodied in the resident and lies at the heart of his stubborn single-mindedness and inability to adapt his approach.

Van Oudijk's nemesis, the regent Sunario who he deposes, incorporates on the other hand what E.M Beekman describes as 'a power Couperus liked to associate with Asia: a paradoxical strength of aggressive passivity that can destroy its victim without any overt or cognitive means'.³⁶ While the coloniser may think that the people he believes he has conquered are subdued, they are simply waiting for his eventual departure or demise. Sunario is the impenetrability of the Indies made flesh and confounds Van Oudijk with his enigmatic distance and deep faith. Van Oudijk privately admits that he cannot understand the man who he likens to a [111] '*wajang* puppet', and their relationship is the greatest obstacle to his work as resident. He finds himself 'unable to incorporate into reality that delicate figure with the fixed coal-black eyes',³⁷ and tries to dismiss him as superstitious and fanatical. To try to understand him would be to entertain the possibility of another world-view being valid and Van Oudijk is incapable of processing what does not fall into his notions of right and logic. His position of power over the regent also means that Van Oudijk is not forced to attempt a compromise. The attempt to control or domesticate native peoples is a trope of Gothic literature set in the colonies, reflecting the need to assert dominance over potentially stronger races and in the case of *The Hidden Force*, the danger to the self attendant in failing to do so.³⁸

Much to the confusion of Van Oudijk, who sees Sunario's administration as disadvantageous to the wider native population, the young regent is adored by the local Javanese population and his reputation as a devout Muslim seems to enhance his prestige. His faith also aligns him to the spiritual, intangible side of life of which the prosaic resident cannot conceive and which represents a potential uniting force for the natives. Islam is as such presented as a potential threat in *The Hidden Force*, though the allusions made to it are subtle. Towards the beginning of the text, mention is made of an atmosphere of Islam which hangs over the town, seemingly emanating from the Arab quarter, 'even more mysterious than the fashionable part of Labuwangi'. Van Oudijk himself is described as having read about the Pan-Islam movement, although he does not afford this 'dark force, this gloomy secret' much thought.³⁹ The recurring motif of the Hadji and the links between Si-Oudijk, the resident's purported illegitimate son, and the Arab community revisits the issue of Islam further on in the novel, albeit schematically while the disdain which Van Oudijk imagines Sunario feels for him seems to be grounded in a sense of morally superiority based on his religion; he is described by Van Oudijk as a 'saint' whose 'icy correctness' conceals hatred.⁴⁰

There is also an alignment between this sense of aggressive and alien morality and the focusing of the supernatural occurrences (including the table-turning) on Léonie van Oudijk, the major moral transgressor of the text according to European social codes. Her body's defilement with the sirih-stained spit suggests that her condemnation at the hands of the 'hidden force' stems from the sentiments of the native population above all as it is their habit to

chew the leaf as a stimulant. That it is an attack on her immorality, and particularly sexual immorality, is reinforced by her nudity and the red colour of the sirih, marking her in European thinking as a low woman. Punishment for past sins is one of the key aspects of Gothic writing, in which protagonists are often forced to confront both the dark sides of their own self and their past actions.⁴¹

Somewhat less prominent in the text is the third marker of 'imperial Gothic', put forward by Brantlinger: 'the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world'.⁴² Van Oudijk, the character who reflects the most [112] on seeking new experiences, generally finds the Indies to be a realm of possibility for him and particularly enjoys going out on horseback to inspect his district. The fear of a restriction of experience is instead expressed when Van Oudijk considers his future career and the possibility of a return to Holland:

(being resident of so large and important a district as Labuwangi) was a delight, that was a living, that was a life more grand and expansive than any other, a life that could not be compared to anything in Holland [...] His activities were varied: office work and inspection tours; the interests of his work were varied: a man was not bored to death in his office chair; after the office there was the open air, and there was always change, always something different.⁴³

The threat of retirement is the oppression Van Oudijk foresees. He dreads the notion of vegetating in The Hague 'among the old fogies', and is ambivalent about accepting higher office should it mean a less interesting role in the colonial capital Batavia. The power that the imperial administration has over his fate ironically limits his potential for adventure as a colonial officer. The presentation of the secretary, Onno Eldersma, presents a further example of the empire's role as a limiter of experience. Eldersma is perpetually overworked and his duties overshadow his family life as he is left unable to leave his office. Unlike Van Oudijk, Eldersma also fails to flourish in the Indies and is eventually shipped back to Holland in a state of nervous exhaustion, 'her husband, so much changed, her once robust Frisian husband, now tired out, worn out, yellow as parchment, careless of his appearance, muttering gloomily when he spoke.'⁴⁴ His experience reflects the potential for physical as well as intellectual decline in the tropics and the transformation of the Indies from a site of adventure to a place of banal bureaucratic labour. The empire itself is a limit upon the freedom of white men in the tropics, who go there as officers managing administration rather than adventurers.

