POSTCOLONIALISM, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND BURTON
POWER PLAY OF EMPIRE

BEN GRANT

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Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton
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17 Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English by Neelam Srivastava
18 English Writing and India, 1600–1920: Colonizing Aesthetics by Pramod K. Nayar
19 Decolonising Gender: Literature, Enlightenment and the Feminine Real by Caroline Rooney
20 Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography by David Huddart
21 Contemporary Arab Women Writers by Anastasia Valassopoulou
22 Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton: Power Play of Empire by Ben Grant
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton
Power Play of Empire

Ben Grant
# Contents

*List of Figures*  
List of Abbreviations  
Acknowledgments

Introduction  

1 No Doubt We’re Underway: With Our Man in *Scinde*, and Elsewhere  

2 Translating / ‘The’ *Kama Sutra*  

3 En-crypt-ing: Burton / Abdullah  

4 Playing With Words: The Negro Question, from ‘Race’ to ‘Geographical Morality’  

5 Outside the City Walls: Gorillas and Cannibals  

6 Ending Up—Lost in the *Nights*

*Notes*  
*Bibliography*  
*Index*
Figures

1.1 ‘Zanzibar, from the terrace of H.B.M.’s Consulate’  
(Richard F. Burton, Zanzibar: City, Island, and Coast  
[London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872], I.256) 9

3.1 Abdullah’s signature (Richard F. Burton, Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah, ed. Isabel Burton  
[London: Tylston and Edwards, 1893], I.432). 57


3.3 Burton’s tomb, among others (photograph taken by the author). 87


5.2 Leering at you face on (Thomas Henry Huxley, Man’s Place in Nature and Other Anthropological Essays [New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896], 18). 123

5.3 ‘Am I A Man and A Brother?’ (Anon., ‘Monkeyana,’  
Punch XL, 18 May 1861, 206). 126
Abbreviations

For ease of reference, I have given abbreviated references for published books of Richard F. Burton to which I refer frequently. Full references can be found in the bibliography. Where the book is in more than one volume, the volume number is given in roman numerals, except in the case of *Nights* and *Suppl. Nights*, which are in arabic numerals. Other works of Burton’s are fully referenced in footnotes.

The abbreviations are as follows, in alphabetical order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abeokuta</td>
<td>Abeokuta and the Camaroons Mountains. An Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahome</td>
<td>A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falconry</td>
<td>Falconry in the Valley of the Indus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Footsteps</td>
<td>First Footsteps in East Africa or, An Exploration of Harar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>Goa and the Blue Mountains; or, Six Months of Sick Leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorilla-Land</td>
<td>Two Trips to Gorilla-Land and the Cataracts of the Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasidah</td>
<td>The Kasidah of Hâji Abdû El-Yezdi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Regions</td>
<td>The Lake Regions of Central Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nights</td>
<td>A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah &amp; Meccah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scinde</td>
<td>Scinde; or, The Unhappy Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind R.</td>
<td>Sind Revisited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppl. Nights</td>
<td>Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanderings</td>
<td>Wanderings in West Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zanzibar</td>
<td>Zanzibar: City, Island, and Coast</td>
</tr>
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Acknowledgments

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Wonderful was the contrast between the steamer and that villa on the Mahmudiyah canal! Startling the sudden change from presto to adagio life! In thirteen days we had passed from the clammy grey fog, that atmosphere of industry which kept us at anchor off the Isle of Wight . . . and now we are sitting silent and still, listening to the monotonous melody of the East—the soft night-breeze wandering through starlit skies and tufted trees, with a voice of melancholy meaning.

And this is the Arab’s Kayf. The savouring of animal existence; the passive enjoyment of mere sense; the pleasant languor, the dreamy tranquility, the airy castle-building, which in Asia stand in lieu of the vigorous, intensive, passionate life of Europe. It is the result of a lively, impressible, excitable nature, and exquisite sensibility of nerve; it argues a facility for voluptuousness unknown to northern regions . . . No wonder that ‘Kayf’ is a word untranslatable in our mother tongue! [Pilgrimage I.8–9]

Richard Francis Burton (1821–90), a nineteenth century imperial spy, explorer, anthropologist and translator, travelled throughout the world and produced a considerable body of writing arising from these travels. He began his career in India and wrote about his time there, as well as of his wider travels in Asia, Africa, and the New World. The exploit for which he is perhaps best known is his pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, disguised as a Muslim pilgrim named Abdullah. It therefore seems appropriate to begin with his first moments in Alexandria, already in disguise, at the very beginning of this journey that would, as he very much intended, make his name. Although it has been thirteen days since Burton left the shores of England, the transition that we see in the opening quotation, from northern European ‘industry’ and haste to the languid stillness of the East, is made ‘sudden’ by the simple device of connecting the steamer from which he steps forth with the land from which it departed, as steam is connected with fog—only now
does he really leave England and enter the Oriental scene. The nature of the change is encapsulated in the word *Kayf*, which describes our experience—‘we are sitting silent and still’—and yet this is for us, paradoxically, an unobtainable state, being inseparable from the *Arab’s* ‘lively, impressionable, excitable nature, and exquisite sensibility of nerve.’ The word is, therefore, ‘untranslatable in our mother tongue.’ Although Burton says this, he does nonetheless offer a translation: ‘The savouring of animal existence; the passive enjoyment of mere sense; the pleasant languor, the dreamy tranquillity, the airy castle-building.’ Furthermore, it becomes almost synonymous with the Orient itself, as that which distinguishes this place from Europe: all these things which approximate a translation of *Kayf* ‘stand in lieu of the vigorous, intensive, passionate life of Europe.’

*Kayf* is, therefore, an important word in Burton’s narrative, which emphatically marks the border between Europe and Orient, European and Arab, and which also marks the essential untranslatability ‘in our mother tongue’ of what is to be found on the other side. Given this importance, it is not surprising that Edward Said notices it, and Burton’s attention to this word, in fact, gives rise to what is a very striking observation, in the context of *Orientalism*:

In no writer on the Orient so much as in Burton do we feel that generalizations about the Oriental—for example, the pages on the notion of *Kayf* for the Arab . . . are the result of knowledge acquired about the Orient by living there, actually seeing it firsthand, truly trying to see Oriental life from the viewpoint of a person immersed in it.¹

Burton would, therefore, seem to pose a considerable challenge to Said’s thesis and, in particular, to his oft-cited opening claim that ‘the Orient was almost a European invention.’² The accuracy of Burton’s proposed translation of this word suggests instead that there is a real Orient which Burton, like no other writer, is able, through the authenticity of his ‘firsthand’ experience, to approach a ‘knowledge’ of. Although Burton is singled out here—quarantined, perhaps—his example uncomfortably marks the moment when Said’s attack on the discipline of Orientalism on the grounds of inaccuracy and oversimplification appears to collapse. Said, it seems to me, is so seduced by Burton’s ‘knowledge’ that he fails to ask the question: why does Burton choose this word to represent, untranslated, the Orient? He does not, in other words, consider closely enough Burton’s *psychological* investment in *Kayf* (and, therefore, in the Orient) as standing in lieu of something which is other than Europe, a potential place to which he can escape and from which he can cast a critical eye upon Europe. Asking this question leads us not to dismiss Said’s thesis, but to push it further and suggest that it is precisely where Orientalism is most ‘accurate’ that the Orientalist’s fantasy is most clearly revealed. To put this another way: Burton, as an imperialist and a
European subject, comes into being simultaneously with an Orient which, far from being merely a fantastic projection, is a place which can really be lived in, and seen firsthand.

Whether Burton, himself, can truly live there is, however, tellingly unclear, as we see in the leap, across a paragraph break, from ‘we’ to ‘the Arab’s [untranslatable] Kayf.’ Burton does not so much resolve this ambiguity as stage it in his insistent presentation of himself, often in the third person, as appearing in the Orient as ‘Abdullah’ or ‘the Pilgrim.’ Said pays scant attention to this character: for him, the one who sees the Orient and who is immersed in it is always assumed to be Burton. That Burton was able to travel the Hajj in disguise is, of course, the ultimate proof of the accuracy and efficacy of his knowledge, and it is in this way that Said reads it:

Far more successfully than T. E. Lawrence, he was able to become an Oriental; he not only spoke the language flawlessly, he was able to penetrate to the heart of Islam and, disguised as an Indian Muslim doctor, accomplish the pilgrimage to Mecca. . . . No man who did not know Arabic and Islam as well as Burton could have gone as far as he did in actually becoming a pilgrim to Mecca and Medina.³

Once again, Said privileges Burton’s knowledge and does not consider his relationship to Abdullah who, I argue, is ‘untranslatable in our mother tongue,’ and so cannot simply be equated with Richard Francis Burton. This proper name, therefore, functions analogously to Kayf, as a sign of Burton’s exceptional knowledge, which also serves to reveal his psychological investment in the Orient: it is, emphatically in Burton’s narrative, not Burton who is immersed in the Orient, but Abdullah. Said, in common with all other commentators whose work I have read, does not accord Abdullah the same status as Burton, and it is a central aim of this book to do so, seeing in the relationship between these two individuals, who share the same body, and in Burton’s repeated attempts to translate Abdullah into his mother tongue, a key signifier of Burton’s relationship with the Orient, and with the wider non-European world. The manner in which Burton presents his presence abroad will, therefore, be an important concern of this book, and I will see his self-representation as being intimately connected with the way in which he represents the places he travels to, and the people he meets there.

II

Although this book centres on Burton, it is also a wider exploration of the manner in which Britain and British subjects appropriated the non-European during the period of imperialism and beyond, and the mechanisms of mediation between an imperial centre and its peripheries. I therefore look at the nature of the ‘border,’ the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other,’ and such
genres as travel writing, translation, anthropology, and political writings. Richard Francis Burton is an ideal central focus of this project. Throughout his career, he was a problematically located ‘mediator’ between Britain and the rest of the world, who consistently sought, not only to delineate other parts of the world for his British audience, but also to use his experiences and observations abroad to intervene in a number of important metropolitan debates, from the direction of imperial policy, to the evolution of man, racial theory, and discourses on sex and sexuality. He was also a co-founder, and first Vice-President, of the Anthropological Society of London.

Although Burton has frequently been seen as a somewhat eccentric individual, more interesting for his unconventional life than for his contributions to scholarly fields, much recent critical work has sought to question this reading, and to suggest that his writings indicate new ways of understanding nineteenth-century conceptions of ‘difference.’ A good example of this is Daniel Bivona’s analysis of the effects of Burton’s assumption of a disguise in India and Arabia, in which he argues that

To be able to play many games, to embrace the constant shifting of cultural identities, is to rise above, to an extent, the boorish ethnocentrism which distorts the perceptions of most of the Europeans who live in the Middle East or India. . . . That Burton . . . use[s] this novel stance as the basis for a critique of British ethnocentrism testifies to the corrosive power of the conception.  

As a consequence of his immersion in ‘a network of differences,’ Bivona believes, Burton is able to move toward an understanding of identity as relative, rather than absolute. Burton is, therefore, presented as someone who challenges the view that nineteenth-century representations of the non-European were based upon a strong sense of European superiority, and employed a racist framework. A similar argument is employed by Dane Kennedy in his monograph on Burton, The Highly Civilized Man, in which he states that ‘Difference became for Burton the basis for critical inquiry, capable of being turned in any direction, not least against Britain itself.’ The move from ‘racism’ to ‘relativism,’ and the relationship between them, is also a dominant theme of Kennedy’s book; for instance, he suggests that Burton’s ‘understanding of race as a closed space defined by difference . . . opens the door to a relativist conception of culture,’ and, like Bivona, he argues that Burton’s ‘determination to resist definition, to keep his own identity in continuous play . . . makes him . . . a profoundly modern figure.’

Like Bivona and Kennedy, I seek to explore Burton’s articulations of ‘difference.’ However, I also aim, through closely reading Burton, to draw connections between postcolonialism and psychoanalysis. Therefore, while this book has much in common with Kennedy’s desire ‘to de-mythologize and rehistoricize Burton’s life,’ and in the process to ‘gain fuller insights
into the wider Victorian world through which Burton passed,"™ my point of departure is somewhat different, in that my reason for giving sustained attention to a single author is that I hope thereby to bring into sharp relief the close relationship between the question of imperial appropriation and the question of the ‘individual.’ The appropriation of foreign territories and people in the service of British imperialism was, I argue, always already rewritten as an appropriation by particular individuals, with their own interests and obsessions. The aggrandizement of the nation, therefore, went hand-in-hand with the self-aggrandizement of its subjects. There is, of course, a tension between these motivations, but I believe that it is important to realize that they were, nonetheless, mutually reinforcing. Consequently, to understand Burton’s contributions to the imperial project and nineteenth-century metropolitan debates, we must also engage with his self-construction as an ‘individual.’

Rightly or wrongly, postcolonialism is often attacked for its tendency to homogenize the figure of the ‘colonizer’ or the ‘imperialist,’ and to indulge in, as Leela Gandhi puts it, ‘the pleasures of an Occidental stereotype.’™ Gandhi makes this observation in the course of her discussion of Said, whose view of the relationship between particular writers and Orientalism often appears to be that the former stand outside of the latter, to which they cannot help but contribute; this is no more evident than in his memorable claim that ‘Orientalism . . . reduced the personalities of even its most redoubtable individualists like Burton to the role of imperial scribe.’™ This argument has attracted a great deal of criticism, the most common observation being that Orientalism did not have such power, and that there were those who, despite their ‘general and hegemonic context,’™ nonetheless managed to make genuine contact with the Orient, and even, indeed, to produce counter-hegemonic discourses; we see this when Gandhi goes on to claim that William Jones’ ‘appeal on behalf of non-European knowledges exceeds the bounds of Said’s book, and begs to be accommodated in a less formulaic rereading of Orientalism.’™ My rereading of Said takes a different course in that, rather than placing Burton outside of the œuvre which he wrote, I see him as coming into being only in that œuvre. Furthermore, I believe that, far from erasing differences between individuals, representations of the non-European were productive of a huge variety of different responses, inclinations, personalities, and desires; to put this another way, these representations helped to produce the individual as such. It is, therefore, not possible to see Burton, the ‘redoubtable individualist,’ as distinct from the hegemonic producer of knowledge, or ‘imperial scribe;’ the two come into being simultaneously, and this book seeks to explore the imbrication of the ‘individual’ and the ‘typical’ in Burton’s work, rather than privileging one or the other. With this aim in mind, I both locate Burton in particular places, at particular moments in time, and also, unsettlingly, take a great deal of pleasure in an all too familiar Occidental stereotype: the White Man on top.
I therefore argue that what Kennedy calls Burton’s ‘epistemological quest to understand, explain, and classify difference’ is inseparable from what I call the White Man’s ‘imperial fantasy,’ and that the racism, sexism, and homophobia for which Burton is so justly famous, are not only organizations of knowledge—which we can now see as flawed—but also part of his self-organization, from which we are, perhaps, not quite so detached. Burton’s relativism and ‘critique of British ethnocentrism’ then appear as a part of this fantasy, and not an overcoming of it. In making this case, I am influenced by analyses which have sought to trace the relationship between desire and colonial discourse. A good example of this work is Robert Young’s *Colonial Desire*, which reads nineteenth-century racial theory as articulating ‘covert theories of desire’ and as betraying an ‘oneiric logic’. This book extends this way of thinking about the science of the period by considering the connections between racial theory and other important kinds of writing, such as travel narrative, translation, anthropology, sexology, and evolutionary theory. The insistent focus on one writer allows a consideration of these discourses to which Burton contributed, but also complicates the question of genre by reading all of these writings as part of a single *oeuvre*. Needless to say, Burton’s output is a remarkably heterogeneous one, and his ability to intervene across a vast range of subjects is an integral part of his identity. However, although I by no means ignore this, my aim is, rather, to seek the recurrences, slippages, and overlaps in Burton’s work, in the hope of emphasizing what I find to be a very singular voice. While this voice is distinctively Burton’s, though, it cannot simply be separated from that of the broader *oeuvre* to which he contributes. By listening attentively to Burton, I therefore hope to point towards important recurrences in that larger body of writing, from which others are—by definition within that very *oeuvre*—excluded. In the part of this text which bears the name ‘Richard F. Burton,’ that which is excluded is repeatedly identified as Abdullah.

In this close reading of Burton’s work, I have frequently been drawn, like Homi Bhabha before me and in his wake, to hybrid figures, of which Abdullah is an example. However, my reading of these is a little different from that of Bhabha, who has identified hybridity as a source of fascination and anxiety in the colonial context. For instance, he tells us that ‘The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside.’ I broadly agree with this, but I believe that further light can be thrown on the seductive nature of the hybrid by looking at it alongside the similar, but not identical, graft. These two methods of bringing things together are usually treated as synonymous, as we see when Young remarks that ‘At its simplest, hybridity . . . implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things, *grafting* a vine or a rose on to a different root stock, making difference into sameness.’ It is my contention, however, that we should distinguish between these two terms, and that the graft is the preferred strategy of imperial appropriation,
whereby the border between self and other, inside and outside, is ostensibly abolished, but at the same time retained. Given this tension between the erasure of the border, and its inscription, it might be better to say that such appropriation is the reiteration of the moment of grafting, which is never fully achieved. The hybrid then displays the success of the graft, but this very success brings to an end the appropriative drive which defines the relationship between self and other, inside and outside. Paradoxically, then, the hybrid, which bears the trace of a successful grafting, must be repeatedly disavowed for appropriation to continue unabated. Bhabha tends to suggest that the ‘threat from the hybrid’ arises because it unsettles the myth of a fixed and stable imperialist self, as when he says, ‘The display of hybridity—its peculiar “replication”—terrorizes authority with the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery.’ However, what he understates, I think, is the fact that the hybrid also disturbingly displays the loss of the other, that clearly identified part of the self which must remain forever outside in order to incite an appropriative desire; what must be achieved, in the service of Empire, is a continuation of this desire, and never its fulfilment.

III

If this short concluding section had a heading, it would have to be ‘Burton and I.’

What I have found most fascinating about this project is that I have often felt that the words I have written are not mine, but Burton’s. I have, therefore, constantly been forced to ask myself whether I am offering an analysis of Burton or simply reporting his analysis of himself. This is partly a product of the much remarked ironic tone of Burton’s voice, and his propensity to assume a multitude of guises. I am, as I hope will quickly become apparent, very suspicious of this irony, and have, at every turn, wanted to resist the temptation of celebrating Burton’s self-awareness as somehow mitigating his prejudice. Rather, I see this seductive self-critical distance as an inseparable part of his singular identity; we might say that it is a pre-emptive occupation of any external site of resistance. Therefore, instead of repressing this feeling that Burton has anticipated me, I have sought to accentuate it, in order to avoid simply repeating Burton’s own self-representation in the mistaken belief that it is I who casts a critical eye upon him. This book, then, is an unusual one, in that it foregrounds my own experience of writing about Burton, and is therefore as much about me as it is about him, and has a great deal to say about the relationship between those two. This has important implications for the form and style of the book. For instance, I quote a great deal, and frequently echo Burton’s words. I also adopt his spellings for words whose spellings have since changed. A good example of this is my use of ‘Moslem;’ I only use the currently correct ‘Muslim’ in this Introduction,
where I have assumed a greater detachment from Burton than I achieve hereafter. Furthermore, I have adopted an episodic structure rather than, for instance, a chronological one, with the aim of highlighting the recurrent motifs which Burton and others insistently compel us to find in their work. This methodology has the uncanny effect of making of their obsessions my obsessions. Although this is certainly a risky strategy in an academic book, I take the risk deliberately, with the aim of asking what is at stake when we read colonial discourse today, what is at stake when we read Richard Francis Burton today.

I now hand over the floor to the other ‘I,’ who is much closer to Burton than I will ever be.
1 No Doubt We’re Underway
With Our Man in *Scinde*, and Elsewhere

At last, my soul explodes, and wisely she shouts at me, ‘Anywhere! Anywhere! provided it is out of this world!’

Illustration, By Way of a False Start

As I attempt to begin, I am haunted by an illustration in one of Richard Burton’s many books, *Zanzibar; City, Island and Coast* (1872), entitled ‘Zanzibar, from the terrace of H.B.M.’s Consulate’ (see Figure 1.1), in which we see a portion of the coastline of the island, buildings crowding the land, a ship sailing out, and in the distance, where the island curves around, palm trees and hills beyond. In the foreground, a considerable expanse of terrace

\[\text{Figure 1.1} \quad \text{‘Zanzibar, from the terrace of H.B.M.’s Consulate’ (Zanzibar I.256).}\]
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton

intrudes between ourselves and the view, protecting and containing us as a border. The Consulate, metonym of Britain and its corollaries—the Centre, the West, Home, Civilization, the Self—is, in fact, separated from the land by an intervening stretch of water, indicated by the masts rising above the wall, and it seems thereby as much associated with the ships as with the buildings in whose company it, at first sight, belongs. But what interests me most in the picture is that seemingly supplementary and rather dapper Englishman (I presume) in the corner. Surveying the view from the terrace, or deck, he is our proxy as spectator, another border projected forth with that stretch of terrace, distancing us further from the avowed subject, ‘Zanzibar’, hurling us, in fact, unceremoniously outside the frame. We are invited, of course, to identify with this figure, to see with his eyes and to accept him as a protective image of ourselves. However, is there not also left open the possibility that we refuse this imposed identification, see him as part of the spectacle and, in turn, turn our backs on him? Well, to give a tentative answer, ‘Yes, and no.’

Burton and Bull

in the Indian case there seems to have been a sudden leap from a prevalent notion that the Indian travelogue did not yet exist . . . to a sense that the genre was already exhausted.²

‘Step in, Mr. Bull,—after you, sir!’ (Scinde I.1). So begins Burton’s Scinde; or The Unhappy Valley (1851), with an invitation to the quintessentially English Mr. John Bull to step aboard a ship which will take him from Bombay to Kurrachee, accompanied by his ‘guide’ (Scinde I.2), Lieutenant Richard Francis Burton. Tzvetan Todorov has suggested that in travel narratives there is ‘a certain tension (or a certain balance) between the observing subject and the observed object.’³ However, ‘in addition to the first relation of alterity—the one that exists between the narrator and the object of his narrative—there exists another, less obvious no doubt, between reader and narrator, who must not share the same ideological framework.’⁴ This difference between reader and narrator is, indeed, usually less obvious, given that it is often obscured in the evocation of the reader as companion; for instance, Edward Eastwick’s account of Scinde opens,

It was in 1839 . . . that I commenced a journey which conducted me to the classic but somewhat atrementous waters of the Indus; but stay,—I found my lonely march such an uncomfortable one, that I wished often enough for a companion; so, reader, this time we will make it together.⁵

Burton, in contrast, markedly foregrounds this relationship: ‘Step in, Mr. Bull,—after you, sir!’ This second person address to Mr. Bull in the manner of the tourist guide’s schpiel is maintained throughout the book, which is therefore
a somewhat fictionalized account of a tour of the province, presumably based upon the Survey Tour of Northern Scinde, which Burton conducted with his friend and colleague Walter Scott—to whom the book is dedicated—in 1845. This relationship, though, is an ambivalent one, for Bull, while different from Burton, is nonetheless also his ‘companion,’ and it will therefore be useful, as we proceed through the imperial terrain, to bear in mind Tim Youngs’s assertion that ‘Travel writing, especially in an imperial or colonial context, is an expression of identity based on sameness to and yet remoteness from the members of the home society.’

Burton accompanies Bull throughout his tour of Scinde, from Kurrachee to Hyderabad, and thence, in native dress, north as far as Shikarpur. As tour guide, he provides a thorough description of all the requisite sights, as well as informative and provocative lectures on the local history and population, and on the present and future of this recently annexed province of Britain’s Empire in India. He, himself, first came to the subcontinent in 1842, as an officer of the East India Company’s 18th Bombay Native Infantry. Having contrived to be expelled from Oxford University, he had wanted to participate in the reprisals which would inevitably follow the dramatic defeat and humiliation of the British occupying forces in Afghanistan in 1841. However, when he duly arrived, the Afghans had already been subdued, and his career took a different turn: he immediately applied himself to learning and obtaining qualifications in a number of Indian languages, in which endeavour he proved exceptionally able. Following Charles Napier’s controversial conquest and annexation, in 1843, of the predominantly Moslem state of Scinde—which straddles the river Indus and is now a part of Pakistan—Burton’s company was ordered to the port of Kurrachee, where Napier, then governing the province, had set up his headquarters. There, Burton was appointed Assistant Surveyor in the Canal Survey Department, which had been established to improve the system of irrigation in Scinde. For Burton, though, this title was something of a cover for covert espionage, and he proceeded to put his knowledge of the native languages to good use in surveying this newly conquered territory in the role of imperial spy. During this time, disguised as Mirza Abdullah of Bushire, he was, as he put it, able to pass behind ‘the veil which the fearfulness, the duplicity, the prejudice and the superstitions of the natives hang before his eyes’ (Falconry 99). Upon returning to Europe, he published several books, in addition to Scinde: Sindh, and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus (also 1851) is a thorough ethnographic monograph on the province, which was greeted by a not wholly sympathetic reviewer as ‘the most complete account which has yet appeared of the Indus valley;’” Falconry in the Valley of the Indus (1852) looks at the art of falconry in Scinde; and Goa, and the Blue Mountains; or, Six Months of Sick Leave (1851) is another travelogue based on Burton’s Indian experience. Sind Revisited was published in 1877, following a visit that Burton made to the subcontinent in later life, and takes the form of a heavily edited version of Scinde.
Burton was not the first to have travelled in, and written about, Scinde. Those who had done so previously went there when it was an independent state, and in various official and quasi-official capacities. For instance, Nathan Crow, who wrote a report for the East India Company in 1799, established a factory there; Henry Pottinger visited the ruling Ameers in the course of his involvement in the Great Game; and Eastwick was a political officer in the Company, based in Hyderabad. These predecessors, often with explicit intent, paved the way for the British conquest of the territory, and Burton’s own survey, facilitated by the greater access which military occupation afforded, might be said to have continued this conquest by other means. Furthermore, the itinerary of his tour closely follows that established by previous travellers, including a visit to the Alligator Tank (which Crow described in 1799, and which had become a popular place of resort for the soldiers stationed in Kurrachee); Tattah, the ancient capital, now ‘fallen from its high estate’ (Scinde I.101); and the ruins of Bhambora and Kullian Kot. However, when he contextualizes his narrative as an address to Mr. Bull, an English tourist, Burton highlights the repetitious nature of the route, rather than presenting himself as contributing to a progressive mapping of the territory; this is somewhat ironic, given that Scinde was not well-known at the time, and had certainly never been visited by tourists. The suggestion seems to be that, even if no previous account had been produced, this would still appear as yet another account of Scinde, and the banality of the experience is evident throughout; for instance, when we are provided with an excerpt from Bull’s diary, which reads, ‘walked a mile or two to see some large domed tombs; I am sick of them, but that fellow B. will insist upon my visiting all the sights’ (Scinde I.179); or when Burton finishes his final lecture before the journey home with, ‘You must by this time feel qualmish upon the subject of desert districts, dusty roads, tamarisk jungles, mud mausolea, lean Hindoos, puny Scindians, mosques, bazaars, and clay towns with tumble-down walls. At least, if you are not, I am’ (Scinde II.287). Even when Bull dons his native dress, it is presented in the manner of a clichéd Oriental experience: ‘So, Mr. John Bull, now turn round and show yourself to the civilized world’ (Scinde II.41).

This can be read as a parody of what Burton takes to be features of a typical Indian travelogue; as Barbara Korte has pointed out, ‘The Victorian tourist, like the visitor of the contemporary panoramas, was principally concerned with seeing sights;’ such a tendency of the tourist to view the space travelled through in the same way as one might a panorama is something which Burton emphasizes in his tongue-in-cheek hope that Bull found his journey to India ‘almost as entertaining as the thousand-and-one Di-, Pan-, Physi-, Poly-, and other–oramic imitations at which you have been perseveringly staring these last few years, sir’ (Scinde I.1). This theme recurs in Goa, in which the narrator assumes a similar, although not so clearly defined, relationship with his reader. There, Burton suggests that ‘Gentlemen tourists,
poetical authors, lady prosers . . . certainly are gifted with wonderful optics for detecting the Sublime and Beautiful’ (Goa 5), and asserts that ‘we can’t allow you to hand your rose-coloured specs. over to us. We have long ago superseded our original “greens” by a pair duly mounted with sober French grey glasses’ (Goa 7). Burton’s sober view distinguishes him from his reader/companion, who also represents himself when he first arrived here. However, at the same time, a distinction is drawn between Scinde and that more familiar route of the tourist: the European Grand Tour. We see this, for instance, when Burton jokingly provides Bull with a method ‘To extract Bombay from the Bay of Naples’ (Goa, 5–6). Consequently, we are never sure exactly what Burton is attacking, whether it is the genre of representation—the spectacles through which Bull (and by implication you) views the space and its inhabitants—or whether it is Scinde which refuses to conform to the view expected through these specs., and which, therefore, refuses to offer up a rewarding touristic experience.

This ambivalence is enacted when Burton and Bull visit the ‘city of the dead’ in Tattah; we are told that ‘From a distance the effect of the scene is imposing’ (Scinde I.109), while

A closer inspection is by no means favourable to the view. . . . Your eye rejects the profuseness of square and circle, spiral and curve, diamond and scroll-work, flowers, border-pattern and quotations from the Koran, in characters whose sole beauty is illegibility. In vain you look for a straight line in any building; the architects were not sufficiently skilful to succeed in the simplicities of art. As a late traveller justly observes, the effect of the tout ensemble is gaudy, and there is that ‘appearance of tinsel tawdriness which results from injudicious over-ornament.’ [Scinde I.111–12]

It is unclear here whether Burton is distinguishing his own from Bull’s eye—a conjecture supported by the fact that the Arabic script would have been perfectly legible to Burton the consummate linguist, who a little later translates a Sufist ode inscribed on one of the tombs (Scinde I.117–19)—or if he identifies his own with Bull’s ‘optics.’ Is he implicitly advocating the transformation of the eye through travel, as opposed to tourism? If so, we might bear in mind James Buzard’s suggestion that ““travel” acquires its special value by virtue of its differential relationship with “tourism” . . . [and] the two together make up a binary opposition fundamental to and characteristic of modern culture.” Burton then seems to stage this doublet in Scinde, with himself as traveller and Bull as tourist. However, this passage can also be read as asserting the value of a superior Western gaze which, having already marvelled at the sights in Europe, can recognize real art, and the deviation of Indian architecture from that true line. In this case, Burton can be identified with Bull, and the tourist and the traveller become one. The introduction of the voice of another traveller only further muddies the water: does he observe justly, or is this just
a piece of received wisdom recycled for popular consumption by the dutiful
guide? Burton’s ‘sameness to and yet remoteness from’ Mr. Bull emerges as a
consistent and acute point of undecidability throughout the narrative.

Alongside the tourist and his guide, Burton introduces another figure
from the European scene when he says, ‘I know no place where one of your
thorough-bred continental-English flaneurs would be more out of place than
in a Young Egypt [Scindian] town’ (Scinde I.188–89). Having grown up on
the continent, in France and Italy, Burton is more likely, when he refers to this
‘thorough-bred,’ to be speaking of himself than the pure-bred Bull. Again,
though, the relationship with the tourist is an ambivalent one. Walter Benja-
min opens his essay on the flaneur in the work of Charles Baudelaire with the
words, ‘Once a writer had entered the marketplace, he looked around as in
a diorama. A special literary genre has preserved his first attempts at orient-
ing himself. It is a panorama literature.’ Benjamin associates this kind of
literature, the ‘physiology,’ with the flaneur, who strolls through the mar-
ketplace, and privileges his ability to distinguish people and objects according
to his sense of sight. In this respect, he is very like Burton’s tourist, whose
experience of the foreign space has been preconditioned by his viewing of
panoramas at home, and for whom the object of his gaze is, indeed, a com-
modity. Yet, as Baudelaire tells us,

His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd.
For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy
to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of
movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from
home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be
at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world.

The flaneur then appears to differ from the tourist, in that, while the tourist
(and perhaps also his companion, the traveller) makes a clear distinction
between the home to which he will return and the place through which he
travels, the flaneur is more ambiguously located, wishing as he does to lose
his body and his identity in the crowd, whose flesh becomes his own. None-
theless, when Baudelaire tells us that ‘He is an “I” with an insatiable appetite
for the “non-I,”’ this both troubles the border between these terms, and
at the same time creates the tourist-as-consumer as the flaneur’s less subtle
double. Perhaps what most clearly distinguishes the tourist and the flaneur is
the apparent invisibility of the latter, ‘hidden from the world,’ as opposed to
the conspicuous consumption of the tourist.

As a ‘passionate spectator,’ the flaneur is also closely related to the voyeur,
whose presence we see enacted in Burton’s description of a quintessentially
exotic Indian Nautch, or traditional dance. As the narrative progresses,
our pair approach the exotic closer as they journey northwards, from the
Unhappy Valley into Scindia Felix; ‘Larkhana is in the centre of Scindia
Felix—the summer-house of the garden about it’ (*Scinde* II.239), and it is here that the Nautch occurs. Burton and Bull are treated to a variety of entertainments, but the star of the show is undoubtedly ‘Mahtab—the “Moonbeam” . . . the Donna of Larkhana’ (*Scinde* II.241). It may not be coincidental that Eastwick also saw a performance by a dancing girl with the same name:

I was asked by Ibrahim Sháh, the Hyderábád minister, to a nách . . . The Sindhian dancing girls are inferior to those I have seen in India. One whose name was ‘Moonbeam,’ (Mahtáb) was rather pretty; but, on the whole, there was no great risk of being fascinated.18

Unlike Eastwick, though, Burton and Bull are most certainly fascinated. Burton begins by describing her ‘perfect’ features—although he wishes that ‘she would appear somewhat more human, less like a statue in a moonlit walk’ (*Scinde* II.241)—and we then proceed to

her figure . . . Your glance slowly takes in a throat . . . thence it shifts lingeringly to a line of shoulder, where, if it could, it would stay; but on it must go, to understand what a bust is, and to see what a woman’s waist might be—not, as you shudderingly recollect, what it is so often made to be—thence—

But stop, Mr. Bull. At this rate you will be falling in love with the Moonbeam—I tremble to think of the spirit in which your lapse would be received by the bonneted, well curled, be-mantled, straight-laced, be-petticoated partner of your bosom. *[Scinde* II.241–42]

In this circumscribed space—a Nautch in a summer house at the centre of a garden—Bull’s erotic gaze is almost allowed to indulge itself to the utmost, but Burton pulls Bull up short by invoking the spectre of an illicit love, and reinforcing this with a licit image: the tourist’s good wife. Bull is trapped in the role of *voyeur* on the margins of the exotic Indian spectacle, in his English identity as Mr. Bull and in his marriage to the equally English Mrs. Bull. The Nautch therefore evokes England, by way of contrast, as the locus of respectability and the locus of the *voyeur’s* gaze, and in this home space Mahtab must appear as “minx” and “savage” (*Scinde* II.242). If Bull’s desire pulls him toward immersion in the Scindian scene, like a *flaneur* lost in the crowd, his identity draws him back—*remember you are English*—and this is reinforced by the aspect of the Siren herself: not only is she somewhat other than human, but ‘there is something in her look which spurns rather than courts ardent eyes’ (*Scinde* II.244).

This scene echoes another, which Burton presents with the words, ‘I must request you to be present at the unpacking of a Scindian lady of high degree, during which operation I shall lecture you upon the points most likely to interest you, sir, my intelligent audience’ (*Scinde* I.272), and ends with ‘—the
lights wane—the stage darkens—the curtain descends’ (Scinde I.297). Unlike
the Nautch, which presented an exotic Eastern experience, this episode is
ostensibly ethnographic in purpose, presenting us with the dress, habits, and
life history of a typical Scindian, Moslem woman. As such, she is normalized
as an ethnographic object and political subject. However, supplementary to
this ethnographic narrative is the manner of the narration, which explic-
itly establishes the act of observation as voyeuristic—an exact equivalent of
the Nautch—and the relationship between observer and observed as one of
displaced desire and power. In thus foregrounding Burton and Bull in the
presentation of the scene, we (the other audience) are left wondering pre-
cisely what the status of such ethnography is: can it lay claim to any kind of
objective authority, or is it hopelessly undermined by its inscription within
the power play of Empire, or more allegorically by its status as part of Bull’s
‘six weeks’ sinning trip to the “Continent” (Scinde II.291)?

Burton distinguishes himself from Bull in these scenes, mocking him
as he watches him watching, but at the same time he cannot fail to be
identified with Bull, the other Englishman, whose voyeuristic spectator-
ship is constructed as manifestly male and heterosexual. Although Burton
assumes an ironic distance from this figure, his identity as a doubly dis-
placed spectator is dependent upon the presence of Bull, who appears to
serve as Burton’s proxy. Furthermore, by inflecting his representation of
Scinde as an authority on the subject by its point of address—Mr. John Bull,
the English tourist—Burton ironizes this voice. However, what emerges is
only this critical distance from his companion, rather than an alternative
way of viewing Scinde. The message seems to be that if the truth of the
multiple ways in which Scinde and the Scindians are represented in the
narrative appears irrefutable to Burton, it is precisely this inescapability
of his own predetermined voice that he rebels against by contextualizing
it as the schpiel of yet another tourist guide. In a wonderfully lengthy pas-
sage near the end of Scinde, Burton enumerates all the ‘curios . . . treasures’
which Mr. Bull is taking back with him to England as souvenirs (Scinde
II.294–95), and Jonathan Bishop is quite right when he argues that the
whole narrative points towards the sense that

Burton’s knowledge of Oriental life is, as far as the world is concerned, of
the same value as the physical ‘curios’ he holds up to such scorn, mere pic-
turesque scraps of information. The ultimate end of his adventures into na-
tive life is a return to the parlor from which he was so anxious to escape.19

As far as the world is concerned but also, perhaps, as far as Burton himself
is concerned, escape is impossible, resistance is futile.

In relation to the border between viewer and viewed, Burton is then located
on the same side as the viewer, or Bull, and it is in Bull’s Britain that Burton is
constrained to construct his identity. His role there is unambiguously presented
in the dedication to *Sindh, and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*, as that of an expert placing his knowledge of Oriental life at the service of imperialism:

To the Honourable the Court of Directors of the East India Company, this attempt to delineate a province of the Empire owning their extended rule, is, with much respect, dedicated by their very obedient servant, R.F. Burton, Lieutenant Bombay Army.

The importance of this function is made clear when he goes on to claim that

It were needless to enlarge upon our duty as a nation ‘accurately to know the condition of so many of our fellow-subjects in the East.’ And it would be difficult to supply a better illustration of the popular axiom, ‘Knowledge is power,’ than the conduct of Orientals towards those who understand them, compared with their contempt felt, if not expressed, for the ignorant.²⁰

It might be said that in the parallel text, *Scinde*, Burton shows off his superior knowledge, mocking his more ignorant compatriots in the figure of Mr. Bull; indeed, such was the reading of a contemporaneous reviewer of *Sind Revisited*, who objected to the ‘chatting addresses to Mr. Bull, otherwise the British reader,’ which ‘familiarity hurts our pride . . . [for] we do not like it made apparent how inferior is our knowledge to that of our teacher.’²¹ In addition to this difference from his addressee, Burton also positions himself politically against the ‘respectability’ of the Bull family. These differences between Burton and Bull locate both as members of an ideologically and experientially diverse home culture, and arise as a result of their contrasting engagements with ‘the first relation of alterity—the one that exists between the narrator and the object of his narrative.’ Thus, Burton creates himself as an expert on, and potential ruler of, ‘our fellow-subjects in the East,’ and also as someone who is, as a consequence of his superior knowledge of other cultures, able to question prevalent English, middle-class values. In these roles, Burton is different from Bull, but nonetheless the same, with respect to the Orientals on the other side of the border which together they perform. However, if the narrator (Burton) wishes to distinguish himself from the reader (Bull – *us*), then we must also consider more carefully the first relation of alterity, and question the extent to which, in differentiating himself from Bull, Burton identifies himself with the other object of his narrative: Scinde, the native.

An interesting contrast to the tourist and his guide’s position outside the scene is given by Burton in *Goa*, in which he tells us of an Indian army officer who, unlike Bull, did not resist the temptation offered by the Nautch girls. Burton narrates how, while in Seroda, he and his companions ‘sallied
forth to view the abode in which Major G—passed his last years’ (Goa 127).

This person

was an officer who had served with distinction for many years in a Native Regiment. He was a regular old Indian, one of the remnants of a race which, like its brethren in the far west, is rapidly disappearing before the eastward progress of civilisation in the shape of rails, steamers, and over-land communication. By perpetual intercourse with the natives around him he had learned to speak and write their language as well as, if not better than, his own. He preferred their society to that of his fellow-countrymen; adopted the Hindoo dress; studied their sciences, bowed to their prejudices, and became such a proficient in the ritual of their faith as to be considered by them almost a fellow-religionist. [Goa 127–28]

The Major had fallen ‘in love with a Seroda Nautch girl . . . not an usual thing in those days: he also set his mind upon marrying her, decidedly a peculiar step’ (Goa 129). However, the dancer refused to accept his proposal of marriage ‘unless he would retire from the service to live and die with her in her native town’ (Goa 129). So ‘Major G—. . . disappeared from the eyes of his countrymen, bought a house at Seroda, married his enchantress, and settled there for the remainder of his years’ (Goa 130). Visiting his tomb, Burton remarks that

It is always a melancholy spectacle, the last resting-place of a fellow-countryman in some remote nook of a foreign land, far from the dust of his forefathers—in a grave prepared by strangers, around which no mourners ever stood, and over which no friendly hand raised a tribute to the memory of the lamented dead. The wanderer’s heart yearns at the sight. How soon may not such fate be his own? [Goa 130]

No doubt there were mourners there (the family the Major married into, his friends and colleagues, perhaps his children), but no ‘fellow countrymen’, and the rest simply vanish in Burton’s evocations—a strange dematerialization this, a strange disavowal. Yet there is surely something here, pushed back in time, driven to the far east and west by the outward (from the centre) march of civilization, something of Burton himself maybe: a limit point; a strange disappearance suggested by this place of pilgrimage; a subtext of this moralist’s cautionary tale. From the point of view of Burton, the traveller, tied to Bull, the tourist, the trace of Major G—can only present the ‘melancholy spectacle’ of something forever lost on the other side of the border, in a ghostly ‘foreign land.’ In constructing a role for himself in the metropolis, Burton the ‘wanderer’ then both differentiates himself from, and places himself alongside, not only his companion, Bull, but also another alter ego, namely the one who has entered the mis-en-scène with no possibility of return.
This story resonates with the finale of *Scinde*, where Burton has bid farewell to Mr. Bull and projected before his ‘spiritual eye’ his companion’s journey home, ending with his ‘falling into Mrs. Bull’s extended arms—the proud look at Billy, who has grown prodigiously these last nine months—the huggings of all the dear little creatures’ (*Scinde* II.308). At this point, and for the first time in the book, Burton refers to Bull in the third person:

He gripes my hand . . . He mounts the boat-side slowly, and waves his pocket pennant. His figure loses distinctness, diminishes, disappears in the distance.

Mr. Bull is gone.

And I remain behind upon this sultry shore, ‘alone!’—as novels will say—‘alone!!’

How affecting (to oneself)—how romantic, and how ennuyeux! [*Scinde* II.309]

Like the Major in his tomb, Burton is left ‘alone’ in this foreign land as his companion, his double, loses distinctness and disappears. That Burton would wish to take Bull’s place in that limited family scene seems unlikely, and there is no projected future for himself. Now that Bull’s story has ended, the guide, the narrator, is left in suspended animation, with no one to talk to, tantalizingly left to his own devices upon this sultry shore. The emotion that Burton feels at this moment is self-consciously ironized, presented as merely conventional, novelistic, and romantic; indeed, it is as a novelistic figure that Burton inscribes himself here, at the end of *Scinde*. If one part of the fictional doublet has returned home to England, the other remains behind the veil and the novelistic façade, living a story which cannot be narrated—a non-story perhaps, or an anti-story.

**Cross-Dressing**

Burton’s somewhat ambiguous identity in *Scinde* led to a certain degree of mistrust in the minds of his fellow officers, as we see when he tells us a little of his life at the Survey’s Headquarters in Kurrachee:

I made acquaintance with Mirza Ali Akhbar . . . He lived outside the camp in a bungalow which he built for himself, and lodged a friend, Mirza Dâud, a first-rate Persian scholar. My life became much mixed up with these gentlemen, and my brother officers fell to calling me the ‘White Nigger.’

Furthermore, his apparent sympathy for Eastern, and in particular Islamic, culture would continue to make him an object of suspicion in many quarters
throughout his life; to give but one example, a reviewer of his works on West Africa (who was scandalized, with many others, by his defence of polygamy) commented,

We seriously believe that Captain Burton would have acted more openly and honestly towards his readers, if he had added to all the other titles that trail along after his name, the words, ‘An English Gentleman, converted long ago to El Islam or the Perfect Cure.’

As well as making acquaintances in Scinde, and championing their religion, Burton also went among them disguised as Mirza Abdullah of Bushire, in which identity he might be thought to have come perilously close to going native. In *Scinde*, Burton does not speak directly of Abdullah, whose appearance the following year, in *Falconry*, is an important moment in Burton’s oeuvre. I consider this work in Chapter 3, where I begin to look at Abdullah’s significance and genealogy. However, the theme of cross-dressing does occur in *Scinde*, in which Burton and Bull travel the second half of their journey, from Hyderabad to Shikarpur, in native dress, and the way in which Burton presents this throws further light on his relationship to both Britain and Scinde.

The description of the change of dress is preceded by a ‘lecture’ in which Burton contends that Orientals are inveterate liars, and therefore superior to plain dealing Europeans in the art of cunning. Developing this theme, he tells us that

Our inferiority of cunning to the Oriental, is certainly not owing to want of knowledge of the people amongst whom we live, or to ignorance of their manners, customs, and languages. The Macnaghtens, the Burnses, and generally those who devoted their time and energies, and who prided themselves most upon their conversancy with native dialects and native character, are precisely the persons who have been the most egregiously, the most fatally, outwitted and deceived by the natives. This is a trite remark, but it cannot be too often repeated, too forcibly dwelt upon. *Scinde* II.3

Given Burton’s own status as an interpreter and spy in India, as well as an expert on the native population, this reference to his immediate predecessors is pertinent, and also poignant, because Alexander Burnes and William Hay Macnaghten had recently been killed in Afghanistan, the former having been the first prominent figure to be assassinated in Kabul, while Macnaghten was killed by one of the leaders of the uprising, Akbar Khan, during negotiations. Up to this point, both had pursued celebrated careers in India: Alexander Burnes, attached to the political department of the East India Company, had been a leading participant in the Great Game, and in
the conquest of Afghanistan was sent ahead of the army to secure safe passage through Scinde and Baluchi; and William Macnaghten, also a ‘political’ in the Company, was appointed Governor of Bombay, and was largely responsible for the conduct of the intervention in Afghanistan. Alexander’s brother, James Burnes, was another traveller to, and writer about, Scinde, having been invited there as a doctor to one of the ruling Ameers; and the other Macnaghten referred to is presumably William’s father, Francis, who was a judge in India.24 That Burton should so distance himself from, despite his apparent similarity to, these men shows the way in which the British conception of their role in India was changing, and the Afghan affair—which Burton must have had in mind when criticizing the previous generation—was an important factor in this shift.

Burton’s damning conclusion is that these men’s ‘vanity tempted them to shift their nationality; from Briton to become Greek, in order to meet Greek on the roguery field; and lamentably they always failed’ (Scinde II.7). In arguing thus, he implies that we, to succeed in ruling India, must always retain our national character in order to retain the national upper hand. However, when he goes on to defend his and Bull’s recourse to native dress, Burton refers to his predecessors as models to be emulated:

Young India—by which I mean young Anglo-India—would certainly wax violent if he saw us, and disclaim grandiloquently at our ‘morbid propensities’ and our ‘contemptible sacrifice of nationality in aping Asiatics.’ At the same time he knows by tradition that his grandfather and father—who, to say the least, were quite as good men as himself—thought the thing no disgrace. You are old enough not to care much about what people say, and I have learned how largely we gain in convenience by widening the pantaloons, and by exchanging the beaver for a turban. Peasants will not run away from us as we ride through the fields, nor will the village girls shrink into their huts as we near them: the dogs will forget to deafen us with their barkings, and the cattle to fly in terror at our approach. [Scinde II.33–4]

Bearing in mind his previous warnings about the dangers of ‘aping Asiatics,’ we might identify Burton’s voice with that of ‘young Anglo-India,’ but the very fact of his going against this advice differentiates him from that collective ‘he.’ Burton does not directly address the question of national identity here, but instead defends the disguise on the grounds of ‘convenience,’ which refers both to the greater comfort of native costume, and to the greater ease with which he and Bull can now travel through the territory.

The fact that Burton and Bull will no longer be shunned in Scinde is important in the context of this narrative, in which the rejection of their presence by the space and its inhabitants is a recurrent motif. Thus, among the tombs of Tattah,
Every now and then some strolling fakir, grim as the ruins amidst which he stalks, frowns at the intrusion of the stranger, or a pariah dog barks as we approach. . . . If we enter a mausoleum, the noise of our footsteps returned by the hollow ground, disturbs the hundred tenants of the porticos, the niches, and the projections of the domes. \[Scinde I.111\]

This is at once the experience of the living among the dead, and that of the European stalking the ghost-inhabited ruins of the East—all that dead weight which cannot speak. It is also the experience of the outsider: a rejected foreign body, circumscribed by frowns and barks. We encounter this resistance on the part of the observed over and over again; for instance, Burton tells us that ‘There is nothing this people hate so much as to be overlooked’ \(Scinde\ I.104\); he claims that in Jerruck, ‘we walked through the town, were barked at by the pariah dogs, stared at and called Kaffirs by the little children . . . giggled at by certain fair dames . . . and avoided by the rest of the population’ \(Scinde\ I.188\); and, at the famous tomb of Sehwan, he states, ‘Everything in this place seems to hate us. Even the pet tiger, as he catches sight of our white faces . . . springs up, glaring at us with blood-thirsty eyes’ \(Scinde\ II.221, my\ emphasis\). Only in Hyderabad, where the population has been forcibly pacified, do the people ignore the European, but they are hardly welcoming:

the people, accustomed to the presence of Europeans, scarcely stand to stare at the endemic ‘calamity,’ to whose horror habit has hardened them. The ladies know it is useless to beckon us, the fakirs have learned the fallacy of begging from us; the curs have forgotten to bark at us, and the infant population to taunt us with infidelity. \[Scinde\ I.212\]

In relation to the space through which they travel, Burton and Bull, therefore, appear as the only living beings, with only each other for company. Furthermore, in the eyes of the natives, those differences between Burton and Bull, which Burton is at such pains to emphasize, disappear as both, together, are hurled outside the frame. By repeating the motif of the barking dogs and other signifiers of the land and its inhabitants rejecting the foreign intruders, when he argues in favour of native dress, Burton would, therefore, seem to suggest that only by cross-dressing are he and Bull allowed to become part of the scene. Presumably, then, the point at which ‘the thing’ becomes ‘a disgrace’ is a matter of contention, and Burton’s difference—from young Anglo-India and from the previous generations—is a question of degree. It is in this contentious zone that the figure of the Englishman aping the manners and dress of the native emerges as a site where Burton can both ostentatiously parade his difference from his contemporaries, in both India and England, and at the same time assert his connection to Britain as an obedient servant passing behind the veil to gather political intelligence, or, to put this another way, more conveniently to show Mr. Bull the sights.
Burton divests Bull of his constraining European dress, and replaces it with the more ample Eastern garments, with some relish:

A muslin pirhan, or shirt with hanging arms, and skirts like a blouse buttoned round your neck . . . A pair of blue silk _shalwars_, or drawers, wide enough without exaggeration, for a young married couple, the baby and all . . . draw a little _surmeh_ along the inside of your eyelids: ‘twill make you look quite an Eastern. [Scinde II.39–41]

Evidently, this cultural cross-dressing also allows a considerable degree of gender transgression, and there is a great deal of theatricality in the performance, which is very much in keeping with the representation of Scinde as a _mis-en-scène_, or a stage upon which the proficient actor can appear in a variety of roles. However, the suggestion that the foreign body is now allowed to pass, as though magically transformed, also suggests that the adoption of Eastern clothes allows some kind of identification to take place, and that the surface visibility of this fetishized native dress comes to signify _something_ (I wish I could think of a better word) of Burton which belongs on the other side of the border from the spectator, Britain, civilization, the West, the Self. Speaking on this side of the border, tied as he is to Mr. Bull, this is something from which the speaker is alienated, and which can only be hinted at.

The symbolic importance of cross-dressing in _Scinde_ becomes clearer when we look at its variation in _Sind Revisited_ (1877), but before looking at that passage of the text, I need to say a few words about the broader significance of this later work. Ostensibly, it is a product of a return trip which Burton made to Scinde/Sind in 1876, accompanied by his wife, Isabel. However, the book takes the form of a revised edition of _Scinde_, large stretches of which are only minimally edited, while others are more substantially altered. In addition to the relatively untouched passages—retained in the present tense address to Bull (his companion still, eliding the presence of his wife)—other sections are reworked as memories of the forties, or as quotations from his earlier work. It is as though, as Burton’s new journey partially effaced the old, so this is manifested in the text, which then becomes a palimpsest. As Burton methodically works through the earlier work, altering it as he sees fit, it also becomes a kind of sequel to _Scinde_. In this way, it serves as a commentary on the changes to the province, which has now been under the imperial yoke for over thirty years, and signs of the ‘civilization’ consequent upon this rule are visible everywhere Burton revisits. Thus, in returning to the native town of Karáchi (now differently spelt), Burton finds that it has become, externally at least, mighty respectable and dull. . . . There is a general Bombay look about the place, the result of deep eaves supported by corbelled posts; of a grand Hindu establishment or two; of the new market-place, and of large school and native police stations. And it
will improve still more, under the blessing of Agni Devta, the Fire-god. [Sind R. I.47–8]

In Kotri, he recalls what the place was like, with its minimal traces of civilization, and invites Mr. Bull to ‘Now mark the differentia, and note how the Railway, the Steamer, and the Telegraph have overshadowed everything in these places’ (Sind R. I.237). These methods of communication, along with the instruments of civilization—‘the outbreak of schools’ (Sind R. I.261), police stations, and churches—are continually recurring motifs which represent the integration of the province into the fabric of Empire, and its reinscription as a ‘line of transit and traffic,’ which Burton characterizes as ‘Her manifest destiny’ (Sind R. I.79).

In the context of these other changes to Scinde, we can now consider the significance of the alterations which Burton makes to his description of Bull’s adoption of native dress, which is changed from the present into the past tense: ‘A few years ago we might have travelled dressed partly as natives . . . ’ (Sind R. II.26). The reason Burton gives for this no longer being possible is precisely that which he ignored at the time: ‘young Anglo-India, would certainly wax very violent . . . ’ (Sind R. II.27); the interdiction is now presumably too strong to resist, and the border less passable. However, ‘Even in these Philister days we are permitted by “Public Opinion” to exchange the black tile . . . for the fez or tarbúsh. We may also stow away our hateful collars . . . ’ (Sind R. II.30). Some native dress is, therefore, still allowed, but the figure of the Asiatic-aping European has become a considerably corrupted one, and the theatricality of the performance is gone, entirely effaced by the emphasis on convenience and comfort, as we see in the replacement of the words, ‘So, Mr. John Bull, now turn round and show yourself to the civilized world,’ with, ‘So, Mr. John Bull, you might now travel even through Wahhábi-land as comfortably and safely as Colonel Pelly did’ (Sind R. II.32). While, on the earlier journey, Mr. Bull was able, by cross-dressing, to slip from the political world to another, theatrical space, on the later trip, only more conveniently attired, he remains in the here and now. With Bull, his proxy, Burton, too, is pulled back into this world, his other self disappearing in the distance as though it never were, just as the race to which Major G—belonged is pushed further and further eastward, as the native Scinde is burnt to the ground—improved almost out of existence by the network of communications and institutions which constitute its civilization—and as Burton and Bull’s earlier journey is effaced, rendered in the past tense, everywhere they retrace their steps. This point is made with remarkable clarity in the new ending to this revisited text:

Separations, Mr. John Bull, are no longer the heart-breaking affairs of thirty years ago. In these days we part with a fair average chance of meeting again. I venture to hope that you will remember the trip with
pleasure; and now let us shake hands and exchange, if you please, not an adieu, but an au revoir. [Sind R. II.319]

No longer is Burton left alone on a sultry shore, in an otherworld, separated forever from his evanescing double; now, he remains in this world knitted more closely together by the Railway, the Steamer, and the Telegraph, this comfortable world from which we never depart, this world in which the tourist is king.

Perhaps We Should Start Over: Burton and Empire

Continuing his reflections, in Scinde, on the merits of donning native dress, Burton says to Mr. Bull that

Some Englishmen delight in . . . isolating themselves from the sable and tawny members of their species. For my part, I infinitely prefer to be in a place where one can be giggled at by the young, and scowled at by the old ladies, as they pass to and from the well; . . . where we can excite the men by sketching them, and showing them the caricature; startle the greybeard by disputing his dogmas; and wrangle about theology with the angry beggars. [Scinde II.89]

Burton, when he passes behind the veil, apparently very much enjoys being the centre of attention not only in England, where he appears in theatrical guise, but in Scinde itself. Thus, when he assumes native dress, Burton moves from being a voyeur—for whom the return of his gaze is both troubling, and, as it rejects his presence, necessary to maintain his position outside the scene—to being an exhibitionist. Once again, an interesting comparison can be made with the flaneur strolling through the arcades of Paris, of whom Baudelaire says, ‘The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito.’ This description is an uncannily apt one of Burton, the imperial spy, when he assumes his disguise. However, while the flaneur is, as Benjamin puts it, an ‘unknown man,’ Burton, in his very incognito, needs must stand out. This places him in stark contrast to the ideal figure of the European who has gone native, whose principal attribute in the eyes of the European viewer is his disappearance, or the fact that he has become ‘one flesh with the crowd’. In staging himself as an exhibitionist, Burton effaces this alternative persona. Furthermore, while the trope of going native figures the voyeur’s resisted desire to identify with the object of his gaze, the spectacle of Burton as the centre of attention in the bazaar presents the viewer with a rather different image of himself, as, paradoxically, both exhibitionist and voyeur at the same time. This viewer also finds his double in those other Englishmen in India, isolated from ‘the sable and tawny members of their species,’ who must ostentatiously exhibit their power in the very place from
which they claim to be detached. Burton in disguise, therefore, becomes these Englishmen’s representative in more ways than one.

If Burton and Bull in native dress evoke the spectre of those Europeans who have sacrificed nationality in ‘aping Asiatics’, they are also placed alongside a variety of other problematic figures:

They [the Indians] are beginning to feel easy in the presence of European-aping natives from Bombay and Delhi . . . and half-castes, who hopelessly essay to imitate the ruling race. . . . To this hybrid offspring of civilisation and barbarism they are, I repeat, so accustomed, that they look upon us only as some hitherto unseen variety of the species; and in their curiosity they press forward eagerly, as you have done, sir, to find yourself face to face with an infant elephant, or an ourang-outang marvellous for hideousness. [Scinde II.90–1]

This ‘hybrid offspring’ provide protective cover for Burton and Bull, but Burton does not wish to be identified with these other ‘mimic men’: it is with some bitterness that he tells us of his perceived resemblance to them, and there is a strong sense of competitiveness, not to say naked aggression, in his representation of them as ‘European-aping natives’ and ‘half-castes.’ However, for the European viewer, unlike the native, Burton and Bull are easily distinguishable from these other varieties of the species, and we might say that in the European metropolis, Burton has his revenge, for here only he will be heard, and he appears amongst his semblables only to take their place as an acceptable image of the mixing of civilization and barbarism. In appearing thus, Burton’s self-representation intersects with his strongly expressed political views concerning British India, and while Scinde and Burton’s other Indian travelogues can be read as a complex engagement with the genre of travel narrative, they are also forums in which Burton articulates his position with respect to imperial policy, and a particular vision of imperial rule. These aspects of the books cannot be separated. However, reading them in such a way as to foreground the engagement with Empire gives a rather different perspective on Burton’s relationships to his companion, the reader, and the space through which he travels. This section of my chapter should, therefore, be read as forming a palimpsest with my preceding analysis, which it both overwrites and is overwritten by.

As Burton’s self-representation indicates, a cornerstone of his version of imperialism was the belief, which was growing in popularity and clarity at the time, that the formation of a hybrid political space should not be allowed to emerge in British India. As Nigel Leask explains, ‘imperial policy studiously resisted the formation of any such Indian “public sphere” which might have seen the emergence of a creolized “colonial society” something along the lines of Iberian America.’27 This kind of creolization was associated with the presence of half-castes in India, the consequence of relationships between
European men and Indian women, and Sudipta Sen, like Leask, suggests that the comparison with Latin America was, again, influential in the formation of this link: ‘in the wake of the rebellions in the creolized Spanish Americas, the growing number of mixed-blooded subject[s] were seen to be particularly menacing.’ However, Burton does not need to look so far afield for a bad example for the British in India, finding it in that other colony which was grafted onto the body of British India, to wit, Portuguese Goa:

it was [Afonso de] Albuquerque [who, as governor of India, captured Goa in 1510 and] who advocated marriages between the European settlers and the natives of India. However reasonable it might have been to expect the amalgamation of the races in the persons of their descendants, experience and stern facts condemn the measure as a most delusive and treacherous political day dream. It has lost the Portuguese almost everything in Africa as well as Asia. May Heaven preserve our rulers from following their example! [Goa 87–8]

These inter-racial marriages are further described as ‘the weak point which vitiated the very foundation of his [Albuquerque’s] political edifice.’ In Portuguese Goa, then, the domestic and political economies overlap, and are rejected as models for British India. What is implicitly advocated, instead, is a clear separation of the European and the native, which Burton articulates as a divided imperial space.

In Goa, and the Blue Mountains—a narrative of his journey via Goa to the mountain retreats of the British in India, and his stay there—Burton juxtaposes Goa with an alternative imperial paradigm suggested by elevated sanitaria, where soldiers may be removed from the inimical climate of the plains, ‘and yet be available for immediate active service, whenever and wherever their presence may be required’ (Goa 155). Even these climatically favourable spots, however, should not form the basis of a colony, which would inevitably result in the degeneracy or intermarriage seen in Goa. Given this, the Empire would collapse, because:

Our Empire in the East has justly been described as one of opinion, that is to say, it is founded upon the good opinion entertained of us by the natives, and their bad opinion of themselves . . . if not contented with exposing individuals to their contempt, we offer them whole colonies, we may expect to incur even greater disasters . . . Such colonies would, like Goa, be born with the germs of sure and speedy decline. [Goa 157–8]

This imperial geography of India—with the natives in the plains and their British rulers in the hills—also informed Burton’s perception of other spaces through which he travelled, particularly in Africa, where a quest for possible sanitaria (always on elevated ground) was an important aspect of his
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton

explorations. For instance, in *Abeokuta* he argues that, though Great Britain ‘requires expansion . . . the superior race may not descend into an inferior ethnic centre’ and, therefore, ‘We must abandon the Utopian idea that we are destined to people the earth.’ However, this does not preclude a British presence abroad, for ‘all the world over there are scattered isolated positions; hills rising like islands from the plains, mountain-masses, and rocky ridges, where Anglo-Saxon life and labour can—if incapable of propagation and perpetuation—at any rate be greatly prolonged’ (*Abeokuta* II.65). Elsewhere, Burton is less certain about the impossibility of ‘propagation and perpetuation.’ Thus, in *Gorilla-Land*, he argues that the ‘poor man’ should not hesitate ‘from quitting the scenes of his purgatory, and from finding, scattered over earth’s surface, spots where he may enjoy a comparative paradise,’ and advocates a ‘national system of emigration . . . the exodus of whole villages’ (*Gorilla-Land* I.219). Whatever the function of these scattered spots might prove to be—Burton was particularly keen on that of convict station—the insistent repetition of this imperial geography, set alongside Goa’s bad example, is emblematic of Burton’s construction of Empire as a strategically divided space.

The hill stations of India, which Burton sought to replicate elsewhere, came to serve the British Empire, according to Dane Kennedy, ‘both as sites of refuge and as sites for surveillance.’ Burton’s own suitability for residence in these colonial outposts is questionable, as we see in his letter to a friend some years later: ‘Glad to hear that Ooty [the hill station of Ootacamund] has done you good—My remembrance of it is that it was a very rotten hole full of middle-class, respectably-pious and water-swilling mules—a race which disagrees with me,’ in a word, perhaps, Bull-territory. Nonetheless, they appear to him as essential to the successful governance of Empire, variously functioning as a refuge for foreign bodies, as the locus of an imperial gaze (both panoptical and voyeuristic), as a guarantor of presence and as a site of identification. Looking down from these secure heights, Scinde can only appear as a place which has ‘stood in a corner; isolated, materially and morally, from the outer worlds of the North and the Far West . . . she was a natural thoroughfare leading from nothing to nothing, and she was of scant service to racial development’ (*Sind R.* II.305). From this point of view, the North and the West reach this isolated corner of the world belatedly, too late to be struck by any novelty, and can only arrive as conquerors and rulers of its backward population.

This strict division of the imperial space and time coincides, in Burton’s political vision, with his belief that

when you thrust your enlightened institutions, the growth of slowly rolling centuries, upon the semi-barbarians of the Ionian Isles, and the rugged ruffians of Afghanistan [*sic.*], then you pass the fine limit of things proper. Then you act like a professed philanthropist, very benevolently, and in my humble opinion, very mischievously, very unwisely. [*Scinde* II.92–3]
In this way, Burton draws another distinction between himself and Bull, to whom these words are addressed: while Bull might believe that the Easterner can be easily reformed, for Burton the difference is a more profound one, grown over slowly rolling centuries and firmly fixed in political institutions, minds, and bodies. In a striking image, Burton claims that Bull sees the Indian as ‘a novel kind of automaton, into which you can transfer your mind and thoughts—a curious piece of human mechanism in the shape of a creature endowed with all things but a self’ (*Scinde* II.131–32). In Burton’s view, such an attempted ‘transfer’ would produce, not a successful mimic, but an improper hybrid.

The space in which Burton and Bull are able to appear in native dress is, therefore, an ambivalent one, only safely allowing contact and passage to a certain degree, if the national identity and character are to be maintained. Thus, Burton speaks of ‘we demi-Orientals’ (*Goa* 270), and of ‘the half-married’[^34]. Although he was emphatically against European men marrying Indian women, he nonetheless defended the *Búbú* system of British soldiers living with native mistresses, in the following terms:

> The ‘walking dictionary’ is all but indispensable to the Student, and she teaches not only Hindostani but the syntaxes of native Life. She keeps house for him, never allowing him to save money, or, if possible, to waste it. She keeps the servants in order. She has an infallible recipe to prevent maternity, especially if her tenure of office depends on such compact. She looks after him in sickness, and is one of the best of nurses, and, as it is not good for man to live alone, she makes him a manner of home.[^35]

For the European man, the native woman is legitimate as a source of knowledge, and of the comforts of home, and just as Burton, to perform his role as imperial spy, must only travel so far, become merely a *demi*-Oriental, so she can only enter the home as a *half*-wife, a possession and servant, sexual and otherwise. Burton sees this rather chilling semi-contact as necessary to the governance of India, arguing that the exit of the *Búbú* from the imperial scene has ‘left a void. The greatest danger in British India is the ever-growing gulf that yawns between the governors and the governed; they lose touch of one another, and such racial estrangement leads directly to racial hostility.’[^36]

It is not sexual desire which is denied here—sex is implicitly presented as simply biological and thereby made a necessary touch, useful both for Empire and for the lonely man in his manner of home—but the establishment of a contractual link between the two sides of the border, namely the bond of marriage, which had such disastrous political consequences in Goa, and the creation of a real home and succession of offspring which such a bond entails. If marriage can, in a patriarchal world, ideally be characterized as an appropriative act, and reproduction as a repetition of the same, in the divided imperial context difference enters into the equation, so that the
native can never be completely appropriated and the next generation will not constitute a reproduction of identity, but its corruption and loss; the hybrid child can, thus, never become the Son who will take the Father’s place. The imperial space has no such political temporality; rather, the European will always remain the Father, the only man, and the only subject, in this half-home. According to Octave Mannoni, ‘colonial life is simply a substitute to those who are still obscurely drawn to a world without men;\(^{37}\) in this world, it is only the European man who can roam freely over the surface, deciphering and articulating all those different ‘syntaxes’, and touching who he likes.

Ashis Nandy speaks of this imperial symbolic order when he says that there was, in the practice of Western colonialism, a persistent ‘homology between sexual and political dominance which . . . produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity.\(^{38}\) In other words, according to this consensus, the native must recognize his inferiority as a man to accept the European man as Father and Law. In accordance with this paradigm, Burton repeatedly feminizes the native, describing Scinde, for instance, as ‘an Eastern Ireland on a large scale,’ and suggesting that ‘The only chance of reclaiming the country, is to provide the people with peculiar facilities for emigration, or to leaven the dull mass by an infusion of the manly races that tenant the neighbouring mountains’ (Scinde II.125). However, undercutting this self-confident assertion of masculine dominance in Burton’s narrative is, as we have seen, the anxiety that this will not be recognized by the native, who will feel, not respect, but contempt for the white man exposed to his view, and that this will undermine the whole basis of Empire. That this must be understood in gendered terms is clear from Burton’s claim that ‘In the East men respect manly measures, not the hysterical, philanthropic pseudo-humanitarianism of our modern government which is really the cruellest of all’ (Nights 4.3, my emphasis), or in his comparison of French and British colonialism, this time in Africa, when he asserts that the French ‘warlike imperial colonial policy contrasts strongly with our Quaker-like peacefulness; about Gambia the natives have sneeringly declared that they will submit to the French, who are men, but not to us’ (Wanderings I.137, my emphasis).

The importance of the white man as symbol of authority is evident in Burton’s defence of the annexation of Scinde by Napier: he asserts that ‘Scinde is, in my humble opinion, exactly the frontier we require’ (Scinde II.57), and that

The Hala mountains . . . are the ethnographical, if not the strictly geographical, western boundary of our magnificent empire. The Scindians are Indians. A very different race of beings peoples the rugged ranges of the Kelat hills, and the oases that chequer the deserts beyond. Here a collector may raise his revenue without perpetual appeals to the bayonet; a
handful of Europeans may still awe thousands with the white face. [Scinde II.62, my emphasis]

The Scindians, as Indians, are ethnographically and racially marked as being amenable to rule by a handful of white faces, borne like standards upon the field of battle, and it is the awe inspired by this face—the visible boundary between ruler and ruled, white face and brown—which Burton sees as being fundamental to the very possibility of Empire in India, its sine qua non. The irony of Burton’s ‘Empire of Opinion’ is that, for the white face to be effective as slogan (from the Gaelic, sluagh-ghairm, a battle-cry), the white man must dissemble himself by posing as an Oriental despot. Prior to its conquest by Napier, the government of Scinde had repeatedly been characterized as a ‘military despotism,’ James McMurdo claiming that ‘although the annals of Asiatic countries seldom record any other kind of rule, yet it may be fairly questioned if any instance of such a despotic government is to be met with in their pages.’ Such a representation could provide a justification for intervention in the interests of reform, Thomas Postans, for instance, saying of the British government in India that ‘its efforts have been invariably directed, and wisely, to gradually introduce a better order of things.’ However, in Burton’s view the white man must retain the good opinion of the natives by assuming the place of authority in the native order. Thus, he applauds the security of Scinde, ‘typical of the state of a newly conquered country, governed by a ready and vigorous hand’ (Scinde II.91), and believes that ‘a military government is the only form of legislature precisely adapted to these countries’ (Scinde II.92):

Here the admirable state of security will linger in the country parts till the province become thoroughly ‘assimilated’ to the rule of British India, and the people grow familiar with the white-faced man and the fond folly of his justice-ideas. [Scinde II.91, my emphasis]

Familiarity with the white face needs must breed contempt, when the white man allows the white mask to slip.

We find in this curious imperial masquerade, this power play of Empire, another example of the incomplete passage, the half-inhabiting of the other side of the border as the white man, the Master of Syntax, strategically occupies the site of authority in the native space, though still precisely as the white man, so creating an imperial order. The white face has to become visible in India, as the very signifier of British authority, with which to awe millions, and the salubrious heights of the hill stations therefore function in Burton’s imperial imaginary not only ‘as sites of refuge and as sites for surveillance,’ but also as a place upon which to display this white face—a pedestal, as it were. It is, then, in India that Foucault’s modern man—who is ‘a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton

less than two hundred years ago—comes most prominently into view, as the *white* man: ‘enslaved sovereign, observed spectator, he appears in the place belonging to the king.’ This figure could only come into being as a consequence of drawing a clear border between rulers and ruled in India and elsewhere, by which the latter were rendered feminine, child-like, and even deprived of their humanity, while at the same time it was *their* gaze which confirmed him, the only man, in his identity as ‘observed spectator.’ From the point of view of the other viewer—who is both the same as, and yet remote from, this white mask—the hills and plains together map out a split identity, with the latter always assuming a subordinate, repressed, relationship to the former.

Towards the end of *Scinde*, Burton and Bull spend their last evening together dressed in a ‘mongrel mixture’ (*Scinde* II.288) of European and oriental attire and composing poems, Burton reworking Bull’s ludicrously English pastoral as a contrast between England and this land of ‘atmosphere rank, steamy, hot’ (*Scinde* II.290) where ‘We ask, indeed, as well we may, / What chance have we to live the day?’ (*Scinde* II.291). Given the persistent emphasis throughout *Scinde* on the harmful effects of the Indian climate, it is striking that the second time around, in *Sind Revisited*, Burton remarks to Bull that ‘The doctor advised change of air, and you wisely chose, for the winter, Western India. In days to come, this will be the favourite hibernial trip of your sons and your sons’ sons’ (*Sind R.* I.1). To an extent, this difference can be explained as owing to the fact that the second journey occurs during the cold season and, although the poems are removed, Burton retains much of the description of the discomforts of the hot season in the revisited text (*Sind R.* II.276ff.). However, it is also the case that the ill-effects of the climate have become considerably reduced in the intervening thirty years, so that Burton’s admonishment to Mr. Bull ‘to leave this place . . . otherwise I cannot be answerable for what the French call your “days”’ (*Scinde* II.294) is removed, and he now remarks that

> Increased comforts, decreased exposure, and less of the doctor, have made Young Egypt comparatively safe. But I remember the day when, what with cholera, dysentery, and congestion of the brain; dropsy, ophthalmia and enlarged spleen, that household was happy where only the first-born died. [*Sind R.* II.279–80]

Thus Burton is able to conclude that

> Either the climate of the Unhappy Valley has improved, or, what is more likely, we have learned to subdue its wildness by the increased comforts of a more civilized style of life. . . . Formerly it was a feat to live five years in Indus-land; now you find men who have weathered their two decades. [*Sind R.* II.317]
As the native is progressively subdued by the spread of a more civilized way of life, so too is the climate which maintains the difference, and as men become less vulnerable in this now not so foreign space, now a health resort indeed, so the native is progressively effaced as though it never were, and these singular men come to occupy the whole territory.

It is also interesting to note that the references to the *white face* and the *white-faced man* which I have emphasized here are removed in *Sind Revisited*. Such theatricality seems less appropriate in this more familiar, less dangerous world where the native is indeed subdued—where, for instance, ‘During the last quarter-century a few Sindis, women as well as men, have studied the manners and customs of their conquerors sufficiently to become domestic servants in European establishments’ (*Sind R.* I.302). Yet Burton still hankers after that ‘military government’ (*Sind R.* II.77) which will ‘labour to bring out the capabilities of your subject races, not to Anglicise them’ (*Sind R.* II.78); is pleased that ‘We have not imitated the Teutons, who, instead of developing the finer qualities of various races—Slavs and Italians, Roumanians and Magyars—vainly attempt a silly “Germanization”’ (*Sind R.* II.317); and asserts that ‘Young Egypt, like Old Egypt, imperatively demands a sanitarium’ (*Sind R.* II.318). Such a political paradigm, of course, fits the model of an English paternalism which keeps the native at arm’s length, in Empire—a kind of half-home—but out of England, a state of affairs rendered permanent by the racial twist, that slippage from ‘our fellow-subjects in the East’ to ‘our subject races.’ However, this political expediency is also bound up with a desire to keep the natives—those ‘sable and tawny members of the species’—and their space cordoned off as a guarantor of something of the white man which he cannot acknowledge and which he cannot do without and whose disappearance, however devoutly it may be wished, is accompanied by a certain frisson of despair: the world is not enough—when you take it all, you lose what you most want. ‘How affecting (to oneself)—how romantic, and how ennuyeux!’

By thus yoking together an imperial and a personal history, in the distance between *Scinde* and *Sind Revisited*, Burton brings into sharp focus the image of modern man progressively bringing the world under control, and at the same time becoming more and more disconnected from that world. In this teleology, the space of India becomes simply a stage upon which the history of European man is enacted. This places India and Indian history in an entirely secondary light. Furthermore, India is a stage in another sense, for, as Edward Said says, the Orient ‘seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe.’ It is significant, in this regard, that *Scinde; or, The Unhappy Valley* in fact has a third title, *Scenes in Scinde*, which is printed in the margin above the title of the first chapter. That this is actually intended as the real title, displacing those printed on the title page, is indicated by the fact that it also appears at the top of every second page. For Burton, *Scinde*
is certainly a theatrical space, which not only presents a variety of ‘scenes’ to the viewer, but in which the viewer, himself, plays out, whenever and wherever required, a variety of fantasies, including those of despotic ruler, cross-dresser, or singular male amongst all those women, while leaving his essential identity untroubled. In this strategic performance, in which the viewer/actor assumes centre stage, the space through which he moves, and the people who inhabit it, are rendered simply part of the scenery in that one man’s imperial and psychological drama. This is very much related to the construction of an imperial space in which an ‘ever-growing gulf . . . yawns between the governors and the governed,’ and in which India, as a site of presence and of historical agency, is buried beneath an ever accumulating weight of ever more ‘realistic’ Oriental scenery.

Benedict Anderson assumes this notion of the Orient as a stage when he argues that Empire was placed outside the narrative of English history: ‘nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history.’ Rather than being part of the modern nation, the imperial domain acted as a stage where earlier, non-democratic forms of power could be enacted, so that ‘late colonial empires even served to shore up domestic aristocratic bastions, since they appeared to confirm on a global, modern stage antique conceptions of power and privilege.’ Consequently, imperialism was more a ‘conjuring-trick’ than an expansion of the state, and so the colonies could be ‘shrugged off.’ Homi Bhabha has, however, criticized this representation of colonial racism as ‘a dream-text of a form of historical retroversion,’ arguing that it insists on the ‘homogeneous temporality of the modern nation,’ which a closer analysis of the colonial scene would call into question, suggesting instead ‘a hybridizing of the Western nation.’ Burton’s dominant narrative, in which the white man appears as a vulnerable foreign body in India, performing the role of privileged aristocrat, or despot, is very much in tune with Anderson’s representation. Indeed, his performance as narrator can also be seen as a sign of this privilege, as Tim Youngs points out when he remarks that

The freedom of movement within and between certain discourses highlights the writer’s occupancy of a special place. This latter site may appear variously as one of transcendence or exile, but the overall scope of movement signifies privilege, as well, of course, as the donning of masks and disguises for which Burton would become so noted.

However, what is also striking in this ‘donning of masks and disguises’ is the way in which Burton constructs his own identity alongside, and in relation to, a whole range of other figures, from Bull and Major G—, to European-aping natives, Goan half-castes, native women, Moslems, and Hindus. When Burton and Bull appear in the scene as exhibitionist voyeurs—thereby presenting
a mirror image to the white man in the hills, who is in this way also drawn down into the plains—they ostensibly do so to take the place of those other semblables. However, the humoured, excited, startled, and angry viewers draw them into the midst of all those people looking at each other and speaking to each other, and they cannot help becoming part of that multiplicity which constitutes the present of Indian history. The dreams of ‘eternal contaminations’ and ‘loathsome copulations’ keep us apart within the crowd, as does our desire to rule here, and the fact that we, unlike those around us, are speaking perfect English. Our identification with the white face in the hills keeps us firmly rooted in England, and tied to the temporality of that ‘modern nation.’ However, by ostentatiously drawing our attention to all of this, Burton’s *Scenes in Scinde* also suggests that this modern representative of this modern nation belongs to that crowd, comes into being precisely in order not to be lost in it as one unknown man amongst others, but to appropriate it. The very opposite, then, of the stage on which modern man performs a few (good) turns in the 1840s, Scinde also appears in Burton’s narrative as the place where the modern nation and the modern man have their origin, as symbols and strategies of authority, hastily cobbled together on the scene, with which to seize control of the space and the temporality of Indian history.
2 Translating / ‘The’ *Kama Sutra*

both a sort of epigraph, an hors d’œuvre, and a seed, a seminal infiltration: indeed both at once, which only the operation of the *graft* can no doubt represent . . . one must elaborate a systematic treatise on the textual graft. Among other things, this would help us understand the functioning of footnotes, for example, or epigraphs, and in what way, to the one who knows how to read, these are sometimes more important than the so-called principal or capital text. And when the capital title itself becomes a scion, one can no longer choose between the presence or absence of the title.¹

**The Book**

When Burton returned from his 1876 vacation to Sind, that province becoming more and more closely integrated into the fabric of Empire, he did, in fact, bring *something* back with him, a token of that world being burned to the ground, for on arriving in Bombay he and his wife were met by his old friend Foster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, then serving as Collector for the Indian Civil Service in Bombay, who was eager to share with Burton his discovery of a book which, under the title *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana*, was eventually published in 1883, in an edition of 250 sent to subscribers in seven parts, by The Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares, for private circulation only. This Society was bogus, its only members being Arbuthnot and Burton, now serving as British Consul in Trieste; both men had worked with others, since that meeting in Bombay, on the translation and composition of the work. The reason for the bogus Society and the formula ‘for private circulation only’ was to exploit a loophole in the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, prosecutions under which had been actively pursued by The Society for the Suppression of Vice.² Henry Spencer Ashbee³ was intimately involved in the dissemination of the book, and it has been speculated that Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton,⁴ was also an unofficial member of the Society. These four men were friends who shared an interest in the erotic, Ashbee and Houghton owning extensive libraries of erotica from which texts
prohibited in England were disseminated, and the milieu in which they lived could hardly be described as an ‘underworld,’ involving as it did people close to the centre of the Establishment. Rather, an interest in, and collection of, the exotic and the erotic suggests an air of exclusivity, as well as a certain frisson in the transgression of boundaries instituted by those people Burton and others would collectively refer to as ‘Mrs. Grundy,’ thereby ostentatiously marking their difference from respectable British society. At the same time, the library of erotica was, in the late Victorian period, a site from which the legally enshrined values of the society which prohibited it were challenged, in the name of a more enlightened approach to the subject of sexuality, so that the very word ‘erotic’ became a site of contention.

In this chapter, I trace the mechanism of this appropriation of a book brought back from the divided space of an India under the imperial yoke, and to do so will invoke, by way of comparison, Homi Bhabha’s examination, in ‘Signs taken for wonders,’ of the native appropriation of the Bible in colonial India, in which he explores the implications of the way in which, in 1817, a group of natives under a tree outside Delhi claim the Bible as their own, ‘God’s gift to us,’ and question the repetitions of the English interpretation of the Book by Anund Messeh, a less original native Christian. Bhabha’s analysis centres on the natives’ denial of Messeh’s claims that the Bible is ‘the European book,’ and that ‘God gave it long ago to the Sahibs, and THEY sent it to us,’ and he contends that, in so doing,

The natives expel the copula, or middle term, of the Evangelical ‘power = knowledge’ equation, which then disarticulates the structure of the God–Englishman equivalence . . . The Bible is now ready for a specific colonial appropriation . . . The expulsion of the copula . . . empties the presence of its syntagmatic supports—codes, connotations and cultural associations that give it contiguity and continuity—that make its presence culturally and politically authoritative.9

By claiming the Bible as a direct, unmediated revelation to themselves, the natives deny the equivalence between the white man’s imperial power and his authoritative voice, and in this way undermine the Englishman’s counter-claim that he is authorized to mediate the Word of God. I argue that when a group of elderly English gentlemen seek to claim Kama Sutra as their own, to lift it from its Indian context and strategically insert it into British culture, they establish themselves as mediators and the book as part of their culture, a revelation to themselves. I also suggest, however, that at the same time, and equally strategically, they leave the book in place by filling its presence in the West with syntagmatic supports which associate it with its Indian context. This makes its presence in English and in England at the same time a non-presence, a fragment of India, or the East, which cannot be fully assimilated. I see the title of the book itself—‘The’ Kama Sutra—as indicative
of this incomplete appropriation: by leaving ‘Kama Sutra’ untranslated, the book is in a sense left in place. In this way, the appropriation of Kama Sutra is comparable to the way in which the Bible comes into being in India as ‘a representation of an essence,’ a signifier of the white man’s identity at the same time as it functions as ‘a (strategic) device in a specific colonial engagement, an appurtenance of authority.’

In developing these ideas, I employ the concept of the ‘graft,’ to set alongside Bhabha’s use of the ‘hybrid.’ While the figure of the hybrid suggests a seamless fusion which abolishes an established boundary, the act of grafting creates a seam or boundary which it, at the same time, claims to have abolished. The newly-constituted organism is perceived to be made up of its several parts, and the grafted-on appendage is seen as the secondary addition of a foreign body. Although the combination, and the flow across the instituted border, may be fruitful, there is also the threat of contamination, and the fear that the original forms of the several parts cannot be reconstituted. This fear returns us to the threat of the hybrid. Darwin unites the two terms when he suggests that

we must admit the extraordinary fact that two distinct species can unite by the cellular tissue, and subsequently produce a plant bearing leaves and sterile flowers intermediate in character between the scion and stock . . . in short, resembling in every important respect a hybrid formed in the ordinary way by seminal reproduction.

He favours the use of the term ‘graft–hybrids’ to describe such plants. Darwin’s astonishment in the face of this phenomenon is revealing, reflecting the belief in a rigid boundary between species which can only (occasionally) be abolished through sexual reproduction. If it is in the literalized figure of the hybrid, the half-caste, that the anxiety of the colonizer finds its most potent expression, the fear of a loss of identity through hybridization haunts every form of contact and exchange involved in the European colonial project, and is accompanied by a transgressive desire for fruitful transformation. I suggest that it is in the figure of the graft, which constantly reiterates the institution of the boundary at the same time as it claims to have abolished it, and from which a hybrid form is hardly credible, that cultural appropriation by the colonizer finds its most apposite symbol.

I therefore believe that the translation of ‘The’ Kama Sutra into English culture, and its dissemination, can be characterized in terms of this graft. The grafted-in book both is and is not part of the same culture. This can be related to theories of translation, which tend to concentrate anxiously on the possibility or impossibility of achieving fidelity to an Original, of successfully decoding and recoding it, transplanting it from one hermetically sealed semantic system into another. Such a theorization constructs a clear border between languages and syntaxes, which is also a border between the
‘cultures’ expressed in and through those languages. The labour of translation, therefore, establishes a well-regulated passage between domains, and in the European translation of ‘Eastern’ texts this passage was principally regulated within the academic discipline of Orientalism, which systematically constructed a coherent representation of the East. As Tejaswini Niranjana says, ‘translation . . . produces strategies of containment. By employing certain modes of representing the other—which it thereby also brings into being—translation reinforces hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representations, or objects without history.’

In the case of India, many of the texts translated were presented as sacred in what was a concerted effort to create a religion of Hinduism and its representative figure, the Hindu. This contained, timeless subject could then become an object of European (colonial) discourse. The translated text of ‘The’ *Kama Sutra* might be in English, but it is nonetheless associated with the timeless religion and culture from which it was translated and which it represents, which the non-translation of ‘Kama Sutra’ emphasizes. This makes its declared acceptance as an authoritative text in English culture, a direct revelation to the English reader, ambivalent, and especially so given the subject matter of the book, addressing as it does the sexual relations between individual bodies, and the conflation of ‘culture’ and ‘race’ in European thought. However, at the same time, the text derives its authority precisely from its supposed origin in this essentialized other space—without history or, put another way, outside history.

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The Kama Shastra Society was instituted in the first instance to bring *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* to a British audience. However, this was not the first book which Arbuthnot ‘discovered’ in India; he and Burton had, in fact, attempted to publish the second work issued by the Society, *Ananga-Ranga*, in 1872, but only a few proof copies were made, for “the printer, on reading the proofs, became alarmed at the nature of the book, and refused to print off the edition.”

One of these proof copies made its way into Ashbee’s library, and from thence into the virtual copy of his library, the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, an extensive bibliography of prohibited erotic books which he published in 1877 under the pseudonym Pisanus Fraxi. There the work appears under the original title, ‘Káma-Shástra; or, The Hindoo Art of Love (Ars Amoris Indica). Translated from the Sanscrit, and Annotated by A.F.F. and B.F.R.’. The title of this book, and the way in which it is presented by Ashbee, are instructive of the manner in which the entire body of work issued by The Kama Shastra Society (which are still taken as the standard works of Eastern erotica), and *Kama Sutra* in particular, would be perceived.

The description of *Káma-Shástra* as ‘The Hindoo Art of Love (Ars Amoris Indica)’ suggests Ovid’s *Ars Amatoris*, and the link is made explicit as Ashbee
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton

go on to write, ‘From Ovid downwards, western authors have ever treated the subject jocularly or with a tendency to hymn the joys of immorality, and the gospel of debauchery. The Indian author has taken the opposite view, and it is impossible not to admire the delicacy with which he has handled an indecent theme.’ Ashbee establishes Ovid as the origin of a Western tradition originating in the debauched Roman Empire, which is also a counter-tradition to the Christian, a ‘gospel of debauchery’ to set against the Christian gospel of morality, and the European ‘Art of Love’ is constructed as a parody of the religious hymn and gospel. It is this immoral, debauched work which is, at the same time, compared with and opposed to the ‘Ars Amoris Indica’, so that if this newly discovered work is accommodated within the Western tradition—another Ars Amatoris—it is at the same time representative of a different tradition—‘Ars Amoris Indica.’ In the Introduction to the translation of Káma-Shástra (later to become Ananga Ranga) there are two references to ‘Kama Shastra’: ‘the Kama Shastra, or Scripture of Love,’ and ‘the Scripture of Cupid, the Kama Shastra.’ The word ‘Shastra’ was commonly translated as ‘Scripture,’ and this idea of an authoritative work on the erotic art also being a sacred text seems to have been an appealing one, giving it an implicitly divine authority. If Ovid’s Ars Amatoris was only ironically a gospel, the Káma-Shástra was genuinely one; to step outside of Europe in search of an alternative religious tradition was to search for an alternative morality which would allow sex to be freely spoken of.

This text, described as Káma-Shástra, was originally presented to its readers as the authoritative work, the Scripture. This is evident from Ashbee’s claim that

The treatise, originally written in Sanskrit, has been translated into every language of the East that boasts a literature, however humble. It becomes in Arabia and in Hindostani the Lizzat en’Nisá—the ‘Pleasures of Women;’ in Maharátí and Gujratí, it is the Ananga-ranga, or ‘Form of the Bodiless One’ (Cupid). Generally, it is known as the Sila Shástra, the ‘Scripture of Play’ (i.e. of Amorous Sport, . . .) or Káma-Shástra the ‘Writ of Desire’ or ‘of the Hindú God of Love’ (Káma-deva), and the vulgar call it ‘Koka Pandit,’ from the Prakrit name of the supposed author. Lithographed copies have been printed by hundreds of thousands, and the book is in the hands of both sexes and all ages throughout the nearer East.

The translated work is described as an original Sanskrit text which has since been translated throughout the East, the confusing babble of titles being traced back to a single, essential Original, ‘the treatise,’ which it can be claimed is representative. However, this assignation was later revised, and Ananga Ranga became merely the latest in a genealogy of works. In the Introduction to The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, ‘Kama Shastra,’ now
translated as ‘doctrines of love’, becomes associated with another work, the *Secrets of Love* of Kukkoka. Nonetheless, the naming of The Kama Shastra Society suggests that the idea of a ‘Shastra’ or Scripture retained a certain appeal, implying that what is found in India is the site of enunciation of a universal, ‘sacred’ truth previously unknown, or lost, in the West, which might be profitably heard.

If *Ananga Ranga* had been displaced from its status as an originary authority which could be compared and contrasted with Ovid, the text of the translation itself pointed the way to an antecedent work which might fulfill this role. In the third volume of Ashbee’s bibliography, *Catena Librorum Tacendorum*, published in 1885, in an entry on *The Kama Sutra*, which had by this time been distributed in England, Arbuthnot writes,

*The Kama Shastra, or the Hindoo Art of Love, (Ars amoris Indica)* was printed in London in 1873. In this work, at pages 46 and 59, references were made to the holy sage Vatsyayana, and to his opinions. On my return to India in 1874 I made enquiries about Vatsyayana and his works. The pundits informed me that the *Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* was now the standard work on love in Sanscrit literature, and that no Sanscrit library was supposed to be complete without a copy of it. They added that the work was now very rare.

The two references provided the clue which led to the discovery of another book, which was taken to be more authoritative because it was more ancient, more authentically representative of a Golden Age of Indian civilization, which has since degenerated, an originary and unitary authority preceding that confusing babble of titles. It could, therefore, become the representation of an essence. Arbuthnot’s self-representation here is in stark contrast to that of the natives in the little scene which Bhabha analyses: while the latter describe the Bible as a ‘gift’—‘An Angel from heaven gave it us, at Hurdwar fair’—Arbuthnot’s discovery of this other book is presented as a labour, a quest, and the book, therefore, is secret and hidden, something which must be dug up. It is only in response to his penetrative question that he receives the desired answer from the pundits, and this reported answer is a revealingly ambivalent one, answering indeed to Arbuthnot’s double desire in its description of the book both as authoritatively representative of Indian belief—‘the standard work on love in Sanscrit literature’—and as something neglected, on the verge of being lost, which Arbuthnot in rescuing can claim as his own, his gift not only to the West but to the careless Indians themselves—the work was now very rare.’ I do not speak here of the desires of the pundits themselves, elided in Arbuthnot’s representation of them as simply and mechanically responding to his questions, *his* desire.

To further his project of bringing *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* to a British audience, Arbuthnot made use of a pre-established network of scholars and
translators. He first sought to employ ‘a man competent to prepare the Sanscrit text,’ and for this he found a pundit, ‘BHUGWUNTLAL INDRAJI,’ with impeccable credentials: a tested translator, who had received the degree of Doctor of Letters from the University of Leyden, and was an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society of London. Arbuthnot now ‘set him to work to compile a complete copy of the Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana in Sanscrit,’ which required collating four ‘incomplete’ copies gathered by Indraji from Bombay, Calcutta, Benares, and Jeypoor.

With the aid then of another Brahman by name SHIVARAM PARSHURAM BHIDE, then studying at the University of Bombay, and well acquainted both with Sanscrit and English . . . a complete translation of the above text was prepared, and it is this translation which has now been printed and published in London.

It should also be added that ‘The pundits obtained great assistance in their translation from a commentary on the original work, which was called Jaya-mangla, or Sutrabashya . . . and without the aid of the commentary it [the ‘original work’] would have been in many places unintelligible.’

This account constructs the discovery/production and translation of the text as a collaborative effort, but also a hierarchical one, with Arbuthnot at the top. The credentials of the Indian contributors are detailed thoroughly, establishing their legitimacy to contribute, but they are also secondary, a point reinforced by Arbuthnot’s description of them as pundits and Brahmins, placing them as natives despite their credentials within Western institutions. Indraji’s performance of the apparently mechanical task of compiling a complete original text which has only to be put back together is amply acknowledged. However, the account of how the translation took place is elided—‘With the aid’ then of . . . BHIDE . . . a complete translation . . . was prepared,’ giving the impression that the translation is completely adequate, that it faithfully reproduces an authoritative original. However, the process was really rather more complex, and quite who was responsible for the translation is difficult to ascertain. Lovell has suggested that Bhide and Indraji produced a translation into a modern Indian language and that Edward Rehatsek, a friend of Arbuthnot’s, who introduced him to Burton on that 1876 trip, rendered this into English.

This original English text was, according to Lovell, then edited and altered first by Arbuthnot and then by Richard Burton, although the names of these two, and increasingly only that of the well-known Burton, have become associated with the text as translators, a trend which dutifully plays out a process established at the origin, in Arbuthnot’s reduction of the Indian translators to the role of machines to be put to work, and concomitant insertion of the authoritative European as mediator of the text, uncannily ventriloquizing Vatsyayana’s voice in the service of his own cultural and political authority.
The manner of the appropriation of this book can, therefore, be seen to mirror the Englishman’s use of that other sacred text, the Bible, in India, of which Anund Messeh says, ‘It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use.’ However, if the disseminators of *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* wish to distinguish themselves from the society which they thereby seek to enlighten, they do so precisely by undermining the claim that the work is THEIR book, or, in other words, by also distinguishing themselves from the other mediator of the truths contained therein, whose book it is, namely ‘the good old sage Vatsayayana.’

The translation distributed privately in 1883 as *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* was framed by an Introduction, a Preface, and Concluding Remarks, which show the ways in which the work was presented by Burton and Arbuthnot, who were responsible for these additional texts in which they sought to mediate its reception. The Preface to the work furnishes ‘a brief analysis of works of the same nature, prepared by authors who lived and wrote years after Vatsyayana had passed away, but who still considered him as the great authority, and always quoted him as the chief guide to Hindoo erotic literature.’ As well as establishing a genealogy and a canon, the list given can, especially given the reference to ‘erotic literature,’ read like an informative guide for the potential collector, and the writer goes on to say that ‘The contents of these works are in themselves a literary curiosity.’ If this analysis establishes Vatsyayana as the origin of an Indian tradition, the Preface also lists three works ‘in the English language’ which are ‘somewhat similar to these works of the Hindoos,’ these being *Kalogynomia: or the Laws of Female Beauty* by T. Bell, M.D., with twenty-four plates, and printed in London in 1821; *The Elements of Social Science, or Physical, Sexual and Natural Religion*, by a Doctor of Medicine, London, 1880; and *Every Woman’s Book*, by Dr. Waters, 1826, and it is claimed that

After a perusal of the Hindoo work, and of the English books above mentioned, the reader will understand the subject at all events from a materialistic, realistic and practical point of view. If all science is founded more or less on a stratum of facts, there can be no harm in making known to mankind generally certain matters intimately connected with their private, domestic, and social life.

The ‘subject’ referred to here is the relations between ‘men and women,’ and there is an avowed intent to use the translation of this work, this ‘Hindoo Art of Love,’ to further the study of a science which has been sorely neglected, or repressed, in England. In pursuance of this aim, *Kama Sutra* is, to a certain extent (‘somewhat similar’) accommodated within an English canon, and the idea of learning from the work is taken up in the Concluding Remarks:

It is a work that should be studied by all, both old and young; the former will find in it real truths, gathered by experience, and already tested by
themselves, while the latter will derive the great advantage of learning things, which some perhaps may otherwise never learn at all, or which they may only learn when it is too late . . . to profit by the learning. 39

We find, then, in these texts which frame the translation, an intersection of three principal rhetorical constructions of the work: as an exotic piece of rare erotica intended for the collector; as a religious/Hindu text; and as an important work on the relations between men and women. These different discourses are not merely superimposed, but interwoven, so that, for instance, its construction as a work of erotica feeds into a sense of the Indian way of life and religious tradition as pervaded by eroticism—‘erotic literature’—and at the same time creates a site from which to challenge the legally enshrined values of the society which interdicted it as erotic, in the name of a more enlightened approach to ‘the subject.’ The official designation of the work as salacious and dangerous is refuted through the authority invested in ‘the good old sage Vatsyayana,’ and while an attempt is made to place Vatsyayana in a particular context—‘It is supposed that he must have lived between the first and sixth century of the Christian era’40—he is also constructed as a universal authority, outside of place and time, the Concluding Remarks and the book ending with the words,

This work, then, which has stood the test of centuries, has placed Vatsyayana among the immortals, and on This, and on Him, no better elegy or eulogy can be written than the following lines:

‘So long as lips shall kiss, and eyes shall see,
So long lives This, and This gives life to Thee.’ 41

The Library

In a lecture entitled ‘Human Interest of Sanskrit Literature,’ published in 1883 in India: What Can it Teach Us?, Friedrich Max Müller, a renowned philologist based at Oxford, drew a distinction between ‘two periods’ of Sanskrit literature, ‘the one anterior to the great Turanian invasion, the other posterior to it, we may call the literature of the former period ancient and natural, that of the latter modern and artificial.’42 He places this invasion, of non-Indo-European peoples and languages from Central Asia, ‘from about the first century B.C. to the third century A.D.’43 The later literature is presented as ‘curious only,’ while the earlier ‘opens to us a chapter in what has been called the Education of the Human Race, to which we can find no parallel anywhere else.’44 This ancient Indian literature is seen to ‘teach us some kind of lesson that is worth learning, and that certainly we could learn nowhere else,’45 and this tying of the lesson imparted to a specific location is related to the positing of an essential difference between East and West
which represent ‘two hemispheres . . . in human nature . . .—the active, combative, and political on one side, the passive, meditative, and philosophical on the other.’ Müller contends that we might learn a lesson from the East, namely that ‘we, sturdy Northern Aryans, might . . . have been satisfied with a little less of work, and a little less of so-called pleasure, but with a little more of thought, and a little more of rest.’ Furthermore, he sums up the essence of ‘the Indian character’ in one word—‘transcendent’—and believes that this can be found in all nations and individuals to some extent, falling under the name ‘Religion,’ as opposed to ‘a religion.’ However, the essence of this Religion is to be found in the East, and in the Indian character, and only finds its undiluted expression in ancient Sanskrit texts.