Whilst bureaucracy sought to create order by quantifying and organising the colonised space, other means were becoming available which further demystified the tropics. One theme which Brantlinger says was often touched upon by travel writers in relation to the end of the era of exploration was that of technology and communications which they blamed for opening up the 'wonders of foreign parts' and transforming exploration and civilising efforts into tourism.⁴⁵ In *The Hidden Force* telephones in particular are shown to have a negative effect on the breadth of experience of the women in Batavia, who rarely venture outside and are occupied with idle gossip, 'people no longer saw one another, they no longer had any need to dress and send for the carriage, because they chatted over the phone in *sarong* and *kabai*, in pajamas, almost without stirring a limb'.⁴⁶ Interestingly, the women who make use of this western technology use it in order to dispense with western dress and social customs and degenerate into idleness [113] akin to that regularly criticised in native Indonesians, suggesting that Couperus identifies technology as one of the contributing factors to the degradation taking place in Western society. However, while the adoption of native habits is a token of personal degeneration in characters

in *The Hidden Force*, it is important to recognise that this degeneracy does not come from the native population. Indolence and enervation brought about by modernisation are what cause the deterioration in behaviour.⁴⁷

Pig-headedness Punished

While it is clear that *The Hidden Force* fits relatively neatly into the model of pro-empire 'imperial Gothic' formulated by Patrick Brantlinger, the novel does also deviate from what might be expected of such a text in several minor, yet significant ways, such as the attention to the failures on the part of the colonists to adapt to the Indies which suggest that this, rather than the hostile nature of Java or some arbitrary evil present in Labuwangi, is to blame for their discomfort there. When, for example, Eva Eldersma's home is invaded by the tropical environment, she recognises herself as being at fault for trying to simply transpose European modes of living to Java,

'We're idiots here', she continued, 'we Europeans in this country!' ⁴⁸ Why do we bring all the paraphernalia of our costly civilisation with us, considering that it will never last? [...] Our whole administration... it's so tiring in the heat. Why – if we must be here – don't we live simply and plant paddy and live on nothing?'⁴⁹

Failure to adapt culturally is another apparently self-inflicted cause of the colonists' suffering. Although many of them have lived in the Indies for a long time, their ignorance of the 'hidden force' and their arrogance with regard to Javanese culture means that they neglect to equip themselves to deal with the mysterious happenings that occur around them, implying that they have only themselves to blame. Heijne credits Couperus with the 'insight, that Dutch colonial rule was doomed to fail, not through bad or unfair management, but because of a deeper incompatibility', one that the colonists do not seek to overcome.⁵⁰ Birney echoes this sentiment, saying that the book's central message concerns the 'impossibility of keeping on clinging unthinkingly to one's own culture...'⁵¹ This stubbornness on the part of the colonists, and their entrenchment into their role within the colonies is interesting given the recentness of the change towards segregation of races highlighted above. [114]

The Colonial System

While 'imperial Gothic' novels by definition express anxiety about European culture and the decline of civilisation whilst incorporating generally pro-Empire values,⁵² *The Hidden Force* goes beyond a criticism of decadence or a concern with the limits of progress to examine the flaws of colonialism in particular through the failings of the characters. It is thought of as a genre-defining colonial novel but differs there also in its stance towards the idea of empire. Although primarily concerned with offering adventurous and romanticised stories of life in the colonies, a great number of colonial novels do actually offer criticisms of the colonial system. However, when they do so, they tend to place responsibility for its failings firmly in Europe proper. Any decay of the colonies was seen as a reflection of the rot at the heart of European civilisation and colonial novels recognised times when there was a need to reform the system and defend it against such things as racial mixing and native unrest.⁵³ However, such negative analysis of aspects of colonialism did not necessarily add up to disapproval of the system as a

whole and many colonial writers saw imperial expansion as vital to their nation, with the colonies a potential source of regeneration.

One tendency was to make a distinction between the general disarray of colonialism and the success of the administration at a local level. The government 'back home' would commonly, for example, be blamed for the inadequacies of the system while a regional administrator would be portrayed as a morally unimpeachable hero.⁵⁴ In *The Hidden Force* Couperus seems to play with and ultimately undermine both of these self-justifying tactics through the character of Van Oudijk.

Although the threats posed to the colonial set-up in Labuwangi are precipitated by the actions of the characters, there is some criticism of the Dutch government's handling of the empire in *The Hidden Force*. It is implied in the novel that Van Oudijk subscribes to some extent to the view that the government back home is mishandling the Indies. He appears critical of the decision to appoint 'outsiders [...] men sent straight from Holland, newcomers who knew nothing about the Indies – instead of [...] old colonial officials who had made their way up from subcontroller and knew the whole official hierarchy by heart', describing it as a 'strange mania'.⁵⁵ But despite this, he fails to go further in his criticism and open his eyes to the exploitative nature of the colonial enterprise as it is described elsewhere in the text until after he gives up his position in the colonial administration.

Van Oudijk also blames mysterious inhospitality of the tropics and the Javanese climate for the unrest which breaks out in the region rather than any mischief on the part of Sunario and followers of the Adiningrats, refusing to admit the possibility of politically-motivated agitation.⁵⁶ This, along with his enthusiasm for improving Java 'for the sake of the Javanese' and delusion that the activities of the colonial power have their roots in benevolence reflect the tendency which Hugh [115] Ridley identified in the work of the British Whig historian Trevelyan to focus on an idealistic civil service, 'not because such idealism corresponded to the actual motives behind imperial conquest but precisely because they did not'.⁵⁷ If *The Hidden Force* is read as an allegory of colonialism, Van Oudijk's failure to come anywhere near a recognition of the realities of the native experience of colonialism is a fatal flaw of the Dutch imperial project. As Susie Protschky writes:

In Van Oudijk's (lack) of perception, Couperus explores a deeper inability among Dutch colonists to grasp the true nature of their alienation in the Indies. In their dealings with Asians, the Dutch refused to blame themselves for any failings of governance due to their own ineptness or insensitivity, and rejected responsibility for the strength of indigenous resistance to colonial rule, both of which (if conceded) might fatally undermine the Dutch imperial project in the Indies.⁵⁸

Imperial Ignorance

Couperus makes it clear that although Van Oudijk does fit the image of a heroic and moral official on the surface through his good intentions and caring attitude, he is a flawed character with a skewed sense of what is necessary, whose behaviour has a negative impact on others. His exchanges with the Adiningrats betray an arrogance and security in his position through his repeated harking back to the notion of an 'older brother, younger brother' relationship and the quasi-familial respect he had for the former regent. Van Oudijk's belief that this relationship is based on genuine sentiment rather than calculated exploitation of Javanese custom highlights

his blindness towards what is before him and his concern with upholding the honour of the ruling family functions can be read as simple transference of his need to maintain the empire.⁵⁹

While his sentimentality with regard to the Adiningrats could be read as kind-hearted, Van Oudijk's lack of recognition of their experience of the coloniser/colonised relationship ultimately leads to his mishandling of situations, to disastrous effect. He is later bewildered by the antagonism of the regent and his family, even after his catastrophic encounter with the *radèn-aju pangéran*, which marks his sealing of his own fate:

he became more severe and asked her whom the Adiningrats had to blame for the fate that was now pursuing them. And with his eyes looking into hers, he said that it was she! [...] she began to shriek with anguish – she, the old princess, who looked down upon the resident, the Hollander without birth or breeding – shrieking with anguish because he dared to speak like this and was entitled to do so.⁶⁰ [116]

The rigid sense of what is right and possible which drives Van Oudijk to dismiss the regent of Ngadjiwa and lies behind his inability to understand or respect Sunario leaves him incapable of understanding the hidden force. He is emblematic of the European attitude described by the narrator, 'the European, proud in his might, in his strength, in his civilisation and his humanity rules arrogantly, blindly, selfishly, egoistically, amidst all the intricate machinery of his authority, which he slips into gear with the certainty of clockwork, controlling its every movement...'.⁶¹ Van Oudijk's inability to operate beyond his own 'machinery' leaves him vulnerable to that which lies beyond his notions of logic and justice. The whole text of *The Hidden Force*, in its combination of 'rational' fears of degradation and racial contamination based in science and the 'irrational' power of the hidden force constitutes a 'counter-attack' against Western logocentrism and the belief that everything may be solved through science and progress.⁶²

Ignorance is Van Oudijk's major failing in all areas of his life. He turns a blind eye to what is happening in his family and prefers to adore an image of them which is predominantly fictional. His daughter Doddy is in love with the womaniser Addy De Luce and regularly manages to meet with him alone, a fact that Van Oudijk might discover if he was not inclined to put his family on a pedestal. The other, more worrying, possible explanation for his lack of intervention in Doddy's life is a lack of interest. This possibility is supported by Van Oudijk's uncertainty regarding whether Si-Oudijk, the man living in the *kampung* is, as he claims, his illegitimate son. He chooses to ignore this issue until after his catastrophic loss of confidence, when he sends Si-Oudijk money. The implied lack of concern over the fate of his former mistress and possible offspring represents both a moral failure in Van Oudijk's apparent callousness and an indictment of a social system which allows such indifference.⁶³

Léonie is the greatest symbol of Van Oudijk's lack of awareness, a fact which positions her as his Achilles heel and explains the targeting of her by the hostile power which dogs the resident. Although the adulterous relationships his wife enters into appear at first to be genuinely unknown to him, Van Oudijk later begins to recollect past indications that she was unfaithful, 'memories suddenly darted into his mind like brief flashes of lightning: memories of an unexpected visit, of a locked door, of a moving curtain, of a whispered word, of a timidly averted glance'.⁶⁴ His conscious or unconscious choice to turn a blind eye to aspects of his wife's character reflects the narrow focus which he applies to his duties as resident, seeing events in a certain light determined by his belief in the empire. In this way Léonie can be seen as an echo of the Indies themselves, where Van Oudijk feels he belongs. He loves Java but, as is shown in the

text, fails to comprehend the Javanese and behave sensitively towards them as colonised subjects. He similarly idealises Léonie, which reduces the sympathy the reader feels for him when she betrays him. [117]

Imperial Immorality

Although critics have begun to recognise the critical nature of *The Hidden Force*, and the flaws Couperus aims to reveal within colonialism, the moral dimension of that criticism is still underexplored.

The clear linking of sexual morality with the mysterious power provides an indisputable indication that the protagonists have invited the horrors visited upon them. They draw the attention of the 'hidden force' through their moral failings and although the mysterious power is portrayed as inherent to the Indies, its hostility towards the characters is not inevitable or born out of indiscriminating malevolence, as one might expect from the *fin de siècle* tales of supernatural persecution which Brantlinger describes as a typifying the 'imperial Gothic' genre.⁶⁵ Instead, the force punishes Léonie for her immorality and Van Oudijk for his needless humiliation of the Javanese ruling family.