This assertion of an essential difference between East and West institutes a sense of incompleteness in the West which can only be remedied by the incorporation of the East. For Müller, this labour of incorporation culminated in his editing of the monumental series, The Sacred Books of the East, initiated in 1874, and takes the form of a graft, the texts which represent the wisdom of the East always being associated with the place from which they came: the Sacred Books of the East. If this series can ideally be seen as metonymic of a hereby consolidated Eastern library, then this library is grafted into the European library as a heterogeneous fragment, carrying with it all the syntagmatic supports which locate it in the East. This location is completely literal, for while the Western tradition depends upon ‘these Northern climates, where life is and always must be a struggle,’ the Eastern arises in ‘the happy fields and valleys along the Indus or the Ganges.’ Consequently, the revelations contained in these volumes are inextricably tied to the space from which they hail, and with it the bodies and minds which inhabit that space.

The translations constituting The Sacred Books of the East are then intended to give the impression of a true projection of the original Eastern library into the Western library as its Eastern section, which is carried across and, at the same time, left in situ, especially when (as is almost always the case) the titles are left untranslated. In employing the channels of institutionalized Orientalist translation to carry Kama Sutra across into British culture, Arbuthnot potentially accommodates that text within the framework established by Müller and others. The parallels with Müller’s project are, in fact, quite striking. On the mechanical level, one contributor to The Sacred Books of the East series was Georg Bühler, who provided a version of Laws of Manu, and it was this man, who became Sanskrit Professor in Vienna but was at the time employed in the Educational Department in Bombay, who directed Arbuthnot to the ‘pundit’ Indraji. On the textual level, in the association of ‘the holy sage Vatsyayana’ with the translated text and its contents, the translation of The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana is presented as a sacred Hindu text, and, through its establishment as ancient, it is seen to be close to, in Müller’s words, ‘the fountain-head of Indian wisdom.’ This sacred book, without which the Sanskrit library, and therefore the Eastern library, would
be incomplete, would, on the face of it, be a valuable addition to Müller’s metonymic library, and, given the involvement of Bühler in both projects and the fact that Arbuthnot and Rehatsek were both well known Orientalists who were later to revive the Oriental Translation Fund of the Royal Asiatic Society, it would seem justified to ask why it did not take its place there.

In the text of the translation itself, we find delineated potential subsections of the Indian library, when it is stated in the opening passage:

In the beginning the Lord of Beings created men and women, and in the form of commandments in one hundred thousand chapters laid down rules for regulating their existence with regard to Dharma, Artha, and Kama. Some of these commandments, namely those which treated of Dharma, were separately written by Swayambhu Manu; those that related to Artha were compiled by Brihaspati; and those that referred to Kama were expounded by Nandi, the follower of Mahadeva, in one thousand chapters.54

Here we have a Book of Books, and the text goes on to relate that the Kama Sutra (Aphorisms on Love) written by Nandi were successively abridged, and that ‘Vatsyayana . . . composed this work in a small volume as an abstract of the whole of the works of the above-named authors.’55 Thus, Vatsyayana’s work can be made to stand metonymically for the whole of the section on ‘Kama’ in the Book of Books, so becoming the (severally) desired Scripture. This idea of the Book of Books, with its three main sections, might be carried across into the Indian section of the European library to structure a collection which could adequately represent Hinduism, and, from the list of works given in the Preface to The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, it was clearly the intent of The Kama Shastra Society to provide a framework for the carrying across of the ‘Kama’ section.

However, the inclusion of this section, with its emphasis on the erotic and the worldly, was not only presented as interdicted by the Obscene Publications Act, but also by the fact that it would have eroticized Müller’s construction of the Indian character, embodied in its ancient sacred texts, as ‘transcendent,’ a place of thought and of rest rather than of ‘so-called pleasure.’ A new text could not simply be grafted into the Indian section of the library, but would have to be fully assimilated, with the inevitable consequence of contamination, so that to accept The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana under the rubric The Sacred Books of the East would, it was implied, result in the entire Eastern tradition becoming contaminated with eroticism. The ‘Kama’ section of the library was, therefore, rhetorically and literally displaced to Ashbee’s library of prohibited books, where it inevitably became associated with those books which surrounded it, books classmarked as pornographic and dangerous. However, because it could, on the face of it, be characterized as a sacred book of the East, it could both be claimed as a legitimate work of Orientalist
translation, throwing light on the Indian character, and usurp the authority of that status to challenge the essence of the West, against which the East was defined. To seek to graft *Kama Sutra* into the European library, in the context of the laws which prohibited it and of Müller’s project, was to seek to give it subversive power by characterizing that project and those laws as deliberately excluding it, as repressing the truth about the relations between men and women, a truth which might be found authoritatively expressed in the East, which is in the process evoked and consolidated as the essential location of the erotic.

**The Bedroom**

In his review of *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* for *The Bibliographer,* Ashbee, writing under the anagrammatic pseudonym E. H. Shebsa, argues, like Müller, that the Indian character is timeless:

> As they lived centuries ago, so they live to-day. . . . It behoves us, in our intercourse with the natives of India, to bear this fact in mind, and to abstain from all futile endeavours to force upon them a civilization ill suited to their requirements, and in disaccord with their unchangeable ways of thought and manner of living.57

Of course, given the subject matter of the book, these ‘ways of thought and manner of living’ are presented as very different from those suggested by Müller; while Müller presents Indians as essentially contemplative, Ashbee implicitly suggests that they are sensuous and their way of life, erotic. If we can learn from this essentially different East, then what we will learn will be not how to sit in silent contemplation, but an *ars erotica,* and ‘From almost every page might be extracted something fresh, or startling to our Western notions.’ The book is presented as ‘a treatise on social life and the relations of the sexes . . . evidently written for those who have to teach others,’ so that it presumably might serve the same function in the West. However, ‘as Hindū ideas on those subjects differ very widely from our own, the work will not be found acceptable in its entirety to the general reader. Nor was it destined by its author, or by the present translator, for any but students.’ There is introduced here a sense of danger around the erotic essence of the East, something which can only be handled by the educated gentleman in his private library, and this aura of exclusivity is further emphasized as Ashbee draws attention to the fact that ‘but a limited number of my readers will be able to obtain a copy of a work printed for private circulation, and to the extent of 250 copies only.’ Ashbee then seeks to entice the potential buyer with an extract from the opening of Part 1, Chapter 4 of the translation, entitled, ‘Life of a Citizen,’ which describes in minute detail the house and daily routine of the ‘citizen,’ including the ‘inner room . . . occupied by the females’ and the
‘outer room’ with ‘a bed, soft, agreeable to the sight, covered with a clean white cloth, low in the middle part, having garlands and bunches of natural garden flowers upon it, and a canopy above it, and two pillows, one at the top, another at the bottom.’ Thus, the reader is presented with an erotic version of Müller’s happy fields and gardens, namely the locations—the women’s quarters, or harem, and the man’s bedroom—to which, he is to presume, the startling teachings which the book expounds will relate.

The Eastern bedroom as harem was an important scene in European discourse, an uncanny double of the European bourgeois home, which became a representative image of the Orient. It was, by definition, a secret/sacred space, and what was perhaps most significant about it was its exclusivity, the fact that the European male could not enter and satisfy his voyeuristic desire. The harem, therefore, contained a secret, which was both the secret of the native’s most intimate life, and a secret knowledge of sex, cultivated in this place devoted to its practice: here was to be found the essence of the Orient; it was the place where the exotic and the erotic fused. Perhaps this ‘phantasm’ of the harem was differently inflected in India—the women’s quarters of the palace, or the zenana—but the harem was always palimpsested on the same space, so that different images of the Orient closely interacted with each other there. The word ‘harem,’ in fact, frequently occurs within The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, although it could not have been present in the original. Here we have a word which is inextricably associated with the East, a word supplied by the translators posing as an untranslated word, a word to which ‘A simple allusion . . . is enough to open wide the floodgate of hallucination just as it is about to run dry.’

The secret, sacred, exotic and erotic space of the harem thus performs in European discourse a role uncannily similar to that which Foucault assigns to sex in ‘modern societies’: ‘What is peculiar to modern societies . . . is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret.’ In The History of Sexuality, Foucault argues against the ‘repressive hypothesis,’ which he says is intimately bound up with the desire for ‘nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality,’ and it is precisely this hypothesis and desire which we see informing the presentation of Kama Sutra. In the attempt to translate Kama Sutra into England, the location of reality, we find that the irruption of speech and pleasure comes from outside, from Vatsyayana as authoritative mouth-piece of India, the location of pleasure, and the harem which metonymically represents it as a sexually-charged site. What is incited here is an appropriation, and so what irrupts into the West is a book, The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana: ostensibly taken from the secret domestic space of the East, it is rhetorically grafted into the European bedroom to stand in for an absent (repressed) knowledge of sex. The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, therefore, emerges at the intersection of discourses on the Orient and on sexuality.
It is precisely because it ostensibly comes from the harem that the book is presented as supplying a secret knowledge of sex absent from Victorian England, and the harem thus becomes a potential site from which to challenge the very ‘Western’ morality which was at that time being used to justify the ‘civilizing mission’ in India.

It is, therefore, by no means coincidental that at the same time that so-called ‘Bible women’ were seeking to introduce the light of civilization into the zenanas of India through the medium of the Bible, *Kama Sutra*, as the Indian Scripture on the subject of Love, was being presented as reading material for the bourgeois European bedroom, where it might displace the Bible. The enterprise of conversion and education in the zenanas of India, necessarily conducted by women, was an important part of the Evangelical mission in colonial India, and one which became of considerable importance in the creation of new female roles in the metropolis. Underpinning this endeavour was the representation of the zenana as, according to Indira Ghose, ‘less and less . . . a site of sensual pleasures and increasingly . . . a bourgeois home. Any sense of fascination with otherness is repressed . . . Instead, the image presented of the Indian woman is that of a Victim.’ For instance, in the accounts of missionary women in India—whose labour was characterized as ‘light and truth . . . now penetrating into the dark and dreary recesses of many a zenana’—this site emerged as a place of ‘intrigues and licentiousness’ which was responsible for ‘the degraded and neglected state of the females in India.’ However, as the word ‘licentiousness’ suggests, ‘Despite the efforts to defuse the eroticism of Indian women, a sense of unease at the zenana as an uncolonized space remains.’ For a group of elderly British men to present *Kama Sutra* as a native description of this space was to usurp the privileged accounts given by British women, who were able to gain the access to the harem which was denied to these men. It was also, by presenting such a vivid and purportedly authentic picture of it, to play on and excite this sense of unease, and to invoke this space as that which haunts its other: the bourgeois home.

In the Preface to his collection of poems, *Palm Leaves*, published in 1844 as a poetical account of his trip to the Middle East, Richard Monckton Milnes admitted that ‘the present intellectual state of the female mind in the East is pitiably low, and that civilisation is considerably retarded by this circumstance.’ However, he is eager to assert that ‘We have taken our notions of Eastern domesticity much more from the ballet than from reality’ and to suggest that

as regards the physical happiness of the weaker sex, and the regard paid to their well-being, I do not hesitate to say that I can find no superiority in the morals and manners of the West, and am led to fear that the evils connected with the relations between the sexes are more productive of suffering and debasement in many, so-called,
Christian countries than in those that remain attached to the habits of the elder world.\textsuperscript{75}

This is the argument which would, almost forty years later, inform the presentation of \textit{Kama Sutra} as a new Scripture shedding light on European sexual and marital relations, as we can see in the entry on the book in Ashbee’s \textit{Catena}, where Arbuthnot writes,

\begin{quotation}
The first impression on roughly running through the writings of the old Indian sages is that Europeans and modern Society generally would be greatly benefited by some such treatises. It is difficult to get Englishmen to acknowledge that matrimonial happiness may in many cases be attained by a careful study of the passions of a wife, that is to say admitting that a wife be allowed to feel passion.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quotation}

To suggest this is to argue against, and characterize as absurd and repressive, the kind of view put forth most forcibly by William Acton in 1857, that ‘the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind.’\textsuperscript{77}

Although this might appear to be an argument supporting women’s ‘liberation’, in its context such a mediation of the text strategically contested British women’s characterizations of the harem to, at the same time, undercut their various uses of this image to carve out roles for themselves outside of the home. In effect, to present what is worth learning from this treatise as essential for ‘matrimonial happiness’ was to suggest that women could be fulfilled in that place to which they rightly belonged, the home; or, if the harem was the place where white women sought to save brown women from brown men, and in the process create new roles for themselves, it was also the place where white men, anxious about their own sexuality and role, might learn from the brown man (Vatsyayana) how to satisfy their wives. Therefore, to translate \textit{Kama Sutra} was to strategically exploit the connection, made so pervasively and anxiously at this time, between female sexual passion and the Eastern harem as the place both where the secret knowledge of sex was to be found, and where women were contained in a domestic sphere. The strategic use to which these English gentlemen put THEIR book is, therefore, dependent upon the fact that it was seen, as Vatsyayana’s book, to give an authoritative account of the Eastern domestic space and of the secrets to be learned therein.

As such, the book is ambivalently presented as providing insights into an exotic and erotic Indian scene, which might teach lessons worth learning in Victorian Britain. As we have seen, Ashbee, in his review of \textit{The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana} for the respectable journal \textit{The Bibliographer}, stresses the ‘anthropological’ value of the translation, and also alludes to its sensational content when he writes that it ‘will not be found acceptable in its entirety
to the general reader.’ However, in a flier for the second edition of the work the message is rather different: repeating a passage from the Concluding Remarks, it is claimed that

The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana is now considered the standard work on love in Sanscrit literature, and no Sanscrit library is complete without a copy.

It might be called a treatise on men and women, their mutual relationship, and connection with each other. It is a work that should be studied by all . . .

This flier also contains a specimen page taken from Part 2 Chapter III of the translation, ‘On Kissing,’ which could be presented as providing valuable information on the art of love, but might at the same time be titillating. We thus find a curious doubletalk in the juxtaposition of these two texts: *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* is both a valuable work for the insights it provides into the exotic Indian life, but only acceptable in the library of the student, and valuable as a treatise on men and women, an erotic art, a work that should be studied (and, implicitly, applied) by all. Furthermore, that the work might be erotic is suggested, but at the same time denied, so that the reading of *Kama Sutra* as the much sought-after description of the harem, which satisfies the European male’s voyeuristic desire, is ostentatiously suppressed, suggesting as it denies an equivalence between the ethnographic and the voyeuristic viewer.

This same doubletalk attends Arbuthnot’s Introduction to his book *Early Ideas: A Group of Hindoo Stories Collected and Collated by Anaryan,* published anonymously in 1881, in which he mischievously takes the opportunity to ‘give a few details of the domestic and social life of the Hindoos themselves, as described by the learned sage, Vatsyayana.’ There then follows an analysis of the as yet unpublished *Vatsyayana Kama Sutra,* described as ‘the standard work on love, and social and domestic life in that language.’ As with Ashbee’s review, Arbuthnot warns us that the text contains . . . a good deal of matter connected with the domestic and private details of married life to which it is unnecessary to allude, and which are more fitted for Sanscrit manuscript than for English print. But the remarks on the subjects of . . . [the householder’s] occupations and amusements, his conduct to the fair sex, and his marriage, are simple and good.

The transitions in this text—‘on love, and social and domestic life [of the Hindoos];’ ‘more fitted for Sanscrit manuscript than for English print. But . . . ’—figure the doubletalk: that the book describes and belongs to its context,
India, the East, and but at the same time can be appropriated as a valuable work on the universal subjects of love and marriage. Again, the erotic content is suggested in the marked refusal to allude to it.

These manifest contradictions in the presentation of the text are intimately connected with its perceived subject matter, namely the relations between men and women. Let me be permitted to supply an apparent elision in Burton and Arbuthnot’s remarks: ‘It might be called a treatise on Indian men and women, their mutual relationship, and connection with each other.’ As such, The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, presented as an authoritative, original, and originary representation of the essence of a timeless Indian culture, could putatively be read as shedding light on Indian social and domestic life, but might also be read voyeuristically as giving an eye-witness account of life within the inner sanctum of the East, the harem, that ‘universe of generalized perversion and of the absolute limitlessness of pleasure.’82 The elision is able to occur in Burton and Arbuthnot’s free translation of ‘Kama Sutra’ because of the privileged position that the East occupies as the location of the erotic: in challenging the repressiveness of Victorian England, a key text in an alternative, non-repressive culture is invoked as giving a more frank and accurate account of ‘men and women’, as universal and natural ‘objects without history;’ as Burton and Arbuthnot go on to say, the ‘early ideas’ expressed here, ‘seem to prove that the human nature of today is much the same as the human nature of the long ago.’83 Therefore, an attempt is made to appropriate the text through translation and accommodate it within the contemporary, and increasingly polarized, debates about the appropriate relationships between men and women in Victorian Britain.

Rod Edmond has pointed out that as the European bourgeois home became increasingly idealized over the course of the nineteenth century, this movement was accompanied by a growing anxiety about the disjunction between this image and reality, a shift exemplified in the change from the kind of novel where, ‘As his hero and heroine pass the matrimonial barrier, the novelist generally drops the curtain, as if the drama were over then,’84 to later nineteenth-century novels in which the wedlock narrative featured prominently. Burton rips the curtain asunder at the very threshold of this matrimonial barrier, the wedding night, describing how, ‘For a delicate girl to find a man introducing himself into her bedroom and her bed, the shock must be severe and the contact of hirsute breast and hairy limbs with a satiny skin is a strangeness which must often breed loathing and disgust’ (Suppl. Nights 5.223–24), and contrasting this with the East, where sexual ‘lore has been carefully cultivated by the “young person” with the able assistance of the ancient dames of the household, of her juvenile companions and co-evals and especially of the slave-girls’ (Suppl. Nights 5.223). The one room of the house with which those household books which proliferated through the nineteenth century never dealt was the bedroom, and Kama Sutra was rhetorically intended to fill this gap.
In seeking to extract this lesson worth learning from *Kama Sutra*, there may be an attempt, similar to Bhabha’s characterization of the appropriation of the Bible by those Indians under a tree outside Delhi, to ‘articulat[e] it syntagmatically with a range of differential knowledges and positionalities that both estrange its “identity” and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power.’ However, by at the same time insisting on this ‘identity’, on the text being representative of, and contiguous with, the essential East, on the other side of a border, the bourgeois home envisaged as reformed through such an ‘articulation’ can only appear as an inferior, corrupt copy of the Original, the harem, which thus emerges on the horizon of the home as a site of authenticity, where this identity, the bourgeois home, would be lost were it not for the border. Therefore, to make the rhetorical gesture of placing *Kama Sutra* in the British bedroom was to **graft** the harem, the location of female pleasure, into the home, and thereby to irrupt the fantasy of the women’s quarters with its implicit polygamy and lesbianism into the reality of the bourgeois bedroom, to juxtapose the chaste and ignorant white woman and her sexually experienced, lascivious brown counterpart; it was to superimpose the idealized image of the harem on that which simultaneously comes into being as its polar opposite, the idealized bourgeois home, and in the process it was to invoke the phantasm of the (location of the) absolute limitlessness of pleasure within the limited domain of the monogamous marriage. If, through this appropriation as grafting, there are produced ‘new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power,’ the nature of these is entirely bound up with the construction of opposed identities—West and East, home and harem, ruler and ruled, viewer and viewed, white and brown—as an appurtenance to the white man’s authority in the colonial space.

Of course, *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* describes a great variety of sexual relationships besides those between a husband and wife within a monogamous marriage, and it was certainly these alternative relationships which interested Burton when he wrote excitedly to Monckton Milnes of Vatsyayana’s work that ‘One of his chapters treats of courtesans, another of managing one’s own wife and a 3rd of managing other men’s wives. It is the standard book.’ It is also interesting that the three books alongside which Arbuthnot places *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* were all ones which advocated variety in sexual relationships. *Kalogynomia* is a rather eccentric work which does, indeed, bear an uncanny resemblance to *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* if one superimposes the two texts on the subjects which Arbuthnot describes *Kalogynomia* as treating of: ‘of Beauty, of Love, of Sexual Intercourse, of the Laws regulating that Intercourse, of Monogamy and Polygamy, of Prostitution, of Infidelity.’ The way in which these subjects are addressed is really rather entirely different than ‘somewhat similar,’ but what is significant is the emphasis in the book on variety, of types of women, of types of marriage and marital relations, and so on, and the suggestion that ‘variety is essential to the high enjoyment
of every sensual pleasure.’89 Every Woman’s Book has been described as ‘the founding statement in an alternative tradition of birth-control ideology, the libertarian tradition as opposed to the Malthusian,’90 a tradition in which The Elements of Social Science, published anonymously by George Drysdale, was firmly embedded, ‘being an elaborately buttressed argument on behalf of promiscuous heterosexual liaisons.’91 By association—of The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana with these books and of ‘The’ Kama Sutra with its Indian/Eastern context—India becomes the place where sexual liberation and variety might be achieved, and we can see in Ashbee’s assertion of the need ‘to abstain from all futile endeavours to force upon them [the Indians] a civilization ill suited to their requirements’ a desire to retain India as it is (perceived to be), as a physical location which both offers new sexual experiences and becomes a source of sexual fantasies. Therefore, what is irrupted here in translating ‘The’ Kama Sutra might be outside history, but it is also to be found there, in India and the Orient more widely, and most especially in that place which is most anxiously marked as remaining uncolonized and uncivilized: the harem.92

We find, then, that the East is grafted onto the West as the location of an erotic culture. When Foucault draws a distinction between two great procedures for producing the truth of sex, distinguishing between ‘the societies—and they are numerous: China, Japan, India, Rome, the Arabo-Moslem societies—which endowed themselves with an *ars erotica*’ and ‘our civilization [which] possesses no *ars erotica* . . . [but] is undoubtedly the only civilization to practice a *scientia sexualis*,93 what he fails to consider is that this *ars erotica* was already part of ‘our civilization,’ precisely as that which it did not possess, but which was only to be found elsewhere, on the other side of a border. In the desire to establish Vatsyayana as an authority on the subject of love, and his Kama Sutra as the authoritative text, there is an avowed attempt to appropriate ‘The’ Kama Sutra. However, this appropriation is a strategic failure, and the book is always intended, at the same time, to be left in place, un-appropriated, and standing in for an essentially other culture, a place against which to define the repressive West, and at the same time an inexhaustible source of the erotic. It was not, in fact, me who supplied the elision in Burton’s remarks—‘Indian men and women’—but the title of the book itself, ‘The’ Kama Sutra, which, by remaining untranslated, underlines the presentation of the contents of the book as a description of the context in which it is located: India, the East. If we strip away all the exotic layers of the text, what we are left with is a *lingam* thrusting into a *yoni*; in other words, the erotic is, after all, still exotic. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar have pointed out that Vatsyayana ‘only rarely uses *lingam* to refer to the male sexual organ and never refers to the female sexual organ as *yoni*.’94 Like ‘harem,’ however, these familiar terms appear in the translation as though untranslated, so that the sexual parts of the copulating bodies described remain exotic, other, and, consequently, those universalized textual objects, ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ have grafted onto them
the culturally- and racially-specific sexual parts of Indian/Eastern bodies. To rhetorically transpose these othered bodies into the bourgeois bedroom does not characterize a return of the repressed, but rather a construction of the repressed as something—secret and sacred, exotic and erotic—which is lost but still to be found elsewhere, and which must, for severally desired reasons, be nominally reintegrated by the act of grafting.
3 En-crypt-ing

Burton/Abdullah

‘Why can’t we be friends now?’ said the other, holding him affectionately. ‘It’s what I want. It’s what you want.’

But the horses didn’t want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn’t want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn’t want it, they said in their hundred voices, ‘No, not yet,’ and the sky said, ‘No, not there.’

Preface

In the first chapter of this book, I analysed some of Burton’s writings about Scinde, and I begin here by returning to this period of Burton’s career, considering in more detail a book I only touched on in that chapter, namely Falconry in the Valley of the Indus, which was published in 1852, a year after the publication of Scinde; or, The Unhappy Valley and Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus. This book is known principally for its Postscript, in which Burton introduces us for the first time to his alter ego, Abdullah, an identity which he assumed when travelling in disguise in Scinde, and again when he travelled the Hajj several years later, an account of which journey is provided in Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah (1855–56). This figure occurs once more in The Kasidah of Hâjî Abdû El-Yezdi, which Burton published in 1880 as a Sufi st poem written by ‘Hâjî Abdû,’ a name which clearly recalls ‘Abdullah,’ and translated by ‘F. B.’ It is also interesting to note that, outside of these works, this name haunts Burton’s text, as he compulsively signed letters to his friends with the signature of Abdullah, written in Arabic; Burton also scrawled this signature on the Kubbat al-Sanaya, an inscription praising the Companions of the Prophet, and reproduced this piece of graffiti in Pilgrimage (see Figure 3.1).
In this chapter, I trace a genealogy of Abdullah and his relationship to Richard Francis Burton through *Falconry*, *Pilgrimage*, and *Kasidah*. In thus foregrounding Abdullah in my readings of these books, I seek to examine in what ways Burton’s representations of himself as traveller and translator intersected with his working through of this double identity. In so doing, I consider how my understanding of the ‘graft’ as a strategy of appropriation in the imperial context might also inform a reading of Burton’s self-representation; in particular, I see the relationship between Burton and Abdullah as a form of ‘en-crypt-ion’ by drawing on Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s metapsychological concept of the intrapsychic crypt, and in particular its mediation in Jacques Derrida’s Foreword to their *The Wolf-Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, where he describes this crypt as like ‘a graft in the heart of an organ’.

**The Ins and Outs of *Falconry***

In the Preface to *Falconry*, Burton writes that ‘To obviate, if possible, the dryness of a regular treatise, I have attempted a narrative form, describing a visit paid some years ago to one Meer Ibrahim Khan, a scion of the house of Talpur, lately reigning in Scinde, and a falconer of distinguished fame’ (*Falconry* xi). The
first chapter of the book—one of the narrative sections which are interspersed with the treatise on falconry—begins, ‘WE,—that is to say, my friend Ibrahim Khan Talpoo, with Kakoo Mall his secretary, and I, supported by Hari Chand’ (Falconry 1), and Burton goes on to describe the setting of this group:

Behind us lay my modest encampment, a tent or two, half a dozen canvas sheds, tenanted by government Khalassis; horses picketed in their night clothes; camels at squat . . . and motley little groups of Scindian beaters, Hindoo chainmen and rodmen, Affghan ‘horse-keepers,’ and Brahui camel-men, scattered about in all directions. . . . Directly in front of us, so placed that they could enjoy a full view of our every movement, sat a semi-circle of the Ameer’s retainers, smoking, conversing, and listening to the words of wisdom that fell from our lips, as gravely as a British jury empanelled on a matter of life and death. [Falconry 1–2]

Although Burton might want to be here to enjoy a day of falconry with his friend, he cannot help but notice that he is actually in this place as a functionary of the East India Company, signified both by that sign of his imperial mastery, the not-so-modest encampment at his back, and also by the very public manner in which he is received by the Ameer: in this setting, right at the beginning of the narrative, the pair, ‘WE . . . my friend Ibrahim Khan Talpoo . . . and I,’ are already pulled apart by their respective moonshees, Kakoo Mall, and Hari Chand, and, as our eye is directed further outwards, by the presence of Burton’s camp and the Ameer’s retainers.

Burton then tells us that ‘We were jogging very prettily . . . along the beaten track of Oriental conversation, when our course was arrested by an unforeseen incident . . . a din of corvine voices . . . a clashing of wings above and around us’ (Falconry 5). In response to this intruding flock of crows, the Ameer whispers, ‘Send in for Khairu, the Laghar’ (Falconry 6), meaning the hawk, and at this point Burton invokes the famous Greek storyteller, Aesop, whom he claims, ‘had no experience in the character of the Indian “Kak,” otherwise he would not have made the Fox outwit the Crow’ (Falconry 7). Thus, Burton self-consciously narrates this story as a fable, in which he reads the Indian Crow as a figure of cunning. You may remember that he spoke, in Scinde, of the Macnaghtens and the Burnses being outwitted by the natives of India; this representation of the Indian, and particularly the Hindu, as duplicitous and deceitful, was such a common trope in his writing that this Crow, whom he goes on to name ‘Corvus,’ will certainly remind us of it.

When the hawk is set loose upon him, Corvus ‘falls, cunningly as might be expected.’ However, Khairu is not deceived, but ‘with a soldier’s glance, perceives the critical moment’ (Falconry 10) and attacks. Then,

From the neighbouring mimosas, roused by the cries of their wounded comrade, pours forth a ‘rabble rout’ of crows, with noise and turmoil,
wheeling over the hawk’s head, and occasionally pouncing upon her, _unguibus et rostris_, with all the ferocity of hungry peregrines. We tremble for Khairu. [*Falconry* 11]

By the time the onlookers arrive, Corvus is dead, and ‘poor Khairu’ (*Falconry* 11) has lost her sight; horribly wounded, she is herself approaching death. There might well be a fable here, appropriate for this moment in time and space, with Khairu representing for Burton the imperial hawk of the nascent British Empire, and Corvus an apt symbol of the cunning, squawking native, easily overcome with a soldier’s acumen, although there is always a ‘rabble rout’ hidden in the trees and bushes, ready at any moment to swoop; perhaps he is thinking uncomfortably of those native attendants in the camp at his back.

However, Burton reports another reading of this scene:

’I never yet heard of good coming from these accursed Kang,’ said the Ameer as we slowly retraced our way towards the encampment; ‘one of them I am sure killed my poor brother at Meeanee. All the night a huge black crow sat upon the apple of his tent-pole, predicting the direst disasters to him. We drove away the beast of ill-omen half a dozen times, still he would return.’ [*Falconry* 11–12]

It was at the battle of Meeanee that Sir Charles Napier led his troops to victory against the army of the Ameers of Scinde, thereby annexing their territory as a province of the East India Company’s Empire, and so the crow who killed the Ameer’s poor brother is for the Ameer British, or in the service of the British. If, for Burton, the hawk represents the British presence, and the crow the natives of India, then the reverse is true for the Ameer and, given the track he is following, it is not surprising that he should respond angrily when his companion, Kakoo Mall, interjects, ‘Yet . . . the crow of the wild, the _Ghurab el bain_, is frequently commended by the poets as a Mujarrad, and even they make him their messenger when sending a mental missive to those they love’ (*Falconry* 12). The Ameer replies, ‘They are asses, and sons of asses! and thou, O Kakoo! art the crow of all the Kafirs! . . . have not these, thy kinsfolk, killed Khairu, the Laghar?’ (*Falconry* 12). The Arabic word ‘Kafir’ means unbeliever, and it may be that the Ameer also is thinking uncomfortably of those native attendants in Burton’s encampment, Kakoo’s kinsfolk, with whose help the British have overthrown his brother, as both brother and symbol of authority. The mutilated body of the hawk thus signifies very differently for Burton and for Meer Ibrahim Khan Talpoor, and the latter begins to cut a very isolated figure in this little group, framed by those larger ones, as he conjures the memory of the battlefield of Meeanee.

Another dawn, and Burton is roused from his tent to set out hawking with his friend once more:
‘Wallah, you have shown cunning,’ quoth the Ameer, looking at the tall cylindrical cap I was wearing, instead of the usual turban: ‘nothing a hawk hates so much as a “mullah’s” head-gear, except, perhaps—except—’

‘What?’ I inquired, guessing the reason of the hesitation.

‘Except the great things like ladles which you Sahibs wear on your heads. The other day I rode out hawking with an officer . . . He came all in white, face and everything, just like a corpse . . . As long as the bird was hooded all went well; but when she gained her sight, she could no more support what she saw, than I the looks of the Div Sapid [in footnote: The white fiend, a celebrated goblin in Firdausi’s Epic, the Shah Nameh] . . . But you, Sahib,’ concluded the Ameer, ‘hold your hawk just like a Beloch; and you look a very Sayyid. You must be a Moslem! Come, Wallah! confess you have not been—.’ [Falconry 22–4]

The elided word here is certainly ‘circumcised,’ and the subject of circumcision would fascinate Burton throughout his life. It is tempting to read this fascination in Freudian terms, as signifying castration, but it should be remembered that this signification is, in Burton’s text, bound up with a more specific and personal one, namely the rite of passage suggested here, across a border thereby marked on the body, from Christian to Moslem, from Sahib to Sayyid, from European dress to native, from English to Scindee, from white body to the place where the white body is a corpse, from one camp to the other. In relation to these opposed terms, Burton’s native dress and proficiency in falconry, coupled with the encampment at his back, make of him a seemingly ambivalent figure in this scene, difficult to place, which is indicated by Ibrahim Khan’s fluctuating address: ‘Sahib’ alternating with ‘Wallah.’

Burton’s identification with and attraction toward the other side of the border are figured most clearly in this narrative portion of the main text in his emphatic opening declaration of friendship with Ibrahim Khan: ‘WE . . . my friend Ibrahim Khan Talpoor . . . and I.’ In the Preface, where this narrative is said merely to obviate, this identification is displaced from the spatial to the temporal dimension, and from a friendship with the other side on the imperial margin to other affiliations in the European centre, where Burton writes. The book begins:

The Knight no longer rides out with hawk on fist, and falconers, and cages, and greyhounds behind, to chase the swift curlew, or to strike down the soaring heron. In these piping days of peace and civilization

‘The pointer ranges, and the said Knight beats

In russet jacket,’

his broad acres . . . And the knight’s lady, instead of mounting her fiery jennet, with merlin clasping her embroidered glove, thinks a drive
round Hyde Park, or a canter down Rotten Row, quite sufficient exercise in these times for her highly nervous and thoroughly civilized constitution. [*Falconry* vii]

By nostalgically invoking mediaeval European figures in contemporary, civilized England, Burton locates the hawk and falconers in Europe’s past, and not in present day Scinde. Furthermore, the Continent is presented as another of London’s peripheries, Burton dedicating the book “To The Royal Patron of the Noble Art, in this our Modern Day, His Most Gracious Majesty William III, King of the Netherlands,” and from ‘His Majesty’s Most Obedient Humble Servant, The Author.’ Significantly, the Continent is also the place where Burton grew up, and Burton tells us that ‘My first step in the noble art was taken when a boy in France’ (*Falconry* ix). In this way he places himself, as a child, in a periphery analogous to that in which he now finds himself in Scinde, when he goes hawking with his friend, Ibrahim Khan. Therefore, the place of Burton’s own childhood serves, along with the mediaeval past, as a locus of affiliation to displace, and at the same time preserve, his friendship with the other side here, on the imperial margin.

So in this Preface, Burton claims that his seeming movement across the border has only been such as to allow him to enjoy falconry, to play the role of a Knight and to act as though he were a child once more. His attack on ‘this our Modern Day’ is meant to appear audacious, but the position Burton chooses to speak from, the network of marginal affiliations he rhetorically establishes, is one which needs must disavow as it occludes that other position, of friendship with Ibrahim Khan. By presenting himself as self-confidently moving towards the Ameer from an assured position carved out for himself in the metropolitan centre of London, Burton thus overwrites the picture of himself hinted at in the main text, as a vulnerable figure caught somewhere in-between two camps. Consequently, his affiliation with that other place, his friendship with the Ameer, is rendered entirely superficial and de-politicized, for Burton has only moved forward to satisfy desires which pre-existed his meeting with the Ameer: ‘Judge, therefore, gentle reader, how great was my joy when I found myself in a country where the noble sport flourishes in all its pristine glory’ (*Falconry* x).

In the Postscript to *Falconry*, Burton similarly performs an act of occlusion, but does so from a different position. This piece of the book is presented as a response to criticism in the London press of his earlier published *Scinde* and *Sindh*, and in it Burton seeks to establish his credentials as entitled authoritatively to represent the place and people about which and whom he writes. In this way he finds ‘a kind of excuse for venturing, unasked, upon a scrap of autobiography’ (*Falconry* 88), and in choosing to call *this* piece of writing autobiographical, that other fragment which we have been reading, in the main text, is covered over, covered up. Burton begins by establishing the difficulties to be overcome if ‘the Anglo-Indian subaltern’ wishes to
‘study’ the natives (Falconry 91). Before inserting himself in this scene, as the subaltern, he traces his biography to this point, stressing in particular his Continental upbringing and consequent dissatisfaction and rebelliousness at Oxford, which led him to fly to India, the ‘land of the sun’ (Falconry 94) in search of war. Thus, he establishes himself as a rebel, a malcontent, in search of adventure in Empire. Arriving in India, though, he finds it very different from what he had expected: the war is over and the place parochial and disease-ridden. Here,

two roads lead to preferment. The direct highway is ‘service;’—getting a flesh wound, cutting down a brace of natives, and doing something eccentric, so that your name may creep into a despatch. The other path, study of the languages, is a rugged and tortuous one, still you have only to plod steadily along its length, and, sooner or later, you must come to a ‘staff appointment.’ [Falconry 95]

Burton, of course, ventures on the laborious road, in which he claims to have achieved outstanding success, and only after all his hard work does he feel qualified to begin ‘the systematic study of the Scindian people, their manners and their tongue’ (Falconry 99).

In pursuing this project, we are told:

The first difficulty was to pass for an Oriental, and this was as necessary as it was difficult. The European official in India seldom, if ever sees anything in its real light, so dense is the veil which the fearfulness, the duplicity, the prejudice and the superstitions of the natives hang before his eyes. [Falconry 99]

Through the familiar trope of the veil, Burton establishes a clear border between the two camps in India, and in the process establishes himself as clearly on one side, as the European official who is prevented from openly passing to the other side not by his own inadequacies, but by the duplicity of the natives. His passage across is thereby presented as a Herculean effort in the service of Empire, described in more detail as follows:

After trying several characters, the easiest to be assumed was, I found, that of a half Arab, half Iranian . . . With hair falling upon his shoulders, a long beard, face and hands, arms and feet, stained with a thin coat of henna, Mirza Abdullah of Bushire—your humble servant, gentle reader, set out on many and many a trip. He was a Bazzaz, a vender of fine linen, calicoes and muslins;—such chapmen are sometimes admitted to display their wares even in the sacred harem. . . . Now and then he rented a shop and furnished it with clammy dates, viscid molasses, tobacco, ginger, rancid oil and strong-smelling sweetmeats; and wonderful tales
En-crypt-ing 63

Fame told about these establishments . . . Or he played chess with some native friend, or he consorted with the hemp-drinkers and opium-eaters. . . . What scenes he saw! What adventures he went through! But who would believe, even if he ventured to detail them? [Falconry 99–103]

Burton now presents himself, with self-conscious irony, as a character in a play, ‘Mirza Abdullah of Bushire,’ and this character is tied, by an array of syntagmatic supports, to that place to which he belongs, the East, the representation of which is drawn rather more from the ballet than from reality. Certainly Burton is snubbing his nose at his ‘gentle reader’ when he alludes to his entry into the harem, his indulgence in hemp and opium, his immersion in the other scene, but there is no escaping the fact that he is presenting himself as acting a part in the service, and for the gratification and scandalizing, of this very (English) reader. Despite the apparent irony, the fact is that nothing emerges behind the scenery. The possibility of an ostentatious transgression of English social norms is, therefore, secondary to the primary movement here, namely the distancing of Burton, the Author addressing his Reader, from the part he plays, Abdullah, and his movement forward is, once again, declared to be no movement at all. The only difference between the post-writing and the pre- is that the stated desire has changed from a love of falconry to an imperial mission ironically disguised as a personal adventure; as Edward Said says, ‘In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.’

Said would later write, in his analysis of Burton’s Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah, that

Burton thought of himself both as a rebel against authority (hence his identification with the East as a place of freedom from Victorian moral authority) and as a potential agent of authority in the East. It is the manner of that coexistence, between two antagonistic roles for himself, that is of interest.

The manner of this coexistence is, indeed, interesting. However, both roles do, as Said intimates, depend upon Burton’s positional superiority, his assumption of the upper hand as he mimes a movement forward, secure in his several stated desires, and I think it is also necessary to consider that which these self-proclaimed roles occlude, write over, namely the always already lost moment of shifting position, of losing the upper hand, of a genuine movement forward, figured in the main text of Falconry as a friendship, lost from the beginning. To move on in my consideration of this deferred moment, and to think about its significance to the coexistence of Burton’s roles, I now turn to Abraham and Torok’s concept of the ‘crypt,’ which is
felicitously anticipated by Said when he remarks that ‘Orientalism . . . is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate [my emphasis], what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world.’

Abraham and Torok draw a clear distinction between the Freudian terms ‘introjection’ and ‘incorporation.’ The former is seen as the process of successfully mourning a lost object, and ‘is not at all a matter of “introjecting” the object . . . but of introjecting the sum total of the drives, and their vicissitudes as occasioned and mediated by the object.’ This process results in the growth of the Self, and once completed the dead body of the loved object can be laid to rest. If the metaphor of cannibalism is an apt one here, with the dead object being digested and reintegrated into the body of the living subject, incorporation is an incomplete cannibalism, in which ‘we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing,’ so that the lost object takes its place as ‘a kind of “false unconscious,” an “artificial” unconscious lodged like a prosthesis, a graft in the heart of an organ, within the divided self.’ This ‘graft’ is figured as a ‘crypt,’ in which the corpse of the lost object, preserved intact, embalmed, neither living nor dead, is retained, unacknowledged, underground, within the psyche of the subject. Derrida dwells upon this topography, writing that

The crypt is . . . not a natural place [lieu], but the striking history of an artifice, an architecture, an artifact: of a place comprehended within another but rigorously separate from it, isolated from general space by partitions, an enclosure, an enclave. So as to purloin the thing from the rest. . . . The inner forum is (a) safe, an outcast outside inside the inside.

If introjection can be seen as a process, ‘gradual, slow, laborious, mediated, effective,’ incorporation is, by contrast, a fantasy, a ‘magical “cure” . . . [which] exempts the subject from the painful process of reorganization;’ it is ‘fantasmatic, unmediated, instantaneous, sometimes hallucinatory,’ and its result is ‘the preservation of the status quo.’

In the Preface to *Falconry*, Burton remarks: ‘there are many gentlemen in England who would willingly see the good old sport conjured up from its black letter sepulture’ (*Falconry* viii); we might say that Burton’s crypt, although the letters written on it are blacked out, nonetheless has written upon it, marking its spot, the words, ‘the good old sport,’ *Falconry*. I have already traced the significance of falconry up to a certain point in the narrative, looking at the way in which the battle between the hawk and the crows figured, in the form of a fable, the relationship between the British and natives in India, and figured, too, Burton’s and the Ameer’s different investments in the hawk, indicating their different identifications in the setting of this already lost friendship. We left the pair considering Burton’s dress, and whether or not he was circumcised. Although this sign represents, as I have
En-crypt-ing

suggested, other things besides castration, these are nonetheless bound up with its involvement in the castration and counter-castration Order of Imperial Rule, and this elided sign might therefore be seen as a further expression of Burton’s positional superiority (uncircumcised as uncastrated) which he both does and does not wish to give up (for the sake of friendship).

Moving on, then, in Burton’s narrative of this second day’s hawking: Burton is allowed the privilege of being the first to hawk a partridge, and he does so successfully. As he describes his movement towards the hawk and its prey, he writes,

Stooping low and ejaculating the ‘Ao Bacheh!’ as though I loved her, I approached, knelt down to her, put forth my left hand and turning the dying bird upon its back, drew my knife across its throat with the usual religious formula [in footnote: Good Moslems never take the life of an animal without acknowledging that they do it in the name of Allah].

Thus, Burton speaks to the hawk not in English but in Arabic, and he makes sure to perform his duties correctly, according to Islamic custom, even going so far as to declare himself, in the footnote, a good Moslem; this is very far from the picture of himself as a mediaeval knight. All continues to go well, and the Ameer disturbs a pair of pigeons and asks for a hawk to be brought. However, this hawk is discovered to have been ill-prepared that morning by the Ameer’s nephew when it fails to bring down the quarry, and the Ameer petulantly shoots and kills it; Burton tells us, ‘After the murderous act . . . nothing seemed to prosper’ (Falconry 33).

Following this incident, there is a great deal of cursing and squabbling, and Hari Chand whispers in Burton’s ear insults about the violent natures of these ‘Belochies.’ Burton’s reaction will be critical, as being his reaction also to the murder of the hawk, which might well, owing to their shared libidinal investment in that other hawk, whose death this one repeats, embody the ‘friendship’ of the two men (shared symbol of authority? shared phallus?) even as their different investments in it pull them apart:

I determined to act as a ‘friend of order,’ and, thanks to study of the native character, my benevolent efforts were crowned with success. Whilst the Ameer, too sullen to interfere, stood looking on apparently in hope of a row, I walked up, compelling Hari Chand to follow me, and, selecting the weaker party, began to ‘tell them of their faults’ as the members of high-spirited English families love to do, that is to say, to overwhelm them with pointed and personal abuse. . . . And when . . . I concluded my harangue with the emission of a few most inappropriate, unintelligible, and villainous sounding Arabic words, a spell seemed to have fallen upon the mob; where anger was, blankness appeared; where spite reigned, puzzle ascended the
throne, and men began to chew the cud of indigestible thought . . . A ‘let us move on, base-borns! is this the way the Beloch hunts?’ finally restored the status quo of things. [Falconry 33–5]

Burton performs here for the sake of the onlooker, the Ameer, and it is an arrogant performance, in which he treats the natives in the manner of servants in an English home, demonstrates in no uncertain terms his mediocre grasp of Arabic, and positions himself as an English tourist hoping to enjoy the exotic spectacle of native hunting. The ultimate irony is that Burton attributes the success of this performance to his ‘study of the native character’ that which brings him so much fame in England. By thus assuming the upper hand in the Ameer’s home, Burton declares this to be the status quo, the reality of the various positions, and at this point Richard Francis Burton, at this moment of crisis, openly disavows his friendship with Ibrahim Khan, usurping his place and recasting him as part of the ‘mob’, or the herd.

It might appear surprising that Burton should have penned such a revealing self-portrait, in this rather literary representation of his final meeting with the Ameer, and certainly understandable that he should have sought to divert our attention from this mocking of his own famous name with those displacements pre-and post-. The explanation for his feeling the need to write it at all is to be found in the Preface, where he tells us that ‘In a previous work on the Unhappy Valley, this gentlemen [Meer Ibrahim Khan Talpoor] was made the subject of a chapter or two; he is now introduced to the courteous reader in a new and perhaps a more favourable character’ (Falconry xi). In that other work, Scinde; or, The Unhappy Valley, in which Burton is accompanied by Bull, Ibrahim Khan is presented in extremely derogatory terms: Burton speaks to his companion of this man’s facility for ‘fleecing . . . the poor’ (Scinde II.126), and of his ‘flea-ridden Scindian palazzo’ (Scinde II.129), with its ‘Oriental imitation of an English saloon . . . As usual, there is an intense grotesqueness in the general appearance’ (Scinde II.143); he repeats at great length his moonshee, Hari Chand’s, abuse of Ibrahim Khan, undoubtedly exaggerated to show up the native Hindus; and he mocks his inability to write (Scinde II.144) and his corpulent body (Scinde II.145–6). There is much motivation here for a feeling of having betrayed a friendship on Burton’s part by thus representing his friend in print, and it was, I suggest, this feeling which prompted his alternative narrative in Falconry—a narrative which dwells upon the nature of the relationship between Burton and Ibrahim Khan, and which Burton seeks to hide even as he draws attention to it.

In this way, the narrative assumes a place similar to that of the crypt of which Derrida writes, ‘What is a crypt? No crypt presents itself. The grounds [lieux] are so disposed as to disguise and to hide: something, always a body in some way.’ Yet in Burton’s narrative, the crypt does present itself, hidden and yet drawn attention to, as a ‘black letter sepulture.’ The narrative is
not only, itself, the writing on a crypt, but describes, when we bring Derrida alongside, the construction of a crypt. Derrida writes:

The violence of the mute forces that would thus be setting up the crypt does not end with the trauma of a single unbearable and condemned seduction scene—condemned to remain mute, but also condemned as a building is condemned, by official order of the court. A forum is always defined, from the start . . . as a politico-judicial instance, something more than a dueling ground, but like a dueling ground requiring a third, a witness: a tribunal preparing a case, summoning before it for indictments, statements of counsel, and sentencing, a multiplicity of persons called up by *sub poena*.16

As Burton and the Ameer step forward to duel, each with his second, Hari Chand and Kakoo Mall, a duel represented in displaced form in the battle of Khairu and Corvus, there are indeed witnesses, a third. We might think here of those at Burton’s back, and especially his ‘gentle reader,’ as the judges of this scene (it is, after all, we to whom he addresses his statement), but in the scene which Burton presents it is explicitly the Ameer’s retainers, listening attentively, who are likened to ‘a British jury empanelled on a matter of life and death.’ By presenting us with this image of the third—which decides between life and death, which will inevitably condemn this seduction of Richard Francis Burton by Ibrahim Khan and vice versa, this ‘friendship,’ to death—Burton displaces his own sentence into the mouths of the Ameer’s retainers, just as the Ameer was represented as killing the possibility of their friendship when he killed the hawk, and just as it is the Indian ground which rejects the white man’s foreign body, or only accepts it as a corpse.

Derrida maintains that

Incorporation is of the order of a fantasy . . . A fantasy *does not coerce*, it does not impose, as Reality does . . . from within or from without, any topographical transformation. In contrast with Reality, the fantasy tends to maintain the order of the *topoi*. All the clever tricks it can deploy obey a conservative, ‘narcissistic’ finality. It is precisely this kind of resistance, refusal, disavowal, or denial that designates Reality as such: Reality is that which would require a change of place, a modification of the topography.17

By encrypting his libidinal ties to Ibrahim Khan, his friendship, Burton ostentatiously denies a shift in the topography, their relative positions, Burton with the upper hand. At the same time he denies, through his resistance to, refusal, and disavowal of any such shift, that any shift has occurred in the here (in this little narrative) designated Imperial Reality as an Imperial topography. The very moment of the encryption, the denial, is marked in
Burton's narrative: it is the moment when he reveals himself to the Ameer as emphatically British, as Richard Francis Burton, at our service, the moment when he claims, using the same phrase as Abraham and Torok, that he has ‘finally restored the status quo of things.’ At this moment, Burton denies that there ever took place that moment of uncertainty, that moment when he was somewhere in-between, coded in this narrative as the moment when the Ameer talks of Burton’s dress and cheekily queries whether or not he has been circumcised. However, that Burton has so restored the status quo is misleading, hides the fact that ‘The topography is fragmented by the secret. The cryptic enclave . . . forms, inside the self, inside the general space of the self, a kind of pocket of resistance, the hard cyst of an “artificial unconscious.”’

From this moment on, from the moment of this magical cure, Burton’s Self is divided; as he tells us himself, in Lake Regions, where he writes that during fever fits suffered in Africa, ‘and often for hours afterward, [I had] a queer conviction of divided identity, never ceasing to be two persons that generally thwarted and opposed each other’ (Lake Regions 74).