While some critics such as Piet Kralt are inclined, for example, to see Van Oudijk as a sympathetic character, whose attitude to life is 'alien to the eastern mentality' rather than 'contemptible',⁶⁶ they tend to overlook the damaging complacency which taints his character. If nothing else, Couperus shows in the case of Van Oudijk that the choice (and it is a choice) to believe in the righteousness of the task at hand promoted by imperial ideology has real consequences and that the private good intentions of individuals are meaningless when they are operating within the colonial system.

Although Van Oudijk aims to behave morally, his desires cannot counterbalance the mercenary heart of colonialism and he cannot escape from the mentality which imperial ideology has produced in him. Although he, 'in his idealistic honesty thinks that his aim is the Indies, not because of Holland, but because of the Indies themselves',⁶⁷ Van Oudijk is at last a small part of a massive, exploitative system and a discourse which does not match reality. Couperus communicates this view of colonialism through the character Van Helderren:

The reality is not the Indies under a great ruler, but the Indies under a petty, mean, bloodsucker; the country sucked dry, and the real population – not the Hollander, who spends his colonial money in The Hague, but the population, the native population, attached to the native soil – oppressed by the distain of its overlord, who once improved it with his own blood, is now threatening to revolt against this oppression and distain...⁶⁸

As an Indies-born official of European descent, Van Helderren is an interesting choice to vocalise the 'truth' about colonialism, and his importance to the message of *The Hidden Force* has not been appreciated in criticism. While the mixed-race characters in the book such as Doddy, Addy and Theo seem preoccupied with personal enjoyment and are not portrayed as taking an interest in the empire [118] and the characters most closely identified with European 'Dutchness', such as Eva and Van Oudijk, are seen as having tunnel vision with regard to the Indies, brought about by their preconceptions and position within Indies society, Van Helderren seems to occupy a position between cultures and is neither overly emotional or overly analytical. His portrayal as the most well-rounded and perceptive character goes against the stereotypical contemporary view of the colonies as having a negative effect on personal

development. Although Van Helderer desires to experience the civilised atmosphere of Europe and behaves in a typically European fashion, he is blessed with a clearness of vision beyond any of the other characters. Couperus seems to imply that this insightfulness is a product of his Indies upbringing, which gives him critical distance from the Dutch imperial project. As he says to Eva Eldersma, 'You, as an artist, feel the danger approaching, vaguely, like a cloud in the sky, in the tropical night; I see danger as something very real, something arising – for Holland – [...] from the soil of this country itself'.⁶⁹

Van Helderer also expresses some ambivalence towards the Dutch colonial model, defending it to some extent despite his recognition of the mercenary objectives of colonialism. He argues against the German Dr. Rantzow, who criticizes the Dutch regime for its gentleness compared to the British,

'The British in India deal with their Indian princes in a more arbitrary and high-handed fashion. The Dutch treat them too gently.'

'The question might arise which of the two policies is the better in the long run,' said Van Helderer drily, because he hated to hear a foreigner disparage anything about a Dutch colony, 'fortunately, we know nothing here of the poverty and famine that prevail in British India.'⁷⁰

By arguing for gentleness and tact with regard to the Javanese royal families, Van Helderer is advocating a conciliatory approach to colonialism. This anticipates the more optimistic opinion expressed by Couperus later in his career, in works such as *Oostwaarts*. He eventually came to believe that the colonial system could be developed in co-operation with the colonised people to the benefit of both parties and famously stated that he would advise any son he had with strong muscles to become an assistant on a plantation in Delhi rather than pursue a career as an author.⁷¹ Although statements such as this are suggestive of his being a supporter of colonialism, it is important to note that *The Hidden Force* was written in a distinctly different phase.

The moral dimension to the targeting of the Dutch community by the hidden force that suggests the sins of individuals 'coming home to roost'⁷² can be read as representing on a wider scale the punishment of Westerners for the injustice of colonialism. The ubiquity of the 'curse' trope in 'imperial Gothic' literature has been interpreted by scholars engaging with Brantlinger's work as an expression [119] of the fear of punishment felt by Europeans in light of the cruelty of colonial rule.⁷³ Supernatural monstrosities then constitute the 'dark underbelly to the otherwise progressivist and rational ideologies of empire',⁷⁴ the expression in the collective psyche of suppressed doubts and fears and anxiety about cultural values.⁷⁵

Scholars who have studied *The Hidden Force*, such as Peter van Zonneveld, have emphasised the sense of doom in the text and interpreted this as Couperus criticising the Dutch colonial project but I would argue that his criticism of colonialism goes beyond a sense that it is bound to fail because of the 'weakening' or 'demoralisation' of the Dutch race or the vulnerability of colonialism in the face of the unknown.⁷⁶ Couperus certainly appears to prophesise the demise of the empire but the source of this fate seems to be the inevitable consequences of immoral behaviour – in a colonial sense, the exploitation of other races. Although he activates associations with racialism and competition between peoples, which are typical of pro-imperialist Gothic texts,⁷⁷ Couperus seems concerned with the irreconcilability of European morality and the mechanisms of imperialism. As such he marks himself out from

other authors of his era, who employed Gothic elements to express the fear of decline by drawing attention to the possibility of the arrogant and exploitative management of colonialism and the delusions of imperialist ideology leading to a collective comeuppance for colonising nations.

The Hidden Force is a far more critical novel than it would appear at first reading and according to the study made by Frédéric Bastet of the critical climate in which it was written, the author's attitude to colonialism at this time probably reflected that of Van Helderer when he characterises the root of the practice: 'your mind is confronted with that greatness, that glory (of the Indies). That's the poetry of it, but the prose is a gigantic but exhausted colony, still governed from Holland with one idea: to make a profit.'⁷⁸ Even Van Oudijk comes to reflect on the distorted relationship the Netherlands have to Indonesia:

This poor country. How they swear at it. It's not the fault of the country that we freebooters invaded it, barbarian conquerors, who only want to grow rich and get out. And if they don't get rich, they swear at it: at the heat, which God gave it from the beginning; at the lack of nourishment for mind and soul, the mind and soul of the freebooter! This poor country must think, 'Why didn't you stay away!'⁷⁹

It is undeniable that *The Hidden Force* presents in part an exotic and alluring presentation of the Indies but colonialism is not part of the attraction. Even while Couperus is drawn to describe the majesty of the Javanese environment in extravagant prose, he emphasises its threat over its beauty⁸⁰ and vocalises a disillusionment with the empire which resonates with that of other writers of the era like Pieter Brooshooff, who compared the Dutch empire with a marriage: [120]

From now on we'll live, partially in common [...] when you earn more than you spend; and in order to make sure that this is the case as much as possible, I shall decide what expenses you are allowed to run up and not pamper you; and – take note of this above all, darling angel – by in common in this case I do not mean that we shall share the excess, but that all of it flows into my pocket.⁸¹

Reading texts such as this, and *The Hidden Force*, with their sense of moral abhorrence and responsibility at once makes Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* appear part of a continuum rather than the Dutch canon's stand-alone predecessor to modern attitudes to colonialism and give a sense of the mood of moral discomfort which motivated the adoption of the 'ethical policy' by the Dutch government in 1901. The concept of 'een eereschuld' (debt of honour) towards the inhabitants of the colonies gained currency around the turn of the century and although this would later be used as self-justification for a multitude of sins, the recognition of responsibility towards colonial subjects was one step in the progress away from imperialist ideology in the Netherlands. As such, *The Hidden Force* deserves to be read as a text morally critical of colonialism, rather than a superstitious text that only predicts, as if through serendipity, the empire's ultimate demise. Bastet rightly argues that Couperus saw the situation in Indonesia more clearly in 1899 than in 1921,⁸² and his later optimism about the future of colonialism is no justification for the neglect of the incisive political messages in his most controversial work.

Notes

1. I. Buruma, 'Revenge in the Indies', *New York Review of Books*, 11 August 1994, quoted in P. Vincent 'Forgotten Classic: The Work of Louis Couperus in English' *The Low Countries* (1988), no. 6, p. 104.
2. For example in the 1940s by Harold Acton in his autobiography 'Memoires of an Aesthete' (1948) or by the reviewer William Ploemer (1945). See C. de Westenholz, 'Couperus bij Harold Acton' in *Arabesken* 10 (2002), no. 19, p. 24.
3. Labuwangi has been identified as a fictional recreation of the real town of Pasaraun, where Couperus stayed as a guest of his brother-in-law as part of the visit to Java in 1899-1900, during which he wrote *The Hidden Force*. E.M. Beekman, 'The Passatist: Louis Couperus' Interpretation of Dutch Colonialism', *Indonesia* (1984), no. 30, p. 62.
4. R. Buikema and L. Wesseling, *Het heilige huis. De gotieke vertelling in de Nederlandse literatuur* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 51.
5. P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 230.
6. P. Pattynama, '... De baai ... de binnenbaai...' *Indië herinnerd* (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers UvA, 2007), p. 10.
7. E.M. Beekman, 'Introduction' to *The Hidden Force* (London: Quartet Books, 1992), p. 31. [121]
8. 'Zij stelde rok en witte das in, en zij was onverbiddelijk. [...] hare arme heeren sribbelden tegen, pufden de eerste maal, kregen congestie in hun hoogen boord. De doctor beweerde, het was ongezond; de oudgasten beweerden, het was dolligheid en breken met alle goeie oude Indische gewoonten...' (first part, p. 75). All Dutch quotes taken from Louis Couperus, *De stille kracht* (Amsterdam: L.J. Veen, 1900).
9. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 230.
10. Beekman, 'Introduction' to *The Hidden Force*, p. 31.
11. P. 159. 'Mijn tuin is een moeras. [...] Witte mieren hebben mijn mooie Japansche matten opgegeten. Een nieuwe zijden japon is, onverklaarbaar, met vochtvlekken uitgeslagen. Een andere is, louter van de warmte, vergaan tot losse draadjes. [...] Om mij te troosten, heb ik mij gestort in den Feuerzauber. Mijn piano was valsch; ik geloof, dat er kakkerlakken tusschen de snaren rondwandelen.' (second part, p. 63).
12. S. Protschky, 'Nature, Landscape and Identity in the Netherlands Indies. Literary Constructions of Being Dutch in the Tropics', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Landen Volkenkunde* 164 (2008), no. 1, p. 21.
13. P. 216. '... een onverschilligheid, die langzaam had doorzielt zijn levensmerg van eerst zoo krachtigen en praktischen en altijd arbeidjeugdigen man [...] Een zacht verwelken, verflauwen, wegsterven was in zijn ziel.' (second part, pp. 179-80).
14. P. 227. 'De bruine gezichten gluurden om den hoek. En hij riep ze, hij lokte ze, vriendelijk, met een breed vaderlijk gebaar. [...] Het is me wel een Indische boel, zal u zeggen: dat Indische-huwelijk met een dochter van een koffie-opziener, en daarbij nog op den koop toe de oude vrouw en de broërtjes en zusjes. Maar [...] so is het heel goed: ik veeteer nu hier, en drink lekkere koffie en ze zorgen goed voor den ouden man...' (second part, p. 205).
15. P. 226.