Even before this moment in the text, though, Burton has begun to mark the crypt, not only to mislead as to its true contents (which are endlessly deferred), but to use it, to use his internal division, in the service of Empire, in the service of the very topography which, in forming the crypt, he seeks to maintain. In this way, the crypt becomes that which, waiting there in Burton’s narrative for Burton and his friend, it always already was: a part of Reality, of the Imperial topography, fragmented by a disavowed, encrypted seduction, marked as a love that dare not speak its name. By calling the Ameer his friend, Burton is already overwriting any friendship, asserting his knowledge of the natives and, thus, his right to write of them from a position of authority; this is confirmed from the Ameer’s very mouth when he marvels at Burton’s proficiency, in passing muster as native, as well as in falconry. However, at the same time, we can already clearly discern another manifestation of the cryptic topography, namely the emergence of another voice, another site of enunciation, relegated to the footnote of Burton’s text, when Burton writes of his own actions as those of a ‘good Moslem.’ It is in the Postscript, or ‘Postcrypt,’ the further writings upon the crypt, that this deceitful cryptic topography is most clearly laid out.

Here, in the Postscript, Burton marks all his experiences among the natives as those of his alter ego, ‘Mirza Abdullah of Bushire’; Burton does not have friends, but Abdullah has ‘native friends.’ What we find here is a continuation, to its logical conclusion, of the problem of Burton’s dress introduced in the encounter with the Ameer: through adopting the persona and name of Abdullah, Burton, magically, does not have to choose between one side and another, one religion and another, one dress and another, one skin colour and another, but can now authentically appear on both sides of the border at once, as Burton and as Abdullah. In this way, as Abdullah, Burton can claim not to have renounced his friendship with Ibrahim Khan,
for it continues, there on the other side of the border, where Abdullah lives on—not only this friendship, though, for with his friend, and under the name ‘Abdullah,’ is encrypted the whole of that other side of the border, here named, in its broadest sense, ‘the Orient.’ However, such a claim is marked precisely by its disavowal: the assumption of the native dress and name in the service of Empire indicate that ‘Abdullah’ is nothing more than a *nom de guerre*, and that Burton has gone nowhere. By claiming to have only played a-part, in a theatrical space, Burton buries alive the body of his friendship, the trace of any alteration in his topography effected by any movement forward. However, ‘the cryptic safe can only maintain in a state of repetition the mortal conflict it is impotent to resolve,’19 and that which Burton grafts into himself will continue, repeatedly, to haunt, and to haunt precisely in the guise of the name which he, here and hereby in the service of Empire, gives it: *Abdullah*.

**Two Pilgrimages for the Price of One**

Orientalism . . . reduced the personalities of even its most redoubtable individualists like Burton to the role of imperial scribe.20

In the next appearance of Abdullah in print, in *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah* (1855–56), Burton tells us that while in London preparing to leave for Southampton, from where he will depart for Alexandria, his ‘Eastern dress was called into requisition before leaving town, and all my “impedimenta” were taught to look exceedingly Oriental. Early the next day a “Persian Prince” . . . embarked on board the Peninsular and Oriental Company’s magnificent screw steamer “Bengal” (Pilgrimage I.5). So it was as this Persian Prince that Burton left the shores of England. It is a pity he does not tell us of his experiences in this role, both in London and aboard ship; he only tells us that aboard the Bengal, ‘A fortnight was profitably spent in getting into the train of Oriental manners,’ and that ‘Our voyage over the “summer sea” was eventless’ (Pilgrimage I.6). It might also be said that, by placing that curious word, ‘impedimenta,’ in quotation marks, Burton is perhaps alerting us to something: it may be that he is telling us that he was, in the interests of maintaining his disguise, circumcised at this time.

Arriving in Alexandria, Burton establishes himself as a doctor, staying in the outhouse of an Englishman and making a name for himself (Mirza Abdullah of Bushire) among the locals. He tells us:

I could revel in the utmost freedom of life and manners. And although some Armenian Dragoman, a restless spy like all his race, occasionally remarked *voilà un Persan diablement dégagé*, none, except those who were entrusted with the secret, had any idea of the part I was playing. The
domestics, devout Moslems, pronounced me an ‘Ajami [in footnote: A Persian as opposed to an Arab], a kind of Mohammedan, not a good one like themselves, but, still better than nothing. I lost no time in securing the assistance of a Shaykh [in footnote: A priest, elder, chieftan, language-master, private-tutor, &c, &c], and plunged once more into the intricacies of the Faith; revived my recollections of religious ablutions, read the Koran, and again became an adept in the art of prostration. My leisure hours were employed in visiting the baths and coffee-houses, in attending the bazars, and in shopping,—an operation which hereabouts consists of sitting upon a chapman’s counter, smoking, sipping coffee, and telling your beads the while, to show that you are not of the slaves for whom time is made. [Pilgrimage I.11]

The world which Abdullah enters here sounds very like that described in the Postscript to Falconry, so that we are given the sense that he is returning home, to the timeless East. At the same time, for Burton it is an escape from our world, this place populated by ‘the slaves for whom time is made.’ However, the situation is somewhat different from that in Scinde, for now the particular identity, Mirza Abdullah of Bushire, marks him out: in Alexandria, he is identified clearly as Ajami, ‘A Persian as opposed to an Arab,’ and not a good ‘Mohammedan.’ Given that the reason Burton gives us for assuming a disguise, rather than risking going on pilgrimage in his own name, is that ‘My spirit could not bend to own myself a Burmá, a renegade—to be pointed at and shunned and catechised, an object of suspicion to the many and of contempt to all’ (Pilgrimage I.23), this rejection, as a foreign body not allowed to pass unremarked, must have come as a blow.

Rather than allowing himself to be thus inscribed, Burton, instead, begins to transform Abdullah’s name: ‘After a month’s hard work at Alexandria, I prepared to assume the title of a wandering Darwaysh; after reforming my title from “Mirza” to “Shaykh” Abdullah’ (Pilgrimage I.13–14). This transformation from ‘Mirza’ to ‘Shaykh’ is tied to Burton’s adoption of the role of Darwaysh, of which he tells us, ‘No character in the Moslem world is so proper for disguise as that of the Darwaysh. It is assumed by all ranks, ages, and creeds’ (Pilgrimage I.14). By assuming this theatrical part, Burton further emphasizes that he is present here in disguise, and the same can be said of his taking the title ‘Shaykh,’ which effects, according to Parama Roy, a ‘transition from Shi’āh to Sunni in nomenclature.’

Shaykh Abdullah of Bushire now goes to some lengths to obtain a passport to authorize this name, for, as Burton ambivalently writes: ‘I had no choice but to appear as a born believer, and part of my birthright in that respectable character was toil and trouble in obtaining a Tazkirah’ (Pilgrimage I.23). He then leaves Alexandria still in the guise of a Persian, but taking the advice of Haji Wali—whom he met on the steamship from Alexandria
to Cairo and who became his ‘friend’ and ‘cicerone,’ and who significantly knew of his ‘true’ identity—Burton now changes Abdullah into a Pathan:

After long deliberation about the choice of nations, I became a ‘Pathán.’ Born in India of Afghan parents, who had settled in the country, educated at Rangoon, and sent out to wander, as men of that race frequently are, from early youth, I was well guarded against the danger of detection by a fellow-countryman. To support the character requires a knowledge of Persian, Hindustani and Arabic, all of which I knew sufficiently well to pass muster. [*Pilgrimage* I.44–45]

In dropping his very origin, the identifying of Abdullah as a disguise to allow Burton the deceitful traveller to pass muster is emphasized even more strongly, making it more and more impossible for this alter ego to assert itself as an alternative self, an alternative site of enunciation and belief.

Parama Roy has convincingly traced the ways in which Burton’s disguise functions in *Pilgrimage* as a strategy of appropriation, allowing him to ‘absorb the office of the native informant in himself,’22 and to ‘render . . . the native transparent’23 through performance. She also demonstrates that Burton does not simply imitate the native, but ‘resemanticizes—instead of simply imitating—“native,” or, more properly, Muslim . . . identity; it is not possible for the native to be properly a native, to have access to that subject position, without imitating Burton.’24 For such foregrounded role-play to function in the service of Empire, it is important that ‘When figures such as Burton assume their disguises, they seem to do so with the fullest faith in their own unfragmented subjectivity and in their ability to “disguise and conquer.”’25 The insistent manner in which Burton’s narrative draws attention to the trope of masquerade can, indeed, be read as just such an assertion of ‘unfragmented subjectivity;’ it is this unity of self which Burton wishes to impress upon us, and this is, as Roy points out, no more evident than in the fact that

what we are never allowed to forget is Burton’s sense of his own separation from the collective cultural experience of pilgrimage; this experience, however persistently coded as authentic, is always also raw material to be organized into a narrative for Orientalists, ethnographers, and the reading public in England.26

In her reading of the relationship between these two ways of coding the pilgrimage—as ‘authentic’ and as ‘raw material’—Roy, by focusing on the role of Burton’s disguise, follows Burton in privileging the latter. However, in thinking about the way in which Burton’s narrative appropriates an Eastern space and subject position, I think it also important to consider more closely the dynamic of disavowal in the positing of an ‘authentic’ experience of pilgrimage which, Burton never allows us to forget, is overwritten by another narrative.
The very title of the book announces that a pilgrimage will be its subject (*Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah*), but in the text Burton describes his objectives rather differently:

I have entitled this account of my summer’s tour through Al-Hijaz, a Personal Narrative, and I have laboured to make its nature correspond with its name, simply because ‘it is the personal that interests mankind.’ Many may not follow my example; but some perchance will be curious to see what measures I adopted, in order to appear suddenly as an Eastern upon the stage of Oriental life; and as the recital may be found useful by future adventurers, I make no apology for the egotistical semblance of the narrative. [*Pilgrimage* I.4–5]

Here the person of this personal narrative, the unfragmented ego of these egotistical outpourings, is the resourceful actor on a glorious stage, and now Burton entitles his work in a very different way from what we find on the cover: *Personal Narrative of My Summer’s Tour Through Al-Hijaz*. This new title inscribes Burton both as an adventurer on a summer’s tour, suggesting a vacation, and as the explorer of the geographical region of Al-Hijaz, a role which he earlier emphasized when he stated that he was ‘liberally supplied with the means of travel by the Royal Geographical Society’ (*Pilgrimage* I.2). At the same time, in thus re-titling his work, Burton draws attention to as he occludes the title which appears on the cover. The two titles are thus juxtaposed as Burton writes over one, and in this way he gives us the compulsively recurring motif of this rather more extended scrap of autobiography: the actor, the one in disguise, writes over, seeks to efface, the other one, the one on an authentic pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah, the good Moslem. In the end, though, it is another voice which comes out on top, as we see in the final words of the book, which take the form of a quotation: after speaking of, ‘This *Personal Narrative of my Journey to Al-Hijaz,*’ Burton writes, ‘I have been exposed to perils, and I have escaped from them; I have traversed the sea, and have not succumbed under the severest fatigues; and my heart is moved with emotions of gratitude, that I have been permitted to effect the objects I had in view’ (*Pilgrimage* II.276, my emphasis). After re-titling his book once more, now privileging the explorer, the imperial spy, on a ‘Journey’ over the holiday adventurer on tour, Burton gives us his final message: ‘Despite all the Siren temptations in that place to which I went for your sake, I have come back to you, I have achieved my mission. Forgive me my small rebellions.’ Once again though, after the disclaimer and after the book, the place marked ‘Abdullah’ will continue to haunt.

Burton writes of this place, specifically here the old city of Cairo:

There are certain scenes, cannily termed ‘Kenspeckle,’ which print themselves upon Memory, and which endure as long as Memory lasts. . . . Of
En-crypt-ing 73

this class is a stroll through the thoroughfares of old Cairo by night . . . there is something not of earth in the view . . . Briefly, the whole view is so strange, so fantastic, so ghostly, that it seems preposterous to imagine that in such places human beings like ourselves can be born, and live through life, and carry out the command ‘increase and multiply,’ and die. [Pilgrimage I.88–9]

Looked at from the writer’s point of view—looking from the present, here, upon Memory, the Orient, Egypt—this is a ghostly realm where it is impossible to imagine that human beings like ourselves could be present, in the flesh, alive. But I’m here: a living, breathing body! This idea of ghostliness is returned to when Burton writes of Cairo’s City of the Dead:

Sometimes I walked with my friend to the citadel, and sat upon a high wall . . . enjoying a view which, seen by night, when the summer moon is near the full, has a charm no power of language can embody. Or . . . we passed, through the Gate of Victory, into the wilderness beyond the City of the Dead. Seated upon some mound of ruins, we inhaled the fine air of the Desert, inspiriting as a cordial, when star-light and dew-mists diversified a scene . . . There, within a mile of crowded life, all is desolate; the town walls seem crumbling to decay, the hovels are tenantless, and the paths untrodden; behind you lies the Wild, before you, the thousand tomb-stones, ghastly in their whiteness; while beyond them the tall dark forms of the Mamluk Soldans’ towers rise from the low and hollow ground like the spirits of kings guarding ghostly subjects in the Shadowy Realm. Nor less weird than the scene are the sounds. [Pilgrimage I.84–5]

The ‘friend’ with whom Burton walks here is Haji Wali, who knew of his ‘true’ identity, and so Burton’s sense of danger and sense of being in disguise are relaxed sufficiently for him to feel alone, an aloofness guaranteed by his friend and companion, as together they walk the deserted paths. From this point of view, always elevated, they are indeed alone, for the space is depopulated and ruined, a Shadowy Realm of spirits, a weird, uncanny place where it is impossible to imagine that human beings could live and breathe. The East becomes a very spacious crypt. Yet it is there that Abdullah strolls. It is there, in that ghostly realm that, from this point of view and this site of writing, Abdullah begins, and ends, his pilgrimage.

In his encounter with Ibrahim Khan in Scinde, I have suggested that it was Burton’s uncircumcised penis which marked him out as different and, at the same time, as uncastrated, marked his positional superiority. In this other personal narrative, it is not the penis which marks the site of difference, but the pen, and it does so insistently. Burton’s self-representation as a note-taker, and one who must, at all costs, keep this activity secret from those around him, is evident throughout, and most marked at those
Figure 3.2 ‘An Arab Shaykh in his travelling dress’ (Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah*, ed. Isabel Burton [London: Tylston and Edwards, 1893], I.235).
moments when the ghostly Abdullah is most clearly revealed. For instance, when Burton adopts the disguise of an Arab to avoid paying a road tax, he presents ‘to the reader an Arab Shaykh fully equipped for travelling’ (*Pilgrimage* I.234); this figure is also illustrated (see Figure 3.2). As he describes the Shaykh’s Hamail, ‘a pocket Koran, in a handsome gold-embroidered crimson velvet or red morocco case’ (*Pilgrimage* I.239), the following passage unexpectedly occurs:

For this I substituted a most useful article. To all appearance a ‘Hamail,’ it had inside three compartments; one for my watch and compass, the second for ready money, and the third contained penknife, pencils, and slips of paper, which I could hold concealed in the hollow of my hand. [*Pilgrimage* I.239]

This perfect Arab dress might well be seen perfectly to dress Abdullah, figure him as the essence of the Orient, the desert, and Islam. However, Burton marks out his difference, inserting in place of a case containing the Koran his own tools towards a text, including a watch, a compass, and money, but most especially his pencils and paper, which he transfers to the hollow of his hand, claiming that hand as his. The pen essentially places Burton in a different space from that which Abdullah might seem to occupy, connects him with his reader, and makes of his journey an example of what Syed Islam, following Deleuze and Guattari, calls ‘sedentary travel:’ ‘When the European colonialists, in their sedentary voyages, ventured into other places, they moved tightly folded in the inside, and replicated the same old boundaries in distant places.’27 Burton, in this role, makes no movement forward, crosses no boundary, and the demands of the pen recurrently place his body apart, as when he hires a ‘Shugduf’ or litter . . . My reason for choosing a litter was that notes are more easily taken in it than on a dromedary’s back’ (*Pilgrimage* I.233–34), or when in the house he is staying at in Meccah, the boy Mohammed’s, a room is cleared for him where ‘In the few precious moments of privacy notes were committed to paper, but one eye was ever fixed on the door’ (*Pilgrimage* II.229).

A further conspicuous intervention of the pen occurs when Burton finally comes in view of Al-Madinah, the first object of his *Pilgrimage*:

We halted our beasts as if by word of command. All of us descended, in imitation of the pious of old, and sat down, jaded and hungry as we were, to feast our eyes with a view of the Holy City [Burton now quotes exclamatory remarks, unattributed]. . . . Such were the poetical exclamations that rose all around me, showing how deeply tinged with imagination becomes the language of the Arab under the influence of strong passion or religious enthusiasm. . . . It was impossible not to enter into the spirit of my companions, and truly I believe that for some minutes
my enthusiasm rose as high as theirs. But presently when we remounted, the traveller returned strong upon me: I made a rough sketch of the town, put questions about the principal buildings, and in fact collected materials for the next chapter. [Pilgrimage I.279–80]

First: ‘we’ act ‘as if by word of command;’ ‘we’ are at one with the Word of God, here, at our place of pilgrimage. Then, humbly and piously, we realize that all of us here are only in disguise, in imitation, of the old ones. We raise our voices in praise. Next: these words reveal to me that the language of the Arab, Arabic, has become tinged with imagination, and the association of this language with the body is clear in that it does so ‘under the influence of strong passion or religious enthusiasm.’ This is an enthusiasm which Burton confesses to have shared, in Arabic and in the Arab body, before the pen intervenes, and the traveller holding it, to reassert its and his dominance, to make Burton the writer of this book; the real pilgrims, his native informants; and the first view of Meccah the basis of a sketch and detailed description. So Burton seeks to limit Abdullah’s presence to the space of ‘some minutes,’ but the latter’s trace is inscribed, in the language and the body that the pen claims to have left behind, especially when it translates from Arabic to English. The pen here is accompanied by the eye of surveillance, indicated by the fact that the traveller returns upon Burton when he remounts, assuming an elevated position, and this difference of Burton’s eye also repeatedly marks him out, as when he writes of the garden of the Mosque marking the Prophet’s tomb that ‘the scene must be viewed with Moslem bias, and until a man is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the East, the last place the Rauzah will remind him of, is that which the architect primarily intended it to resemble—a garden’ (Pilgrimage I.313). From this point of view, which can discriminate between what is here and a true line, we, the tourist, will never be able to appreciate or translate the Moslem’s, Abdullah’s, point of view and site of enunciation.

Abdullah is marked even more dramatically at the first sight of the Harim, ‘the “Navel of the World”’ (Pilgrimage II.172), the Ka’abah of Meccah:

There at last it lay, the bourn of my long and weary Pilgrimage, realising the plans and hopes of many and many a year. The mirage medium of Fancy invested the huge catafalque and its gloomy pall with peculiar charms . . . the view was strange, unique—and how few have looked upon the celebrated shrine! I may truly say that, of all the worshippers who clung weeping to the curtain, or who pressed their beating hearts to the stone, none felt for the moment a deeper emotion than did the Haji from the far-north. It was as if the poetical legends of the Arab spoke truth, and that the waving wings of angels, not the sweet breeze of morning, were agitating and swelling the black covering of the shrine. But, to confess humbling truth, theirs was the high feeling of religious enthusiasm, mine was the ecstasy of gratified pride. [Pilgrimage II.160–61]
There is a considerable degree of struggle in this passage, which condenses in the word ‘Pilgrimage,’ capitalized as in the title, the object and hope of both the good Moslem and the ambitious explorer. Suggested here is the writer’s sense of wonder and emotion, manifesting itself in a communion of beating hearts and voices around the stone, enacting the divine presence written of in the authoritative texts. Yet this very tumultuous throng is denied in the words, ‘how few have looked upon the celebrated shrine!’, instantly creating an alternative, more select, communion, of Author and Reader, of pen and eye. Furthermore, the Authority of the texts speaking of this are denied as they are invoked, as merely ‘poetical legends,’ of the Arab and in Arabic. Yet even the pen-eye is not sufficient to distinguish Burton from Abdullah here, and Burton asserts himself in even less certain terms: ‘mine was the ecstasy of gratified pride,’ yours, of bodily enthusiasm; it is, then, pride which most clearly marks this ego.

In *Orientalism*, Said writes of the Orientalist that

> What he says about the Orient is . . . to be understood as description obtained in a one-way exchange: as they spoke and behaved, he observed and wrote down. His power was to have existed amongst them as a native speaker, as it were, and also as a secret writer.\(^\text{28}\)

Said also remarked of Edward Lane, Burton’s predecessor both in the Orient and as translator of the *Nights*, that ‘It was into and for this system [Orientalism] that Lane wrote his work, and sacrificed his ego.’\(^\text{29}\) These things can be seen to repeat in Burton, where Abdullah becomes, as a way of understanding by empathy, the speaker and actor, while Burton is the eye and pen. Yet Said seems to move too quickly when he distinguishes between the writer of the work and his (singular) ego, that which he sacrifices in order to write. Rather, in Burton, and presumably in Lane, this sacrificed ego (the ghostly trace of the body) comes into being simultaneously with the aloof scribe, who cannot be considered as other than the ego, but poses as another ego, the proud actor on this stage and careful observer who claims his positional superiority, holding the pen and paper in the hollow of his hand. It is this ego which repeatedly sacrifices another, marked in Burton’s text as Abdullah. Similarly, then, this ego sacrifices (Arabic) speech as he writes (in English); he sacrifices the (Arab) tongue and heart for the (English) ear, eye, and hand, not to mention the penises, here where the castration and counter-castration Order of Imperial Rule reigns for Burton, and presumably Lane. And so we find that the body and the text are divided up, cut in two, the Arab and the English (with all their connotations), marked on and in the body as Abdullah and Burton, on their respective Pilgrimages, the former sacrificed to the latter.

We can also see that Said’s felicitous phrase, ‘a secret writer,’ has a double meaning, for not only is Burton marked as just such a furtive writer, but in this very setting apart of himself he marks another site of enunciation as that which he has suppressed in order to write, so that Abdullah emerges here, as Burton
did *there*, as a secret co-writer who always has to be set apart and disavowed. According to Abraham and Torok, ‘every incorporation has introjection as its nostalgic vocation,’30 a desire for the reunion of the self and that part of itself which is other than itself, outside of itself, here on the inside. If Burton is marked as always, in the end, coming out on top, this compulsively repeated domination at the same time announces his nostalgia for that *something* of himself which he cannot introject but must nominally reintegrate by the act of grafting, at the same time disavowing this act, so that Abdullah marks the place of a “false unconscious,” an “artificial” unconscious lodged like a prosthesis, a graft in the heart of an organ, within the *divided self.* Burton thus claims to incorporate, by appropriating as his own, the site of enunciation placed on the other side of the border; he effectively says to the Arab world, the Orient, all those others who live there: ‘You must give up your claim to a pen, but you can live on as the false unconscious of my text, that which I have repressed and must labour to find.’ As Said writes, ‘European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.’31 This ‘will to incorporate’ is also that which drives this particular form of Empire, is its subtle technique of brutal domination: Burton’s pen and eye (*pre*)figure the always already lost moment of colonial intervention, whereby the other world is, at a stroke, partitioned off from general space, and the only relationship that can be established with it is a melancholic one of incomplete mourning.

In considering the manner of coexistence between Burton’s two antagonistic roles, Said speaks of his ‘two voices blending into one:’32 ‘we must recognize how the voice of the highly idiosyncratic master of Oriental knowledge informs, feeds into the voice of European ambition for rule over the Orient.’33 By this first voice, Said presumably means that of the rebellious adventurer and Master of Syntax, which does, indeed, blend with ‘the voice of Empire, which is itself a system of rules, codes, and concrete epistemological habits.’34 However, both of these voices, blending into one despite their apparent (Oedipal) conflict, depend for their identity upon the marking out of another voice with which they cannot blend, which must be set apart as that over which they (together, as friends, sharing their pen) have positional superiority, and as that which they covet. This is the voice marked ‘Abdullah.’ It is strange, though, that Said, having emphasized that the Orientalist watched and wrote that which the native did and said, should now refer to Burton’s *voice,* the *voice* of Empire. Rather, it is the two *pens,* the two *eyes,* which merge into one to assert their singular dominance in this world without pens, this world without men.

Burton leaves Meccah, and

Issuing into the open plain, I felt a thrill of pleasure—such joy as only a captive delivered from his dungeon can experience. The sunbeams warmed me into renewed life and vigour, the air of the Desert was a perfume, and the homely face of Nature was as the smile of a dear old friend.
I contemplated the Syrian Caravan, lying on the right of our road, without any of the sadness usually suggested by a parting look. [Pilgrimage II.260]

He emerges from Meccah literally as from a dungeon or a crypt, from which the sun itself was absent. The Desert is, this time, not sublime but ‘homely,’ like a dear old friend. Because Burton denies that he was ever really there, except as a prisoner furtively writing notes, he feels no sadness in contemplating the Caravan, for he has no loss to mourn, no-body has been left behind. The movement out continues as other travellers join the party, and Burton tries to converse with one old man in various languages. Finally, they chatted in English, which Haji Akif spoke well, but with all manner of courier’s phrases; Haji Abdullah so badly, that he was counselled a course of study. It was not a little strange to hear such phrases as ‘Come ’p, Neddy,’ and ‘Cré nom d’un baudet,’ almost within earshot of the tomb of Ishmael, the birthplace of Mohammed, and the Sanctuary of Al-Islam. [Pilgrimage II.261]

Abdullah’s name has acquired the title ‘Haji,’ entitled by his experience, but the theatricality is almost all we see here, as Burton’s mother tongue (not only English, but also French) reasserts itself, within earshot of those places which guarantee the other tongue, Arabic. Thus the critical distance between one language and another, as that between writing and speech, dissolves and the difference between languages becomes merely superficial, the languages themselves something to be traded in chit-chat. The journey out ends in Jeddah, where Burton,

felt once more at home. The sight of the sea acted as a tonic. The Maharattas were not far wrong when they kept their English captives out of reach of the ocean, declaring that we were an amphibious race, to whom the wave is a home. [Pilgrimage II.266]

So Burton, as a traveller, asserts his Englishness, invokes England as an imperial power, claims the sea as the connective tissue of its grafted together Empire, and recalls heroic sacrifices in India. The central place of refuge here in Jeddah is the British Consulate, to which Burton repairs because, ‘not having more than tenpence of borrowed coin, it was necessary to cash at the British Vice-Consulate a draft given to me by the Royal Geographical Society’ (Pilgrimage II.266); it is always, in the end, the money, the pence, that (one) counts.

This moment recalls the last sight Burton had of a British Consulate, on the ‘Pilgrim Ship’ from Cairo, finally on pilgrimage:

As the ‘Golden Wire’ started from her place, I could not help casting one wistful look upon the British flag floating over the Consulate. But
the momentary regret was stifled by the heart-bounding which prospects of an adventure excite, and by the real pleasure of leaving Egypt. I had lived there a stranger in the land, and a hapless life it had been: in the streets every man’s face, as he looked upon the Persian, was the face of a foe . . . and the circumstance of living within hail of my fellow-countrymen, and yet finding it impossible to enjoy their society, still throws a gloom over the memory of my first sojourn in Egypt. [Pilgrimage I.194–95]

The instant stifling of Burton’s ‘momentary regret’ is linked to his identification as an adventurer, his invocation of ‘the British flag’ and his connection to his ‘fellow-countrymen.’ However, this movement was rather less clear when Burton left Alexandria: ‘Outside the gate my friends took a final leave of me, and I will not deny having felt a tightening of heart as their honest faces and forms faded in the distance’ (Pilgrimage I.143). Burton feels the loss of Abdullah left behind in his friends, in his very heart, and this connection, which he refuses to deny here but does deny so compulsively throughout the narrative, might lead us to expect the motif of betrayal to emerge again, as it did in the narrative of Burton’s friendship, always already lost, with Ibrahim Khan; we do indeed find this, although in somewhat different form.

A betrayal in this narrative manifests itself as an understanding by Abdullah’s friends that they have been duped by Burton, and is found on two occasions. The first friend is an ‘Indian boy:’

He had all the defects of his nation; a brave at Cairo, he was an arrant coward at Al-Madinah; the Badawin despised him heartily for his effeminacy in making his camel kneel to dismount, and he could not keep his hands from picking and stealing . . . his swarthy skin and chubby features made the Arabs always call him an Abyssinian slave . . . he was amenable to discipline, and being completely dependent upon me, he was therefore less likely to watch and especially to prate about my proceedings. As master and man we performed the pilgrimage together; but, on my return to Egypt after the pilgrimage, Shaykh (become Haji) Núr, finding me to be a Sāhib, changed for the worse. He would not work, and reserved all his energy for the purpose of pilfering, which he practised so audaciously upon my friends, as well as upon myself, that he could not be kept in the house. [Pilgrimage I.64]

This description can be read as an allegory of the white man’s rule in India, in its representation of the relationship between the swarthy, effeminate Indian boy and his master. We have already seen how, in Scinde, Burton claims that the native Indian only respects the Englishman who knows him, so that the latter should insert himself and his white face as symbol of authority in the native scene. However, Burton also told us that the native loses his respect
for the white man when he learns of what lies (lie) behind the mask. Similarly, he tells us here, in *Pilgrimage*, ‘I am convinced that the natives of India cannot respect a European who mixes with them familiarly, or especially who imitates their customs, manners, and dress’ (*Pilgrimage* I.40). Burton’s narrative, describing the relationship between himself and the Indian boy, is taken to confirm this state of affairs, and the only possible solution, once the deception has been uncovered, is to cast the Indian boy, who will not respect his master, out of the half-home of Empire. In the end, all that appears is aggression, of the castrating father towards the surrogate son.

This relationship between ‘master and man’ echoes Burton’s friendship with another boy, referred to throughout as ‘the boy Mohammed,’ an Arab whom he met in Cairo and in whose family home he stayed in Meccah. The two boys learn the truth together, although Burton focuses on Mohammed:

> having hinted that, after my return to India, a present of twenty dollars would find him at Meccah, [Mohammed] asked leave, and departed with a coolness for which I could not account. Some days afterwards Shaykh Nur explained the cause. I had taken the youth with me on board the steamer, where a bad suspicion crossed his mind. ‘Now, I understand,’ said the boy Mohammed to his fellow-servant, ‘your master is a Sahib from India; he hath laughed at our beards.’ [*Pilgrimage* II.271]

Although Burton tries to bracket the two boys together as fellow-servants—a point reinforced by his offering a substantial sum of money for services rendered—unlike the Indian, Mohammed does not take Burton’s money and steal more; rather, he refuses the gift, refuses the (half-)friendship on the terms offered by Burton, and refuses his designations as servant (‘your master’), and as a child (when he speaks of his, and his true friends’, ‘beards’). It is tempting to see this as a moment when Burton hears, finally, another subject, proudly asserting his independence from the Sahib whom he now knows only too well, and at the same time the independence of Arabia from Europe. However, it seems to me unavoidable that we also read here Burton’s appropriation of this voice to figure his alter ego, Abdullah, Mohammed’s friend and/as Master, asserting himself to accuse Burton of fraud and betrayal.

**An MS. from Nowhere**

In 1880, Burton privately published a curious volume, entitled *The Kasîdah of Hâjî Abdû El-Yezdî, a Lay of the Higher Law, Translated and Annotated by his Friend and Pupil F. B.*. This book contained what purported to be a Sufi st poem written by Hâjî Abdû and translated by F. B., who also apparently wrote a prefatory Note to the Reader and, following the main text, two lengthy Notes and a Conclusion. The entire book was, though, written by Richard Francis Burton, the main text under his familiar pseudonym of
Abdu(llah), while F. B. is both a truncated form of his own name, and the initials of another of his pseudonyms, Frank Baker, which his wife, Isabel, describes as ‘an English nom-de-plume from Francis his second name, and Baker his mother’s family name.’

In her Preface to the 1894 edition of this work, now acknowledged as being that of Richard, Isabel Burton writes: ‘On the return journey from Meccah, when Richard Burton could secure any privacy, he composed the following exquisite gem of Oriental poetry. . . . It was written twenty-seven years before he ventured to print it.’ This is certainly disingenuous, for there is ample internal evidence, such as the poem’s references to Darwinian evolutionary theory, to indicate that the work could not have been written, at least in its entirety, at that time. An explanation for this bending of the truth is indicated when Isabel Burton goes on to suggest that The Kasîdah ‘reminds one’ of Edward Fitzgerald's by then hugely successful Rubāiyât of Omar Khayyam: ‘Yet the Kasidah was written in 1853—the Rubaiyat he [Burton] did not know till eight years later; no doubt Isabel was keen to claim precedence for her late husband’s work, even as she sought to place it alongside this other Oriental text. Nonetheless, it may be that the work was begun at an earlier date, as Isabel suggests. Whether or not that is so, I find the nature of her fiction, if such it be, an intriguing one, placing Burton/Abdul-lah on return from pilgrimage as the author of the poem, and rendering The Kasidah, therefore, as something of a parallel text to Pilgrimage.

Isabel also writes that, upon reading Fitzgerald’s Rubaiyat, ‘Richard Burton at once claimed him as a brother-Sufi.’ Burton did, indeed, claim to be a disciple of Sufism. For instance, he tells us that after he had conceived the idea of following the Haj as a believer, he decided to improve his disguise by learning to recite the Koran and, in addition, not forgetting a sympathetic study of Sufi-ism, the Gnosticism of Al-Islam, which would raise me high above the rank of a mere Moslem. I conscientiously went through the chillâ, or quarantine of fasting and other exercises . . . and I became a Master-Sufi.

Burton even included a translation of his ‘Murshid’s Diploma, in the Kadiiri Order of the Mystic Craft Al-Tasawwuf [Sufism]’ as an Appendix to Pilgrimage (Pilgrimage II.327–32). In choosing to present his Sufist kasidah as a translation, though, Burton splits the ‘I’ who speaks in this passage: Abdû is now the Sufi poet, and F. B. his translator, so that Burton, the single writer, constructs himself as having a double identity and a double voice.

The relationship between these two alter egos is laid out at the beginning of the first of F. B.’s Notes, entitled ‘Hājī Abdû, the Man,’ which opens with the claim, ‘HĀJĪ ABDÛ has been known to me for more years than I care to record’ (Kasidah 71), and with the following description of Abdû: ‘He had travelled far and wide . . . To a natural facility, a knack of language learning,
he added a store of desultory various reading . . . Nor was he ignorant of “the–ologies” and the triumphs of modern scientific discovery’ (Kasîdah 71). This reads very much as an exaggerated version of Burton himself, and our sense of this is reinforced when F. B. describes Abdû’s physical appearance, his ‘long and hoary’ beard and ‘piercing eye, clear as an onyx’ (Kasîdah 72; Burton was renowned for his penetrating eyes). Most straightforwardly, Abdû can be read as Burton’s theatrical construction of himself, as an Eastern figure of course, but also as multilingualist and polymath. Nonetheless, this description of the text’s author is distancing, constructing the poem as performance, and the self-parodying tone continues as F. B. writes,

We, his old friends, had long addressed Hâjî Abdû by the sobriquet of Nabbianâ (‘Our Prophet’); and the reader will see that the Pilgrim has, or believes he has, a message to deliver. He evidently aspires to preach a faith of his own; an Eastern version of Humanitarianism blended with the sceptical or, as we now say, the scientific habit of mind. [Kasîdah 72–3]

It was during the last meeting of F. B. and Abdû that the latter handed over the manuscript of the poem which F. B. here presents in translation:

Even his intimates were ignorant of the fact that he had a skeleton in his cupboard, his Kasîdah or distichs. He confided to me his secret when we last met in Western India—I am purposely vague in specifying the place . . . The MS. was in the vilest ‘Shikastah’ or running-hand [Burton’s handwriting was indeed vile]. [Kasîdah 72]

This last meeting in Western India, when the MS. was handed over, might remind us of the final passage of Scinde, when Burton was left alone on the sultry shore as Bull left for England, his future story left untold, unnarratable in the absence of Bull, his audience. We can then read this last meeting as another with that left behind character, and as another ‘scrap of autobiography’. On this occasion, no words are exchanged, only the hand-written text, and given the relationship we have seen Burton construct in Pilgrimage, between Abdullah the speaker and Burton the writer, this passing over of a text might well create a frisson of excitement in F. B., receiving these written words of his other half. That the MS. is, in reality, Burton’s own distanced text is a separate matter from the relationship constructed here between Abdû and F. B., for whom Abdû was a skeleton in his closet, as the MS. was in Abdû’s. The purposeful vagueness in specifying the place echoes F. B.’s remark that Abdû ‘preferred to style himself El-Hichmakâni, a facetious “lackab” or surname, meaning “Of No-hall, Nowhere”’ (Kasîdah 71), and reminds us of the impossibility of placing the crypt, which Derrida describes as ‘this singular “beyond-place” or “no-place” . . . a no-place or non-place within space, a place as no-place’.
In thus describing the relationship between Abdû and F. B., Burton once more reiterates the impossibility of retaining an unmediated connection with the ‘Nowhere’ to which Abdû belongs: for Abdû to speak here, in this forum, a laborious process of translation and annotation is required, emphatically marking the boundary between one language and another. Furthermore, in his role as mediator, F. B. repeatedly draws attention to the ‘Eastern’ nature of certain of Abdû’s ideas. This is evident, for instance, in his assertion that ‘The Pilgrim’s view of life is that of the Soofi, with the usual dash of Buddhistic pessimism’ (Kasîdah 80), and when he writes of Abdû, ‘he is an Eastern. When he repeats the Greek’s “Remember not to believe,” he means Strive to learn, to know, for right ideas lead to right actions’ (Kasîdah 85). F. B. also highlights his own contributions, as translator, to the poem: he has adapted it in places to echo European forms and traditions, so that one ‘quotation has been trained into a likeness of the “Hymn of Life”’ (Kasîdah 104), and elsewhere he has ‘purposely twisted his exordium into an echo of Milton’ (Kasîdah 107); overall, his contribution has been considerable: ‘I have omitted . . . sundry stanzas, and I have changed the order of others. The text has nowhere been translated verbatim; in fact, a familiar European turn has been given to many sentiments which were judged too Oriental’ (Kasîdah 128). F. B. is sitting in judgement over the poem, improving it for a European audience, but there is also, perhaps, the suggestion that there is something ultimately untranslatable, something ‘too Oriental,’ which cannot, despite all F. B.’s efforts, be carried across.

Placing such an elaborate interpretive framework around the poem might well be seen as a parody of Burton’s own translation process, and that of other translators. In this sense, the work can be read according to Gideon Toury’s description of what he terms ‘psuedo-translation:’

features are often embedded in a fictitious translation which have come to be habitually associated with genuine translations in the culture which would host it . . . By enhancing their resemblance to genuine translations, pseudo-translators simply make it easier for their textual creations to pass as translations without arousing too much suspicion . . . In fact, as is the case with parodies . . . fictitious translations often represent their fictitious sources in a rather exaggerated manner.41

Toury contends that original writers may use the form of translation to introduce ‘new models . . . into an extant cultural repertoire . . . under disguise,’42 and that such pseudo-translations will, therefore, reveal a great deal about the place of translations within ‘the target system,’43 as well as ‘the notions shared by the members of the target-language community as to the most conspicuous characteristics of genuine translations.’44 Toury is concerned to trace the potentially strategic function of translation within a society, which enables pseudo-translators to ‘put the cultural gatekeepers to sleep’45 by presenting their work in the familiar and acceptable form of a translation. Such an idea very much
inform Dane Kennedy’s reading of *Kasidah* as ‘determined to counter religious and other orthodoxies with freethinking views framed within a relativist context.’ For Kennedy, Burton’s poem ‘imitate[s]’ the ‘poetic tone’ and ‘Orientalist trappings’ of Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat* ‘in pursuit of its own objectives.’ In such a reading, the form of translation is little more than a convenient disguise, one indeed which ‘proves to be too effective, preventing many of his readers from recognizing the modern, independent voice that speaks through the guise of Hājî Abdû.’

Kennedy establishes important differences between the contents of Fitzgerald’s poem and Burton’s, but does not, I believe, pay sufficient attention to differences in the framings of these works, which render problematic an analysis of *Kasidah* as intended to pass muster as a genuine translation of an Eastern source. It is particularly striking that Burton deviates substantially from the tradition in which *The Rubaiyat* is firmly placed—of translations of work from a ‘golden age’ of Persian poetry—when he describes Abdû as a contemporary figure, and, indeed, a cosmopolitan and well-travelled one who is familiar with a wide range of European, as well as Eastern, thought, from different times and places. In comparison with *The Rubaiyat*, Burton constructs a radical proximity between author and translator, placing them face to face. As part of his oeuvre, Burton’s performance of a translation can then be seen to stage his own encounter with himself in the guise of Abdullah, and his Oriental trappings are, therefore, more than simply a dress which can be shrugged off to reveal the voice of a singular ego. Rather, Burton seems to be adapting the form of an Orientalist translation for a parallel objective, namely to narrate once again his own relationship with the language of the Orient. In this context, F. B.’s lengthy notes—which Kennedy rightly describes as ‘for the most part redundant and pretentious, the labored performance of an author who is determined to leave his reader in no doubt about the breadth of his learning and the depth of his understanding’—might be read as a form of self-mockery which at the same time parodies the entire tradition of attempts to translate the Orient, of which this pseudo-translation purports to be a part.

If F. B. is clearly located within this tradition, the same cannot as easily be said of Abdû, whose poem poses as originally written in another language. Burton speaks here not so much through the guise, as in the guise of Hājî Abdû, and the poem opens in the Arabian desert, by a town of tents and in sight of Mount Arafat: Abdû is, indeed, on return from pilgrimage. The encampment, with its ‘tinkling of the camel-bells’ (a recurrent motif of this poem) is surrounded by the desert: ‘fiery wastes and frozen wold . . . The home of grisly beast and Ghoul, / the haunts of wilder, grislier men,’ with only the ‘brief gladness’ (*Kasidah* 10) of an oasis, a place of ‘joy and hope’ to those ‘whose souls’ (*Kasidah* 11) are on pilgrimage. As he reflects on the scene, the speaker despairingly muses on the mutability of things, the inexorable passage of time and inevitability of death; standing in this desert, he sees ‘visionary Pasts revive’ and ‘ghosts’ and ‘spectral shadows’ on the horizon, and there are ‘awful
secrets gathering round’ (*Kasidah* 13). The poem then takes the form of a series of reflections, in which the speaker traces the history of the Earth and life upon it, and the development of Man from a ‘Brute-biped . . . His choicest garb a shaggy fell’ (*Kasidah* 37). It is in this context that Abdû looks at a range of religious faiths, none of which can claim to hold the Truth, which is ‘As palace mirror’d in the stream, / as vapour mingled with the skies’ (*Kasidah* 41). He believes that in this transient world, we pass our lives as ‘Forms, nothing more! . . . We know not substance; ‘mid the shades / shadows ourselves we live and die’ (*Kasidah* 42). In such a world, we should never cease in our straining towards self-knowledge and freedom—‘Be thine own Deus: Make self free’ (*Kasidah* 62)—and this ‘self’ seems to emerge for the speaker as the only substance in a world of shadows, as we see again when he writes:

Do what thy manhood bids thee do,
from none but self expect applause;
He noblest lives and noblest dies
who makes and keeps his self-made laws.

All other Life is living Death,
a world where none but Phantoms dwell,
A breath, a wind, a sound, a voice,
a tinkling of the camel-bell. [*Kasidah* 57]

The poem does, then, as Kennedy suggests, express ‘freethinking views framed within a relativist context,’ but it seems to me important that these views are expressed not by Richard Francis Burton, but by Hâjî Abdû, within a framework that clearly establishes an ironic distance between the author and his mediator; we might say that Burton is only able to give expression to freethinking relativism in a performative mode, and the content of the poem is, therefore, not separable from its ‘Orientalist trappings.’ Furthermore, it is striking that Abdû’s description of the world as a place of shades and Phantoms, from which the manly self should distinguish himself, echoes the way in which Burton portrays the place through which he travelled in *Pilgrimage*, in terms which made it resemble a crypt. The relativism expressed here, which is closely allied in the poem with the doctrine of Progress and an individualist philosophy, thus employs the same rhetoric of melancholic disavowal as was used to distinguish Burton from the East, to which he claimed only to belong in another guise. It is, then, not merely coincidental that the ‘modern, independent voice’ that speaks here should do so in this particular setting, in this particular guise. Once the Oriental packaging used to smuggle Burton’s relativism past the ‘cultural gatekeepers’ has been removed, such relativism no doubt appears in the metropolitan centre as at once radical and firmly rooted in an evolving discourse of European modernity. However, in its enunciation on the imperial stage, in the other language from which it purports to be translated, it is
crypt-ing

intimately bound up with a denial of any movement forward by the actor on
the stage, and this disavowal functions to deprive those who live there of any
voice of their own, any belief of their own, any Life of their own. Or, to put this
another way, in a world where ‘Conscience’ is ‘a geographical and chronologi-
cal accident’ (Kasidah 117), the manly Burton is free to travel where he likes, in
whatever guise and regardless of other people’s laws.

Postcrypt

Richard Francis Burton died at his consular post in Trieste on 19th October,
1890. His embalmed corpse then became the subject of considerable attention.
His wife Isabel claimed it for the Catholic Church, asserting that Richard had
embraced her religion on his deathbed and surrounding his body with the para-
phernalia of a Catholic funeral. This corpse, dressed in the uniform of a British
Consul, was also claimed for England, being accorded a full military funeral in
which the coffin, draped with the Union Jack and bearing Burton’s court sword,
was escorted by the Consular corps and attended by the officers and cadets of
a visiting English warship. Of course, the body had to be returned home, to
England, and was therefore placed in a hermetically sealed zinc coffin for later
transport. Back in England there was some talk of establishing a committee to
decide Burton’s final resting place. However, Isabel put an end to such specula-
tion with the decision that the corpse would be accommodated according to her
husband’s own wishes, in a stone crypt built to resemble an Arab tent. And so

Figure 3.3  Burton’s tomb, among others (photograph taken by the author).
it was to be. On the outer perimeter of a Catholic cemetery in Mortlake, South West London, amongst the tombs of Isabel’s family, can be found the crypt of Sir Richard Francis Burton and his wife Isabel, an Arab tent redolent with Oriental imagery but also sporting ‘a crucifix and other symbols of Christianity inside and out,’ in which the couple listen to the tinkling of camel bells festooned from the ceiling, recalling the model camel thrust between the crucifix and the roof of the tent, and into which light floods through a window at the back (see Figure 3.3). This is a final compromise, then, between Richard and his wife, but also, alongside, between Burton and Abdullah, for in death Burton’s corpse absurdly occupies both West and East, both homes at once, a pocket of en-crypt-ed Eastern space enclosed within, grafted into, England, an outside inside the inside.
The Negro Question, from ‘Race’ to ‘Geographical Morality’

Introduction

In 1863, the Anthropological Society of London was formed as a break-away from the Ethnological Society of London. James Hunt was appointed president of this new Society, and Richard Francis Burton—who was at that time British Consul at Fernando Po with responsibility for a several hundred mile stretch of the West African coast—became its first Vice-President. Later that year, Hunt delivered a paper entitled ‘On the Mental and Physical Character of the Negro’ to the ‘Geography and Ethnology’ section of the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), held in Newcastle. This paper was later distributed as a pamphlet, ‘On the Negro’s Place in Nature,’ which was dedicated in the form of a letter to ‘My Dear Burton’ and subsequently published in *Memoirs of the Anthropological Society of London*.

A great crowd had gathered to hear Hunt’s paper, which was read toward the close of the session on the 30th August, and ‘it was known that Mr. Craft, a gentleman of colour, recently from Dahomey, and formerly, it was stated, a slave in the Southern States, would reply.’ William Craft had achieved celebrity status in America following his daring escape from slavery with his wife, Ellen, and had already made a name for himself at the BAAS meeting, having been ‘loudly cheered on rising’ to defend the African race in response to John Crawfurd’s paper on the ‘Commixture of Races,’ which argued the inadvisability of mixing higher and lower races of men, and the soundness of American laws preventing such mixing. In the ‘somewhat warm’ discussion following Crawfurd’s reading, Hunt had supported its argument, although he felt that it had not gone far enough in stressing the physiological impossibility of sustained hybrid populations.

Crawfurd was the president of the Ethnological Society, and he and Hunt’s support for each other’s papers suggests that, despite the acrimonious splitting of that Society earlier in the year, and despite significant differences of opinion, these two individuals at least shared an emphasis on scientific
This approach to ethnology by no means carried the gallery, and if there was a somewhat heated response to Crawfurd’s paper, that which greeted Hunt’s was even more so; as the reporter for the *Times* writes: ‘The paper was applauded by a portion of the audience, but—what is most unusual in these scientific meetings—there were also numerous expressions of dissent, not to say loud hisses,’ and

Though the discussion which followed was conducted, as far as the speakers were concerned, as strictly as could be expected within scientific limits, it was evident that the audience were governed entirely in their loudly expressed assent or dissent from the views of each speaker by their sympathy with one or other of the great parties now contending on the American continent. In fact, the discussion assumed quite a political turn, and in the excitement of the moment the science of ethnology was almost lost sight of.

In this atmosphere, William Craft used his own presence to good effect, and in his reply to Hunt’s paper established himself as representative of the negroes whom Hunt had described as inferior to the European and incapable of improvement: ‘Though he was not of pure African descent, he was black enough to attempt to say a few words in reference to the paper.’ The main thrust of his argument was to refute the notion of an innate inferiority of the negro by citing examples of negroes who had ‘improved,’ and to contend that it was entirely adverse circumstances which prevented this in the majority of cases; in his own case ‘the degraded position which he was forced to occupy [in America] gave him no chance of proving what he was really capable of doing.’ He did not, therefore, reject Hunt’s characterization of the negroes as less developed, but assigned a different cause to this, seeing them as a suppressed class rather than an innately inferior race. As a ‘gentleman of colour,’ Craft, himself, exposed the fallacy of Hunt’s argument, and his positioning of himself as ‘an Englishman of African parentage, unfortunately born in America’ was calculated to undermine Hunt’s attempt to racialize, and thereby naturalize, the privileged status of the ‘English gentleman.’

The science of ethnology was far from being lost sight of in this debate, for what it shows is that scientific racism was inextricably interwoven with politics. It was entirely natural that the response of the audience should be presented as governed by their views on the American Civil War, because this conflict had become understood as a war over the right of the slaves of the Southern States to emancipation, and was accompanied by an increasingly polarized debate about the place of the negro in nature, with those arguing for the negro’s innate inferiority, such as Morton, Nott, and Gliddon, also being activists for the Southern cause, while their opponents supported the North. The need to justify slavery by representing the negro as a
natural slave, thereby invalidating his inscription as a Man for whom Justice (in the form of the American Constitution) demands the Rights of Man, was important in the elaboration of a more rigorous and unified scientific discourse of race than had hitherto existed.