16. P. 227. '... al mijn praktijk en logica, die mij op eens toescheen als een foutief opgebouwd levensstelsel... (second part, p. 202) Maar misschien voelt elke Europeaan dat op een andere manier, volgens zijn aanleg, en zijn natuur.' (second part, p. 204).
17. P. 193.
18. '... door zijn eenvoudigen moed van ambtenaar, Hollander en man' (second part, p. 133)
19. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 239.
20. P. 177. 'De meid hurkte diep, nederig, ineem, als duldende alle noodlot van onverklaarbare geheimzinnigheid. Zij zou niet ontvluchten.' (second part, pp. 98-9). Beekman, 'Introduction' to *The Hidden Force*, p. 31.
21. C. Jagpal, "Going Nautch Girl" in the Fin de Siècle: The White Woman Burdened by Colonial Domesticity' in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 52 (2009), no. 3, p. 252.
22. P. Pattynama, 'Secrets and Danger: Interracial Sexuality in Louis Couperus' *The Hidden Force* and Dutch Colonial Culture around 1900' in J. Clancy-Smith, F. Gouda, *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville, VA / London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), p. 92.
23. Buikema and Wesseling, *Het heilige huis*, p. 40.
24. A. Birney, *De dubieuzen: Wat Multatuli, Daum en Couperus ons niet vertelden (en wij niet konden lezen...)* (Haarlem: In de Knipscheer, 2012), p. 207. [122]
25. Pattynama, 'Secrets and Danger', p. 98.
26. 'Niet alleen de sociale conventies, ook moraal, esthetiek en de menselijke verbeelding zelf, alles wat cultuur en beschaving heet te zijn, blijkt buiten de vertrouwde westerse context op niets meer gebouwd dan drijfzand.' B. Heijne, *Echt zien. Literatuur in het mediatijdperk* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & Van Gennep, 2012), p. 74. My translation.
27. Pattynama, 'Secrets and Dangers', pp. 92-3.
28. 'de onontkoombaarheid uiteindelijk op te gaan in een mengcultuur' Birney, *De dubieuzen*, p. 91.
29. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 230.
30. Pp. 44-5. 'een lange brandende lont, waarvan hij de gloeiende punt zwaaide om aan wie voorbijging, in den avond, den resident te doen herkennen'. (first part, p. 5)
31. P. 45. '... nu en dan kwam echter een enkele Javaan, zich donker bewegende, even uit de schaduw, en dan zwaaide de oppasser achter zijn heer met veel ostentatie de gloeiende punt van zijn vuurtouw. Meestal begreep de Javaan, en maakte zich klein, en kromp in-een aan den rand van den weg, en ging als loophurkende voorbij. Een enkelen keer, onwetend, pas uit zijn dessa, begreep hij niet, liep angstig voorbij, zag angstig naar den oppasser. [...] Als een karretje aankwam of sado, zwaaide hij weêr en zwaaide hij zijn vuursterretje door den avond, wenkte den voerman, die of stil hield en afsteeg, of neêrhurkte in zijn voertuigje en hurkend doormende aan den uiterste rand van den weg.' (first part, pp. 6-7)
32. P. 177. 'Het gekerm en gesnik was heel duidelijk. Léonie zag spierwit en zij trilde over haar lichaam.
– Wees toch niet bang, zei Theo. Het zij natuurlijk beesten...

- Maar hijzelf was krijtuit van angst en toen zij elkander in de oogen zagen, begreep zij, dat ook hij bang was. [...] Plotseling, [...] waren zij bang als met eene bangheid, bang als voor een straf. [...] zij beiden blanken kinderen van den Indischen grond van geheim, – die van hunne kinderjaren af hadden geademd de geheimzinnige lucht van Java, onbewust hadden gehoord het vaag andonzende mysterie, als een muziek van gewooneheid, [...] Een huiverende kilheid woei aan, vulde het huis; een tochtslag woei de lamp uit. En in de donker bleven zij nog een oogenblik...' (second part, pp. 98-9)
33. P. 146. 'Des nachts sloot men beter de huizen, legde men wapens bij de hand, werd men plotseling angstig wakker, luisterde naar de geluiden van den nacht, die donsde in het weide buiten.' (second part, p. 34)
 34. Pp. 129-30 '... diep in zijn ziel, nooit overheerscht, hoewel zich, voornaam minachtend glimlachend, schitternd, lenig neêrvlijende onder zijn noodlot. [...] Hij voorgevoelt het verre gebeuren. Wat is, zal niet altijd zoo blijven...' (first part, p. 182)
 35. L. Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions. Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Nationalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 42.
 36. Beekman, 'Introduction' to *The Hidden Force*, p. 32.
 37. P. 68. 'Hij kon die fijne figuur, met zijn strakke, koolzwarte, niet neêrzetten als mensch in het praktische leven.' (first part, p. 54)
 38. A. Warwick, 'Colonial Gothic' in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, ed. by Marie MulveyRoberts (London: New York University Press, 1998), p. 262.
 39. P. 72. '... dit stadsgedeelte nog tragischer geheimzinnig dan het notabele Laboewangi...', 'het sombere geheim' (first part, p. 61) [123]
 40. P. 124. '... een tegenwerking, nooit uitgesproken maar toch zoo duidelijk tastbaar onder zijn ijskoude correctheid!' (first part, p. 170)
 41. J. Wilt, 'The Imperial Mouth: Imperialism, the Gothic and Science Fiction', *Journal of Popular Culture* 14 (1981), no. 4, 620.
 42. Beekman, 'Introduction' to *The Hidden Force*, p. 32.
 43. P. 68. 'Maar resident zijn, zelf bevelen, zelf besturen een gewest, groot en belangrijk als Laboewangi [...] dat was een genot, dat was leven: een leven grootsch en ruim als geen ander, en waarmee in Holland geen betrekking en leven te vergelijken was. [...] Zijn werkring was gevarieerd: kantoorwerk en tournée; de belangen van zijn werk waren gevarieerd: men sufte niet dood op zijn kantoorstoel: na het bureau was er de vrije natuur, en het was altijd afwisseling, altijd iets anders.' (first part, pp. 50-1)
 44. P. 127. 'En haar man, hoe zoû men hém vinden, veranderd – haar frissche, Friesche man, afgebeeld, uitgeput, geel als een perkament, nonchalant in zijn uiterlijk, somber mopperend in al zijn uitingen.' (second part, p. 181)
 45. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 238.
 46. P. 220. 'Men zag elkaâr niet meer, men hoefte zich niet meer te kleden, en het rijtuig – de wagen – te laten inspannen, want men cauzeerde door de telefoon, in sarong en kabaai, in nachtbroek en kabaai, zonder zich bijna te bewegen.' (second part, p. 189)
 47. Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions*, p. 42.
 48. Couperus actually repeats this sentence in his 1923 travel journal *Oostwaarts* (p. 134).

49. P. 159. 'Wij zijn idioot, hier, wij Westerlingen in dit land. Waarom brengen we hier geheel den nasleep van onze dure beschaving, die het hier toch niet uithoudt! [...] Al onze administratie – dat is vermoeiend in de warmte. Waarom – als we hier willen zijn – leven wij maar niet eenvoudig en planten wij padi en leven wij van niets...' (second part, p. 64)
50. 'inzicht[,] dat het Hollandse koloniale bewind ten dode was opgeschreven, niet door slecht of onrechtvaardig bestuur, maar door een diepere onverenigbaarheid', Heijne, *Echt Zien*, p. 73. My translation.
51. 'onmogelijkheid onnadenkend vast te blijven houden aan de eigen cultuur...', Birney, *De dubieuzen*, p. 191.
52. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 200.
53. R. Edmond, 'Home and Away: Degeneration in Imperialist and Modernist Discourse' in *Modernism and Empire*, ed. by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 42.
54. H. Ridley, *Images of Imperial Rule* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 102.
55. P 69. 'Maar men had tegenwoordig in Holland die vreemde manie vreemden tot de hoogste betrekkingen te benoemen, Hollanders, baren, die totaal niets van Indië afwisten – in plaats van [...] oud-Indische gedienden te kiezen, die van aspirant-controleur waren opgeklommen en de geheele ambtelijke hiërarchie op hun duimpje kenden...' (first part, p. 55)
56. Protschky, 'Nature, Landscape and Identity in the Netherlands Indies', p. 23.
57. Ridley, *Images of Imperial Rule*, p. 102.
58. Protschky, 'Nature, Landscape and Identity in the Netherlands Indies', p. 23.
59. Edmond, 'Home and Away', pp. 42-3. [124]
60. P. 141. 'Maar heftiger werd Van Oudijck, en hij verweet haar, dat zij nooit goeden invloed had uitgeoefend op hare zonen en hare neven. Dat zij de slechte geest was van haar geslacht [...] Zij begon te gillen van smart, de oude vorstin, die op den rezident, den Hollander van geen bloed en geboorte, neêrzag; smart omdat hij zoo dorst spreken en recht er toe had.' (second part, p. 23)
61. P. 129. 'En de Westerling, prat op zijn macht, op zijn kracht, op zijn beschaving, humaniteit, troont hoog, blind, egoïst, eindachtig tusschen al de ingewikkelde raderen van zijn autoriteit, die hij uurwerkzeker laat grijpen in elkaâr, contrôle op iedere wenteling.' (first part, p. 180)
62. Wilt, 'The Imperial Mouth', p. 620; N. Clausson, 'Degeneration, Fin de Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection: Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of The Baskervilles* and the Emergence of the Modern Detective Story', *Journal of Narrative Theory* 35 (2005), no. 1, p. 75.
63. Pattynama, 'Secrets and Danger', pp. 100-1.
64. P. 197. '[Plotselinge herinneringen] flitsen als korte weêrlichten door hem heen: van een onverwacht bezoek; van een deur, die gesloten was; van een portière, die bewoog; van een gefluisterd woord, en een schuw afgebroken blik.' (second part, p. 142)
65. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, p. 227.
66. 'wezensvreemd aan de oosterse mentaliteit', 'verachtelijk', P. Kralt, *Louis Couperus: bourgeois en artiest* (Leiden: Stichting Internationaal Forum, 2005), p. 45.