It is not surprising that Hunt frequently referred to the situation in America, for he had been considerably influenced by the American debate, and his audience was not slow to recognize the extent to which many of his arguments also functioned as pro-slavery propaganda. This is not to say that scientific racism was born with the Civil War, but this acute conflict focussed attention on the indeterminacy which allowed the American Constitution and the institution of slavery to coexist: if the latter had always depended upon an a priori assumption of the inferiority of the negro, the threat to its existence required a rigorous proof of this assumption. This conclusion in search of a proof may have been precisely unscientific, being rather more akin to rhetoric, but the scientific language it employed and its intersection with other scientific fields—particularly those of geology and evolution, suggesting, respectively, a longer history of man than hitherto supposed and his development over time—enabled its enunciators to claim for themselves an effective and powerful language with which to engage in the political debate.

The debate in America would certainly have struck a chord in Great Britain, where the issue of how to accommodate other racial groups, as peoples governed by Britain in the colonial context, was also an important one. The sense of national esteem and purpose which Britain gained from its abolition of the slave trade in 1807, and of slavery itself in 1833, was considerable, and this, coupled with the liberal ideology of the civilizing mission, contributed to widespread support for the North, a fact clearly evident in much of the BAAS audience’s response to the presence of William Craft. However, the consequences of abolishing slavery in the Caribbean had received much attention in Britain, most famously in the debate between Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill on the so-called ‘Negro Question,’ which reached its apogee in Carlyle’s satirical ‘Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question’ and Mill’s reply. Furthermore, the complacent view of Britain’s international role as a welcomed torch-bearer of civilization had recently been substantially shaken by the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Therefore, although it might be argued that the political implications of scientific racism for British colonialism were not to be fully argued through within the public domain until the intense debate surrounding the Governor Eyre Controversy of 1866, there were already, in 1863, considerable differences of opinion regarding this subject, and if a certain amount of hissing followed Hunt’s paper, a significant minority of the audience were nonetheless happy to applaud, convinced that the negro was, indeed, an inferior being, incapable of improvement.

Craft’s own contribution to the meeting of the BAAS came on the 3rd September, and once again the gallery was ‘unusually crowded’ to hear the account of his recent visit to the King of Dahomey. This subject in itself was
certain to attract interest, because Dahomey had received persistent attention in the British popular press, being widely known for its role as a major supplier to the slave trade, for its annual ‘Customs’—reported as involving large-scale human sacrifice—and for its army of women warriors, inevitably dubbed ‘Amazons.’ Only a couple of weeks previously, on the 18th August, the Times had published a letter ‘received by the Duke of Wellington from the celebrated lion-hunter M. Jules Gerard,’ who gave a lurid account of his visit to Kana, where the King had celebrated a part of the annual custom; for instance, he describes ‘the market place, where 12 corpses were exposed to view on separate sites,’ and ‘The entrance gate . . . flooded by a pool of blood two yards in width, . . . on each side a column of recently decapitated heads formed two immense chaplets.’ Within this scene, ‘the King came and went in the midst of pools of blood and fragments of human flesh in a state of putrefaction’ and took part in ‘a mad dance.’ This letter provoked a number of responses, such as that from an individual signing himself ‘An African’ and writing ‘from ocular testimony,’ who defended the King as ‘a man of superior intellect, and . . . endowed with an extraordinary capacity for government,’ and human sacrifice as a religious practice; this letter in turn prompted a vehement response from the Wesleyan Minister Charles Hillard.

It was within the context of such accounts as those of Gerard that Craft had decided to visit Dahomey, ‘to ascertain whether those accounts were true or false, and whether anything could be done to change the bad habits of the people in that part of the world.’ The settled opinion on Dahomey was such that friends feared ‘that the King of Dahomey would be sure to cut his head off as soon as he laid hands on him,’ and a Government official ‘thought he would never get back again alive.’ Nonetheless, Craft found himself well received, and although he did indeed see evidence of human sacrifice, this was ‘not to the enormous extent that had been reported. The King of Dahomey was quite black enough, but not quite so black as he had been painted.’ Craft refutes Gerard’s depiction of the King dancing in pools of blood, stating that he had been present on the occasion and seen no such thing, and is keen to point out that in the practices of waging war and capturing prisoners for the slave trade, and of human sacrifice, ‘the pecuniary element entered into the question to a very large extent.’ The way, therefore, to end these things was to provide an alternative source of income, and Craft suggests the encouragement of cotton cultivation, an idea that he raised with the King, who seemed interested in pursuing it.

The reputation of Dahomey had, at the same time, drawn the British Consul, Richard Francis Burton, to Kana; Craft informs us that Burton had arrived during his stay, ‘and a grand review of the troops took place in honour of them all.’ Gerard also mentions Burton in his letter to the Duke of Wellington, stating his regret ‘that Captain Burton should have arrived at Kana just at the moment of the King’s departure, as he might have been enabled to see and judge of all these things.’ Craft, for his part, ‘regretted that Captain Burton
was not present [at the BAAS] to corroborate his statements; but he had seen a letter from that gentleman in the Anglo-African newspaper . . . and in that letter the captain made no allusion whatever to the horrible things which M. Gerard said he saw. Clearly Burton’s ocular testimony regarding Dahomey would carry some weight, and when he was finally granted an official visit as Her Majesty’s Commissioner to Dahomey, he used the opportunity to produce what he hoped would be the definitive statement on this contentious subject, proudly writing in his Preface to A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome (1864) that

The Pages now offered to the Public are the result of a three months’ personal study of Dahome, my work extending over the day, and often half through the night. I may venture to assert that, by comparing its results with the authors before cited, the labour expended upon this monogram [sic.] will become apparent. [Dahome I.xvii]

Both Gerard and Craft are likely to have been disappointed by Burton’s ‘monogram’, Gerard because Burton printed a copy of his letter as an appendix, adding derogatory footnotes such as ‘This is pure fancy’ and ‘Others represented the contrary,’ and concluding with a note stating, ‘The letter is interesting, as giving the darkest view of things Dahoman’ (Dahome II.410–12), and Craft because Burton frames his discussion within an explicitly racist framework which supports the contentions of Hunt. Indeed, in the course of his narrative he elaborates upon this theme in a chapter entitled ‘Of “The Negro’s Place in Nature,”’ which takes the form of a letter to ‘My Dear Hunt’ and opens with praise for Hunt’s courageous paper on the ‘Negro’s Place in Nature.’ It shows the reason why, at the last meeting of the British Association, you were received with those encouraging sounds, which suggested a mob of Eve’s tempters rather than a scientific assembly of her descendants [Dahome II.177–78], the last phrase repeated from Hunt’s own letter to him in the published paper.31

Burton was thus an intriguing marginal presence at the 1863 meeting of the BAAS, not physically present, but still there in spirit, part of the assembly despite his actual location in West Africa. When he spoke, his words were, therefore, delivered in and to the metropolitan centre, his ocular testimony answering questions posed within the parameters of the contemporary debate on the negro and his place in nature, and the importance which Hunt places on this testimony is clear:

We have had plenty of African travellers, but there is perhaps no other man living who, by previous education and study, is better able than yourself to paint the Negro and other African races as they exist, regardless of what we may consider should be their state.32
In the Preface to *Dahome*, Burton had stated that in the chapter addressed to Hunt, he had done his ‘best to aid him [Hunt] in dispersing the mists with which “mere rhetoric of a political and religious nature” has invested the subject’ (*Dahome* I.xv–xvi). However, we have seen that political rhetoric was not far from the surface in the debate at the BAAS, and I hope to show that Burton’s own views concerning the negro were nothing if not rhetorical as he attempted to construct a racial subject which might be accommodated within a range of discourses, including the political and the religious. The chapter ‘Of “The Negro’s Place in Nature”’ is, perhaps, Burton’s most sustained statement of these views, but a quite coherent set of opinions can be traced throughout his writings.

**The Noble Negroid and the Ignoble Negro**

Let us cast our minds back to a seminal moment in Burton’s career. After a long and arduous journey, he stands in sight of Lake Tanganyika, the object of his quest to the Lake Regions of Central Africa, and waxes lyrical as he paints a picture for his reader. He perceives the scene as ‘picturesque’ (*Lake Regions* 307), but finds that it ‘wants but a little of the neatness and finish of art—mosques and kiosks, palaces and villas, gardens and orchards’ (*Lake Regions* 308). In her analysis of imperial travel narratives, *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Pratt uses this passage to exemplify ‘the civilizing mission as an esthetic project,’ which is also an imperialist project and a ‘rhetoric of presence.’ Although Pratt draws attention to the ‘non-Christian Mediterranean esthetics’ of this vision, which she sees as reflecting ‘Burton’s deep ambivalences about Victorian English culture,’ this aesthetics also problematizes her use of it to illustrate the civilizing mission, because what Burton is projecting here is his ideal Oriental scene: rather than seeing the landscape as it might be improved by *European* intervention, he sees it as being improvable by *Islamic* influence. Certainly, though, this projection of an Islamic scene onto a central African landscape is an aesthetic vision, and one which we see repeated elsewhere in Burton’s writings on Africa—as when he finds in the court of Dahome that ‘the real negro grotesqueness, like bad perspective, injures the whole picture’ (*Dahome* I.275), so that ‘In the whole assembly there was hardly a redeeming point of picturesqueness or appropriateness except the “Porto Novo” Moslems’ (*Dahome* II.45). Indeed, it is a vision so powerful as to become entirely imbricated with Burton’s racial theories as they pertain to Africa, and one which contrasts not only with the very unaesthetic barbarism of what Burton calls ‘Negroland,’ but also with the equally unaesthetic outcomes of the European ‘civilizing mission’ as Burton found it, particularly in the colonies of West Africa.

For Burton there were two principal types of African:

The noble race, or great North African family, which shows everywhere signs of increase, insititious negroid, semi-Semitic, in fact, Mulattoes
and Asiatic Æthiopians . . . [and] the ignoble race, or pure breed, the aboriginal and typical African, exceptionally degraded in Guinea, and improving as he descends southwards and blends with the true Kafirs, who may be a people of mixed blood. [Wanderings I.177–78]

The latter group, the pure negroes, are lazy, debauched, deceitful, unattractive, instinctively servile, and irredeemably inferior: in a word, ignoble. Burton here is clearly inverting the trope of the noble savage so central to anti-slavery literature, locating his ideas within a more widespread turning away from the image of the negro as ‘a Man and a Brother,’ a slogan that Burton repeatedly ridicules. This subversion of the noble savage also implicitly rejects the Judaeo-Christian belief in a Fall from Adam in favour of a progressivist and evolutionary model of Man’s development which saw ‘early man’ as ‘a savage very little superior to the brute’ (Nights 10.185). Given this rejection of the ‘noble savage’ trope, Burton’s ironic designation of the negro as ignoble is entirely typical. However, what is more surprising is that he should choose to contrast this African type with one which is noble. So who, then, is this noble negroid?

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) wrongly honours Burton with the first use of the word ‘negroid,’ but its definition, ‘n. A person of Negro type,’ conflicts with Burton’s own usage as given above. Nonetheless, the word, itself, clearly suggests the OED definition, which implies that the negroid is a negro. In fact, this ambivalent word has proved itself amenable to two principal uses, either distinguishing, as Burton does, racial groups from negroes, or creating a larger category which includes negroes as a subset; this latter usage is still current in the racial division of the world’s population into Negroid, Caucasoid and Mongoloid, which specifically identifies sub-Saharan Africans, whom Burton calls negroes, as negroids. The vagueness of the word seems to suit Burton’s purposes, mirroring the vagueness of the object it is variously taken to designate, and although Burton calls it a race, the negroid category is something of a mixed bag: ‘Mulattoes and Asiatic Æthiopians,’ with the key term being ‘semi-Semitic.’ The negroid is, then, not a race in a rigorous genealogical sense, but an umbrella grouping of all those individuals and groups of people in whom the negro stock has received an infusion of noble Semitic blood. This supplement apparently has the power to transform the negro into a negroid, and thereby to en-noble him, but seen from the other side it is a degeneration: ‘The half-caste Arab is degenerate in body and mind; the third generation becomes as truly negroid as the inner heathen’ (Lake Regions 42, my emphasis). The negroid is closer to the negro than the Semite, then—hence the word: negroid—but that supplementary ‘id’ identifies this negro as noble.

However, it is not only nobility which distinguishes the negroid from the negro, for ‘the fetor is the grand discrimin’ (Dahome II.191), so that the negro’s ignobility becomes an unmistakable attribute of his body, the fetor
signifying in its invisibility physical differences which are perhaps not quite so unmistakable. This is a clear example of Burton’s insistent coupling of the moral and the physical, or ‘morale’ and ‘physique,’ as when he compliments Hunt ‘for having so graphically shown the great gulf, moral and physical, separating the black from the white races of men’ (Dahome II.178).37 For Burton, the body is the site where racial difference is inscribed, and this physical difference becomes the cause of moral difference. The moral level of a race then finds expression in its civilization (or barbarism), and in the case of the negroid this is most often the civilization of the Semite, or, to be more precise: Islam.

So when Burton projects an Islamic scene onto a central African landscape, he envisages a rolling back of ignoble barbarism before the advance of a noble Islamic civilization, and explicitly associates this enculturation with an infusion of Semitic blood. Thus the mixed, negroid races of the north are seen as those ‘who, extending southwards, with slow but regular advance, will, after many generations, mix their blood with the tribes typified by the Congo; will spread Islamism through the “Heart of Africa,” and will pave the way for a higher civilization.’38 This ‘gradual but sure advance of El Islam’ is characterized as ‘the Perfect Cure for the disorders which rule the land,’39 and, as a consequence of this process, ‘the negro must become extinct by being absorbed into the negroid’ (Dahome II.203). In the projected ‘civilizing mission’ of El-Islam, the advance of civilization is, therefore, accompanied by a mixing of blood which enacts a racial transformation: race and civilization are inextricably yoked together in the concept of the noble (Moslem) negroid, although quite how is tellingly unclear.

In order to unpack some of the contradictions and implications of this terminology, it is worth looking at one passage in some detail:

The negroid has taken a long step in the way of progress; for the Arab and the negro, as might be expected, combine better than the European and the black. El Islam, by forbidding impure meats and spirituous liquors, by enjoining ablutions and decent dress, and by discouraging monogamy and polyandry, has improved the African’s physique, and through it, by inevitable sequence, his morale. It is a cognate and a congenial civilisation, not one imported from 1500 miles of latitude, and sitting grotesquely upon the black mind, as the accompanying vestments upon the sable body—both being made contemptible by the contrast of what is and what ought to be. [Dahome II.192–93]

Taking this passage in isolation, we might think that the negroid is a Moslem negro, his physique and his morale improved by the strictures of Islam, a civilization not very different from his own, which he can therefore accept without too great an adjustment. This is in stark contrast to the effects of the British civilizing mission, and we see here again the aesthetics of appropriateness in
the contrast of what is and what ought to be. However, when Burton suggests that the Arab and the negro combine better than the European and the black, he also means that the offspring of inter-racial couplings between the Arab and the negro are more viable than those between European and black. Thus, when a narrative of the benign and spontaneous acceptance of a congenial faith intersects with a racialist discourse, as it does in Dahome, it becomes warped, in more ways than one. The negro ‘is apparently incapable of receiving the impressions of El Islam’ (Lake Regions 503), and so a new racial category, the negroid, irrupts into the narrative, masking, or marking by its masking, the contradiction between the discursive inscription of space—the marking of boundaries between distinct and geographically confined racial types—and the temporal narrative of the diffusion of Islam. The adoption of Islam in time can then only occur through an alteration in space—the rolling back of the boundary separating negro and negroid—and in the process the negro becomes extinct, or absorbed, as in a lovers’ embrace. And yet, strangely, the negro remains, blatantly clear, in his and her not-so-new name: negroid. The deeper underlying logic of Burton’s narrative of the civilization of Africa is thus a homogenization of race, and therefore space, by a progression of Islam carried in an erasing wave of blood, but when that wave has passed what, after all (that time), has changed? A couple of letters removed, another couple added: an ignoble negro has become a noble negroid, a racial type which seems, fetor notwithstanding, very much like the negro.

By contextualizing Burton’s vision on the shore of Lake Tanganyika within the wider framework of his narrative of an Islamic civilization of Africa, it can now be seen that there are some problems in Pratt’s use of this passage to exemplify her concept of the ‘rhetoric of presence’ associated with a British civilizing mission. Although it seems, at first sight, to illustrate her point perfectly, what makes this vision so interesting is precisely its difference from the clichéd drawing over of empty landscapes with scenes of Northern European industry, which Burton, probably intentionally, ironically subverts, playing with his readers’ expectations. This difference cannot simply be dismissed as reflecting Burton’s idiosyncratic ambivalences; we might, in fact, call his vision a displaced rhetoric of presence, and this displacement not only reveals an attachment to Islamic civilization, but implicitly suggests the very impossibility of a British presence in, and civilization of, the space upon which Burton gazes.

When Burton contrasts the ‘cognate and . . . congenial’ civilization of Islam with that ‘imported from 1500 miles of latitude,’ this contrast carries with it another: that between the cognate Semitic racial type and the less cognate Aryan type. Therefore, in the case of the spread of Islamic civilization, the moral and physical gulf separating the races could be rhetorically spanned in a racial intermixture, but in the case of the black and the white races, this is far from appropriate. Rather than the improvement and ennoblement which Burton perceives in the negroid, such a mixture produces
the mulatto, the ‘worst class of all’ in West Africa, of whom Burton says: ‘the uneasy idea that he is despised, naturally fill[s] him with ineffable bile and bitterness. Inferior in point of morale to Europeans, as far as regards physique to Africans, he seeks strength in making the families of his progenitors fall out’ (*Wanderings* I.271–72). An inappropriate in-between, this literal hybrid literally challenges the harmonious order established between pure black and pure white, and this notion takes on a more blatantly political edge when Burton claims that ‘Had the Slave States manumitted and deported their mulattos, the present state of things might not have been. In Southern America, also, the mongrel is the canker of society and of political life’ (*Dahome* II.188).

We have already seen this idea of a degraded and dangerous hybrid in Burton’s work on India, and in particular in his descriptions of Goa. In *Gorilla-Land*, he returns to this Portuguese colony to contrast it with that of Congo, and in this way to ‘obtain a measure of difference between the African and the Asiatic’ (*Gorilla-Land* II.225). His conclusion is that

> Asia was not so inimical, mentally or bodily, to the European frame as Africa; the Goanese throve after a fashion, the mixed breed became the staple population, and thus it continues till this day. On the other hand the Hamitic element so completely asserted its superiority over insidious Japheth, that almost every trace has disappeared in a couple of centuries. [*Gorilla-Land* II.226]

As in India, the difference between different bodies is related to the viability of their interbreeding, and the difference between Africa and Asia is a quantitative one: in Africa the gulf between European and native is greater than it is in Asia. Furthermore, this greater gulf manifests itself as the superior assertion of the ‘Hamitic element,’ suggesting that it is more difficult for the European to resist this assertion and to survive (or to retain his or her identity) in Africa. Of course, Congo serves as a bad example for the British in Africa, as Goa did in India, but the nearer equivalent of Goa on this continent is surely the Arab presence, which also results in a staple ‘mixed-breed’ population: the (noble) negroid. In Africa, it is then the Arab who comes between the African and the European, rather than the Portuguese between the Indian and the English. There are many moments when Burton describes the Arabian colonies using the same trope of corruption which he employed in speaking of Goa. However, we have seen that he also describes this site in very different terms, as an eminently desirable one, as when he projects an Eastern and Islamic scene onto the barren landscape around Lake Tanganyika. Burton’s representation of the Arab presence is, therefore, an ambivalent one, figuring a desirable expansion of Eastern space and elimination of Negroland, but also retaining the negro in his or her not-so-new name—negroid. Given the parallels with the Portuguese presence in India,
Playing With Words 99

this displaced rhetoric of presence is all the more striking, in that it evokes a hybrid site, in which the negro and the Semite are juxtaposed, as the most desirable transformation of Africa.

Burton’s friend, William Winwood Reade, shared his view that ‘neither European Commerce, nor Military Protection, nor Christian Missions, can civilize this country [of Africa],’ and that ‘the great work of Progress is being accomplished, though without European aid, and though concealed from European eyes. The continent is being civilized; the Africans are being converted by means of a Religion [Islam].’ Reade does not envisage a racial transformation, his views reflecting Burton’s more straightforward opinion that Islam suits Africans better than Christianity, Africans being ‘now in much the same state as were the Arabs before Mohammed.’ He further believes that we should ‘aid the Mohammedans in their great work—the Redemption of Africa’ and ‘abandon our absurd projects of converting Musulmans,’ rather seeking to ‘convert them to our arts, our sciences, and our commerce.’ However, in the final step of Reade’s projected Redemption of Africa even the ‘Mussalmans,’ with whom we should work, mysteriously disappear from the scene as a racial extermination attends the triumphant progress of a very English civilization and race:

Africa shall be redeemed. Her children shall perform this mighty work. Her morasses shall be drained; her deserts shall be watered by canals; her forests shall be reduced to firewood. Her children shall do all this. They shall pour an elixir vitae into the veins of their mother now withered and diseased. . . . In this amiable task they may possibly become exterminated. We must learn to look on this result with composure. It illustrates the beneficent law of nature, that the weak must be devoured by the strong.

But a grateful Posterity will cherish their memories. When the cockneys of Timbuctoo have their tea-gardens in the Oases of the Sahara; when hotels and guide-books are established at the Sources of the Nile; when it becomes fashionable to go yachting on the lakes of the Great Plateau; when noblemen, building seats in Central Africa, will have their elephant-parks and their hippopotami waters; young ladies on camp-stools under palm-trees will read with tears ‘The Last of the Negroes;’ and the Niger will become as romantic a river as the Rhine.

This is indeed a ‘rhetoric of presence’, which is at the same time a rhetoric of the negro’s non-presence. In this aesthetic vision, the negroes have silently retired from all but the printed page, neatly exterminated by the elegant ‘law of nature’ posited a few years earlier by Darwin. That they should be exterminated in the process of making Africa a fit dwelling place for cockneys, noblemen, and young English ladies conjures images of fatal forced labour,
but such a realistic picture is repressed. Instead, in Reade’s metaphorical scheme of regeneration, an *elixir vitae* is poured from the veins of the negroes into those of Africa, their ailing mother, ‘a Woman whose features, in expression, are sad and noble, but which have been degraded, distorted, and rendered repulsive by disease’—the very disease which, coursing through her veins, prevents the Englishman’s presence. The negro body emptied of its *elixir vitae* then withers away, leaving a rejuvenated and domesticated Africa for Englishmen to inhabit. That’s Progress (*ergo*, an ‘amiable task’ and a ‘beneficent law’).

In Winwood Reade’s vision, it is a new, improved Africa which the Englishman eventually inhabits: Negroland has been cleansed (of its negroes). So this rhetoric of presence is also a rhetoric of absence. For the Englishman to become present, Africa must cease to be Africa, become instead an exotic version of home, and if there is a considerable amount of irony in this vision, we can see accompanying this a melancholic desire to retain Africa as it is (supposed to be), prior to the corrupting touch of the English tourist. What is common to this vision and to Burton’s is the elimination of the negro from the scene, the difference lying in Burton’s falling short of Reade’s final flight of fancy whereby the geographical space of Africa can become inhabitable by the white man. For him it remains at the intermediate stage of an extension and hybridization of the Islamic/Semitic space, in which the negro is retained in the negroid. In both cases, the civilizing mission differs from the Evangelical mission in its conception of the negro: no longer a Man and a Brother, the negro cannot be converted to the values of European civilization. For Burton, even the rise to the stage of Islam requires an infusion of Semitic blood. The rhetoric of the civilization or redemption of Africa, the Heart of Darkness, therefore confronts a fundamental problem: the impossibility of civilizing the negro. Consequently, the improvement of Africa, preordained by the secular doctrine of Progress, can only be achieved by the replacement of the negro in Africa with another, higher racial type. Thus, Burton rhetorically en-nobles the debased negro, while Reade elides him from the picture. This brings us to the second fundamental problem: because racial types are inextricably tied to the spaces to which they belong, the higher races cannot unproblematically inhabit Negroland. Burton solves this problem by retaining the negro at the same time as he eliminates him, absorbing him in the figure of the negroid, and Reade, by cleansing the space itself, neatly eliminating the negro in the same gesture.

However, although Burton’s envisioning of an Islamic presence in Africa seems to preclude a British presence, we nonetheless do find this, as we have seen in Chapter 1, in a division between hills and plains, which takes the form of a projection of the Indian scene onto Africa. In Burton’s narrative, a rhetoric of presence supporting a British civilizing mission is, therefore, to be seen in his descriptions of mountainous regions and, in particular, the Camaroons, the discovery and mapping of which he was eager to claim as his
own contribution to the cause of British imperialism. Thus, he writes of his prospect of the foothills from aboard ship as commanding ‘a fine view of the site where the future town will be’ (*Abeokuta* II.33), draws our attention to ‘a finely wooded cliff, admirably fitted for the site of a convict prison’ (*Abeokuta* II.35) and, high in the mountains, tells us that he and his companions ‘mentally surveyed the future Sanitarium’ (*Abeokuta* II.129). As in India, here also this site is one of surveillance as well as of sanctuary: ‘the unknown land lay before me like a mappamondo. I felt as joyful as if my eyes had gazed upon “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them”’ (*Abeokuta* II.202).

When Burton thus places the British in their mountain sanitaria, the Islamic presence, which elsewhere seems so desirable, becomes simply part of the plains, that circumscribed space where elements mix and diseases are carried on the wind. The wave of Semitic blood sweeping through Africa might, therefore, give a greater sense of endangerment and isolation to the British in their elevated island fortresses, and this division of space figures, once more, an Imperial Order. If India was the place where ‘a handful of Europeans may still awe thousands with the white face,’ then in Africa, ‘It is hard to say whence came the tales invented by the African to explain the inferiority of the black to the white man. Their universality induces me to think them an emanation from the Hamitic brain’ (*Abeokuta* I.205). The African’s own acceptance of his inferiority then becomes the basis of a political order which is also an aesthetic vision: acting in obedience to the white man’s needs, the negro is ‘both useful and valuable in his proper Place in Nature’ (*Dahome* II.181), for

> the world still wants the black hand. Enormous tropical regions yet await the clearing and the draining operations by the lower races, which will fit them to become the dwelling-place of civilized man. . . . It remains only for us to draw upon the great labour-bank of Negro-land. [*Gorilla-Land* II.311]

Thus, the Imperial Order might be exported elsewhere and the divided space of Africa repeated throughout the world. Such a vision requires the strict maintenance of the border, and therefore the prevention of hybrid forms of any kind.

This dividing up of Africa rather moves towards Winwood Reade’s rhetoric of an English presence after the cleansing of the land by the negro, although Burton does not envisage the ‘Redemption of Africa’ as ‘the great work of this generation,’ for Africa cannot be occupied by the European races until they evolve into a Higher Race:

> Our transition state in Europe has at least this consolation, that we can look forward to a permanent improvement in type; to stocking the world with a higher order of man. But in Africa, before progress can be general,
it appears that the negro must become extinct by being absorbed into the negroid. [*Dahome II.203*]

In the (very long) meantime, two competing visions of the African coexist in Burton’s narrative: the retention of the negro in his useful function as the white man’s hand, taking his proper Place in an Imperial Order, and that other aesthetic vision of his absorption into the (noble) negroid.

**The Rudimental African Mind and the Garments of Civilization**

Suddenly every trace of civilization fell from my companions as if it had been a garment. At Aden, shaven and beturbaned, Arab fashion, now they threw off all dress save the loin cloth, and appeared in their dark morocco. [*First Footsteps I.4*]

The rhetorical construction of the negro was dependent upon considerable slippage between the physical, the moral, the psychological, and the cultural. Perhaps the central problem posed by this figure was the question whether he or she should be considered a man—one of us—or not. Theodor Waitz articulates this problem clearly when he asks,

> whether all individuals and peoples, usually comprehended under that term, are of one and the same nature,—whether they belong to one species, or whether there be not such specific differences in the physical and psychical endowments of individual stocks as would justify history in excluding them, assigning them to zoology.48

A racialized history tends to approach, through the coupling of morale and physique, a zoological, rather than political, history, and to be preoccupied not so much with matters of time, as with those of space. However, if the trope of a racialized space institutes clear borders between different races, the temporal nonetheless returns as an ambivalent factor in the institution of these boundaries: by positing the negro as inferior, by which is meant backward, he and she are placed in what Anne McClintock calls ‘*anachronistic space,*’49 and underlying this gesture is the assumption of a continuity in the temporal dimension which undermines the visible rupture between physically different racial bodies: the negro is located instead as the white man’s past.

Within the discipline of British ethnography, the figure of James Prichard looms large. He is ambiguously credited both with establishing physical anthropology in Britain—insisting upon the measurement of physical differences to clearly establish the varieties of man—and with making orthodox the doctrine of monogenism—a belief in the singular origin of man which he supported by
seeking to prove the ‘psychic unity’ of the species, and the unlimited fecundity of inter-racial couplings. As polygenism (a belief in the multiple origins of man) gained ground, the physical differences between races, and the impossibility of hybridity, were increasingly invoked in support of this position. Within such a framework, the psychic dis-unity of man followed as a matter of course. Burton, however, never clearly tied his colours to either of these masts, and his own engagement with the issues raised by the question of whether different races, and particularly the negro and the white man, were psychically different was considerably more complicated than the simply stated parameters of the debate between monogenists and polygenists would suggest.

Given Prichard’s emphasis on ‘psychic unity’, it is notable that in his letter to Burton, which elicited the reply in Dahome, James Hunt called upon him for his ‘experience of the psychological character of the negro race’ (Dahome II.179, my emphasis). This invitation reflects Burton’s own self-representation as an expert on negro psychology, an expertise which he claimed to have acquired ‘after ten years of travel, “on and off”’ (Dahome II.179) in Africa, and the subject was one to which he frequently returned. This theoretical interest, in fact, began as a direct engagement with Prichard’s The Natural History of Man, which Burton took with him to Central Africa, and in which he wrote extensive marginal notes; indeed, the concluding chapter of The Lake Regions of Central Africa (1860), entitled ‘The Character and Religion of the East Africans; their Government, and Slavery,’ can be read as an indirect response to Prichard’s influential book.

Despite his assertion of the unity of the species, Prichard’s thesis is, perhaps, ambivalent on this point—which Burton was quick to pick up on—as his entire theoretical framework emphasizes differences between people, and

it is only by tracing the history of the diversified human races from ancient times, and by comparing the former with the present state, we are made aware of the great changes which time and circumstances have effected in the condition of particular nations, and are brought to admit the probability of the opinion that beings apparently so different in their whole manner of existence can be in any way allied.50

Although Burton does not dispute this idea of change over time, he insists in the margin of Prichard’s book that the latter ‘Shirks [the] question—some improvable others not,’ suggesting that such differences are permanent, and that some races are permanently inferior. However, Prichard does not avoid the question, as the idea of improvability is actually key to his argument, so that he concludes:

We find every where the same susceptibility . . . of admitting the cultivation of these universal endowments, of opening the eyes of the mind to the more clear and luminous views which Christianity unfolds, of
becoming moulded to the institutions of religion and of civilised life: in a word, the same inward and mental nature is to be recognised in all the races of men.51

For Prichard, then, the proof of psychic unity is to be found in the successful conversion and colonization of the African mind. While he, following the Biblical framework, sees the history of man as a diffusion from a common origin—with all men retaining the same fundamental nature, all alike improvable under the twinned influences of Christianity and civilized life—Burton reads this history as a single one, with the negro incapable of improvement beyond a distant point in the white man’s past.

Prichard related the history of man to ‘psychology’, defining that latter as ‘with respect to mankind, the history of the mental faculties’.52 and, arguing for psychic unity, he drew attention to the fact ‘that among nations enjoying a much higher degree of mental culture, the prevalence of superstitions and practices more or less resembling the fetissism of Africa, may be recognised.’53 Constructing his own version of the African mind in the margins of Prichard’s book, Burton also made a ‘history of the human faculties’ central to his discussion of African psychology, although he qualified Prichard’s assertion that ‘the mind is the same in different countries and in different races of men’ with the observation, ‘yes but in different degrees, rudimental and complete.’54 Furthermore, when he opens the final chapter of Lake Regions with the words, ‘The study of psychology in Eastern Africa is the study of man’s rudimental mind, when, subject to the agency of material nature, he neither progresses nor retrogrades’ (Lake Regions 489), Burton, in subjecting the African to material nature, implicitly de-humanizes him. This is again in evidence when Prichard contrasts ‘the lower tribes [who] live every where resistless slaves to the agencies of material nature’ with ‘man, on the contrary, [who] gains victories over the elements’,55 and Burton jots ‘so African’ alongside the reference to the ‘lower tribes’ with which man is contrasted; we might say that this suggestion was already there in Prichard, waiting to be emphasized by Burton. Continuing in this vein, Burton asserts that

His mind, limited to the object seen, heard, and felt, will not, and apparently can not, escape from the circle of sense, nor will it occupy itself with aught but the present. Thus he is cut off from the pleasures of memory, and the world of fancy is altogether unknown to him. [Lake Regions 489]

In such a way, the negro is removed from history, and, moreover, from any sense of history, and is located upon the ladder of progress as ‘an embryo of the two superior races’ (Lake Regions 490), the European and the Asiatic.

When he goes on, once more picking up on Prichard, to address the subject of fetissism, it is within his temporal/psychological framework that Burton locates it, as ‘the condition of the infant mind of humanity’ (Lake
Regions 500). Fetissism arises spontaneously from the individual psyche, as an unmediated response to the African landscape:

Its [fetissism’s] origin is easily explained by the aspect of the physical world, which has colored the thoughts and has directed the belief of man: he reflects, in fact, the fantastical and monstrous character of the animal and vegetable productions around him. Nature, in these regions rarely sublime or beautiful, more often terrible and desolate . . . arouses in his mind a sensation of utter feebleness, a vague and nameless awe. . . . he prostrates himself before the sentiment within him, hoping to propitiate it as he would satisfy a fellow-man. [Lake Regions 499]

By thus infantilizing and primitivizing the African and his rudimental mind, a clear boundary is established between us, in our adult and civilized world, and him, on his knees, trembling before the African landscape. However:

The fetiss superstition is African, but not confined to Africa. . . . That fetissism is a belief common to man in the childhood of his spiritual life, may be proved by the frequent and extensive remains of the faith . . . still sprouting like tares even in the fair field of revealed religion. [Lake Regions 500–1, my emphasis]

This is a repetition of Prichard’s observation in defence of psychic unity, and the eruption of fetissism from the shores of Africa here marks a crucial rhetorical shift in Burton’s narrative, from the temporal to the spatial: fetissism is not an historical vestige, nor does it arrive from Africa by diffusion, but it erupts from beneath, like sprouting tares. There is, therefore, a shift from an historical to an archaeological paradigm, which echoes and becomes entangled with another persistent theme in Burton’s thinking about the African: his displaced dwelling upon the naked body beneath his clothes.

I have already drawn attention to his remark that Islam is, for the negro, ‘a cognate and a congenial civilization, not one imported from 1500 miles of latitude, and sitting grotesquely upon the black mind, as the accompanying vestments upon the sable body,’ and this is a recurring trope in Burton’s work on Africa. For instance, he says of the Kafirs that ‘they have been varnished with the semi-civilization of trade and commerce, which sits ridiculously upon their minds, as a rich garment would upon their persons’ (Lake Regions 499). European civilization appears as an ill-fitting, ill-seeming garment upon the body and mind of the African; we might also say that it is a graft which will not take, as when Burton speaks of ‘Blackman’s English’ as something ‘engrafted upon the African mind’ (Wanderings II.33). When entangled with the archaeology of civilized thought, this African mind appears not so much as an embryo, but rather as a kernel, the inner core of the white man’s mind, to which civilization has been added, and upon the surface of which traces
of barbaric, rudimental belief continue to sprout. The sole difference, then, in a nutshell, between the negro and the white man is that the negro doesn’t suit the white man’s clothes.

The ‘Semite’ is ambivalently located within this framework; as the epigraph to this section shows, the Arab might, simply by taking off his clothes, drop all trace of civilization and return to his dark morocco, just as, by assuming these garments, the negro might become a negroid. Burton once more places this ambiguous figure somewhere in-between the white man and the black when he writes,

As a rule, the civilized or highest type of man owns the sway of intellect, of reason; the semi-civilized—as are still the great nations of the East—are guided by sentiment and propensity in a degree incomprehensible to the more advanced races; and the barbarian is the slave of impulse, passion, and instinct, faintly modified by sentiment, but ignorant of intellectual discipline. [Lake Regions 490]

The category of ‘Asiatic,’ or ‘Oriental,’ is then split as Burton goes on to speak of the ‘barbarian’ as

inferior to the active-minded and objective, the analytic and perceptive European, and to the ideal and subjective, the synthetic and reflective Asiatic. He partakes largely of the worst characteristics of the lower Oriental types—stagnation of mind, indolence of body, moral deficiency, superstition, and childish passion. [Lake Regions 490, my emphasis]

This division of the Oriental into two social classes is also a division between semi-civilized and barbarian. In delineating ‘the mediaeval Arab’ in Nights, Burton reformulates this duality. Here he claims that ‘Considered in a higher phase, the mediaeval Moslem mind displays . . . a most exalted moral idea, the deepest reverence for all things connected with his religion and a sublime conception of the Unity and Omnipotence of the Deity,’ whilst also noteworthy are ‘his lofty quietism’ and ‘his lively poetic impulse.’ However,

Nor is the shady side of the picture less notable. Our Arab at his worst is a mere barbarian who has not forgotten the savage. He is a model mixture of childishness and astuteness, of simplicity and cunning. . . . It must be confessed that these contrasts make a curious and interesting tout ensemble. [Nights 10.64–5]

These notable contrasts within the individual echo the division in Oriental society and explicitly mark a fluctuation in Burton’s representation of the semi-civilized Oriental: he is both barbaric and civilized—or, to put this
another way, both black and white—while being, at the same time, neither one nor the other.

Continuing his ‘on and off’ musings on the subject of African psychology, Burton copies Dr. Von Martius, cited by Prichard, in claiming that the African ‘unites the incapacity of infancy with the unpliancy of age’ (Lake Regions 489).56 (Although Von Martius is speaking here of the American races, presumably what can be said of one savage can be said of all.) However, while Von Martius continues, ‘This strange and inexplicable condition has frustrated almost every attempt to reconcile him completely with the European, to whom he gives way,’57 the equivalent continuation in Lake Regions has a rather different emphasis: ‘He appears . . . to the civilized man a paralogic being—a mere mass of contradictions; his ways are not our ways, his reason is not our reason’ (Lake Regions 490). If, for Von Martius, the contradictory nature of the American is a political problem—a failure of ‘reconciliation’, or conversion, a theme which, as we have seen, Burton also explores at length—for Burton it is also a problem of perception, or appearance: the negro appears contradictory from the white man’s point of view. This is stated more clearly in Wanderings, where Burton remarks, ‘The morale of this people appears to the European exceedingly contradictory, not to say unintelligible. The same, however, may be affirmed of all barbarous tribes, where viewed with purely civilized eyes’ (Wanderings II.20). Moving on to Gorilla-Land, we find Burton reflecting on the work of a Dr. Vidal, whose belief it is that we can discover the psychical peculiarities of a people by examining their language. Burton asserts that this project is both difficult and interesting, ‘the main obstacle to success being the almost insuperable difficulty of throwing off European ideas and modes of thought, which lifelong habit has made a second nature’ (Gorilla-Land I.184). There is a suggestive move here, which makes, now, of the garments of civilization a second nature, which presumably makes of the negro’s rudimental mind, expressed in his language, a primary nature.

Let us return for a moment to Lake Regions, where Burton writes:

In morality, according to the more extended sense of the word, the East African is markedly deficient. He has no benevolence, but little veneration—the negro race is ever irreverent—and, though his cranium rises high in the region of firmness, his futility prevents his being firm. The outlines of law are faintly traced upon his heart. The authoritative standard of morality, fixed by a revelation, is in him represented by a vague and varying custom. . . . The accusing conscience is unknown to him. [Lake Regions 496]

Here we find, again, the idea of the negro having a lower morale, which is tied to his physique in a manner which owes much to phrenology, of which Burton was a strong advocate. In this passage, ‘morality’ is used in a specifically religious
and social sense, and its deficiency is related to a lack of authority and clearly-defined laws. In this way, the moral, physical, psychological, and cultural are woven together in a manner with which we are familiar, and we find here a new keyword—*conscience*—which is linked to morality and declared to be something which the negro lacks. This idea is repeated in *Gorilla-Land*, where Burton develops his commentary on Vidal’s observations, particularly about the lack of any synonym for ‘gratitude’ in African languages:

Surely it is time to face the fact that conscience is a purely geographical and chronological accident. Where, may we ask, can be that innate and universal monitor in the case of a people, the Somal for instance, who rob like Spartans, holding theft a virtue . . . ? [*Gorilla-Land* I.185]

So to understand the negro—to see with barbarian eyes—we will need to throw off our language and with it our accusing conscience, the geographical and chronological accident gifted to us by virtue of our birth here—in northern Europe—and now—the mid-nineteenth century.

However, Burton continues:

And what easier than to prove that there is no sin however infamous, no crime however abominable, which at some time or in some part of the world has been or is still held in the highest esteem? The utmost we can say is that conscience, the accident, flows directly from an essential. All races now known to the world have a something which they call right, and a something which they term wrong. . . . Their good and their evil are not those of more advanced nations; still the idea is there, and progress and tradition works it out in a thousand different ways. [*Gorilla-Land* I.185–86]

There is a considerable movement here from the idea of the negro *lacking* a conscience, to the notion that he has a *different* one. This radically alters the meaning of ‘a geographical and chronological accident’, which now suggests different moralities located on a spatial and temporal grid, and the development of this idea can be traced quite clearly through Burton’s writings. In *First Footsteps*, he is being somewhat ironic when he asserts that ‘After much wandering, we are almost tempted to believe the bad doctrine that morality is a matter of geography’ (*First Footsteps* I.84). In *Abeokuta*, the idea progresses in response to ‘a certain preacher’ whom he quotes as saying, ‘Now, my brethren, Conscience is not, as some say, a geographical or a chronological accident’ (*Abeokuta* I.178); Burton argues against this opinion, thereby positioning himself in opposition to the religious view which saw conscience as a gift from God to Man. As we have seen, Burton further develops his thoughts in *Gorilla-Land*, and his alter ego, Abdû, expresses similar sentiments in *Kasidah*. He finally returns to the idea in a lengthy footnote to
*The Thousand Nights and a Night* which explains polygamy and polyandry as practices tied to climatically different regions:

in low-lying lands, like Persian Mazanderan versus the Plateau; Indian Malabar compared with Marátha-land; California as opposed to Utah and especially Egypt contrasted with Arabia . . . the venereal requirements and reproductive powers of the female greatly exceed those of the male. . . . In cold-dry or hot-dry mountainous lands the reverse is the case; hence polygamy there prevails whilst the low countries require polyandry in either form, legal or illegal (*i.e.* prostitution). [*Nights* 3.241]

Burton describes this as “‘geographical morality’ (for all morality is, like conscience, both geographical and chronological), a subject so interesting to the [colonial] lawgiver, the student of ethics and the anthropologist’ (*Nights* 3.241), and this mapping of moralities implies a moral relativity which demands that ethnocentric judgement be suspended, European ideas and modes of thought thrown off, and different systems studied on their own terms. There is also a clear break with a racial framework, a move from genealogical to geographical essentialism. However, morale does not become decoupled from physique, for climate takes the place of race as determinant of both; space is ostensibly de-racialized, but it continues to determine and reflect the bodies which inhabit it.

It is probably not coincidental that the phrase ‘geographic morality’ was also used by Edmund Burke to attack Warren Hastings in his epic prosecution of the latter for crimes committed during his period as Governor-General of Bengal under the East India Company (1772–86). Saree Makdisi discusses Burke’s use of this phrase, suggesting that

While, for the most part, Burke insists upon the static immutability and everlasting difference from England of India and Indian culture . . . he also invokes the possibility of mutation and development. . . . Moreover, he vehemently denounces the notion of ‘geographic morality’ and insists that ‘the laws of morality are the same everywhere,’ because all human beings and societies share certain fundamental qualities and rights—qualities and rights that implicitly deny the possibility of totally separate spheres of existence, separate histories, separate destinies.50

Such an ambivalence is also clear in Burton’s writings, although in both his racial theory and in his idea of ‘geographical morality’, he is clearly expressing a belief in ‘separate spheres,’ and this would, in the context of the conflict between Burke and Hastings, manifest itself politically as support for Hastings and his rule according to the supposed local norms and traditions.60
demonstrates a cyclical and repetitive structure underlying British debates about how Britain should govern its colonial others—a subject so interesting to the (colonial) lawgiver—and about their Place in Nature—a subject so interesting to the anthropologist. If, for Burton, conscience and the human condition it implied came to seem more and more relative, this was in direct conflict with his interlocutor, James Prichard, whose discussion of the question of whether mankind had one or many origins was avowedly related to ‘the history of mankind contained in the Sacred Scriptures,’ a statement alongside which Burton scribbled, ‘ought to omit this—but he is an Englander!’ For Burton (the student of ethics) these Sacred Scriptures were not a revelation of man’s common origin and single nature, but a garment which may, or may not, be easily thrown off. However, this by no means meant that other moralities were allowed to irrupt into the space and time of the sovereign European consciousness, fatally undermining it. Rather, these moralities—of strategic use in questioning aspects of European ‘civilization’ as well as giving it the semblance of a genealogy and an archaeology—were multiply contained in different spaces, and in bodies and societies which could be described and classified as they were placed outside our community of consensus as to what is right and wrong and, perhaps most importantly, in another time.

Johannes Fabian has explored, at length, the manner in which time is spatialized in anthropological discourse, resulting in a ‘denial of coevalness . . . a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse.’62 We have seen how, for Burton, to travel through space is, indeed, to travel through time, observing earlier stages of the white man’s past, and the idea of Progress was fundamental to him. Thus, other races and their moralities were placed in the past and the relationship between them and us was not one of communication but of mastery, an incorporation precisely as our past which we have moved beyond and hidden beneath our clothes. It might seem that Burton’s notion of ‘geographical morality’ establishes a different paradigm, but, as Fabian says,

Just because one condemns the time-distancing discourse of evolutionism he does not abandon the allochronic understanding of such terms as primitive. On the contrary, the time-machine, freed of the wheels and gears of the historical method, now works with ‘redoubled vigour.’ The denial of coevalness becomes intensified as time-distancing turns from an explicit concern into an implicit theoretical assumption.63

In Burton’s blatantly ambiguous description of conscience (and all that entails) as geographical and chronological, we can see a median term in the transition from evolutionist to synchronic representations, and the manner in which Burton articulates these terms shows the way in which they are
fundamentally intertwined. It was and is only by proscribing the time of the Other, denying him or her coevalness and thereby co-presence, that we could and can ‘construct ordered Space and Time—a cosmos—for Western society to inhabit.”

Conclusion

When Burton rose, before and after the event, to address the 1863 meeting of the BAAS, his speech was a long one, stretching ‘on and off’ across the years. His support for the views of James Hunt allowed him to confront William Craft directly, but the nature of this confrontation was rather more complicated than such a singular identification would suggest. Hunt’s scientific racism was an emphatic rhetoric of non-presence, either of the white man or the negro in Africa and elsewhere, and was based upon an unbridgeable divide between one body and the other—put most simply, between white and not. We have also seen this rhetoric used, rather more ironically, by Winwood Reade in his vision of the cleansing of Negroland, at present diseased but in the future existing as an exotic and touristic version of England. However, Reade also copied, alongside this, Burton’s projection of the conversion of the negro to Islam, and for Burton this convert—the ‘noble negroid’—was an ambivalent figure, in which at the same time the Semite and the Hamite expressed themselves; correspondingly, an Islamic/Semitic space was superimposed upon the dwelling place of ignoble negroes.

These two spaces (‘East’ and ‘Negroland’) are quite clearly visible in Burton’s descriptions of Africa, but less obvious is the vision which is announced in the word ‘negroid,’ namely the presence of a mixed, hybrid population, which is neither Oriental nor negro. Burton frequently presents this population and space in much the same way as Goa—or the hybrid political space of British India, or the European colonies of West Africa—as a grotesque caricature by the lower of the higher power. Such a predictable picture would hardly warrant the title ‘noble negroid,’ and it is only this revealing name which tells us of a rhetoric of presence which is, at the same time, a rhetoric of the non-presence of the white man. I have suggested that this is a displaced rhetoric of presence, and what it displaces—and thereby censors—is the presence of a mixed, hybrid population which includes as it dissolves the white man, as in a loving embrace; this vision is more obviously censored in the very different naming of the mulatto, who is more ignoble even than the negro.

Given the disgust engendered by the figure of the mulatto in the leading lights of the Anthropological Society, it seems ironic that Reade’s only answer to Craft’s argument, given in his review of Burton’s Dahome, was the following:

it must appear all but incredible to foreigners that, at a meeting, which we regard as our grand annual scientific reunion, a man of science... should be hissed by an ignorant mob; and that those whose business it is
to feed the sentimental appetites of this rabble should have platformed a Mulatto named Craft, and palmed him off upon them as a Negro. The Negro now-a-days is the darling of a public who cannot tell a Negro when they see him.65

Reade dismisses this performance as an inaccurate repetition of the staging of escaped slaves, Craft’s predecessors, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for Craft is not even a negro. Although Reade would surely find it uncomfortable, and we ironic, that he is, in fact, a coherently speaking ‘Mulatto,’ here in the inner forum, this is suppressed in the theatrically outraged assertion that a grand annual meeting of rational Englishmen has been turned into a pantomime for sentimental women. Furthermore, Reade does not even acknowledge that the argument he contends against is that of Craft, attributing it instead to those who manipulate, behind the scenes, the ignorant mob.

As we have seen, Craft knew that his physical presence at the heart of this debate could be used to good effect, and he boldly asserts, anticipating Reade’s presentation of him, that he is not a negro, ‘not of pure African descent.’ Having said what he is not, Craft tells us what he is: a ‘gentleman of colour,’ and ‘an Englishman of African parentage, unfortunately born in America.’ By including himself in the term, Craft draws here upon a very powerful self-image of the Englishman: ‘I am so universal that I can and do represent everyone, whatever their differences.’ This self-image was also an important rhetorical underpinning of imperialism. To put this another way: a most fundamental justification of English expansion was that this was not imperialism at all, because the world was always already England, a part of its presence. As soon as one part comes to represent the whole world, though, there occurs a ‘rhetoric of presence’, the drawing of a border between what is present and what is not, between here and another place where here must be projected. Imperialism—the despotic rule of one by another—is the desire (Eros) to project the self outward to fill the world, abolishing the border, and this cannot be separated from the desire that this same thing—loss of the border—happen from the other side. This second desire (Thanatos) must be ostentatiously repressed for imperialism, with its wilful movement outward and forward, to occur, and so the border must be repeatedly reinscribed to prevent loss of self, contamination, and death.