67. P. 97. 'Voor iemand als Van Oudijk, die waarlijk, in volle idealistische eerlijkheid meent, dat zijn doel Indië is, niet voor Holland, maar voor Indië zelf.' (first part, p. 114)
68. P. 98. 'De werkelijkheid is niet: de overheerscher groot in Indië, maar de overheerscher klein en arm – zielige uitzuiger, het land uitgezogen, en de werkelijke bevolking, niet de Hollander, die zijn Indisch geld opmaakt in Den Haag; maar de bevolking, verknocht aan den Indischen grond, – neêrgedrukt in de minachting van den overheerscher, die ééns de bevolking uit zijn eigen bloed verwekte – maar nú dreigende op te staan uit dien druk en die minachting...' (first part, p. 115)
69. P. 98. 'U, artistiek, voelt het gevaar naderen, vaag, als een wolk in de lucht, in den Indische nacht; ik zie het gevaar al heel werkelijk oprijzen – voor Holland [...] uit Indië's eigen grond.' (first part, pp. 115-6)
70. P. 87. '– De Engelschen handelen in Britisch-Indië hoger en willekeuriger met hun Indische prinzen. De Hollanders ontzien ze veel te veel. – Het zoû de vraag zijn, welke politiek op den duur de beste is, zei Van Helderer droog, die niet kon velen, dat een vreemdeling in een Nederlandsche kolonie iets afbraak. Toestanden van ellende en hongersnood als in Britisch-Indië kennen wij gelukkig bij ons niet. (first part, p. 93)
71. A.Vogel, Louis Couperus, 2nd rev. ed. (Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1983), p. 263 quoted in Beekman, op. cit., p. 21.
72. Wilt in Clausson, 'Degeneration, Fin de Siecle Gothic, and the Science of Detection', p. 64.
73. S. Banerjee, 'Political Economy, Gothic, and the Question of Imperial Citizenship', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 47 (2005), no.2, p. 422.
74. Banerjee, 'Political Economy, Gothic, and the Question of Imperial Citizenship', p. 426. [125]
75. J. Nordius, 'A Tale of Other Places: Sophia Lee's *The Recess* and Colonial Gothic', *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 34 (2002), Issue 2, p. 165.
76. P. van Zonneveld, 'Indische literatuur van de twintigste eeuw', in *Europa buitengaats. Koloniale en postkoloniale literaturen in Europese talen. Indische literatuur van de twintigste eeuw*, vol. 2, ed. by Theo D'haen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002), p. 135; Pattynama, 'Secrets and Danger', p. 105.
77. H.M. Malchow, quoted in W. Hughes, 'A singular Invasion: Revisiting the Postcoloniality of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', in *Empire and the Gothic. The Politics of Genre*, ed. by A. Smith and W. Hughes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 91.
78. P. 98. 'Dan komt dat groote, die glorie u voor den geest. Dat is de poëzie. Het proza is: een reusachtige maar uitgeputte kolonie, steeds uit Holland bestuurd, met één idee: winstbejag.' (first part, p. 115)
79. P. 228. 'Het land kan het toch niet helpen, dat er Kaninefaten op zijn grond zijn gekomen, barbaarsche veroveraars, die maar rijk willen worden en weg... En als ze dan niet rijk worden, schelden ze: op de warmte, die God het van den beginne gegeven heeft... aan het gemis aan voedsel voor ziel en geest, ziel en geest van den Kaninefaat. Het arme land waarop zo gescholden is, zal wel denken: Was weggebleven.' (second part, p. 206)
80. Protsky, 'Nature, Landscape and Identity in the Netherlands Indies', p. 28.
81. 'Voorts zullen wij leven, gedeeltelijk in gemeenschap [...] wanneer gij meer verdient dan gij uitgeeft; en om te zorgen dat dit zoveel mogelijk het geval zij, zal ik beslissen welke veteringen ge moogt maken en je daarbij niet verwennen; en – let hierop vooral, lieve engel – onder gemeenschap versta ik in dit geval niet, dat wij het overschietende zamen deelen, maar dat geheel in mijn zaak vloeit.' Quoted in F.

Bastet 'De Indische roman die Couperus nooit schreef', in *Al die verloren paradijzen: van en over Louis Couperus* (Amsterdam: Querido, 2001), p. 178.

82. Ibid.

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