Prichard’s rhetoric of presence as the successful conversion and colonization of the African mind can be seen as such a desired extension of the self, figured as civilization and as Christianity. This specifying of the self as a particular centre opened it to critique—of civilization and of Christianity—and this was even more true when it was further identified as England and English, or as the English industrial metropolis; we find such critique implicit in the bitter irony of Winwood Reade’s rhetoric, and in Burton’s concept of ‘geographical morality’. In the face of such self-questioning, the
border was drawn more emphatically—between bodies—and if Prichard had already incorporated physical anthropology, Reade, Hunt, and Burton did so to a greater degree in their coupling of morale and racial physique. As this difference was foregrounded as the essential one, the greatest (and therefore most desirable) threat to the singularity of the self became the loss of bodily integrity, by disease or degeneration, for instance. The literal signifier of the loss of this border between one body and another was the hybrid child, who represented the hybridization of (as the loss of the border protecting) those other things: civilization, Christianity, England, Man . . .

Burton, in the context of the debate at the BAAS, would be unable to accept Craft’s as an image of his own body, or, by extension, as an Englishman. His African parentage, and even his unfortunate birth in America, also prevented this, tying him to the other space. Yet this identification was, in its refusal, all the more desirable, and such a desire finds its displaced expression in the rhetoric of an Eastern or Islamic presence in Africa. Although this hybrid site—which is, in Burton’s description of it, both one and double—is placed on the other side of the border, in the plains rather than the hills, it is a place to which Burton tells us he would be able to travel in disguise, as Abdullah, now that Negroland has, in his vision on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, become East. Indeed, Burton did so travel on his first trip to East Africa, setting out for ‘the forbidden city of Harar’ (*First Footsteps* I.xxv) disguised as Abdullah, who is now a trader and, naturally, a Haji. On the occasion of their arrival on the coast, Burton writes:

The well-known sounds of Al-Islam returned from memory. Again the melodious chant of the Muezzin—no evening bell can compare with it for solemnity and beauty—and in the neighbouring mosque, the loudly-intoned Amin and Allaho Akbar—far superior to any organ—rang in my ear. . . . After a peep through the open window, I fell asleep, feeling once more at home. [*First Footsteps* I.17–18]

Thus he claims to have two homes—one on each side of the border—but the assertion of Islam and the East as home is openly declared to be strategic, the disguise being simply a means of ‘breaking the guardian spell’ (*First Footsteps* I.2) of the forbidden city. We might also say that Burton, in establishing a second home, places a second border, and ironic distance, between himself as observer of, and as traveller in, Negroland; in this way, Abdullah comes between Burton and the negro.

In Africa, however, Burton was not able, for long, to continue in the guise of Abdullah for, as Dane Kennedy points out, he soon found that ‘His pale appearance exposed him unmistakably and irrevocably as an outsider.’ Kennedy goes on to argue that it was for this reason that ‘physical traits began to assume the sort of significance for Burton’s understanding of race previously held by cultural traits such as language, religion, and custom.’ In
other words, Burton—unmistakably identified in Africa as a foreign body not allowed to pass unremarked—could not contain his own disavowed presence there in the *nom de guerre* of ‘Abdullah,’ with his particular language (Arabic, etc.), religion (Islam, principally) and customs (manifold). Instead, he contained this in another, more clearly-interdicted alter ego—the negro, whose morale is irrevocably tied to his racial physique. Nonetheless, we have seen that even when Abdullah is absent from the scene, the place which he marks mediates between Burton and Africa in a displaced rhetoric of presence, for instance, or in the ambivalent figure of the semi-civilized Semite, or in the bodies of Abdullah’s friends who, shedding their garments of civilization, stand forth in their dark morocco.

It is in the negroid, though, that Burton’s divided self finds its most clearly-displaced expression, and the nature of this division is apparent in the manner in which Burton describes this racial type within the frameworks of phrenology and physical anthropology. For instance, he declares that the face of ‘the Semiticized negroids’ is ‘Arab in the upper and African in the lower half’ (*Wanderings* I.188), and expands upon this when he notes that ‘the upper, or intellectual part . . . is distinctly Semitic. . . . The lower, or animal half . . . unmistakably African’ (*Zanzibar* I.414–15). The same can be said of ‘The figure [which] is, like the features, Semitic above and negrotic below’ (*Zanzibar* II.83). The negroid is not so much a hybrid, then, as ‘the grafting of the semi-civilized Semite upon the Hamite’ (*Lake Regions* 45), with the Semite upper and the Hamite lower.

This paradigm repeats, in the other body, the divided space of the Imperial Order, with the white man on top and the black man beneath. It also repeats the archaeological understanding of the white man’s mind, with its negro kernel, and this spatialization mirrors the temporal dimension, in which the negro is the white man’s past, just as Abdullah always comes before the intervention of Burton’s pen and civilized eye. In Burton’s anthropological psychology, then, the following are inseparably intertwined: a space divided horizontally (different peoples tied to different places according to racial type and/or ‘geographical morality’); a space divided vertically (a naked body beneath clothes, a repressed rudimental mind); and the temporal dimension in which Burton travels through the white man’s past. The common feature knotting all of these together is a border dividing Burton’s presence *here* from another place where he must (in the service of the British Empire) never really have been. That place is neither introjected nor abolished but, like a living corpse interred in a crypt, continues to haunt.

Returning to Burton’s narrative of his first nights in Africa, in the guise of Abdullah, he writes a few pages later in an address to his Reader, James Grant Lumsden:

> It argues ‘peculiarity,’ I own, to enjoy such a life. In the first place there is no woman’s society: Al-Islam seems purposely to have loosened the ties
between the sexes in order to strengthen the bonds which connect man
and man. Secondly, your house is by no means your castle. You must open
your doors to your friend at all hours; if when inside it suit him to sing, sing
he will; and until you learn solitude in a crowd, or the art of concentra-
tion, you are apt to become ennuyé and irritable. You must abandon your
prejudices, and for a time cast off all European prepossessions in favour of
Indian politeness, Persian polish, Arab courtesy, or Turkish dignity.

‘They are as free as Nature e’er made man,’

and he who objects to having his head shaved in public, to seeing his
friends combing their locks in his sitting-room, to having his property
unceremoniously handled, or to being addressed familiarly by a perfect
stranger, had better avoid Somali-land. [First Footsteps I.27–8]

Here loss of self is figured as a loss of the impregnability of the house, or the
Home which is, as we are so often told, an Englishman’s castle. The friend
who must be admitted at all hours, and who will sing his beautiful words
inside, rapidly becomes a crowd and then a perfect stranger, unceremoni-
ously handling one’s property. This is seen as a Natural state, also a free one,
and in order to avoid it—to avoid the ennui and irritability which signify a loss
of identity—the border must be drawn closer, around the solitary and con-
centrated individual, for whom the other as crowd and stranger is a threat.
However, Burton claims to enjoy this life, to be able to cast off his European
self-possession and prejudices—his clothes—in favour, for a time, of ‘Indian
politeness, Persian polish, Arab courtesy, or Turkish dignity.’ That this is a
world without women brings into focus the sexualized version of this vision,
in which the house as castle can be read as the passive subject’s body, and in
which ‘to sing’ is ‘to come.’ If Bull, ogling all those nautch girls, was mark-
edly heterosexual, Abdullah is less clearly so. However, as we have seen time
and time again, Burton was only ever ironically ambivalent about which side
of the border he belonged on: prejudices might be for a time cast off, but they
must be worn again when you come back, cast off your disguise, pick up
your pen and can clearly identify ‘geographical morality’ when you see it.

Burton continues:

You will doubtless, dear L., convict me, by my own sentiments, of being
an ‘amateur barbarian.’ You must, however, remember that I visited Af-
rica fresh from Aden, with its dull routine . . . [and] such semi-civilized
life abounds in a weary ceremoniousness. . . . And if you venture to
object to these Median laws—as I am now doing—you elicit a chorus of
disapproval, and acquire some evil name. [First Footsteps I.28–9]

Justifying his behaviour and fantasy, he argues that such pure barbarism is at
least superior to the Median, semi-civilized state of a degenerate colonial class,
and in the evocation of the barbarian, belonging to Nature, the negro contained in the negroid, as in a crypt, comes to the surface. What Burton figures in this other place is a double image: in one (Eros), the solitary individual (Burton) heroically resists the dissolution threatened by the crowd, their claiming of his house and its contents as their property; in the other (Thanatos) this surrendering of identity, this becoming Abdullah, one of the crowd, is welcomed and enjoyed—and in the sexualization of this vision, his pen becomes their penises. It is therefore one or the other: either I’m on top or you are, and always, in the end, it’s me. The notion that the house and its contents—all this land—might belong equally to all has no place in the Imperial Order of castration and counter-castration. Yet it is this censored vision which is the embryo and kernel of the other, more visible two, and this is the place to which Abdullah, in the absence of Burton, belongs: the place where the houses, the pens, the voices, the cities and the penises belong equally to each, where the presence of one is the presence of all. To truly belong here, in one’s own name, would be to acquire an evil name—White Nigger, Sodomite, or Mulatto. It is this name which Burton so vehemently rejects when he claims that he has never really been there, that he has only visited as an amateur, in the service of Empire and in disguise. Yet what this name signifies is also greatly desirable, as a friendship always already lost, which cannot speak its name.

Despite the manifold disclaimers, the desire for this place returns in displaced form, as the noble savage, or the noble negroid, or the figure of Burton himself, who contains that other place within him, in a serviceable crypt or kernel. These fantasies mark the place of a hidden desire—not Eros or Thanatos, but both together, prior to their difference—and their very ostentatiousness strengthens the border by repeatedly reinscribing it. So when the hybrid figure appears, he does so, from the onlooker’s and writer’s point of view, in order that he and his words might be disavowed. However, someone might choose to theatrically step out of this crypt and these fantasies, placed so ostentatiously in the centre of the self’s forum, deliberately confronting the onlooker with his troubling, not quite resemblance (hybrid rather than graft, or imperfect hybrid), even going so far as to call himself an Englishman, with all the rights of an Englishman. He would do so strategically, to further strike home his unsettling song—his own words, not those placed in his mouth—and to purposefully shake the topography, challenge the status quo. Step forward, William Craft.
5 Outside the City Walls
Gorillas and Cannibals

Perhaps it will be safest not to assume that ‘civilisation’ has any precise meaning at all, but to suppose, provisionally, that it simply refers to the stage of society in which live the readers of the present volume. We shall then know where we are.¹

Darkening Africa

Africa grew dark as Victorian explorers, missionaries, and scientists flooded it with light.²

The gorilla was first named and scientifically described by Thomas Savage and Jeffries Wyman in a paper delivered to the Boston Society of Natural History in 1847. Savage, a missionary, first became aware of this new species of ape when he happened upon a skull in the West African home of the Reverend J. L. Wilson, and he proceeded to acquire other parts of the skeleton with which he returned to America. The paper which resulted comprises a section by Savage on the ‘External Characters and Habits of the Engé-ena’—pieced together from native accounts, Savage never having himself seen the animal alive—and Wyman’s anatomical ‘Description of the Crania and some of the Bones of the Engé-ena.’³ The act of naming was, of course, an important function of this paper, and the native name, Engé-ena, was put forward as the common name, in much the same way as ‘orang-outang,’ a Malayan name taken to mean ‘wild man of the woods,’ and ‘chimpanzee’ had been appropriated. However, this name was to prove short-lived, eclipsed by the species name ‘gorilla,’ a peculiar word rescued from the obscurity of the Carthaginian Hanno’s Periplus, an account of a journey along the West coast of Africa in the 5th century B.C. in which it is written, ‘in this bay was an island . . . having a lake and in it another island filled with wild savages. The biggest number of them were females, with hairy bodies, which our interpreters called “Gorillas.”’⁴

Although Savage and Wyman explicitly state that Hanno’s passage does not actually describe the subject of their paper, their use of the word
paradoxically suggests the contrary, so that the Engé-ena at the same time inhabits the native space and, as the gorilla, the Western textual tradition, with its hereby made to recur motif of a space inhabited by hairy, animal-like men, most (or all but one?) of them women. Furthermore, the gorilla, this hairy savage from an island within an island, was placed in the same genus as the chimpanzee: ‘Troglodytes,’ a word meaning cave-man, and a classification having its origin in Linnaeus’s ‘monster-category’5 of the Anthropomorpha. In the naming of this and other apes, we are conducted irresistibly back to the iconography of the ancients, to those human-shaped figures, those almost humans, but not quite, who inhabited the geographical and conceptual periphery, Outside the City Walls, and traced man’s limits.

Paul Belloni du Chaillu, a Frenchman of uncertain past and parentage (it was rumoured that his mother was black or of mixed race), had spent a number of years working for his father, a trader, in West Africa before moving to the United States, where he had some success lecturing and writing about Africa. In 1855, he set off for Equatorial West Africa again, this time as an explorer intent on mapping the region and bringing back specimens, as well as the first Western eye-witness account, of the recently named Troglodytes gorilla. He returned to America in 1859 and ‘spent much of 1860 touring the United States with his collections of exotic stuffed animals, giving popular lectures.’6 The most popular of these stuffed animals were the gorillas, and there were also specimens of the other two species of ape which du Chaillu claimed to have discovered. Felicitously, Richard Burton was, himself, touring America in that year, and was able to see the gorillas before du Chaillu, collection in tow, came to Britain in 1861, where he ‘described his adventures to packed halls at the Royal Geographical[al] Society and the Royal Institution in London, with a row of stuffed gorillas on the stage and gorilla skulls on hand beside the lectern.’7 Not surprisingly, the narrative account of his adventures was eagerly anticipated, and when Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa was published in May, the reviewer in the Times wrote, with perhaps just a touch of exaggeration, ‘We must go back to the voyages of La Perouse and Captain Cook, and almost to the days of wonder which followed the track of Columbus, for novelties of equal significance to the age of their discovery.’8

Du Chaillu’s book was gripping, supplementing graphic descriptions of face to face encounters with ferocious, breast-beating gorillas with gruesome evidence of cannibalism, and it was not long before many began to accuse him of sensationalizing, not to say inventing, the facts.9 Not only the authenticity of the narrative, but its very authorship, was called into question as du Chaillu’s knowledge of English came under the spotlight, and the striking illustrations, an integral part of the work, were taken to be copied from others or pure fancy. The debate surrounding this work, which came to be known as ‘The Gorilla Controversy,’ certainly, as Stuart McCook claims, ‘illustrates the fragility of the process of legitimation of scientific knowledge in natural history during the Victorian era’10 but its immediate, and I suggest longer lasting, effect was
to draw even greater attention to the work itself and the ‘information’ it contained. *Explorations and Adventures*, the ‘Gorilla Book’ as Burton dubbed it, was a cultural phenomenon of considerable magnitude, and within a few months the word ‘gorilla’ had been propelled from the relative obscurity of scientific discourse via Hanno’s *Periplus* to become a household word—‘a choice expression of abuse,’ according to Winwood Reade—and this word carried irresistibly in its wake the full force of du Chaillu’s representation.

The reviewer in the *Times* goes on to explain just why du Chaillu’s findings are of such significance:

M. du Chaillu has struck into the very spine of Africa, and has lifted the veil of the torrid zone from its western rivers, swamps, and forests. . . . He has sojourned among tribes or races who feed on their kind, and he has encountered the animal more formidable than any yet heard of, which inspires a terror instanced by traditions as yet mysterious and incredible, and which is, at all events, of paramount interest at this moment to the conjectures and hypotheses of our leading physiologists. But the crowning discovery of the whole is the identification of . . . that chain of Alpine mountains which appears to traverse it from East to West, in which are hidden the secrets of its mighty rivers, and on which must depend the determination of its future.

Du Chaillu’s narrative is thus presented as an exposé, and what is exposed is a strategic map which renders Africa accessible, virgin territory ripe for the inscription of a European-determined future. However, at the same time it is exposed as a land of darkness and mystery, a land of savage cannibals and equally savage gorillas. Indeed, du Chaillu’s (rather contentious) map, itself, superimposes upon the geographical terrain areas marked as ‘Gorilla Country,’ or with tribe names followed by the word ‘Cannibals’ in brackets, and at the extreme edge, bordering the still white space, he inscribes, ‘The Country to the East . . . is said to be inhabited by many cannibal tribes.’

This contrast—between the representation of Africa as virgin territory, a *terra nullius*, and as a land of darkness and mystery—is made with startling clarity in du Chaillu’s own version of the ‘rhetoric of presence’ trope:

I began to think how this wilderness would look if only the light of Christian civilization could once be fairly introduced among the black children of Africa. I dreamed of forests giving way to plantations of coffee, cotton, and spices; of peaceful negroes going to their contented daily tasks; of farming and manufactures; of churches and schools; and, luckily raising my eyes heavenward at this stage of my thoughts, saw pendent from the branch of a tree beneath which I was sitting an immense serpent, evidently preparing to gobble up this dreaming intruder on his domains.
My dreams of future civilization vanished in a moment. Luckily my gun lay at hand. I rushed out . . . and . . . shot my black friend through the head. He let go his hold, and, after dancing about a little on the ground, lay dead before me. He measured a little over thirteen feet in length, and his fangs proved that he was venomous.

And now that Christian civilization of which I had mused so pleasantly a few minutes before received another shock. My men cut off the head of the snake, and, dividing the body into proper pieces, roasted it and ate it on the spot; and I—poor, starved, but civilized mortal!—stood by, longing for a meal, but unable to stomach this.  

Here we see a movement from one dream to another, from that of a peaceful domain with just the one man, the looker-on, as king and guardian of his black children, to the heaven-sent revelation that the speaker is a stranger and ‘intruder’ in this land of the serpent, or Satan. Du Chaillu’s reaction is immediate: ‘I . . . shot my black friend. . . . He let go his hold.’ The slippage here—from the snake to du Chaillu’s black companions, seizing hold of him here in the wilderness—is clear, and this movement is further emphasized as du Chaillu speaks of his shock at the eating of the snake. The sense of identification between this creature and his companions remains, so that this violently rejected meal can be read as a cannibalistic one, and it is as a reaction to this idea that du Chaillu places himself as a ‘civilized mortal,’ who can only be an outsider in Africa. In this short passage, then, du Chaillu encapsulates, with startling economy, the turning away from the representation of the black man as a noble savage, to that of him as a cannibalistic, devilish beast.

Returning from this land of darkness, du Chaillu brought back a map—which stressed the gorillas and cannibals rather more than the geography—and he also brought back the gorilla, both literally in the form of specimens to inhabit the space of museums, and figuratively in the form of an image which gripped the public imagination. This gorilla—‘of paramount interest at this moment to the conjectures and hypotheses of our leading physiologists’—entered the metropolitan scene at a particularly propitious time. The publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 had imparted theoretical rigour to the evolutionary ideas of the period, and Darwin’s suggestion that ‘Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history’  was eagerly taken up, particularly by Thomas Henry Huxley, who began to lecture on the subject of the structural relations between apes and man in 1860. The very nature of Man was, thus, called radically into question, and into the debate roused by this question fell du Chaillu’s gorillas. When confronted with these ‘blurred copies of himself,’ as Huxley put it, face to face with a stuffed specimen and/or vicariously in du Chaillu’s gripping narrative, the viewer might indeed be
conscious of a certain shock, due perhaps, not so much to disgust at the aspect of what looks like an insulting caricature, as to the awakening of a sudden and profound mistrust of time-honoured theories and strongly rooted prejudices regarding his own position in nature, and his relations to the under-world of life.16

The viewer might well come to question whether he is not, in fact, himself a devilish beast; or, then again, he might simply feel disgust, or a thrill of terror/pleasure at the sight of this aberrant human, this hairy savage from darkest Africa. Is the gorilla simply an exotic beast, insultingly resembling you, or is it, in fact, your semblable, your frère? This was precisely the question that faced du Chaillu when he saw gorillas for the first time—‘I protest I felt almost like a murderer when I saw the gorillas. . . . they looked fearfully like hairy men’17—and again as he stood rooted to the spot, ready to shoot his first specimen:

truly he reminded me of nothing but some hellish dream creature—a being of that hideous order, half-man, half-beast, which we find pictured by old artists in some representations of the infernal regions. He advanced a few steps—then stopped to utter that hideous roar again—advanced again, and finally stopped when at a distance of about six yards from us. And here, just as he began another of his roars, beating his breast in rage, we fired, and killed him.18

This is a recurring (dream) scene in the ‘Gorilla book,’ a leitmotif, and becomes more graphic as it is repeated:

In the dim half-light of the ravine, his features working with rage, his gloomy, treacherous, mischievous gray eyes, his rapidly-agitated, and frightful, satyr-like features had a horrid look, enough to make one fancy him really a spirit of the damned;19

His fierce gloomy eyes glared upon us; the short hair was rapidly agitated, and the wrinkled face seemed contorted with rage. It was like a very devil, and I do not wonder at the superstitious terror with which the natives regard it.20

In this way, the sight of the gorilla opens the portals of dream, and in the dim half-light of these visions, in which satyrs and demons and monsters rise from the depths of the Western tradition, the gorilla becomes the very embodiment of savagery, the devil himself. Repeatedly, the narrator must face the possibility that this thing before him is an image of himself, and repeatedly he must reject that possibility, kill it to know.

Huxley, in principle, takes only the body carried from this scene. At the heart of his series of three essays, published in 1863 under the title ‘Man’s
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton

Place in Nature is a close comparison of the skeleton, musculature, and brain of Man and of the Man-like Apes, and, in particular, the Gorilla. By this means, Huxley intends to prove that Man should be placed in the same Order as the Apes, because ‘Whatever part of the animal fabric . . . might be selected for comparison . . . the lower Apes and the Gorilla would differ more than the Gorilla and the Man.’ This new classification (Man had previously been an Order unto himself) unsettles Man’s sense of distinction from the rest of animate nature, and Huxley’s espousal of Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection to explain how ‘man might have originated . . . by the gradual modification of a man-like ape; or . . . as a ramification of the same primitive stock as those apes,’ reinforced by his discussion of fossil remains such as those of the Neanderthal Man, further unsettles by suggesting that Man’s classificatory proximity to the apes is also a genealogical one.

The substance of Huxley’s argument might be founded on anatomy and physiology, but he introduces his subject with a discussion of ‘The Natural History of the Man-Like Apes,’ recapitulating the history of their description and classification and laying particular emphasis on their savagery, claiming that the ape ‘may be capable of great viciousness and violence when irritated: and this is especially true of adult males.’ Huxley’s opening paragraph tells us that

Ancient traditions, when tested by the severe processes of modern investigation, commonly enough fade away into mere dreams: but it is singular how often the dream turns out to have been a half-waking one, presaging a reality . . . and though the quaint forms of Centaurs and Satyrs have an existence only in the realms of art, creatures approaching man more nearly than they in essential structure, and yet as thoroughly brutal as the goat’s or horse’s half of the mythical compound, are now not only known, but notorious.

In describing these thoroughly brutal, yet at the same time nearly human, creatures, the half-dreams of myth continually hover on the edge of consciousness, and the naked skeletons in Huxley’s prototype of the now iconic image of Man evolving as he marches purposefully towards futurity are always liable to take on flesh as they turn to leer at us face on, like Linnaeus’s Anthropomorpha, which Huxley reproduces (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). If Huxley notably refrained from citing du Chaillu’s famous work, claiming that ‘It may be truth, but it is not evidence,’ he nonetheless could not ‘discern any inherent improbability in his assertions respecting the man-like Apes,’ and du Chaillu’s graphic descriptions of a devilish half-human, half-beast certainly provided the appropriate subconscious of Huxley’s scientific treatise.

Furthermore, this subconscious bubbles to the surface in displaced form in an appendix to the first essay, in which Huxley addresses the subject
of ‘African Cannibalism in the Sixteenth Century,’ drawing attention to the similarities between du Chaillu’s account of cannibalism and that of Pigafetta, and reproducing the latter’s startling illustration of a ‘Butcher’s Shop of the Anziques Anno 1598.’ He remarks that
In turning over Pigafetta's version of the narrative of Lopez . . . I came upon so curious and unexpected an anticipation, by some two centuries and a half, of one of the most startling parts of M. Du Chaillu's narrative, that I cannot refrain from drawing attention to it in a note, although I must confess that the subject is not strictly relevant to the matter in hand.28

Huxley's inability here to refrain from drawing our attention to this compelling cannibalistic scene graphically demonstrates not only its seemingly irresistible allure, but also suggests that it is, despite Huxley's denial, by no means irrelevant to the matter in hand.

Du Chaillu's devilish beasts lurk in the penumbra of Huxley's text because Huxley goes beyond merely asserting Man's structural and genealogical proximity to apes. This assertion is thoroughly imbricated with an ideology of Progress, graphically illustrated by those skeletons striding into the future, so that du Chaillu's gorilla represents 'the lowly stock whence Man has sprung,'29 and Man's evolution is seen as a 'progression . . . from blind force to conscious intellect and will.'30 At Man's furthest horizon, his limit point, stands the gorilla, and at that limit there is no reason, no morality, no self-restraint; there dwell gorillas—and cannibals. By virtue of Progress, physical and moral, Man has distanced himself from 'early man', and consequently Huxley states that 'no one is more strongly convinced than I am of the vastness of the gulf between civilized man and the brutes; or is more certain that whether from them or not, he is assuredly not of them.'31 The gorilla may be civilized man's semblable, but he is certainly not his frère.

Huxley has thus established two poles: the gorilla and civilized man. The question then arises: where exactly do we draw the line, on one side of which stand we, and on the other they? The idea of a gap, or discontinuity, is an oft repeated one. For instance, Darwin speaks of the great difference between 'the mind of one of the lowest savages' and 'that of the most highly organised ape.'32 Expanding on this, though, Darwin goes on to say that 'Nor is the difference slight in moral disposition between a barbarian . . . and a Howard or Clarkson; and in intellect, between a savage . . . and a Newton or Shakespeare.'33 The visibly obvious gulf between gorilla and man thus also foregrounds the supposed 'fact' that the lowest savages lie somewhere between the ape and civilized man, in that lacuna between Troglodytes gorilla and Homo sapiens (wise man, civilized man). Darwin reinforces this point when he argues that

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes . . . will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man
Outside the City Walls

and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.  

Darwin’s will to exterminate those troubling intermediates is quite striking and is coupled with his vision of Progress. The idea of a progression by incremental change might be the manifest content of Darwin’s text, but when the temporal becomes spatialized, when you stand face to face with that present day representative of, as Burton puts it, ‘early man . . . a savage very little superior to the brute’ (Nights 10.185), the negro or Australian, the question becomes a simple binary one: are you my Brother, or are you, like the gorilla, my Other? Repeatedly you face this question, and repeatedly you answer it, killing to be sure. Of course, the answer is given in the text, for that hairy savage, the gorilla, has been defined precisely in terms of his lack of civilization, his primitiveness, his proximity to the negro, and his distance from us. Consequently, although Huxley speaks of Man’s place in nature, at the crucial moment he must introduce that caveat, civilized man, and both du Chaillu and Darwin must also incorporate the vocabulary of racism. Although the difference between the gorilla and the negro might be clear for all to see, and indeed a substantial problem for Huxley’s theory, from our position on the other side of a divide between the civilized and the uncivilized, they can come to seem frightfully similar, savage inhabitants alike of the geographical and conceptual periphery, Outside the City Walls: darkest Africa, dream-land of gorillas—and cannibals.

Gorillas and Negroes

In the month in which du Chaillu’s ‘Gorilla Book’ was published, the satirical magazine Punch printed a poem entitled ‘Monkeyana’ and signed ‘Zoological Gardens, May 1861 GORILLA.’ The accompanying illustration showed a gorilla holding himself erect with a stick, and with a placard around his neck on which was written the slogan ‘Am I a Man and a Brother?’ (Figure 5.3), recalling the familiar illustrations of the anti-slavery movement, with their question, ‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother?’ The opening stanza of the poem reads,

Am I a satyr or man?
Pray tell me who can,
And settle my place in the scale.
A man in ape’s shape,
An anthropoid ape,
Or monkey deprived of his tail?
Figure 5.3 ‘Am I A Man and A Brother?’ (Anon., ‘Monkeyana,’ *Punch* XL, 18 May 1861, 206).
There then follows a summary of the scientific developments which had led to a profound questioning of Man’s Place in Nature, including Darwin’s theory and archaeological finds which had called into question the Biblical account of human history. The poem concludes with a parody of the contemporaneous debate between Huxley and Owen on the relationship between Man and the apes. In the illustration, these debates clearly intersect with the Negro Question, and if the images of forlorn, manacled black slaves were expected to self-evidently evoke the answer ‘Yes’ to the question, ‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother?’, the answer to the *Punch* cartoon is far from given. By extension, this question becomes equally problematic when asked by the figure whom this image automatically conjures up: the gorilla’s Original, the negro. The philanthropists’ visual stereotype is thus made to overlap with the gorilla, and their verbal slogan becomes double-voiced as Man’s boundaries are blurred. We can also clearly see this redeployment of the image and slogan of the anti-slavery movement in Burton’s remark that

> From humbly aspiring to be owned as a man, our black friend [remember that du Chaillu used the same phrase, equally ironically] now boldly advances his claims to *égalité* and *fraternité*, as if there could be brotherhood between the crown and the clown! [*Wanderings* I.175]

Even if the negro could be called a Man, this now indicated little more than that he had been placed on one side of an arbitrarily drawn line between the ape and civilized man—and it certainly did not identify him as a Brother.

James Hunt’s notorious paper—which we have seen delivered to the 1863 meeting of the BAAS, and which was published under the title *On The Negro’s Place in Nature*—was of course influenced by Huxley’s series of essays published in the same year.35 However, while Huxley set out to establish ‘Man’s Place in Nature,’ Hunt proposed ‘to discuss the physical and mental characters of the Negro, with a view of determining not only his position in animated nature, but also the station to be assigned to him in the genus *homo*.’36 In doing so, Hunt argued that Huxley had erred in ‘grouping all the different races of Man under one generic name, and then comparing them with the anthropoid Apes.’37 His approach was rather to take only one of these races—‘the dark, woolly-headed African found in the neighbourhood of the Congo river’38—and to compare these people with the apes: ‘I shall . . . have to dwell much on the analogies existing between the Negro and the Anthropoid Apes; but these analogies do not necessarily involve relationship . . . on the present occasion we shall not touch on the origin of man.’39 Huxley’s radical attempt to prove the structural and thereby genealogical relationship between apes and Man had no part in the project of Hunt, who never accepted Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection.40 Sidestepping these thorny issues, he instead sought simply to impart theoretical rigour to the frequently drawn analogies between negroes and apes, such analogies
proving nothing other than that the negro is a somewhat ape-like Man, and therefore not at all like the white man.

If Huxley’s thesis gave rise to the troubling idea that civilized man himself might be ape-like, reflected in the figure of the savage gorilla, Hunt placed this encounter at one remove, making that other blurred copy and caricature—the negro—face the ape in place or instead of the white man in the jungles of the Congo basin. In this way, the ape becomes a copy of a copy, a caricature of a caricature; as Winwood Reade says, ‘The negro imitates the white man as the ape imitates the negro. The result in both cases is a caricature.’ Furthermore, just as the ape no longer faces the European, so too is the gaze of the African directed elsewhere, no longer confronting the European with his troubling re-semblance and that equally troubling question, ‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother?’ At the periphery, then, those analogous figures—the ape and the ape-like Man—are made to overlap and embrace, and the white man can view the encounter from a safe distance; or, to put this another way, Huxley’s troubling questions are, always already, being strategically deployed in the contested space of Africa to reinforce an Imperial topography, with its clear division between ruler and ruled, white and back.

Hunt goes on to claim that ‘There is no doubt that the Negro brain bears a great resemblance to a European female or child’s brain, and thus approaches the ape far more than the European [adult male], while the Negress approaches the ape still nearer.’ In this way, further analogues are made to overlap in a palimpsestual layering of European man’s others. Robert Young has argued that ‘racialism operated both according to the same-Other model and through the “computation of normalities” and “degrees of deviance” from the white norm.’ We can see, however, that in Hunt’s paper the degree of deviance from the white norm was established with reference to another norm, namely the ape: deviance from the European adult male was computed as nearness of approach to the ape. This provided a scale with fixed points at either end, and on this scale the negro male, European woman and European child occupy the same point, and the negress is nearer to the ape; all of these are Other with respect to the white man. There was nothing new in these ideas—the negro frequently having been seen as womanly or child-like, and the negress as almost bestial (witness the Hottentot Venus)—but the alternative anatomical model of the ape was used by Hunt to explicitly bring these suggestions together within a pseudo-scientific framework which lent greater authority to their subsequent assertion.

As an instance of this, we might look again at Winwood Reade’s *Savage Africa*. Reade was an enthusiastic member of the Anthropological Society, and in the chapter of his book entitled ‘The Negro’ he draws attention, in a footnote, to Hunt’s reading of the paper at the BAAS which drew ‘hisses’ from the audience. His conclusions are very similar to those of Hunt; for
instance, he suggests that ‘in the muzzle-like extension of the jaws, in the manual application of the foot, and in the early cessation of brain-growth, the negro, speaking physically, approaches the ape.’

He too believes that the ‘negress’ is ‘always a step lower in the scale [than her ‘master’]. . . . More hideous, more nearly approaching the brute than himself, she is nothing better than a beast of burden.’

He goes on to relate this physique to her moral attributes when he says that ‘while the men retire to wash themselves secretly, the women will frequently bathe in public and before strangers without the slightest shame.’

Here we see again the familiar coupling of the moral and the physical, and at the same time it is difficult not to see the trope of a resisted temptation, the author as stranger turning away in ostentatious disgust.

Reade later asserts that ‘if the women of Africa are brutal, the men of Africa are feminine.’ There then follows a most remarkable several pages, in which the negro male is endowed with all the qualities of the European female:

Their faces are smooth; their breasts are frequently as full as those of European women; their voices are never gruff or deep . . . the arms rounded, the legs elegantly formed . . . I have seen men whose form and features would disgrace no petticoats—not even satin ones at a drawing-room. . . . They have also their friendships after the manner of women, embracing one another, sleeping on the same mat, telling one another their secrets. . . . They have . . . that delicate tact, that intuition, that nervous imagination, that quick perception of character, which have become the proverbial characteristics of cultivated women . . . Their nature is an enigma; but solve it, and you have solved the race [etc. etc.].

In this description, the African man is represented literally as a European woman. If we read this text in parallel with Hunt’s, we can see a slippage from the physical—the negro’s brain bears a certain resemblance to that of the female European—to a much wider set of signifiers, glossed as the moral and easily sliding into fantasy. In this way, scientific description and barely suppressed fantasy are coupled and mutually reinforcing, resulting in the discursive cementing of an analogy as a virtual equivalence.

Of course, this passage can be read as an expression of homosexual desire for the African man, and Reade perhaps touches on this himself when he says, ‘Ladies on reading this will open their eyes, and suppose that either I have very bad taste, or that I am writing fiction.’ It might also be read as an act of castration, and as a claim that the narrator is the only man here. This kind of writing is indeed fictional, and greatly resembles the dream-work as described by Freud. What we find in *Savage Africa* is a mechanism of ‘condensation’, by which a number of impressions and experiences are brought
together in a single element of the dream: in Reade’s Africa, the woman and the male negro occupy the same site. The appearance of such composite, uncanny figures in Africa makes that space radically metamorphic, a place where categories blend and clash, creating shifting and unstable nodes of fantasy as well as fixing a hierarchical scheme. The representation of the black man as a woman and a child is fundamentally political—as we see in Reade’s assertion that ‘Such are the “men and brothers” for whom their friends claim not protection, but equality! They do not merit to be called our Brothers; but let us call them our Children’—and this fixating political discourse is always accompanied and inflected by a range of fantasies. Consequently, Africa functions as a land of riddles and dreams: ‘the Sphinx—Africa’s most appropriate emblem’ (Wanderings I.285).

The pseudo-scientific assertion that the black woman is closer to the ape than the black man—an evident echoing of the perceived distance between the European man and woman—intersects with another common motif of ape-lore reiterated by these mid-nineteenth-century European travelers, namely the scandalous possibility that sexual intercourse might occur between the ape and the negress. The power of this trope was captured by the French sculptor Emmanuel Frémiet, who in 1859 presented, in the Salon de Paris, a statue entitled ‘Gorilla carrying off a negress.’ Albert Ducros and Jacqueline Ducros have traced the way in which this statue was initially rejected by the gallery, and when finally displayed—hidden in a nook behind a curtain—heavily criticized, with Baudelaire describing it as an ‘announced rape.’ Ducros and Ducros conclude that ‘Although the theme of the abduction of a nymph by a faun was a classical one in high art, its avatar, the “Gorilla carrying off a woman,” was not found acceptable. Its very plausibility made it obscene.’

The subject matter of this statue had been a common one in the eighteenth century, when European travellers drew attention to the sexual immodesty of African—particularly Hottentot—women, and related this to the suggestion that male apes actively pursued them as sexual partners. These accounts circulated widely and were familiar in the nineteenth century, when they were commonly dismissed as ‘travellers’ tales’. For instance, in Savage’s first account of the gorilla he asserts:

The silly stories about their carrying off women from the native towns . . . related by voyagers and widely copied into books, are unhesitatingly denied. They have been averred of the Chimpanzée, but this is still more preposterous. They probably had their origin in the marvellous accounts given by the natives . . . to credulous traders.

However, it is notable that Savage recapitulates this claim, if only to deny it, and this is a lead which du Chaillu will pursue, transcribing a native account as follows:
One of the men told a story of two Mbondemo women who were walking together through the woods, when suddenly an immense gorilla stepped into the path, and, clutching one of the women, bore her off in spite of the screams and struggles of both. The other woman returned to the village, sadly frightened, and related the story. Of course her companion was given up for lost. Great was the surprise, therefore, when, a few days afterward, she returned to her home. She related that the gorilla had misused her, but that she had eventually escaped from him.57

In these uncanny repetitions of the abduction of a nymph by a faun, we find once again the playing out of mythical paradigms in the geographical space of Africa, and the binaries which this abduction articulates—man versus nature, woman versus man, beauty versus beast, purity versus lustfulness, culture versus nature, barbarism versus civilization—are precisely called into question by this new avatar, the ‘plausibility’ of which arises from the supposed nearness of the bestial negress to that hairy savage, the gorilla. Du Chaillu ‘searched in vain if an intermediate race, or rather several intermediate races or links between the natives and the gorilla, could be found,’58 arguing from the absence of any such that ‘we must come to the conclusion that man belongs to a distinct species from that of the ape.’59 On this evidence (of an absence of offspring) he attributes abduction stories to ‘the superstitious minds of the natives, who delight in the mystical and wonderful.’60 However, by incorporating these undigested stories into his own narrative, du Chaillu undercuts this scientific conclusion, and intimates, even as he overtly censors, a connection between African women and apes.

In thus constructing the negress as a sexual object, and hinting at the possibility of offspring from the union of this woman and the gorilla, the little scene we are considering might be seen to displace what Robert Young calls “‘colonial desire”: a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, inter-racial sex, hybridity and miscegenation.”61 Perhaps the gorilla figures the white man, acts out his desire for the negress, which is at the same time denied because the negress, fit sexual partner of the gorilla, can never be fit for the white man. In the gorilla, though, we can also see the image of the negress’s regular lover, the negro. Then the recurring scene expresses an anxious concern with the sexual potency of that well-endowed figure, an anxiety all the more apparent if the negress becomes the white woman. Furthermore, in the placing in proximity of gorilla and African woman, these two figures are made to resemble each other as sexual predators. It is, therefore, not surprising that Reade, who called the men women, describes the negress as ‘excessively lascivious,’ given to lesbianism and with an ‘elongatio nympharum,’62 or that Burton attributes the origin of the Dahoman Amazons to ‘the masculine physique of the women’ (Dahome II.64). Although this scene is of little overt significance in the narrativization of Africa—circumscribed as a rumour or native superstition—it covertly functions as an important
locus of ‘psychical intensities’ in the representation of Africa and Africans, condensing and encrypting a range of displaced desires and fears, and for this reason it remains stubbornly present as a titillating, dream-like image and focus of unwarranted fascination.

This scene did, of course, draw the attention of Richard Burton. His most substantial musings on the subject occur in his annotations to the Nights, prompted by a treatment of the subject in some of the tales themselves. Burton supplies a number of anecdotes to support his contention, ‘that carnal connexion [between apes and both men and women] has actually taken place cannot be doubted.’ In much the same way as du Chaillu, he sees the ‘grand test’ as being

the existence of the mule between man and monkey [which], though generally believed in, is characteristically absent, absent as the ‘missing link’ which goes so far as to invalidate Darwinism in one and perhaps the most important part of its contention. Of course the offspring of such union would be destroyed, yet the fact of our never having found a trace of it except in legend and idle story seems to militate against its existence. When, however, man shall become ‘Homo Sapiens’ he will cast off the prejudices of the cradle and the nursery and will ascertain by actual experiment if human being and monkey can breed together. The lowest order of bimana, and the highest order of quadrumana may, under most favourable circumstances, bear issue and the ‘Mule,’ who would own half a soul, might prove most serviceable as a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, in fact as an agricultural labourer. All that we can say is that such ‘miscegenation’ stands in the category of things not proven and we must object to science declaring them non-existing.

This passage clearly employs the vocabulary of racism, and in doing so echoes others of Burton’s own writings. For instance, the notion that the ‘Mule’ would be serviceable as ‘a hewer of wood and a drawer of water’ repeats Burton’s contention in Dahome that ‘The negro, as a rule, despises agriculture. . . . His highest ambition is to be a petty trader, whilst his thick skull, broad bones, and cold porous leathery skin, point him out as a born “hewer of wood and drawer of water”’ (Dahome II.201). This naturalization of the black man as an agricultural labourer places him as a slave within the colonial economy, and in Burton’s proposed scheme this role becomes displaced onto the more clearly bestial, and more tractable, ‘Mule.’ The successful implementation of this scheme would presumably allow the elimination of the negro, and the establishment of a clearer distance between master and slave. The strong element of self-parody in this political vision might be said to distance Burton from his own words. However, such parody not only allows the vision to remain intact, but at the same time brings closer to the
surface the phantom image which underpins Burton’s racist musings: that of the negro and the ape who are indeed made to overlap, as the beast with two backs.

This image, along with the newly discovered gorilla, clearly fell into a range of mid-nineteenth-century metropolitan debates. The idea that Man might have descended from an ape-like ancestor threw into doubt the nature of Man and his Place in Nature. However, at its very inception, this theory intersected with ideas of race so that the question of civilized man’s relationship to the ape came to be played out through the intermediate figure of the negro. By turning the negro and the ape into analogous figures, the white man was paradoxically able to consolidate his own differential identity by placing his racial other at a nearer approach to the ape than himself. If the white man’s others were thereby made to overlap in the margin, this margin was geographically located in Equatorial West Africa where, according to du Chaillu, ‘the gorilla, and all the other man-like apes peculiar to Africa, are found roaming in the same forests that are inhabited by the natives, and both live in proximity to each other.’64 The gorilla then became the image of essential primitiveness to which the inhabitants of West Africa approached, and this proximity was most clearly articulated in the trope of a sexual encounter between the gorilla and the African woman.

Although the white space on the map in the 1933 American film, King Kong–The Eighth Wonder of the World65—which was directly inspired by du Chaillu’s Explorations and Adventures—is actually located in the East Indies, the geography of that film illustrates well the symbolic space in which the gorilla is located. Living behind a wall on an uncharted island, Kong, ‘A King and a God’ of the natives, inhabits an island within an island which is a dream-like space, a lacuna in space and time. It is precisely this space which was sought in Africa: the space of the primitive other, Outside the City Walls. The gorilla, whose visage might unlock the portals of dream, became a representative inhabitant of that space. It was a dream-creature in which all the other figures—man, devil, beast, centaur, satyr, hairy savage, child, woman, negro—were condensed, and it was always to be found beneath the surface of the real: ‘Most of the characters of the Negro viewed externally remind us irresistibly of the ape; the short neck, the long lean limbs, the projecting pendulous belly, all this affords a glimmer of the ape beneath the human envelope.’66

Cannibals

The monster in King Kong is only at one point referred to as a ‘gorilla,’ when a woman in the audience eagerly awaiting ‘Carl Denham’s Giant Monster’ asks her neighbour what it is and he says, ‘I hear it’s a kind of gorilla,’ to which she replies, ‘Gee, ain’t we got enough of them in New York?’ This highlights the unsettling possibility that Kong might, in fact,
figure the audience themselves—or, perhaps, the uncomfortably proximate negro population of the city. ‘Kong,’ however, is really an untranslatable name, varyingly referred to as a monster, a spirit, a god, a king, and ‘neither man nor beast.’ If he resembles a gorilla, he differs from it in one important respect: this beast, unlike the vegetarian ape, has large incisors which he uses to chew people, as we see in two graphic close ups, one on the island and the other in New York; as Marina Warner points out, ‘the spectre of cannibalism’ is clear. Also, given that Kong is placated with regular offerings of ‘brides,’ and that consummation of these marriages is physically impossible, the implication might be that he eats these brides, consummating the marriage in another way. At any rate, we find here the same coupling of the gorilla and the cannibal—who are now brought together in a single, gigantic form—which was a central feature of du Chaillu’s representation of West Africa. This was taken up by those following in du Chaillu’s footsteps, including Burton and Reade, who both travelled in West Africa in search of gorillas—and cannibals.

In du Chaillu’s account, it is the Fan tribe who provide him with a sensational example of cannibalism. Although initially doubtful of the stories he had heard, these doubts are soon dispelled: ‘As we entered the town I perceived some bloody remains which looked to me to be human. . . . Presently we passed a woman who solved all doubt. She bore with her a piece of the thigh of a human body.’ This town is, in fact, redolent with the gruesome remains of cannibalism, with ‘here and there human bones lying about’ and ‘piles of human bones, mixed up with other offal, thrown at the sides of several houses,’ and in the houses themselves ‘the smoked game and smoked human flesh, [are] hung up to the rafters.’ The Fan eat human flesh for food, rather than ritually, and go so far as to buy those who have died from disease in neighbouring settlements. Du Chaillu claimed to have witnessed one such corpse being brought into the town, but says, ‘I confess I could not bear to stay for the cutting up of the body, but retreated when all was ready. It made me sick all over. I remained till the infernal scene was about to begin, and then retreated.’ This witnessing of all the signs of cannibalism but not the event itself was a common trope, and we see it repeated by Burton when he claims that ‘in Bonny I have seen all but the act of eating.’

Cannibalism was, for the European, a quintessential signifier of otherness, always expected if not always found; as Peter Hulme says, ‘Cannibalism is—as practice or accusation—quite simply the mark of greatest imaginable cultural difference and therefore the greatest challenge to our categories of understanding.’ The scenes which du Chaillu claimed to have witnessed fulfilled those expectations in the most horrific, and at the same time most desirable, manner possible. Hence, when Winwood Reade, following in du Chaillu’s footsteps, came to the land of the Fan he described it as ‘the Promised Land of Man-Eaters.’ However, Reade fails to attain the
same revelatory experience as du Chaillu; unable to find signs of the event itself, he must be content with second hand evidence. Nonetheless, he is as convinced of the existence of cannibalism as the Christian missionaries to that area, of whom he says, ‘they had “no more doubt that the Fans ate men, than they had that they ate plantains.”’  

If these missionaries had failed to get a clear confession of cannibalism,  

It was, however, never denied of the tribe, but only of themselves as individuals. Thus the natives of village A would deny stoutly that they were cannibals, but they would accuse the villagers of B. The villagers of B would disown the soft impeachment, and denounce the natives A as cannibals of the most confirmed order.

There appears to be an intriguing dynamic here, whereby the idea of cannibalism circulated in the ‘contact zone.’ Whether existing or not, it was clearly a subject of obsessional interest to the European, and the natives responded to this, telling him what he wanted to hear but always of someone else, so that the European could never obtain his much sought confession. When Reade does ‘finesse’—or so he flatters himself—a confession from ‘a veteran cannibal,’ this is immediately followed by ‘a loud roar of laughter,’ and Burton meets with the same response: ‘the people shouted with laughter when I asked a certain question’ (Gorilla-Land I.213). The European’s representations of them seem to be a source of amusement to the natives. This African laughter uncannily repeats that employed by the Maoris, whom James Cook and his companions had encountered in the South Pacific, and whose ‘dis-course on cannibalism,’ Gananath Obeyesekere writes,  

was compounded by the ludic and the serious: the ludic, since they seem on occasion, at least, to enjoy the discomfiture of the Europeans; and serious, because it was a weapon to terrify them in the context of unequal power, where their real weapons were nothing in comparison to European guns.

No doubt, the most efficient expression of this ambivalent compound was, in both Africa and elsewhere, the mouth opened wide in laughter. However, Reade persists in taking his informant’s ‘confession’ at face value, as confirming what he wants to hear. Furthermore, because he is unable to provide as clear an eye-witness account as du Chaillu, he supplements his reported stories with a summary of ‘The Philosophy of Cannibalism,’ giving textual evidence of reportings since ancient times; this is a lead which Burton will follow. Thus, Reade introduces his chapter on cannibalism by stating that ‘The existence of cannibalism, which some authors have ventured to deny, is supported by a cloud of authors,’ and it seems that in the absence of the event itself it is necessary to graft this ‘cloud’ into the body of the work,
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton
to metonymically stand in for that absence. In so doing, the entire textual
nexus accumulated around the word ‘cannibalism’ in the Western tradition
is grafted into the representation of Africa.

The motif of cannibalism also circulates in another way in the contact
zone, for the Africans were convinced—according to our European sources—
that the Europeans themselves practiced it. Thus, du Chaillu notes that the
slaves he met

firmly believe that we whites buy them to eat them. They cannot con-
ceive of any other use to be made of them; and wherever the slave-trade
is known in the interior, it is believed that the white men beyond [the] sea are great cannibals, who have to import blacks for the market. Thus
a chief in the interior country . . . when I made him my first visit, im-
mediately ordered a slave to be killed for my dinner.82

Reade reports similarly that his ‘veteran’ ‘thought I was a cannibal too: a
belief which is universal among the Bush-tribes of Western Africa, and of
which the slave-trade has been the cause.’83 Burton, rather more colourfully,
states that slaves feared ‘being “put in a cannibal pot” and being eaten by
the white anthropophagi’ (Gorilla-land II.315). It might be said that such
stories give us a hint of the Africans’ voice, which becomes an important
moment in the narrative, drawing attention to the manner in which cannibal-
ism was constitutive of the inter-racial encounter: a trope which circulated
to establish differential identities, and a metaphor for the slave trade which
is perhaps more telling than the European travellers would care to admit.
However, the fact that this story was so insistently repeated suggests that
it was—like the superstition that African women were abducted by goril-
las—made to be a source of fascination to the white man, a form of dis-
avowed knowledge which was nonetheless incorporated. Perhaps the image
of the white man devouring the negro articulated a site of unacknowledged
desire and fear which could not be expressed except through the voice of the
other. Once again, we find a repetition of the South Pacific scene in which,
Obeyesekere claims, ‘the discourse on cannibalism conducted by British
officers represented Maori cannibalism in terms of British values, fantasies,
and myth models.’84

The failure to find the scenes which du Chaillu had witnessed did not
deter Reade and Burton from nonetheless labelling the Fan ‘cannibals.’ How-
ever, while Reade seems to have accepted du Chaillu’s claims at face value—
in stark contrast to his criticism of the representation of gorillas—Burton’s
account is, on one level, a debunking of du Chaillu’s characterization:

I made careful inquiry about anthropophagy amongst the Fán, and my
account must differ considerably from that of M. du Chaillu. . . . Dur-
ing my peregrinations I did not see a single skull. . . . A joint of ‘black
brother’ is never seen in the villages: ‘smoked human flesh’ does not hang from the rafters. . . . The sick and the dead are uneaten by the Fán. [Gorilla-land I.211–13]

This description is, though, somewhat ambivalent: not only does the debunking indirectly invoke the scene it refutes, but in its interstices Burton supplies the alternative picture of cannibalism as ‘a quasi-religious rite practised upon foes slain in battle . . . The corpse is carried to a hut built expressly on the outskirts of the settlement; it is eaten secretly by the warriors’ (Gorilla-land I.212). He further undermines his own refutation with the caveat that ‘Mayyán [the town Burton visited] is held by a comparatively civilized race, who have probably learned to conceal a custom so distasteful to all their neighbours, white and black; in the remoter districts cannibalism may yet assume far more hideous proportions’ (Gorilla-land I.211). This projection of the genuine article of cannibalism beyond the contact zone is typical of Burton, who saw such instances as the Fan, and the Wadoe on the East coast of Africa,85 as ‘outliers of the great anthropophagous race which occupies the vast white blot in Central Africa.’86 Burton had, earlier, caught a glimpse of this ‘anthropophagous race’ at the bourn of his exploration to the Lake Regions of Central Africa. He characterized the Island of Ubwari, in Lake Tanganyika, as ‘an island far away’ where ‘Mariners dare not embark . . . except at the principal places; and upon the wooded hill-sides wild men are, or are supposed to be, ever lurking in wait for human prey’ (Lake Regions 347). On the further shore of the Lake,

The land belongs to the Wabembe, who are correctly described in the ‘Mombas Mission Map’ as ‘Menschenfresser–anthropophagi.’ The practice arises from the savage and apathetic nature of the people, who devour, besides man, all kinds of carrion and vermin, grubs and insects, while they abandon to wild growths a land of the richest soil and of the most prolific climate. They prefer man raw, whereas the Wadoe of the coast eat him roasted. . . . the poor devils, dark and stunted, timid and degraded, appeared less dangerous to the living than to the dead. [Lake Regions 351]

We might say that on the far side of a lake, within the large white blot on the map, Burton found the quintessential ignoble ‘savage very little superior to the brute’ which he was looking for, and that savage was a cannibal. However, in contrast to the fear and trembling conveyed by du Chaillu, Burton’s ‘dark and stunted’ cannibals are of no threat to the invading stranger.

When Burton encounters this anthropophagous race on the other side of Africa, though, it neither resembles this type, nor the picture presented by du Chaillu:

Expecting a large-limbed, black-skinned, and ferocious looking race, I was astonished to see a finely-made, light-coloured people, of decidedly
mild aspect. The features, also, were sub-African, many, if whitened, might pass for Europeans; few were so negroed in type as the Mpongwe, none so negro as the blacks of Guinea or Kongo. Their aspect, however, is that of a people freshly emerged from the ‘bush.’ Many of them point their teeth.

The African of the bush—who might have been expected to be typical—in fact turns out to be sub-African. Furthermore, this is a type from which the ‘true’ African, or negro, is, paradoxically, degraded: ‘Demoralized by the contact of European and Asiatic civilization’ and liable to be exterminated by encroachment from the interior in a fierce ‘selection of species, so to speak.’ Here ‘negro’ becomes a verb:

**NEGRO v. rare** M19. To demoralise by contact.

Burton later characterized the ‘homogeneous race of cannibals . . . who must number several millions’ and who occupy ‘the vast area between the Moslemised tribes (N. lat 6°) and the South African family proper (S. lat. 3°)’ as ‘negroids, not negros,’ and therefore ennobled by an infusion of Semitic blood. From this nexus of texts, we can, therefore, infer several different definitions of


This other centre, to set alongside the metropolis, thus becomes overcoded, signifying differently in different writings/readings of the dream-text. However, stubbornly running through all of these conflicting versions is the motif of cannibalism as the key signifier of this centre as exotic essence.

As we have seen, this is a geography shared by du Chaillu, who inscribed at the extreme edge of his map, bordering the still white space, the words, ‘The Country to the East . . . is said to be inhabited by many cannibal tribes.’ In *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, this heart of Africa was metonymically represented by the cannibalistic Fan tribe, and the dream-like scenes du Chaillu witnessed in their midst, and in this textual space of Equatorial Africa, the cannibal was associated with that other key figure of otherness, the gorilla. Again, there is an economy of representation here which resembles the Freudian dream-work, in which ‘Whenever they [dreams] show us two elements close together, this guarantees that there is some specially intimate connection between what correspond to them among the dream-thoughts.’ The ‘specially intimate connection’ in this case is that both the gorilla and the cannibal figure the exotic other, an image of oneself which must be rejected. If the gorilla had recently become a site of considerable significance in the
metropolis, throwing into question the very nature of Man, its coupling with the cannibal—a long-standing signifier of otherness—in the geographical space of Equatorial Africa had the effect of further distancing this question, confusing it more emphatically with the Question of that other inhabitant of this space: the Negro. Although the gorilla and the cannibal were peripheral figures in the space represented, du Chaillu placed them at the centre of his representation, and Reade and Burton, following in his footsteps, constructed their narratives as quests for the scenes du Chaillu had ‘witnessed.’ Neither saw a live gorilla—although both came tantalizingly close—nor witnessed evidence of cannibalism. However, their accounts, like the routes they followed, formed a palimpsest with du Chaillu’s, which had sensationaly established the parameters within which West Africa was to be represented. Thus, Burton entitled his narrative *Two Trips to Gorilla-Land and the Cataracts of the Congo*, and opened with an epigraph extracted from Othello:

It was my hint to speak, such was my process;  
And of the cannibals that each other eat,  
The anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders.

**Primal Scenes and Imperial Irony**

can it be expected that he who is to be sent from life unto death, should be in the same frame of mind as those who stand afar and look on, or who hear the tale thereof? Anyone may answer this question for himself.

Also, if all those who sail to America should fall into the hands of their barbarous enemies, who would wish to proceed thither?291

Burton’s construction of the centre of Africa as a land of cannibals is of a piece with his narrative of human history, for he repeatedly claimed that ‘cannibalism . . . seems at different ages of the world to have been the universal custom of mankind.’92 This quotation is taken from his Preface to his friend Albert Tootal’s translation of *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse, in A.D. 1547–1555, Among the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil*. In this book, Stade describes scenes of cannibalism which are similar in their oneiric intensity to those of du Chaillu, but which have the added spice that Stade is a captive and in constant fear—which his captors are at pains to heighten—of himself being eaten. In the Preface, Burton provides an account of his own travels in the space traversed by Stade, which he hopes will ‘serve the purpose of placing the *mis-en-scène* before the reader’s eye, and of showing what effect three centuries and a half have exercised upon these shores, where the Indian is now utterly extinct.’93 The scenes witnessed by Stade have thus been erased by European settlement and the extinction of the natives, but Stade’s narrative, nonetheless, remains
Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton

as a ghostly textual memory haunting Burton’s representation of this space as its essential quality—buried perhaps, but still present. The space and the text can therefore be written over, but never entirely effaced.

After a number of adventures in the New World, Stade was, at the time of his capture, working as a gunner for the Portuguese colonizers, and the ‘cannibal savages’ who captured him, with the intention of eating him, did so as an act of revenge upon an enemy. Thus, Stade tells us that, when he arrived in their village,

the women ran to me, and struck me with their fists, and pulled my beard, and spoke in their language: ‘Sche innamme pepicke a e.’ That is as much as to say: ‘With this blow I revenge my friend, him whom those among whom thou hast been, have killed.’

Confronted with this situation, the German Stade quickly asserted that he was not Portuguese, but French, for his captors were allies of the latter, while their local enemies were allied with the Portuguese. However, he was taken to see a Frenchman who lived nearby, and who, dismissing this claim, encouraged the natives to ‘Kill him and eat him, the villain, he is a true Portuguese, my enemy and yours.’ If they had carried out this injunction—by roasting Stade’s body, and dividing it up for communal consumption, thereby treating Stade no differently than they would their local enemies—the European interloper would have been incorporated into the native body politic as his captors both took their revenge and cemented their own bonds of friendship. The appropriation of Stade’s foreign body would have been further evidenced in the fact that the man who killed him would ‘gain a new name’ through the act, and Stade’s fear of such a fate is clear when he comes face to face with ‘some fifteen heads on stakes. These belonged to a tribe who are also their enemies . . . whom they had eaten. . . . Then terror possessed me; I thought, thus they will also do with me.’

When Stade first arrived in Brazil, ‘It so happened that the savages of the place had become rebellious against the Portuguese; they had not been so before, but they now began to be so on account of the Portuguese having enslaved them.’ Consequently, Stade and his companions were called upon to defend the settlement of Garasu, ‘which the savages had dared attempt to take,’ and about ninety Christians and thirty slaves found themselves besieged by eight thousand ‘savages.’ This state of being attacked and heavily outnumbered—a lonely foreigner in hostile territory—characterizes the European’s sense of alienation, and for him the borderlines which count in the place to which he travels are not those between different nations, but those between himself and the ‘cannibal savages’ who surround him. It is, therefore, important that Stade is eventually rescued from captivity by the crew of a French ship, who trade him for goods, and thereby restore the clear division between European and native which had been threatened by the
other Frenchman’s willingness to place himself and Stade within the natives’ political system. This clear boundary is later emphatically marked by Burton, who, casting his anthropological gaze upon the scene, considers all the warring natives to be the same: ‘These semi-nomades . . . who were engaged in perpetual wars, apparently belonged to one great family, that is to say, they had a common origin, and all spoke dialects of the same tongue.’

It is in the cannibal feast, with the European as dinner, that the presence of the European’s vulnerable body in the foreign space is most powerfully displayed, and this, therefore, becomes a site of considerable contention in the New World, and elsewhere: if it might serve as a way of assimilating the foreigner, the European must resist this interpretation by using the same scene as a way of incorporating the native into his own political and psychic economy, in which he comes to take the natives’ place. The imperial fantasy of occupying centre stage is, therefore, haunted by the image of the European being eaten and incorporated by the natives whom he seeks to rule.

This striking combination of fantasies reminds us of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*, which tells the story of the beginning of civilization as the communal consumption of the primal father by his sons. Freud finds a clue to this story in ‘a hypothesis of Charles Darwin’s upon the social state of primitive men,’ which draws upon Savage’s account of the gorilla to suggest that the society of the gorilla-like early man was centred on ‘a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up.’ Expanding upon Darwin’s conjectures, Freud then constructs his ‘scientific myth of the father of the primal horde:’

One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. . . . Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal . . . would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion.

Reading this story somewhat against Freud’s grain, the ‘primal horde’ provides the framework into which the European imperialist inserts himself as symbol of authority in Empire, where he occupies a position analogous to that assumed by the primal father: a brother at home, when representing that brotherhood abroad he sees himself as a father and a god to the natives. The primal father therefore emerges as the European’s uncanny double, whose troubling resemblance is succinctly captured by Dan Bivona in his description of du Chaillu’s
encounter with the ferocious gorilla: ‘the warrior king of the jungle facing the
great white hunter who would be king.’ Freud, therefore, lays out the fan-
tasmatic underpinnings of an Imperial Order, the concrete anthropological
signs of which are polygamy, despotism, and cannibalism on the margins, all of
which are evident in Burton’s description of ‘the ladder—cannibalism, slavery,
and polygamy—by one of whose rungs the Homo Darwiniensis became Homo
sapiens’. The three rungs mentioned here (moving from barbarism to civiliza-
tion) occupy the same position in Burton’s imperial fantasy, giving details of the
other scene into which he inserts himself as Master.

In the ‘spectre of cannibalism,’ there is, then, more at stake than simply
the hapless traveller’s body, because to eat him would be to transgress in the
most graphic manner possible the border separating one (civilized) body
from another (savage one). This event, enacted upon the European’s own
body, would symbolize the loss of this border. However, if, as Freud suggests,
the devouring of the father results in both his sons’ identification with him,
and the origin of civilized society, then this is ostensibly what the imperialist
wishes by establishing himself as a ‘feared and envied model’ for the native.
The European wishes to be metaphorically eaten, but this is by no means to
be taken literally, for at the same time he wishes to remain the only man,
at the centre of the horde, and does everything in his power to preserve the
status quo by preventing those he rules from banding together to overthrow
him. That Freud’s primal horde might succinctly figure an Imperial Order
is, however, something which the imperialist must deny, precisely because he
sees himself as a civilized man, who, by definition, cannot be identified with
the primal father. If he performs this role, he only does so ironically, in the
supposed interests of the natives who expect and/or require despotic rule; to
genuinely perform it would be to be lost on the other side of the border, and
so this must be vigilantly guarded against.

This imperial irony can be understood in terms of Paul de Man’s state-
ment that ‘The ironic language splits the subject into an empirical self that
exists in a state of inauthenticity and a self that exists only in the form of a
language that asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity.’ Outside the
City Walls, the appearance of the European’s ‘empirical self’ is seen to be
‘inauthentic’, a perception systematically reinforced by the representation
of this space in scenic terms, and the fact that it is placed in a different time
from that of the viewer. Consequently, the European can don any number
of masks, including that of primal father, while remaining distant from these
inauthentic roles. According to de Man’s definition, the other self only comes
into being in this distance, and we can say that the European uses this self-
reflection, or ability to step outside the scene, to distinguish himself from the
natives among whom he appears. For this reason, however, imperial irony is
somewhat different from that suggested by de Man’s definition, because the
split in the European’s subjectivity coincides with a border between his own
body (located elsewhere) and that of the native (who cannot escape from
the scene); as de Man says, 'to know inauthenticity is not the same as to be authentic,'\textsuperscript{110} and yet imperialism is based on the fallacy that the imperialist spectator, who maintains an ironic distance, is the only authentic self in the \textit{mis-en-scène}.

In accordance with this need to construct a knowing self who is separate from his own engagement in the foreign land, the most striking feature of the compulsively recurring trope of cannibalism in the European narrative is the identification of the traveller and writer as one who is in search of the scene, and as a would-be viewer of it. Stade satisfies this desire in a more graphic way than du Chaillu and those who followed in his footsteps in West Africa because he, unlike them, witnessed acts of cannibalism. For instance, in the presence of Stade, the cannibals captured—in the same place as Stade was taken—and roasted . . . two Mammelucks [half-castes] who were Christians. The one was a Portuguese named George Ferrero, the son of a Captain who had had him by a native woman. The other was named Hieronymus, who was caught by a savage that belonged to the hut wherein I was, and his name was Parwaa. The same fried Hieronymus during the night at about a step’s distance from where I lay.\textsuperscript{111}

We are then told that ‘the flesh of Hieronymus . . . was hung in the hut wherein I was, in a basket above the fire, exposed to the smoke during fully three weeks, until it became as dry as a piece of wood.’\textsuperscript{112} Clearly Hieronymus—a fellow-Christian, taken from the same place, cooked within the same hut—stands in for Stade in the role of meat in the cannibal feast. However, he is marked as different from Stade in being a ‘Mammeluck;’ this half-caste, half way between the European and the native, draws Stade into the scene, while at the same time keeping him separate from it. The act of cannibalism, therefore, becomes a moment of vicarious identification and subsequent differentiation. Burton, in his turn, when he frames this narrative, identifies with his European predecessor in the New World, but states that ‘it is curious to mark the narrowness of the border-line between the belief of the Brazilian cannibal and that of the Christian European of the sixteenth century.’\textsuperscript{113} So Stade is closer than Burton to the cannibals who purpose to eat him, just as Hieronymus was closer than Stade. Moving from Stade to Burton to the generic civilized man, the cannibal feast recedes further and further from view, as the distance between the viewer and the scene increases: in sixteenth-century Brazil, it occurs in the same time and place as the onlooker; for Burton it is only present as a ghostly textual memory; and for Freud it is buried in the distant past, as the very origin of man, and as a collective memory which continues to haunt. In this movement, the scene of cannibalism becomes a \textit{mis-en-abime} haunting the \textit{mis-en-scène}, opening the portals of dream.
By thus emphasizing the relationship of the spectator to the cannibal feast, the rhetorical construction of this scene exhibits the kind of irony which establishes ‘distance within a self, duplications of a self, specular structures within the self, within which the self looks at itself from a certain distance.’ For de Man, this type of irony is a ‘way in which irony can be dealt with, and can be in a sense defused,’ and he finds a more radical concept of irony in Schlegel’s notion of ‘permanent parabasis,’ or ‘an interruption of the narrative line . . . not just at one point but at all points.’ Freud’s story might be read in terms of this ‘interruption’, with the civilized man being constantly haunted by the image of himself as the primal father, threatened with consumption by a band of cannibal brothers. This scene itself, though, serves the purpose of resisting another reading of cannibalism, in which the European is assimilated by the natives. Freud’s troubling narrative can then be seen to function as a way of defusing the even more alarming possibility that the story of the European’s presence in the mouths of those others interrupts, at every point, the homogeneous narrative of the European self and its history, in which his others merely perform the role of reflecting back multiple, disavowed images of himself.

When Freud finds the killing and eating of the primal father as a repressed memory, he occludes the imperial other scene, in which what is repressed is the deed itself, and all that follows it. In this scene, the civilized viewer finds an image of himself in the primal father, and also, as a brother, in his semblables, the cannibal savages. This latter identification, however, must be denied as the condition of possibility of imperialism as the rule of the father, who sets himself apart from his black brothers to govern them. It is, then, not surprising that these other men, on the margins of the horde, bear the mark of absolute otherness—cannibalism. In Freud’s ‘scientific myth,’ they also bear the mark of homosexuality, as we see when he describes the events which, perhaps, followed the overthrow of the primal father:

the brothers had no alternative, if they were to live together, but . . . to institute the law against incest, by which they all alike renounced the women whom they desired and who had been their chief motive for despatching their father. In this way they rescued the organization which had made them strong—and which may have been based on homosexual feelings and acts, originating perhaps during the period of their expulsion from the horde. Here, too, may perhaps have been the germ of the institution of matriarchy . . . which was in turn replaced by the patriarchal organization of the family.

Most straightforwardly, the kind of homosexuality envisaged here, based on the father’s prohibition of the women, replicates the heterosexuality at the centre of the horde, and, in the imperial other scene, is enacted in a desire for the feminized native man, and / or a desire to be dominated by that man. However, as with cannibalism, homosexuality perhaps also suggests a place
where the differences instituted by the father disappear. In this place, the voyeuristic viewer would become part of the scene, as a man, a friend, and a brother amongst others, and cannibalism would represent a world in which everyone is eaten by everyone else. However, to prevent his own loss of authority, his right to act and to speak on behalf of those others, his own death, such a community—marked by homosexuality and cannibalism—can only be invoked as that which must be repressed. This place—just outside and just after the imperialist’s sphere of authority—and the primal horde are the two sides of one coin, figuring as they do the civilized man’s ambivalent self-identification as both father and brother. However, his identification with both these figures is always ‘ironic’, and his very presence, as viewer, renders the scene only something dimly discerned behind the veil of reality, always already lost—somewhere over the horizon, further back in time, buried deeper.

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When Hans Stade, as Burton puts it, ‘steps forth and delivers his testimony about a people who were literally “fleshed with human meat,”’ he is concerned that his story will not be believed, and he concludes:

Now, should there be any young man who is not satisfied with this writing and testimony, let him, so that he may not remain in doubt, with God’s assistance, begin this voyage. I have herein given him information enough, let him follow the spoor; to him whom God helps, the world is not closed!

As if his narrative provided a trail to a dreamworld, Stade sends those for whom doubt is intolerable out to be eaten in his place. Several hundred years later, and we find Burton traversing the same space:

I passed again and again through the Rio Bertioga . . . and I landed, not unfrequently, at the ruin opposite the Forte de Bertioga. The stone-heap occupies the site where Hans Stade . . . served as gunner, and whence he was carried off captive by the cannibal savages.

Of course, Burton does not find the cannibals promised by Stade, waiting to eat him, but only ruins ‘overgrown with bush: a stranger would pass it without a glance.’ Look as he might, again and again, the portal through which his body might literally travel to that otherworld remains forever closed.
6 Ending Up—Lost in the Nights

The progress of civilization in every stage of development of human society, is mainly effected by labour and the renunciation of immediate enjoyment, for the latter merely consumes and produces nothing. It is on this account that civilization does not increase enjoyment. The prevalence of labour is above all characteristic of civilization . . . civilization is an incessant labour of all for every individual, not alone for his enjoyment, but for fitting him for an intellectual life,—a labour which can only have its full effect by the coalition of all the external and inner forces of individuals, but which, on this account, at first includes only small and gradually larger circles of society, until at length it connects all humanity by closer moral bonds.¹

A Labour of Love

To begin at the beginning:

This work, laborious as it may appear, has been to me a labour of love, an unfailing source of solace and satisfaction. During my long years of official banishment to the luxuriant and deadly deserts of Western Africa, and to the dull and dreary half-clearings of South America, it proved itself a charm, a talisman against ennui and despondency. Impossible even to open the pages without a vision starting into view . . . From my dull and commonplace and ‘respectable’ surroundings, the Jinn bore me at once to the land of my predilection, Arabia, a region so familiar to my mind that even at first sight, it seemed a reminiscence of some by-gone metempsychic life in the distant Past. [Nights 1.vii]

What was it about the Nights which ‘proved itself a charm, a talisman’ to Burton during his ‘official banishment’ to South America, where he served as British
Consul in Santos, Brazil between 1865 and 1869? Two alternative readings are suggested in this beginning of the Translator’s Foreword, and of the Nights itself. First, the subject of the opening sentence is ‘This work,’ and there is the sense in which it is the labour of producing the work before our eyes which has enabled Burton to resist the ‘ennui and despondency’ threatened by the South American landscape. However, we move from this image of him conscientiously labouring on our behalf, to another in which he is ‘at once’ borne away by jinns to a place which is ‘at first sight’ the ‘distant Past’ and another life. The task of translation would, therefore, appear to produce a splitting in the translator’s identity: on the one hand, he labours to bring the text over into the English language; on the other, the Arabic text in front of him transports him effortlessly and irresistibly into Arabia, ‘the land of my predilection.’

Burton goes on to describe the scenes into which he is transported, where he appears as Abdullah, narrating tales from the Nights to audiences, first in Arabia and then in Somaliland; as he says, ‘Nor was it only in Arabia that the immortal Nights did me such notable service: I found the wildlings of Somaliland equally amenable to its discipline; no one was deaf to the charm’ (Nights 1.ix). This recalls First Footsteps, where Burton—already thinking of translations of the Nights—wrote:

When Arabs are present, I usually read out a tale from ‘The Thousand and One Nights,’ that wonderful work, so often translated, so much turned over, and so little understood at home. The most familiar of books in England, next to the Bible, it is one of the least known, the reason being that about one-fifth is utterly unfit for translation; and the most sanguine Orientalist would not dare to render literally more than three-quarters of the remainder. [First Footsteps I.26]

In this Eastern/African context, it is the Nights which labours, here to ‘discipline,’ doing so in Burton’s service. Thus, it becomes a tool which he uses to tame the horde of ‘wildlings’ who surround him, and the effect on his listeners is striking: the ‘Shaykhs and “white beards”’ in the inner circle, and the ‘women and children . . . motionless as silhouettes outside the ring’ all ‘seem to drink in the words with eyes and mouths as well as with ears . . . their mouths water . . . they chuckle with delight . . . and, despite their normal solemnity and impassibility, all roar with laughter, sometimes rolling upon the ground’ (Nights 1.viii). Burton is able to break through the physical reserve of his audience by pouring this ‘charm’ into the orifices of their bodies, but, given that he has also used this word to describe the effect of the tales on himself, we might ask what pleasure he gets from his listeners’ pleasure, and to what extent he identifies with their loss of self-control under the influence of these charming words.

These questions resonate with the anxieties attending the labour of translation as Burton presents it. Lori Chamberlain has pointed out that Western ideas about translation, dependent as they are upon a reification of the ‘original,’
almost invariably invoke an Oedipal framework, so that ‘what the original risks losing, in short, is its phallus, the sign of paternity, authority, and originality,’ and ‘what the translator claims for “himself” is precisely the right of paternity; he claims a phallus because that is the only way, in a patriarchal code, to claim legitimacy for the text.’ Thus, we find a dynamic of castration and counter-castration, a contest for the ‘phallus,’ in the translator’s encounter with the text. In the light of this, it is interesting to note that Burton spoke of his own translation, in contradistinction to those of his predecessors, and most particularly that of Edward Lane, as ‘a full, complete, unvarnished, uncastrated copy of the great original’ (Nights 1.ix, my emphasis). (Perhaps he saw me coming.) Burton’s metaphor here alludes specifically to his particular claim to originality, which was the inclusion of lewd and sexually explicit passages omitted by his predecessors. However, it is also significant that Burton’s description of his copy as ‘uncastrated’ draws us into a ‘metaphorics of translation,’ to use Chamberlain’s phrase, which suggests a gendered relationship of power between translator and text.

The Nights was first made known to a European audience by Antoine Galland, who published his French version between 1704 and 1717. His status as ‘translator’ is somewhat ambiguous for, as Robert Irwin has pointed out, he played so large a part in discovering the tales, in popularizing them in Europe and in shaping what would come to be regarded as the canonical collection that, at some risk of hyperbole and paradox, he has been called the real author of the Nights. The tales were largely known in Britain through Galland’s French, or translations of it into English, until Edward Lane’s partial translation from Arabic manuscripts ‘appeared in monthly parts over the years 1838–41, before appearing in a three-volume bound version.’ Lane was a well-known Orientalist who had spent many years in Cairo and was famous for his Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (1836). In his Nights, he sought to continue this work by providing a substantial body of scholarly footnotes. However, Lane only provided a selection of the tales, and altered or omitted passages which he deemed pornographic, as well as taking pains to tell us he had done so. Indeed, one of his principle objections to Galland’s version was that he had ‘excessively perverted the work.’ As Borges says, ‘Lane translated against Galland, Burton against Lane; to understand Burton we must understand this hostile dynasty,’ and the hostility implicit in this dynasty is largely mediated through the ‘phallus’ of the original text. Thus, Burton’s attempt to correct the incompleteness and the style of Lane’s translation is bound up with his presentation of an ‘uncastrated copy,’ which explicitly displaces the relationship with the Arabian ‘phallus’ into the domestic domain of an Oedipal European dynasty. In this way, it might be said that Lane becomes the castrating father, and Burton grafts the phallus back in, signed with his
own name, and made to serve as the marker of his own identity in the European archive. Yet if Burton thereby castrates in his turn (not only Lane, but also the text, in appropriating the ‘phallus’ as his own), we are nonetheless returned with a vengeance to the anxious relationship with the original, let loose in all its hyper-masculine—‘uncastrated’—glory.

These ‘metaphorics’ become even more obvious when Burton comments on the abridged Household Edition of his own translation, produced by his wife, Isabel, and Justin Huntley McCarthy. Burton describes this edition as an attempt at ‘converting the grand old barbarian into a family man to be received by the “best circles”’ (Suppl. Nights 6.451–52), and he ironically presents himself as offended by its failure to capture the public imagination: ‘The result was an unexpected and unpleasant study of modern taste in highly respectable England.’ Given the value he ascribed to the ‘completeness’ of his work, Burton is, of course, really rather exultant that ‘The public would have none of it: even innocent girlhood tossed aside the chaste volumes in utter contempt, and would not condescend to aught save the thing, the whole thing, and nothing but the thing, unexpurgated and uncastrated’ (Suppl. Nights 6.452). The ‘thing’ let loose here to entice innocent girlhood is not presented as Burton’s own, but as (that of) ‘the grand old barbarian,’ and Burton is deliberate in flaunting the original before us. He repeats these ‘metaphorics’ in his Foreword to another of his translations, The Carmina of Caius Valerius Catullus, where he compares his method of translation to the prevalent taste for ‘presenting the toga’d citizen . . . in the costume of to-day—boiled shirt, dove-tailed coat, black-cloth clothes, white pocket-handkerchief, and diamond ring.’ Burton contrasts this with his own technique, of which he remarks, ‘As discovery is mostly my mania, I have hit upon a bastard-urging to indulge it, by a presenting to the public of certain classics in the nude Roman poetry, like the Arab, and of the same date.’ Burton here argues for a literal translation, which domesticating strategies fail to achieve, but in the same gesture he strips the original—in the move from ‘toga’d citizen’ to nude—suggesting an exhibitionism on his part, and on that of the ‘original,’ ‘presented’ by Burton, its ‘discoverer.’

In her reading of Richard and Isabel’s presentations of the Household Edition, Colette Colligan argues that Isabel ‘unmans him [Richard] with her censorship,’ so that

as Burton disputed with his wife over the presentation of the Arabian Nights, he demonstrated that his desire to preserve the ‘barbarian’ character of his translation was intimately bound up with a sense of manhood threatened by a feminised figure who represented the prudery of the nation.

According to this argument, Burton once again appropriates the ‘phallus’ of the Nights within a domestic economy of castration and counter-castration. In the marriage scene, this manifests itself as a battle for the attention of
women, Isabel dedicating her edition ‘To the women of England,’ and claiming in an address to her ‘Dear Readers’—in which she speaks of this ‘large work of my own’—that ‘no mother shall regret her girl’s reading this Arabian Nights,’ while in a flyer for the work it is stated that Lady Burton intends it principally ‘for her own sex.’ It is then not coincidental that Sir Richard draws our attention to the reception of this work by ‘innocent girlhood,’ who would prefer the phallic, male body of the Nights, presented as his own. However, this regulation of his relationship to the text within a heterosexual and Oedipal framework coexists with a more obvious homosexual encounter between Burton and ‘the grand old barbarian,’ who is no ‘family man’. The shared focus of the married couple on a female audience, and consequently heterosexual understanding of ‘manhood,’ can then be read as a convenient domestic fiction, conjuring, even as it forecloses, the spectre of homosexuality which Burton’s ‘metaphorics’ invoke, and which poses a less legible threat to the couple’s marital bliss.

Further complications of gender are introduced when Burton uses the trope of maternity to usurp the role of originator of the text, as when he speaks of the publication of the first volume as ‘the birth of the first-born . . . robed in black and gold, the colours of the Abbaside Caliphs’ (Suppl. Nights 6.395). This complete and healthy offspring is contrasted with other versions, which are ‘abortions, . . . monstrous births,’ presenting ‘a bastard Europeo-Oriental, pseudo-Eastern world’ (Suppl. Nights 4.viii). Burton has to become a woman to thus give birth. He also, presumably, has to become racially other to engender this purely Oriental child. It is, therefore, not insignificant that the Nights bears, along with the name of Richard Francis Burton, that of Al-Hajj Abdullah, in ornate Arabic characters penned by Burton’s friend, ‘the lamented Professor Palmer’ (Nights 1.xxiv). From one point of view, the authenticity of the offspring reinforces the division between these two names, being clearly placed on one side of the border even as it is carried across, and leaving Burton the translator–spy in charge of the message crossing from one side to the other. This power relationship is further stressed by Burton’s comments on the dual role of the translator, who must not only be faithful to the original, but also ‘add something to his native tongue’ (Nights 1.xiv), for

Every language can profitably lend something to and borrow something from its neighbours, near or far . . . and the translator of original mind will not neglect the frequent opportunities of enriching his mother tongue with alien and novel ornaments, which will justly be accounted barbarisms until formally adopted and naturalised. [Suppl. Nights 6.412]

If this paradigm seems to acknowledge and embrace the potentially subversive effect of the site of translation, at the same time it locates the originator of this subversion as the translator, ‘of original mind.’ The threat of subversion
is further limited by the description of good translation as an appropriation of alien ornaments, an enrichment of, rather than attack upon, the mother (tongue). Yet the composite image of the newborn grand old Oriental barbarian, fully clothed and well hung, also leaves us wondering which is the man in this relationship, who is in control. Lori Chamberlain suggests that ‘while the metaphors we have looked at attempted to cloak the secondary status of translation in the language of the phallus, western culture enforces this secondariness with a vengeance, insisting on the feminized status of translation.’ This is a status which Burton troublingly seems to covet, in his markedly passive status with respect to the original text.

This passivity is ‘cloaked’, however, when Burton steps forward, in the Translator’s Foreword, to present his translation as an integral part of his labour on behalf of the Anthropological Society:

These volumes . . . afford me a long-sought opportunity of noticing practices and customs which interest all mankind and which ‘Society’ will not hear mentioned. . . . Hence a score of years ago I lent my best help to the late Dr. James Hunt in founding the Anthropological Society. . . . My motive was to supply travellers with an organ which would rescue their observations from the outer darkness of manuscript, and print their curious information on social and sexual matters out of place in the popular book intended for the Nipptisch and indeed better kept from public view. But, hardly had we begun when ‘Respectability,’ that whited sepulchre full of all uncleanness, rose up against us. ‘Propriety’ cried us down with her brazen blatant voice, and the weak-kneed brethren fell away. [Nights 1.xviii]

The Anthropological Society, and by extension the Nights which is described as its successor, are presented as a forum for the utterance of social and sexual information, embodied as a strong, young man, ‘that uncommonly lusty youth,’ in opposition to the sepulchred corpse of ‘Respectability,’ and uttering the clear male voice of Destitute Truth against the brazen, blatant one of the female ‘Propriety.’ This description of the Anthropological Society in the Nights echoes Burton’s first address, in 1863, to the newly-formed Society, which was entitled ‘Notes on Certain Matters connected with the Dahoman,’ and began:

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—In availing myself of the opportunity now afforded me of addressing you, I cannot but congratulate ourselves upon the fact, that we find in this room a liberty of thought and a freedom of speech unknown, I may assert, to any other society in Great Britain. It is well so. Our object of study being MAN in all his relations, physical, moral, psychical, and social, it is impossible to treat the subject adequately without offending in general the mawaise honte,
the false delicacy, and the ingrained prejudices of the age. Without some such refuge for Destitute Truth as the rooms of the Anthropological Society, we should find it equally difficult to relate and to publish facts.  

This paper was delivered to an all-male audience; indeed, the pretext for the succession of the Anthropological from the Ethnological Society had been the latter’s decision to admit women to its meetings. Burton found in this new Society—or, as he referred to it in a letter to his friend Richard Monckton Milnes, ‘new religion’—a congenial site in which to speak about matters of a sexual nature, as we see when he moves on ‘to notice certain peculiarities in the Dahoman race, which, in the usual phrase, are “unfit for the drawing-room table.”’ In the course of his address—when speaking of the existence in Dahomey of Hetaerae, for women as well as men—Burton makes a passing reference to the Arabian Nights:

I was hardly prepared for this amount of cynicism amongst mere barbarians; although in that wonderful book, the ‘Arabian Nights,’ which has been degraded by Europe into mere Fairy Tales, the lover is always jealous, not of his own, but of the opposite sex.

This allusion was picked up by several contributors in the discussion following. James Hunt, for instance, remarked that ‘it would be conferring a great boon on science if their Vice-President would give the public a genuine edition.’ Burton, in response to these comments, ‘ridiculed the squeamishness of those who allow Rabelais, “Petronius Arbiter,” and other works of that character, to be published, and yet object to the Arabian Nights, which book in its original state is valuable as an anthropological study.’

These exchanges would seem to demonstrate that Burton—who according to his own testimony had conceived the project of translating the work in 1852—was already thinking of the Nights in terms of anthropology, and anthropology in terms of the Nights. The idea of a continuing single project, centred on the creation of a forum from which to disseminate a discourse on sex, ostensibly subordinates the main text of the Nights to an extension of the Anthropological Society, making of it a mere pretext for Burton’s authoritative discourse on MAN in all his relations. In thus linking the Nights to the Society, Burton implies that what is of most value in it can be found in the anthropology it gives rise to, and which is to be found in the heterogeneous and idiosyncratic annotations and additional texts which accompany his translation. So when he gives us ‘the raison d’être of my long labour’ (Suppl. Nights 6.436), Burton speaks both of the ‘duty to translate the text word for word, instead of garbling it and mangling it by perversion and castration’ (Suppl. Nights 6.436–37), and of the value of his ‘running commentary, as it were, enabling the student to read between the lines and to understand hints and innuendoes that would otherwise have passed by wholly unheeded’
(Suppl. Nights 6.436). In this commentary, he claims, is to be found a ‘reper-
tory of Eastern knowledge in its esoteric phase’ (Nights 1.xix), and Burton
‘can hardly imagine The Nights being read to any profit by men of the West
without commentary’ (Nights 1.xviii).

The esoteric nature of Burton’s insights into Arabic culture differentiates
his annotations from those of Edward Lane. However, it is particularly with
reference to his friend John Payne’s more recent translation, on which he
collaborated, that Burton raises this feature of his text as a raison d’être for
his own undertaking. Given their close personal and working relationship,
he is keen not to undermine his friend’s translation, and, in both the Nights
itself and in personal correspondence, emphasizes, instead, the importance
of his supplementary commentary. For instance, in a letter to Payne dated
September 9th 1884, he writes:

As you have been chary of notes my version must by way of raison d’être
(amongst others) abound in esoteric lore, such as female circumcision
and excision; different forms of eunuch manufactory etc. I [?] all my
friends that reading it will be a liberal education and assure them that
with such a repertory of esotericism at their finger ends they will know
all the Sibile requisite to salvation. My conviction is that all the women
in England will read it and half the men will cut me.24

Burton’s desire here to educate his friends is entirely consistent with his wish
to cultivate a coterie of well-educated gentlemen. However, in the light of
his rhetoric about keeping the women outside the circle of readers/listeners,
his ‘conviction that all the women in England will read it’ might seem rather
surprising. Nonetheless, this reference to women readers recalls the ‘inno-
cent girlhood’ who tossed aside his wife’s edition, and also the women in
Somaliland, ‘motionless as silhouettes outside the ring.’ It would seem, then,
that Burton’s desire to publish ‘facts’ is not only (if most obviously) a wish to
make his name, but also to disseminate his text to the very place from which
it is ostensibly prohibited: the drawing room table. We see this even more
clearly in a letter to another friend, Kirby, in which he writes of the first vol-
ume of his Nights: ‘I have come upon a young woman friend greedily reading
it in open drawing room and when I warned another against it she answered
“Very well—Billy (her husband) has a copy and I shall read it at once!”25

By thus invoking a female audience, the Nights becomes Burton’s phallic
substitute—his magic ‘charm’ turning on all the women (only the women?)
in England, exciting their greedy appetites. One, perhaps, assumes that
they are reading his notes. However, if Burton at times presents these notes
as primary, for which the main text is merely pretext, at others he places
them in a more secondary light, ‘enabling the student to read between the
lines and to understand hints and innuendoes.’ The notes are, from this
point of view, a reading in the service of the main text, and in this context
it is interesting that Burton inquired of Payne regarding the forthcoming publication of his—noteless—first volume, ‘What news of Vol. 1? I am very anxious to see it and so are many female correspondents.’ Burton brackets himself here with the women as greedy readers. Perhaps he does so also when he speaks of all the women reading his own Nights, in contradistinction to half the men—who ‘cut’ him (a suggestive term, given Burton’s obsession with circumcision and eunuchry). Is male competition, then, the only possible reading of this sentence, or might we not also see, on the margin, an identification between Burton and his women readers, borne away at once, carried out of themselves, by this magic charm?

These two readings resonate with the ambivalences of Burton’s dramatic enactment of the ‘metaphorics of translation’. He purposefully intervenes in the domestic scene, as a translator smuggling in a text which he claims as his own, which will not only be an invaluable source of knowledge for ‘the greatest Mohammedan empire in the world’, ‘a legacy which I bequeath to my fellow-countrymen in their hour of need’ (Nights I.xxiii), but will also serve to disrupt and perturb the custodians of a hypocritical English morality, which Burton actively wishes to change. In these ways, he appropriates the ‘phallus’ of the Nights as his own. The women on the margin, as ideal readers, then enable the original and the copy to overlap in a shared appeal to these women, a shared exhibitionism. To put it bluntly, Abdullah and Burton present, together, the ‘phallus,’ as alien ornament, to their women readers at the same time as it presented (both shown and offered) to Burton’s male reader as a sign of his own phallic mastery. However, if this is, no doubt, the object of Burton’s labour, there is also the sense, so clearly marked at the very beginning, of Burton’s being in thrall to this charming text, and with it the land of his predilection to which it so seamlessly belongs. Therefore, Burton’s intrusion of this text, and this land, cannot simply be accounted self-assertion, but can also be seen as an irresistible urge that his own loss of self-control as reader be spread outwards, infecting wider and wider circles of listeners until the normal solemnity and impassibility of all is dissipated in a universal roar of uncontrollable, orgasmic laughter. According to this reading, Burton identifies his own relationship to the original text in that of the women whom he ostentatiously places on its margin.

A Pederast’s Pilgrimage

The ‘Pederasty’ section of the ‘Terminal Essay’ of Volume X was the pretext for the Nights which finally compelled Burton to labour to get it done. The idea germinated when he told Payne, in a letter dated May 12, 1883, that he was ‘drawing it very mild’ in his translations of the most notoriously ‘pederastic’ passages in the work, in Volume IV. As soon as May 22, in response to a reply, Burton wrote again:
Yours of May 17 making me almost regret having spoken about the ‘mildness.’ I perfectly understand your difficulty, not appreciating Robertson Smith who as usual with the weak, after being persecuted becomes a persecutor. The poor [?] [?] must be in a stew if they are to marry Vol. IV to Miss Respectability. Unfortunately it is these ‘offences against Nature,’ (which come so naturally in Greece and Persia; and which belong strictly to their fervid age) that give the book so much of its ethnological value I should put it into the hands of every cadet going to the East. I don’t know if I ever mentioned to you a paper (unpublished) of mine showing the geo[graphical] limits of sodomy . . .

In this letter, Burton went on to give a summary of that unpublished paper, and included a pen sketch of what he called the ‘Sotadic Zone,’ in which ‘sodomy’ was prevalent; this paper would form the basis of his ‘Pederasty’ essay. Soon, Burton had embarked upon his own translation, and began, as we have seen, speaking of a wider range of notes as its raison-d’etre. Clearly, Payne anticipated dire consequences were he to proceed with a complete translation without taking into account, at all, the current moral climate, and Burton presented his Nights as a deliberate assault on that ‘climate’, hoping to rely, for his own security, upon his fame and position, and feeling able and more than willing to defend himself on the basis of his contributions to Orientalism, Empire, anthropology, and so forth; in a characteristically theatrical manner, he

resolved that, in case of the spiteful philanthropy and the rabid pornophobic suggestion of certain ornaments of the Home-Press being acted upon, to appear in Court with my version of The Nights in one hand and bearing in the other the Bible (especially the Old Testament, a free translation from an ancient Oriental work) and Shakespeare, with Petronius Arbiter and Rabelais by way of support and reserve. [Suppl. Nights 6.437]

Richard Phillips has suggested that in the ‘Pederasty’ section of the Nights, ‘Burton used travel, and specifically travel geography, as a medium in which to contest contemporary constructions of sexuality, and more specifically to protest against contemporary homophobia.’ Phillips is referring here to Burton’s containment of pederasty within the Sotadic Zone, ‘bounded westwards by the northern shores of the Mediterranean (N. Lat. 43˚) and by the southern (N. Lat. 30˚),’ which then narrows as it runs eastward ‘embracing Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Chaldæa, Afghanistan, Sind, the Punjab and Kashmir’ before it broadens once more, ‘enfolding China, Japan and Turkistan’ and finally ‘embraces the South Sea Islands and the New World where, at the time of its discovery, Sotadic love was, with some exceptions, an established racial institution.’ Within this Zone,
the Vice is popular and endemic, held at the worst to be a mere peccadillo, whilst the races to the North and South of the limits here defined practise it only sporadically amid the opprobrium of their fellows who, as a rule, are physically incapable of performing the operation and look upon it with the liveliest disgust. [Nights 10.206–7]

In this geographical survey, Burton presents the first sustained account of ‘homosexuality’ (although he doesn’t use this word) in the English language. It can then be said to challenge a certain silence on the subject, which Burton saw as indicative of a failure to address matters of sex and sexuality openly and honestly. In doing so, he sought to attack the current moral and legal climate, particularly as expressed in the Labouchere amendment to the Criminal Amendment Act of 1885, which ‘criminalised all homosexual activity, both public and private.’ Furthermore, in the annotations to his own copy of the work (presumably towards a later edition), Burton goes further in advertising his inside knowledge of those who might be affected by this legislation, writing, ‘the ménages of pederasty in London, Dublin & other cities . . . cannot be described without alluding to individuals and details may readily be found in the Police reports.’ However, I question Phillips’s argument that Burton ‘contests’ constructions of sexuality in this essay, and that he intends a ‘protest against contemporary homophobia;’ indeed, it is, most obviously, itself extremely homophobic.

In the wider context of his Nights, Burton’s analysis of pederasty is inseparable from his misogynistic representations of women, which are indebted to the familiar construction of the hyper-sexual prostitute, and the association of this figure with the ‘torrid zone’. In defending himself against the charge in a contemporaneous review that ‘he is never weary of recording disparaging estimates of women’ (quoted in Suppl. Nights 6.439), Burton asserts—repeating an argument we have already seen him use when elaborating his notion of ‘geographical morality’—that

in The Nights we meet principally Egyptian maids, matrons and widows . . . . Like the natives of warm, damp and malarious lowlands and river-valleys adjacent to rugged and healthy uplands, such as Mazanderán, Sind, Malabar and California, the passions and the sexual powers of the females greatly exceed those of their males, and hence a notable development of the crude form of polyandry popularly termed whoredom. [Suppl. Nights 6.439–40]

The Egyptian woman’s body is, therefore, an implicitly diseased one, her excessive sexuality linked to the malarious climate. However, this specifying of Egypt is at odds with Burton’s more common references to Eastern women throughout the Nights, so that Egypt here becomes metonymic of the East as a whole. Furthermore, such women are only ambiguously contained in the
East. This is evident in the striking echo of these ‘Egyptian maids, matrons and widows’ in Burton’s attack upon

the utterly artificial life of civilisation, which . . . leaves to the many, whose lot is celibacy, no bodily want save one and that in a host of cases either unattainable or procurable only by difficulty and danger. Hence the prodigious amount of mental excitement and material impurity which is found wherever civilisation extends, in maid, matron, and widow [my emphasis]. . . . How many an old maid held to be cold as virgin snow, how many a matron upon whose fairest fame not a breath of scandal has blown, how many a widow who proudly claims the title univira, must relieve their pent-up feelings by what may be called mental prostitution. [Suppl. Nights 6.404]

What is constructed here as ‘pent-up’ is the sexuality which Burton claims is manifested by Eastern women or prostitutes. He might be suggesting that repression produces, festering beneath the surface of the West, the perverted sexuality characteristic of the East, but this attack upon a repressive moral climate is really dependent upon a reading of all women as essentially whores, and female sexuality as closely linked to a warm, damp, and diseased geographical space.

Similarly, Burton argues that pederasty is caused by climate and tied to a specific place (the Sotadic Zone): ‘As Prince Bismarck finds a moral difference between the male and female races of history, so I suspect a mixed physical temperament effected by the manifold subtle influences massed together in the word climate’ (Nights 10.210). This extends his earlier claim that pederasty is ‘geographical and climatic, not racial’ (Nights 10.207). Throughout the ‘Pederasty’ essay, the Zone’s climate is linked to disease, and it is as a disease that Burton most frequently describes the spread of what he calls (somewhat ironically) Le Vice, which is in the Sotadic Zone ‘endemic,’ and outside it ‘sporadic.’ Thus, he tells us that ‘The cities of Afghanistan and Sind are thoroughly saturated with Persian vice’ (Nights 10.236), and ‘Le Vice . . . prevails more in the cities and towns of Asiatic Turkey than in the villages; yet even these are infected’ (Nights 10.232). This trope of infection becomes yet more striking when Burton moves outside the Zone: ‘San’à the capital of Al-Yaman and other centres of population have long been and still are thoroughly infected’ (Nights 10.246); and ‘In our modern capitals, London, Berlin and Paris for instance, the Vice seems subject to periodical outbreaks’ (Nights 10.247–48).

Within this framework of a spreading disease, climate and cities—which both exert a ‘physical and moral effect’ (Nights 10.246)—can be said to encourage the spread of Le Vice, the epidemiology of which mirrors Burton’s description elsewhere in Volume X of syphilis, a disease associated with prostitutes and redolent of colonial anxiety:
at the end of the xvth century [syphilis] began to infect Europe. . . . I do not say it actually began: diseases do not begin except with the dawn of humanity; and their history, as far as we know, is simple enough. They are at first sporadic and comparatively non-lethal: at certain epochs which we can determine, and for reasons which as yet we cannot, they break out into epidemics raging with frightful violence: they then subside into the endemic state and lastly they return to the milder sporadic form. 

[Nights 10.88]

In the ‘Pederasty’ essay, Burton transposes this framework and seeks to determine the places and ‘epochs,’ or ‘historique’ (Nights 10.210) of Le Vice. By thus representing pederasty in the same terms as syphilis, what is also repeated is the anxiety attending contact in the foreign space, which is, in the case of syphilis, evident in the reference to the infection of Europe and, in the case of Le Vice, in Burton’s descriptions of the ‘evil results’ of the French conquest of Algiers: ‘From the military the fléau spread to civilian society and the Vice took such expansion and intensity that it may be said to have been democratised in cities and large towns’ (Nights 10.251).

In his essay, ‘Is the Rectum a Grave?’, Leo Bersani writes,

The public discourse about homosexuals since the AIDS crisis began has a startling resemblance . . . to the representation of female prostitutes in the nineteenth century. . . . Prostitutes publicize (indeed, sell) the inherent aptitude of women for uninterrupted sex. . . . the similarities between representations of female prostitutes and male homosexuals should help us to specify the exact form of sexual behaviour being targeted, in representations of AIDS, as the criminal, fatal, and irresistibly repeated act. This is of course anal sex . . . and we must of course take into account the widespread confusion in heterosexual and homosexual men between fantasies of anal and vaginal sex. The realities of syphilis in the nineteenth century and of AIDS today ‘legitimate’ a fantasy of female sexuality as intrinsically diseased; and promiscuity in this fantasy, far from merely increasing the risk of infection, is the sign of infection. Women and gay men spread their legs with an unquenchable appetite for destruction.32

Burton’s association of the pederast with the debauched woman, and Le Vice virus, or bacillus, with syphilis, considerably predates representations of AIDS, being exactly contemporaneous with the nineteenth-century representations of syphilitic prostitutes. We might then say that if Burton’s is the first sustained account of homosexuality in the English language, it is also the first sustained expression of a homophobic fantasmatic which palimpsests the debauched woman and the gay man to invoke the image of a man compulsively spreading his legs, like a woman, in search of destruction. This ‘construction of sexuality’ is consistent with Burton’s statement that
The only physical cause for the practice which suggests itself to me and that must be owned to be purely conjectural, is that within the Sotadic Zone there is a blending of the masculine and feminine temperaments, a crasis which elsewhere occurs only sporadically. Hence the male féminisme whereby the man becomes patiens as well as agens, and the woman a tribade, a votary of mascula Sappho, Queen of Frictrices or Rubbers. [Nights 10.208]

This is not only a feminization of the pederast, for he assumes the active as well as the passive role, and ‘tribades are mostly known by peculiarities of form and features, hairy cheeks and upper lips, gruff voices, hircine odour and the large projecting clitoris with erectile powers’ (Nights 2.234). These bodies and the practices they engage in are, therefore, profoundly ambiguous, not to say monstrous, and the anxiety associated with them is evident in Burton’s consistent descriptions of Le Vice as a contagious disease.

However, if this disease is threatening, it is also eroticized, as we see in the verbs Burton uses to describe the Sotadic Zone—narrows, broadens, embracing, enfolding—which is thereby likened to ‘an aggressive and dominant lover’ whose embrace is, if fearful, yet much to be desired. As Phillips points out, Burton distances himself from this threatening and eroticized Zone: ‘His vision is panoramic, a grand sweep through geography and history.’ However, at the same time ‘His description is like an imaginary journey,’ and this gives a greater sense of exposure to the space which Burton represents. Furthermore, it is not only an ‘imaginary’ journey, for Burton places his own body in the mise-en-scène at the very beginning of the essay, telling us that, when in Scinde, he was ordered by Sir Charles Napier to report upon the boy brothels of Karachi, frequented by soldiers from the nearby encampment. Burton thus enters the Sotadic Zone as his alter ego, stating, in a parodic repetition of his earlier ‘scrap of autobiography’ in Falconry (which he duly references in a footnote) that ‘Accompanied by a Munshi, Mirza Mohammed Hosayn of Shiraz, and habited as a merchant, Mirza Abdullah the Bushiri passed many an evening in the townlet, visited all the porneia and obtained the fullest details which were duly despatched to Government House’ (Nights 10.206). If the pretext for this information is to inform us that the dissemination of this report (which has, suspiciously, never been found) compromised his future career, it also serves the purpose of placing Burton in the scene, in the Zone through which we travel in an ever Eastward circumnavigation of the globe, ending our tour by visiting some notable sites of sporadic occurrence outside this contained space.

This trope of a journey made in disguise obviously contributes to, and allows Burton to develop at length, the dominant theme of debauchery unveiled. In this way, he reprises his role as imperial spy. However, we might also say that the trip is a pederast’s pilgrimage, Abdullah visiting in person a series of (un)holy sites, such as the presumed location of Sodom and
Gomorrah, where he ‘found no traces of craters in the neighbourhood, no signs of vulcanism, no remains of “meteoric stones”’ (*Nights* 10.228). Indeed, the structure of a pilgrimage is reinforced by the fact that Burton traces, throughout the essay, ‘the worship of Androgynic and hermaphroditic deities’ (*Nights* 10.226) which ‘Syria and Palestine . . . borrowed from Egypt’ (*Nights* 10.225–26). It is within this framework that he refers to the Platonic essence of what we might take as the icon which is worshipped in the various temples which he visits:

Plato (Symp.) is probably mystical when he accounts for such passions by there being in the beginning three species of humanity, men, women and men–women or androgynes. When the latter were destroyed by Zeus for rebellion, the two others were individually divided into equal parts. Hence each division seeks its other half in the same sex; the primitive man prefers men and the primitive woman women. C’est beau, but—is it true? The idea was probably derived from Egypt which supplied the Hebrews with androgynic humanity. [*Nights* 10.209]

Burton clearly finds these ‘men–women or androgynes’—in whom the dash marks the join even as it dissolves it—a ‘beau’ ideal. Elsewhere he tells us wistfully that ‘The old Greeks dreamed, after their fashion, a beautiful poetic dream of a human animal uniting the contradictory beauties of man and woman’ (*Nights* 3.306, my emphasis); here, not only the division between man and woman, but also that between man and animal is abolished. It is not surprising that it is in Greece that he encounters the most ‘beautiful’ and ‘poetic’ images of the original androgyne, for this is also the place where ‘the love of boys has its noble, sentimental side,’ and is ‘without any admixture of carnal sensuality’ (*Nights* 10.207). Such nostalgic longing for a ‘pure’ form of androgyne finds further expression in Burton’s evocations of an Edenic scene, as when he says he will show us ‘the matter . . . in decent nudity not in suggestive fig-leaf or feuille de vigne’ (*Nights* 10.205), or when he speaks of ‘Le vice contre nature—as if anything can be contrary to nature which includes all things’ (*Nights* 10.204). His pilgrimage seems, then, to be motivated by a search for an ideal origin, prior to difference and prior to the disturbingly ‘carnal,’ although this search is one which will prove interminable, for ‘The origin of pederasty is lost in the night of ages’ (*Nights* 10.210, my emphasis).

However, while this phrase can be read within the context of a search for something lost, it also recalls Burton’s assertion, made with reference to syphilis, that ‘diseases do not begin except with the dawn of humanity.’ In this context, ‘the worship of Androgynic and hermaphroditic deities’ becomes associated with corruption; for instance: ‘Eusebius (De bit. Const. iii. c. 55) describes a school of impurity at Aphac, where women and “men who were not men” practised all manner of abominations in honour of the Demon (Venus)” (*Nights* 10.230); Julius Firmicus remarks how ‘You may see men in
their very temples amid general groans enduring miserable dalliance and becoming passives like women (viros muliebria pati) and they expose, with boasting and ostentation, the pollution of the impure and immodest body’ (quoted in *Nights* 10.226); and in Egypt ‘the morality gradually decayed; the Canopic orgies extended into private life and the debauchery of the men was equalled only by the depravity of the women’ (*Nights* 10.225). We thus find, once more, the relationship between promiscuity and disease, linked to the passive position in sexual intercourse, which Bersani identified in the homophobic public discourse about AIDS. The revulsion elicited by this site is further reinforced when Burton links it to cannibalism, that other compulsively recurring source of anxiety, finding in Syria and Palestine

Sotadic love in its second stage, when it became, like cannibalism, a matter of superstition. Assuming a nature-implanted tendency, we see that like human sacrifice it was held to be the most acceptable offering to the God-goddess in the Orgia or sacred ceremonies, a something set apart for peculiar worship. [*Nights* 10.227]

This connection between homosexuality and cannibalism is made again when Burton tells us that ‘the Tupi races of the Brazil were infamous for cannibalism and sodomy’ (*Nights* 10.245), which returns us to the text of Hans Stade, and that *mis-en-abîme* haunting Burton’s Brazilian *mis-en-scène.*

Burton would certainly seem to have had a rather complicated attitude towards ‘pederasty’. We can clearly discern the phobic reaction to ‘the unquenchable appetite for destruction’ which, according to Leo Bersani, marks female and gay sexuality in a phallocentric fantasmatic. The notion of a pure androgyny would then seem to stand in opposition to this alternative image of ‘men–women.’ However, these competing paradigms are so intimately and visibly bound together in the essay that it is impossible to escape the sense that it is the diseased sexuality, appearing so fearful, which is also marked as fearfully seductive. This disease is apparently contained in the Sotadic Zone, where it is linked to the climate and bodies of that space, and thereby disavowed. However, when Burton, at length, moves outside of the Zone, travelling north to ‘our modern capitals,’ he finds pederasty even here, occurring sporadically, and best restricted to ‘the pitiful care of the physician and the study of the psychologist,’ although not deserving ‘prosecution’ (*Nights* 10.209). These few aberrant, metropolitan bodies contain Le Vice, but at the same time they bring the Zone into the centre, and invoke the fantasy of an infection caught in the foreign space, which might break out of its ghetto to infect everyone, to disintegrate them and at the same time to bring the whole edifice of civilization tumbling down, bringing down with it the borders between *here* and *there*, and leaving the self as the centre lost in an all-embracing Zone. It is not only these bodies which abolish the distance between the centre and that which surrounds it, though, for Burton himself,
even as he addresses his metropolitan audience, wanders there, as Abdullah, in an every Eastward circumnavigation of the globe. I am reminded, irresistibly, of a passage in Burton’s *Guide Book: A Pictorial Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina* (1865), where he describes the Bedouin, he among them, in the trackless desert:

mounted on swift dromedaries, and armed to the teeth; as their drapery floated in the wind, and their faces were half-swathed and veiled, it was not always easy to distinguish the sex of the wild beings that urged their beasts to speed.37

**Terminus**

In the first notable footnote of the *Nights*, Burton asserts that ‘Debauched women prefer negroes on account of the size of their parts.’ He suggests that these women are Eastern when he says that ‘In my time no honest Hindi Moslem would take his women-folk to Zanzibar on account of the huge attractions and enormous temptations there and thereby offered to them’ (*Nights* 1.6). However, in the ‘Terminal Essay’ of Volume X, he returns to this note to tell us that it is ‘purposely placed there [at the beginning] to give the key-note of the book,’ and develops its theme when he ‘add[s] that the same cause has commended these “skunks of the human race” to debauched women in England’ (*Nights* 10.145). Furthermore, in the note, Burton himself occupies the position of these various women gazing at the negro’s large parts, although ostensibly he appears here as an anthropologist, telling us that he measured one man in Somali-land who, when quiescent, numbered nearly six inches. This is a characteristic of the negro race and of African animals; *e.g.* the horse; whereas the pure Arab, man and beast, is below the average of Europe; one of the best proofs by the by, that the Egyptian is not an Asiatic, but a negro partially white-washed. [*Nights* 1.6]

Thus he constructs a racial geography on the basis of a phallic index, in which a clear distinction is drawn between the negro and the Asiatic. However, within the context of the *Nights* this ‘key-note’ echoes Burton’s ‘metaphorics of translation’, as it conjures the image of the ‘unastrated copy of the great [Arabic] original.’ By thus overlapping, within the same textual body, discussions of translation theory, racial anthropology, and sexuality, Burton imbricates these discourses, and thereby makes of the negro’s large parts something of a mobile signifier, liable to become detached from its specifically racial body. To put this another way: within Burton’s markedly phallocentric fantasmatic, the phallus in question is marked as African.

The fixation on the negro’s penis, which Burton draws our attention to here, was a common feature of racial discourse, evident, for instance, in
Broca’s theory of ‘unilateral hybridity’, which proposes that ‘the union of the Negro with a white woman is frequently sterile, whilst that of a white man with a negress is perfectly fecund,’ and which is based on Serres’ view that

One of the characters of the Ethiopian race consists in the length of the penis compared with that of the Caucasian race. This dimension coincides with the length of the uterine canal in the Ethiopian female. . . . There results from this physical disposition, that the union of the Caucasian man with an Ethiopian woman is easy and without any inconvenience for the latter. The case is different in the union of the Ethiopian with a Caucasian woman, who suffers in the act, the neck of the uterus is pressed against the sacrum, so that the act of reproduction is not merely painful, but frequently non-productive.

This notion of ‘unilateral hybridity’ is, at the same time, a theorization of a unilateral desire, a point reinforced by Broca’s contention that in Australia, ‘as everywhere, the woman of colour selects by preference the alliance of men of a superior race.’ Despite Broca’s eminently polygenist position—that the different races of man constitute different species—there emerges, just below the surface of this narrative, the pornographic imagery of the European man penetrating the Ethiopian woman, while the equally pornographic imagery of rape is also present, displaced onto the union between the well endowed negro man and the resistant Caucasian woman—an image which also interdicts that relationship.

Broca’s ideas here graphically illustrate Robert Young’s central thesis in Colonial Desire, that

the debates about theories of race in the nineteenth century, by settling on the possibility or impossibility of hybridity, focussed explicitly on the issue of sexuality and the issue of sexual unions between whites and blacks. Theories of race were thus also covert theories of desire.

According to Young, a focus on hybridity meant that the colonial ‘desiring machine’ was implicitly heterosexual, because ‘anxiety about hybridity reflected the desire to keep races separate, which meant that attention was immediately focussed on the mixed race offspring that resulted from inter-racial sexual intercourse.’ The white man’s attraction towards the native woman thus figures an ‘ambivalent axis of desire and aversion,’ whereby the desire is the driving force of an expansive colonial project, while the aversion marks the anxiety that the colonizer’s culture and civilization would be fatally undone by a sexual contact which results in degenerate hybrid offspring. Although I agree with this characterization of the main narrative of racial theory, I question Young’s argument that such theories of desire are covert. Racial and colonial discourses incite, rather than deny, the ‘unilateral’
desire of the white man for the native woman, and the interdiction placed on inter-racial sex is constructed as a holding back in the service of Empire, or racial purity, a self-denial which only further excites. We might, indeed, say that the dream of a phallic violence accompanying the castration and counter-castration Order of Imperial Rule is very much an authorized fantasy.

Young’s definition of ‘colonial desire’—as ‘constituted by a dialectic of attraction and repulsion, [which] soon brings with it the threat of the fecund fertility of the colonial desiring machine’—leads him to make some quite striking claims with regard to the place of same-sex sex in the colonial scene. Because it is the hybrid offspring that mark the loss of the colonizer’s identity, same-sex sex, though clearly locked into an identical same-but-different dialectic of racialized sexuality, posed no threat because it produced no children; its advantage was that it remained silent, covert and unmarked. On the face of it, therefore, hybridity must always be a resolutely heterosexual category. In fact, in historical terms, concern about racial amalgamation tended if anything to encourage same-sex sex (playing the imperial game was, after all, already an implicitly homoerotic practice).

This argument suggests that same-sex sex was, ‘in historical terms,’ commonplace, and assumes that the white man invariably adopted the ‘active’ position in such encounters, because ‘the gendering of racial difference means that the sex of the [feminized] races to whom the Westerner is attracted becomes indifferent.’ Consequently, it is accommodated within the ‘sadomasochistic structure of inter-racial sexual relations in the colonial period,’ in which ‘the sadistic imperative’ of the white man remains in place. Young’s argument here, however, is at odds with his claim that ‘the sado-masochistic relation is (as always) reversible:’ in the relation with the colonized woman, this reversal occurs in the production by the latter of ‘the offspring who initiates the degeneration that eventually brings about civilization’s end;’ but in the case of same-sex sex, no equivalent of this ‘masochism’ is to be found, which is precisely why it is so ‘advantageous.’ The native man, therefore, can never be on top. However, it is rather difficult to place the racist’s fixation on the negro’s penis within this framework, and, indeed, Young makes no attempt to do so, unless we are to include his passing reference to ‘the fear, and delicious fantasy, that the white woman really wants to proclaim “I love the black man.”’

If we apply the same logic of the reversibility of ‘the sado-masochistic relationship’ to the same-sex inter-racial encounter, then a more intimate association between constructions of hybridity and homosexuality emerges than that which Young indicates when he says, ‘The norm/deviation model of race as of sexuality meant that “perversions” such as homosexuality became associated with the degenerate products of miscegenation.’ Further light can
be thrown on this by returning to Leo Bersani, and his claim, in ‘Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and Power,’ that

If there were such a thing as a sadism unaffected by masochistic impulses, it would reveal nothing more newsworthy than the pleasure of control and domination . . . perhaps inherent in the very exercise of power is the temptation of its renunciation—as if the excitement of a hyperbolic self-assertion, or an unthwarted mastery over the world and, more precisely, brutalization of the other, were inseparable from an impulse of self-dissolution.54

As Young persuasively shows, ‘the pleasure of control and domination’ is of a piece with the hyperbolically self-assertive imperial project and its drive towards an ‘unthwarted mastery over the world.’ This is, of course, not very newsworthy, and what makes Young’s thesis interesting is his suggestion that the hybrid offspring marks a reversal of this relationship which, in Bersani’s terms, is ‘an impulse of self-dissolution.’ However, rather than going on to analyze this impulse as constitutive of ‘colonial desire,’ Young consistently stresses the role of the hybrid child as a block to ‘desire for the other.’55 This is underlined by his claim that homosexuality ‘posed no threat,’ because, by failing to consider that there might also be a masochistic impulse in the attraction towards the black man, Young forecloses the possibility that the hybrid child marks a displacement and deferral of the imperialist’s desire for a dissolution of his own self. Inter-racial same-sex sex was, in fact, a potentially even greater source of anxiety than heterosexual unions, because, while seeing it as phallic sadism might have been in line with the authorized fantasy, this raised the complementary image of the imperialist in the position of the debauched man-woman (being carried off by a gorilla), exhibiting ‘an unquenchable appetite for destruction’ in his very body. It is this desire which is really covert in racial theory, and which overt theorizations of a unilateral desire of the European man for the native woman, and of the native man as sexual threat to the white woman, serve to mask. The hybrid child is far more acceptable than this, because he or she can be contained and disavowed at a spatial and temporal distance from the colonial sex scene itself, in which the White Man is always on top. In both cases, though, the ‘perversion’ is the same—‘an impulse of self-dissolution.’

It is, then, not surprising that Burton connects the racial hybrid and the pederast when he says, in that revealing non sequitur, ‘As Prince Bismarck finds a moral difference between the male and female races of history, so I suspect a mixed physical temperament effected by the manifold subtle influences massed together in the word climate.’ In the Sotadic Zone, the clear boundary between man and woman is thus broken down, and this, at the same time, troubles the division between dominant and subordinate racial types upon which imperial rule depends. As Bersani says, it is important in
the exercise of power that ‘The appeal of powerlessness . . . be entirely on the side of the masochist, for whom the sadist would be little more than an opportunity to surrender to that appeal;’ the identification of the male body with female sexuality in the Sotadic Zone is, therefore, troubling because it identifies at the locus of power ‘the temptation of its renunciation.’ Of course, Burton positions himself outside of this geographical space, speaking as he does in the forum of the Anthropological Society. However, the fact that he derives his own authority from his male identity suggests an uncomfortable resemblance to these ambivalent others, and, as we have seen, the Zone always threatens to break out of its already uncertain limits. This is particularly so given his assertion that pederasty is ‘not racial.’

Therefore, while the Sotadic Zone can, most obviously, be read as an attempt to master and contain a deviant form of sexuality, this very attempt rebounds upon itself to suggest that what Burton most wants is precisely that renunciation of power which he seeks to contain, and which he requires in order to confirm his own phallic mastery. A similar ambivalence is apparent in his ‘metaphors of translation’, in which he appropriates the ‘phallus’ of the Nights to assert himself within the Oedipal framework of a European dynasty, and to master his female audience, who are ostensibly excluded from the circle of listeners/readers, and yet are entirely necessary for the metaphor to work. At the same time, though, the efficacy of the Nights is dependent upon Burton’s identification with these women on its margins, revealing once more a desire for ‘self-dissolution.’ In the body of the translated text itself, we then find a reversibility of roles, and a breaking down of boundaries, analogous to that which characterizes the Sotadic Zone, and which lacks the clear political temporality which Young identifies in the discourse of hybridity. Again, Burton seeks to contain this ambivalence—by placing himself in a dominant position with respect to the text which he strategically deploys—and yet his self-identification as listener as well as speaker, reader as well as writer, repeatedly places him in a much-to-be-desired passive relationship to the ‘phallus’ of the Nights.

According to Bersani,

S/M strips away the defenses against the joy of self-dissolution; in more general historical contexts, the countervailing instinct of self-preservation drives that joy underground, buries it, so to speak, in proud displays of mastery. . . . S/M makes explicit the erotic satisfactions sustaining social structures of dominance and submission. Societies defined by those structures both disguise and reroute such satisfactions, but their superficially self-preservation subterfuges hardly liberate them from the aegis of the death drive.57

The notion of burial here recalls the figure of the crypt—that singular no-place in which Burton buries alive his own presence elsewhere in order to
preserve his identity as Master. To truly travel there (into the crypt, or the Zone) would be to lose himself, and the border is assiduously policed by those fearful tropes of infectious disease, hybridity, going native, homosexuality, and cannibalism. The instinct of self-preservation, therefore, forces Burton to place himself outside of this threatening otherworld, which is represented, in theatrical terms, as a mis-en-scène in which Burton appears in the dual role of actor and spectator. However, his desire to master this space—by making it a part of himself—cannot be separated from what might be called a ‘colonial death drive,’ which compels him to surrender himself to be swallowed by it. This ambivalence emerges most clearly in Burton’s relationship to the one whose body he shares, Abdullah—who reads the Nights in Arabic, who narrates them to an audience in Somaliland, and who travels in the Sotadic Zone, in which he has his origin—for while Abdullah is presented as the means by which Burton, in disguise, masters the natives, he also figures Burton’s self-dissolution, which must constantly be disavowed, and yet which is necessary for Burton to be able to claim to represent ‘the Orient.’

Accompanying Burton’s ‘hyperbolic self-assertion,’ we therefore find an equally hyperbolic drive towards self-destruction, which is buried, so to speak, ‘in proud displays of mastery.’ The fact that Burton needs must always come out on top is in line with Bersani’s definition of ‘phallocentrism’ as ‘the denial of the value of powerlessness in both men and women.’58 This can also be understood as a denial of the ‘sexual’ itself, which Bersani defines as ‘moving between a hyperbolic sense of self and a loss of all consciousness of self.’59 It is, then, not so much the death drive which poses an inadmissible threat to imperialism: this is, after all, a necessary corollary of any project of mastery. You can go into Empire to conquer, or you can go there to die, but what is unacceptable is that you give in to this movement between mastery and surrender, in which ‘the very boundaries separating subject from object, boundaries necessary for possession, have been erased.’60 In the imperial context, this loss of the border would mean a failure to recognize the distinction between ruler and ruled, and so ‘colonial desire’ is consistently theorized in terms of a framework in which

The ambition of performing sex as only power is a salvational project, one designed to preserve us from a nightmare of ontological obscenity, from the prospect of a breakdown of the human itself in sexual intensities, from a kind of ‘selfless’ communication with ‘lower’ orders of being.61

To acknowledge that powerlessness is inseparable from the power play of Empire would be to admit the erasure of all those distinctions upon which imperial appropriation depends; it is such a reading of his own desire which the imperialist must resist, and this reading of his own presence which must be repeatedly ‘buried,’ for imperialism to continue unabated.

So Burton, as translator, labours to appropriate the Nights, for his own use and that of his fellow-countrymen, but he also wishes to be carried out
of himself, to be forever lost in the *Nights* and in Arabia, the land of his pre-
dilection which these stories represent, and to which they are so seamlessly
connected. Similarly, as anthropologist, he reports his findings in the Sotadic
Zone, where pederasty is contained; at the same time, however, we cannot
fail to see him there still, lost in the night of ages. In both these roles, he splits
his identity into the one who will never come back, and the one who only
went there for our sake and only ever in disguise. Thus he repeats, in his own
body written into the *Nights*, the sado-masochistic structure of Empire, and
uses this division to aggrandize himself. Yet this splitting of the self cannot
be separated from a desire that the two parts be reconciled in a place where
the boundary is erased, and neither one can be seen to ‘possess’ the other.
Such a loss of power is, by Burton as Master, much to be feared, and so we
find its enactment spatially and temporally displaced into a crypt-like Zone,
Outside the City Walls. Here, it is not the two sides of the self which come
together, but all those marginal images of the other self which *copulate*, with
the voyeuristic viewer looking on, holding the pen in his hand. When Burton
steps into this Zone, he does so most obviously to brutalize and to graft in
the service of Empire, and the more he does so, the more he becomes alien-
ated from his other self, which he more and more sadistically punishes for its
failure to be what he wants it to be. Occasionally, we find him simply wishing
to wander, not labouring to make his name, but on pilgrimage interminable,
lost in a world of *Kayf*, in search of *something* and secure in the faith that he
is on his way home.
Notes

Notes to the Introduction

2. Ibid., 1.
3. Ibid., 195–96.
5. Ibid., 40.
7. Ibid., 156.
8. Ibid., 70.
10. Ibid., 7.
13. Ibid., 9.
17. Ibid., 94.

Notes to Chapter 1


4. Ibid., 294.

5. E.B. Eastwick [An Ex-Political], *Dry Leaves from Young Egypt: Being a Glance at Sindh before the Arrival of Sir Charles Napier* (London: James Madden, 1849), 1.


8. The difference in the spellings of the province will no doubt be noted. Burton himself responded to a critic who drew attention to the variation as follows: ‘in a work intended for the general reader, I write the word as he would write it himself, were it read out to him, and as he would find it in his map, “Scinde.” When composing for the Orientalist, that is or is about to be, I adopt the common modification of Sir W. Jones’s system as used by the Indian lexicographers, and indite the name Sindh or Sindhu’ (*Falconry* 106. ‘Scinde’ is also the spelling in this work). We might take this at face value, but we could also remark that ‘Scinde,’ with its supplementary ‘c’ and ‘e,’ is quite poetic, and the extra ‘h’ in ‘Sindh’ gives a scholarly feel. Not only relating to the different readers, these spellings also contribute to representing the province in quite different ways. The third variation, in *Sind Revisited*, a clipped and functional spelling, perhaps relates to what I will have to say a little later about the way in which the province is presented in that work.


12. ‘The tutelar God of Currahee is a scaly monster, with a train of females and dependents, nourished in the muddy riverlets which flow from the hot spring . . . near Currahee, called Peer Munga, from the name of a Saint who formerly resided there’ (Mirchandani, ‘Crow’s Account of Sind [1799],’ 4–5).


17. Ibid.
18. E. B. Eastwick [An Ex-Political], Dry Leaves from Young Egypt, 130.
21. Anon., Review of Richard F. Burton’s Sind Revisited, Pall Mall Gazette, May 2 1877, 11–12, 12. This review and several others are pasted into the front of Volume 1 of Burton’s copy of his Sind Revisited: With Notices of the Anglo-Indian Army, Past, Present and Future, etc. (2 vols.) (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1877) held by The Huntington Library, California, shelfmark BL58.
22. Isabel Burton, The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton, ed. W. H. Wilkins (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2002[1898]), 81. The first several chapters of this biography of Burton by his wife are in Richard’s first person, and Isabel tells us in her Foreword (vii–xvii) that Burton dictated this to her, as the beginning of his autobiography, on the trips to and from Sind in 1876 (vii–viii). It is from these chapters that my references here are taken. This 1898 edition is an abridgement of Isabel Burton, The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton K.C.M.G., F.R.G.S., (London: Chapman and Hall, 1893).
23. Anon., Review of Abeokuta and Mission to Gelele, 452–83, 462. Source Unknown. The article was found, without details, in a volume of pamphlets bound by Burton and held by The Huntington Library, California, catalogued as ‘General 1869,’ shelfmark BL228.
27. Leask, Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 160.
30. These comments might be read alongside Cecil Rhodes’s well-known remark: ‘My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced by them in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists’ (quoted in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire [Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000], 232. The citation is known through the source given by Hardt and Negri: V.I. Lenin, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (New York: International Publishers, 1939), 79. Hardt and Negri interpret this as implying that ‘Through imperialism, the modern state exports class struggle and civil war in order to preserve order and sovereignty at home’ (Ibid).
31. As he proclaims elsewhere in *Gorilla-Land*, ‘I hope . . . ardently to see the day when we shall either put our so-called “colonies” on the West Coast of Africa to their only proper use, convict stations, or when, if we are determined upon consuming our own crime at home, we shall make up our minds to restore them to the negro and the hyaena, their “old inhabitants”’ (*Gorilla-Land* I.16–17). (Well, the movement from the convict to the poor man seems an easy one for Burton). In a letter to the *Times* in 1862, Burton, clearly in search of something to do over the Christmas period, argues the need for ‘a sanitarium, a colony, or a penal settlement’ in the Cameroon Mountains, which he had explored the previous year. He suggests that ‘stationing convicts makes a place,’ and that ‘The first work to be expected from convicts . . . would be a sanitarium’ (Richard F. Burton, ‘Transportation,’ *Times*, 31 December 1862, 4).


33. Letter from Burton to Gratton Geary, in the ‘Edward H. Metcalf Collection of Sir Richard Burton,’ Vol.4: Letters from Burton to Gratton Geary; letter dated July 13th, 1877. This collection of MSS. is held by the Huntington Library, California. Call number in process. This item is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California*.


35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 72–3.


42. Ibid., 312.

43. This is even more striking when we consider that it was for this very reason—to find somewhere warm to go for the winter to restore his health—that Burton, himself, travelled to India at this time (see Lovell, *A Rage to Live*, 617). This fits in with the general impression that Burton, now an elderly gentleman travelling with his wife, and often himself being shown the sights, has moved considerably closer to Bull over the intervening years.

44. The ‘memory’ is repeated from *Scinde*, where it is given in the present tense, although slightly altered; perhaps worthy of note, *Scinde* reads, ‘our kind is happy and comfortable when in a household only the first-born dies’ (*Scinde* II.294, my emphasis).

47. Ibid., 150.
48. Ibid., 111.
49. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 249.
52. Ibid.

Notes to Chapter 2

Note: An abbreviated version of this chapter has been published as ‘Translating/‘The’ *Kama Sutra,*’ *Third World Quarterly* 26:3 (2005), 509–16, and this article was reproduced in Emma Bainbridge, ed., *Connecting Cultures,* Routledge, 2007.

2. For a discussion of the Society for the Suppression of Vice and other British Purity Movements, see Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd., 1977). As Bristow points out, the Society for the Suppression of Vice became inactive, due to financial difficulties, after 1880, allowing for a growth in ‘obscene’ publications (see 49 and 202). The creation of the National Vigilance Society in 1885, which soon incorporated the Society for the Suppression of Vice, led to renewed enforcement of censorship (see 112 and 200). It was in the ‘window of opportunity’ between 1880 and 1885 that *Kama Sutra* was published, although even at this time there was still a perceived need to circumvent the legislation.
5. As Andrew Miller and James Adams put it: ‘As the Victorians increasingly narrowed the scope of morality to the sphere of sexual regulation—a historical development of great moment in itself—resistance to the authority of Mrs. Grundy likewise became charged with sexual associations, and sexual reference became the most provocative mode of resistance. Hence mere frankness could become a mark of intellectual and moral daring’ (Andrew H. Miller and James E. Adams, introduction to *Sexualities in Victorian Britain,* ed. Andrew H. Miller and James E. Adams [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996], 1–15, 2).
7. Quoted in Ibid., 103. This quotation and subsequent ones of these natives and their interlocutor, Anund Messeh, are taken from Bhabha’s citation from *The Missionary Register* (London: Church Missionary Society, Jan. 1818).
9. Ibid., 119.
10. Ibid., 114.
11. Ibid., 114–5.
13. Ibid., 1.413.
16. This is clear from the alphabetically arranged notes on Henry Spencer Ashbee’s collection of erotica compiled by his assistant, James Campbell Reddie, in which the book is listed. See *Bibliographical Notes on Books A-LAD British Museum Additional MS 38828* (Ashbee Collection).
18. This ‘Society’ published, in addition to *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana: Ananga Ranga (Stage of the Bodiless One)* or, *The Hindoo Art of Love (Ars Amoris Indica). Translated from the Sanskrit, and Annotated by A.F.F and B.F.R.*, 1885; *The Perfumed Garden of the Cheikh Nefzaoui, A Manual of Arabian Erotology (XVI Century) Revised and Corrected Translation*, 1886; *The Beharistan (Abode of Spring)* by Jami, *A Literal Translation from the Persian*, 1887; *The Gulistan* or *Rose Garden of Sa’di, Faithfully Translated into English*, 1888. *A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights’ Entertainment, Now Entitled the Book of The Thousand Nights and a Night. With Explanatory Notes on the Manners and Customs of Moslem Men and a Terminal Essay upon the History of the Nights* (10 vols), 1885, and *Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night. With Notes Anthropological and Explanatory By Richard F. Burton* (6 vols), 1886–8, were also published under The Kama Shastra Society imprint, but were not properly publications of the Society, being published and distributed exclusively by Burton.
21. Ibid., 111.
22. This distinction between Ovid and non-European traditions is explicitly made by Havelock Ellis in the chapter ‘The Art of Love,’ in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, where he writes, ‘Ovid . . . who concerned himself much with the art of love, associated that art not so much with morality as with immorality. As he viewed it, the art of love was less the art of retaining a woman in her home than the art of winning her away from it; it was the adulterer’s art rather than the husband’s art. Such a conception would be impossible out of Europe, but it proved very favourable to the growth of the Christian attitude towards the art of love’ (Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Vol. VI: Sex in Relation
to Society [Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Co., 1910], 513). This seems to be a direct paraphrasing of Ashbee, and it should be noted that this chapter draws heavily on the work of the Kama Shastra Society, Ellis quoting Sheik Nefzaoui and Vatsyayana as authorities.

23. Ashbee, Index, 284.


25. See Ibid., ix–x.


27. ‘The holy sage Vatsayana Muni hath declared that whosoever shall take the powder of sensitive plant . . . ‘ and ‘the book of Vatsayana, the Rishi, teaches us as follows: Suppose that a woman, having reached the lusty vigour of her age, happen to be so inflamed with love for a man . . . ‘ (Kalyana-Malla, *Ananga Ranga*, 184 and 204).


30. In the Introduction to *Kama Sutra*, there is reproduced ‘the certificate of the chief pundit’ which vividly evokes an almost obsessive search for ‘correctness’ in the final copy: ‘The accompanying manuscript is corrected by me after comparing four different copies of the work. I had the assistance of a Commentary called *Jayamangla for correcting* the portion in the first five parts, but found great difficulty in correcting the remaining portion, because, with the exception of one copy thereof which was tolerably correct, all the other copies I had were far too incorrect. However, I took that portion as correct in which the majority of the copies agreed with each other’ (F.F. Arbuthnot and R.F. Burton, ‘Introduction to the Original Burton [sic.] Translations [sic.]’ in Vatsyayana, *Kama Sutra*, xxi–xxiv, xxii).

31. See Mary S. Lovell, *A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1998), 621. Lovell describes Rehatsek as ‘An Austro-Hungarian . . . [who] had spent 25 years in India teaching Latin and Mathematics. When he retired in 1871 at the age of 53, it was to work on ancient manuscripts for his own intellectual fulfilment. Living the life of a fakir, dressed in threadbare clothes . . . ‘ (621). A more detailed account of his life and publications can be found in Foster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, ‘Life and Labours of Mr. Edward Rehatsek,’ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* XXIV (1892), 581–95. In this article, Arbuthnot tells us that, arriving in Bombay from New Orleans in 1847, he was initially employed in the Public Works Department (581), but soon devoted himself to Oriental studies and was later employed as Professor of Mathematics and Latin in the Wilson College, Bombay. Arbuthnot dwells on the simplicity of his life—that of ‘an ascetic and recluse’ (582), and tells us that ‘he died on . . . the 11th of December, 1891 . . . attended by his friends, all of whom were either natives of India or Portuguese. Having expressed an earnest desire to be cremated according to the Hindu fashion, the ceremony was
performed the same evening. . . . It is said that this was the first European ever cremated in Bombay, or perhaps, indeed, in India’ (583–84).
32. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 103.
35. Ibid., xi.
36. Ibid., xii.
37. Ibid., xii–xiii.
39. Ibid.
41. F.F. Arbuthnot and R.F. Burton, ‘Concluding Remarks,’ 167. This is a somewhat altered citation of the closing lines of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18 [‘Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?’], which read: ‘So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee’ (Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, [London: Arden, 1997], 147).
43. Ibid., 85.
44. Ibid., 89.
45. Ibid., 97.
46. Ibid., 96.
47. Ibid., 100.
48. Ibid., 104–5.
49. Ibid., 106.
50. Ibid., 98.
51. Ibid., 101.
52. See Ashbee, *Catena*, 459.
55. Ibid., 2.
57. Ibid., 162.
58. Ibid., 163.
59. Ibid., 162.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., 163.
62. Ibid., 164.
64. Ibid.
66. Ibid., 5.
67. For instance, Antoinette Burton has argued that ‘Even English women not ostensibly concerned with conversion (or with feminism, for that matter) used the
zenana as shorthand for Indian women’s imprisonment—and, not incidentally, as contrasting evidence of their own cultural superiority and female agency (Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* [Chapel Hill and London: University of Carolina Press, 1994], 8). In this work, Burton seeks primarily to trace the relationships between English women’s self-presentation and the different roles which women performed in the colonial space. See also Antoinette Burton, ‘Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to make ‘Lady Doctors for India’ 1874–1885,’ *Journal of British Studies* 35 (July 1996), 368–97.


71. Ibid., v.


74. Ibid., xvii.

75. Ibid., xx.


78. The fl  ier is bound in the back of Ashbee’s own bound copies of the seven parts of the first edition of *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, Translated from the Sanskrit in Seven Parts, With Preface, Introduction and Concluding Remarks* (Cosmopoli [sic.]: Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares, 1883). This volume is held by the British Library, London. The last part of the passage (‘a treatise on men and women, their mutual relationship, and connection with each other . . . It is a work that should be studied by all’) can be found in F. F. Arbuthnot and R. F. Burton, ‘Concluding Remarks,’ 165.


80. Ibid.

81. Ibid., 10.


85. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 120.


88. Ibid.

91. Ibid., 178.
92. That the two—the Orient and the harem—were easily confused in the Western imagination is clearly stated by Kabbani, who remarks, ‘The Orient . . . is caught in a state of timelessness, crammed full of incidents remarkable for their curiosity or eroticism, hushed into silence by its own mysteries, incapable of self-expression, mute until the Western observer lends it his voice. It is the seraglio of the imagination disclosing itself, with its veiled women, its blind musicians, its black eunuchs and jealous princes; it is the impossible other, the bourgeois drawing-room’s secret foil’ (Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe’s Myths of Orient* [London: Pandora, 1994 (2nd ed.)], 73).

**Notes to Chapter 3**

3. Ibid., xiii.
5. Ibid., 195.
6. Ibid., 12.
10. Ibid., xiv.
11. Ibid., xvii.
16. Ibid., xv.
18. Ibid., xix.
19. Ibid., xvi.
22. Ibid., 188.
23. Ibid., 196.
24. Ibid., 199.
25. Ibid., 196.
26. Ibid., 207.
29. Ibid., 165.
30. Abraham and Torok, ‘Mourning or Melancholia,’ 129.
32. Ibid., 196.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Isabel Burton, *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton*, ed. W. H. Wilkins (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2002[1898]), 87. The first several chapters of this biography of Burton by his wife are in Richard's first person, and Isabel tells us in her Foreword (vii–xvi) that Burton dictated this to her, as the beginning of his autobiography, on the trips to and from Sind in 1876 (vii–viii). It is from these chapters that my reference here is taken. This 1898 edition is an abridgement of *The Life of Captain Sir Richard F. Burton K.C.M.G., F.R.G.S.* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1893).
42. Ibid., 3.
44. Ibid., 84.
47. Ibid., 197.
48. Ibid., 197.
49. Ibid., 200.
Notes to Chapter 4


8. Ibid.

9. John Crawfurd (1783–1868) was, remarkably, in his 80th year at the time of this meeting. His career had been in the service of the East India Company; arriving in Calcutta in 1803 as a doctor, he later acquired senior administrative posts, including resident of Singapore and civil commissioner in Rangoon. He retired to England in 1827, where he published accounts of some of his missions, and works of Orientalist scholarship. He became president of the Ethnological Society in 1861, and died in 1868. These details are taken from C. M. Turnbull in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.14, 90–1. It should also be said that, despite the views expressed at the 1863 meeting of the BAAS, Crawfurd was a staunch opponent of slavery.


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


15. Burton addressed this point, with characteristic bluntness, in *City of the Saints* (1861), an account of his trip across America to Salt Lake City, when he wrote: ‘When the vexed passage, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,” written in 1776, is interpreted in 1860, it must be read, “all (free white) men” to be consistent and intelligible . . . The “American Mira-beau,” Jefferson, who framed the celebrated Declaration, certainly did not consider, as the context of his life proves, slaves to be his equals’ (Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints, and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* [New York: Harper & Bros., 1862[1861]], 311).

16. In his ‘Introductory Address’ to the Anthropological Society, Hunt was careful to distance himself from the slave-trade, but the ambivalence of his remarks should be clear: he hopes ‘that the objects of this Society will never be prostituted to such an object as the support of the slave-trade, with all its abuses; but at the same time we must not shrink from the candid avowal of what we believe to be the real place in nature, or in society, of the African or any other race’ (James Hunt, ‘Introductory Address On the Study of Anthropology,’ *Anthropological Review* I.1 [1863], 1–20, 4). Robert Young examines the direct involvement of a secret agent for the Southern cause, Henry Hotze, with the Anthropological Society, and concludes that ‘with Hotze’s encouragement, the new Anthropological Society supported the South during the American Civil War, and actively intervened in the debates about slavery’ (Young, *Colonial Desire*, 136).


20. Ibid.


22. Ibid.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid. Burton did not comment directly on this trip to Dahomey, as his request to go had been officially refused. Nonetheless, he does make it clear in *Dahome* that this was not his first visit. Picking up on this, Farwell speculates that the visit may have occurred in early November, 1862 (Byron Farwell, *Burton: A Biography of Sir Richard Francis Burton* [Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1990(1963)], 228).


31. Hunt wrote, ‘You will . . . not be surprised to hear that when I brought the facts contained in the first part of the paper before a miscellaneous audience at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, at the recent meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, my statement of the simple facts was received with such loud hisses that you would have thought the room had nearly been filled with a quantity of Eve’s tempters instead of her amiable descendants’ (Hunt, *On the Negro’s Place in Nature*, v).


34. Ibid.

35. For a further example, see the entry on ‘Negro’ in *Cassell’s Encyclopaedia: A Storehouse of General Information* (Special edition; 8 vols.) (London, Paris, Melbourne: Cassell and Co, 1891), 7.43–4, which also repeats Burton’s view that a racial transformation accompanies the spread of Islam: ‘In general, wherever Mohammedan culture has been of long standing, miscegenation may always be suspected, and may be said to coincide with the prevalence of costume properly so-called, and of stone structures, for the true Negro never goes clothed . . . and never raises stone buildings’ (7.43).

36. Seen out of context, one might be tempted to dismiss this as a frivolous remark. However, it occurs within the context of an analysis of theories of the distribution of negroes and other types of African, which Burton concludes are not universally applicable, suggesting that ‘the fetor is the grand discrimen; thus we distinguish the Somali Semite and free man from his slave neighbour, the Kisawahili, and the Asiatic Malagash from the negro Johanna-man’ (Dahome II.190). The link between the fetor and racial physiology is made explicit in *Abeokuta*, where Burton writes: ‘The negro’s skin—or rather the bulbs situated in the cellular web under the cutis—is a more active organ of depuration than the European’s, importantly aiding the respiratory and other processes in eliminating effete matter from the blood. Dr. Stark proved that the white colour imbibes odours in the lowest, the black in the highest degree’ (*Abeokuta* I.111).


39. Richard F. Burton, ‘The Present State of Dahome,’ *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* (New Series) Vol. III (1865), 400–408, 408. The idea expressed here is taken from Burton’s *Dahome*. There he says that ‘Were it not for the southward progress of El Islam, the slow and silent, but sure advance
of the Perfect Cure, the future of negro Africa would not be bright’ (*Dahomey* II.210).

40. Burton is writing this in 1863, during the American Civil War.

41. This phrase is taken directly from Theodor Waitz, *Introduction to Anthropology*, ed. J. Frederick Collingwood (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1863). The unacknowledged and slightly modified citation is: ‘According to Pöppig, the mongrel population, with its innate vices, and their hatred against the pure races from which they have sprung, is an everlasting canker of society and political life in South America’ (180). Burton, in his own copy of the book, bracketed this section. This copy is held by the Huntington Library, California, shelfmark BL301.

42. W. Winwood Reade, *Savage Africa: Being the Narrative of a Tour in Equatorial, South-Western, and North-Western Africa; with notes in the Habits of the Gorilla; on the Existence of Unicorns and Tailed Men; on the Slave Trade; on the Origin, Character, and Capabilities of the Negro and on the Future and Civilization of Western Africa* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1863), 578.

43. Ibid., 579.

44. Ibid., 585.

45. Ibid., 587.

46. Ibid., 487.

47. Ibid., 488 (My emphasis).


51. Ibid., 545–6.

52. Ibid., 486 (Burton’s underlining).

53. Ibid., 525.

54. Ibid., 506.

55. Ibid., 3.

56. This is copied almost verbatim from Ibid., 494: Von Martius is quoted as saying that the American races are ‘at once in the incapacity of infancy and unpliancy of old age’ (Burton’s underlining).

57. Ibid., 494 (Burton’s underlining).

58. F. B. summarises his views as follows: ‘He declares Conscience to be a geographical and chronological accident. Thus he answers the modern philosopher whose soul was overwhelmed by the marvel and the awe of two things, “the starry heaven above and the moral law within.” He makes the latter sense a development of the gregarious and social instincts; and so travellers have observed that the moral is the last step in mental progress’ (*Kasidah* 117). The modern philosopher referred to here is Kant, who makes this well known remark in the conclusion to *A Critique of Practical Reason*.

59. Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 104. The Burke citations are taken from his ‘Speech on Mr. Fox’s East India Bill’ of 1st Dec. 1783, to
Notes

be found in The Complete Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1866), vol.2.

60. Sara Suleri also comments on the use of this phrase by Burke, claiming that his ‘condemnation of Hastings’s exercise of a “geographical morality”’ is particularly telling: since Hastings’s defence depended largely on a concept of Oriental despotism, the rules of which he was forced to follow, Burke’s counterreading of India is a sustained critique of such eighteenth-century Orientalism’ (Sara Suleri, The Rhetoric of English India [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992], 46). Suleri quotes from the same speech as Makdisi.

61. Prichard, Natural History, 5.


63. Ibid., 39.

64. Ibid., 111–12.


Notes to Chapter 5


3. Thomas S. Savage and Jeffries Wyman, A Description of the Character and Habits of Troglohytes Gorilla (Boston: Freeman and Balles, 1847).


5. I borrow this phrase from Thomas Richards, The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 53.


7. Ibid., 177. The meeting at the Royal Geographical Society took place on 25 February 1861, and ‘Geographicus’ wrote to the Times that ‘I never attended any meeting of that body at which a deeper interest was excited than on that occasion, when the great hall at Burlington-house was crowded to excess’ (‘Geographicus,’ ‘The Gorilla Region of Africa,’ Times, 5 March 1861, 12).


9. For a fuller account of this fascinating controversy, and an interesting analysis, see McCook, ‘It May be Truth, But It Is Not Evidence.’


13. Paul Belloni du Chaillu, Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa; With Accounts of the Manners and Customs of the People and of the Chase of the Gorilla,
Notes

185


16. Ibid.

17. du Chaillu, Explorations and Adventures, 60.

18. Ibid., 71.

19. Ibid., 304.

20. Ibid., 434.

21. These essays are entitled, ‘On the Natural History of the Man-like Apes;’ ‘On the Relations of Man to the Lower Animals;’ and ‘On Some Fossil Remains of Man.’


23. Ibid., 147.

24. Ibid., 58.

25. Ibid., 1.

26. Ibid., 72.

27. Ibid., 71–2.

28. Ibid., 73.

29. Ibid., 154.

30. Ibid., 151.

31. Ibid., 153.


33. Ibid., 56–7

34. Ibid., 156.

35. Huxley roundly attacked Hunt's paper, and, in a reply to Hunt's response to these attacks, wrote:

If the sectional meeting of the British Association at Newcastle, which (as Dr. Hunt is so careful to tell the world in his prefatory letter) soundly hissed him and his colleague, was led to that unusual manifestation of feeling by its objection to their obvious proslavery tendencies, I heartily disapprove of the proceedings; and, had I been present, I would, most assuredly, have expressed that disapprobation. But if, as is really quite possible, the members of the Section were sufficiently well-informed to weigh the scientific pretensions of their would-be instructors at their true value, and were unable to restrain their just and natural indignation, I confess, had I been present, I should have been greatly tempted to join in the sibilant chorus.

[Thomas Henry Huxley, 'The Negro's Place in Nature,' The Reader (March 1864), 334–35, 335]


37. Ibid., 3.

38. Ibid., 2.

40. In this respect, his views differed from those of Burton. Thus, in response to Burton's remark in a book he edited, The Prairie Traveller, that 'The best and wisest book of this, or, perhaps, of any age—I allude to the Origin of Species,—which opens up the grandest views of life, is based upon a practical justification of the ways of eternal wisdom to man,' the reviewer in Anthropological Review—presumably Hunt—responds, ‘We can hardly fancy that the gallant captain's admiration of Mr. Darwin's book will be conceded by even all anthropologists’ (James Hunt, ‘Handbook of Overland Expeditions,’ Anthropological Review 1:1 (1863), 145–49, 148. The book reviewed is Randolph B. Marcy, The Prairie Traveller; a Hand-book of Overland Expeditions, with illustrations and itineraries of the principal routes between the Mississippi and the Pacific, and a map, ed. Richard F. Burton (London: Trübner & Co., 1863).


45. Reade, Savage Africa, 509.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 545.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 548.

50. Ibid., 448–50.

51. Ibid., 549.


56. Savage and Wyman, Description, 9–10.

57. du Chaillu, Explorations and Adventures, 61.

58. Ibid., 378.
59. Ibid., 379.
60. Ibid., 378.
61. Young, *Colonial Desire*, xii.
64. du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures*, 378.
65. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, dirs., *King Kong: The Eighth Wonder of the World* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1933). Subsequent references are from this source.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., 76.
71. Ibid., 75.
72. Ibid., 88.
76. Ibid., 159.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
80. See *Gorilla-Land* I.212ff.
82. du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures*, 143.
85. See *Lake Regions* 98.
88. Ibid., 47.
93. Ibid., lvii.
94. Ibid., i.
95. Stade, Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse, 60.
96. Ibid., 68.
97. Ibid., 62.
98. Ibid., 71.
99. Ibid., 20.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., 21.
104. Ibid., 202.
110. Ibid., 169.
111. Ibid., 178–79.
115. Ibid., 169.
116. Ibid., 178–79.
118. The link between these two practices in western discourse has been observed; for instance, according to Rod Edmond, in his reading of Herman Melville’s Typee and Omoo, ‘the unspeakable practice of cannibalism, about which western texts on the Pacific are so loquacious, is used by Melville to speak of the even more unutterable practice of homosexuality, about which such texts are mainly silent. Both practices involve a particular attention to the body of the desired and are caught in a similar double bind of fascination and horror’ (Rod Edmond, Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 90. Edmond is referring here to Caleb Cain, ‘Lovers of human flesh: homosexuality and cannibalism in Melville’s novels,’ American Literature 66:1 (1994), 25–53).
Notes

121. Burton, ‘Preface,’ i.
122. Ibid., xviii.

Notes to Chapter 6

3. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 23.
11. Ibid., 1.vi.
12. The fler consulted was appended to the copy of this work held by the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
13. The reference is to Edward Henry Palmer, who was Lord Almoner’s Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University. His interest in ‘Oriental’ languages and texts had begun during his time as an undergraduate at Cambridge, and he published widely within this discipline throughout his life. He was also a member of several surveys and expeditions in Arabia, and first met Burton in Damascus in 1870, when the latter was consul there. In June 1882, he was sent on a secret service mission to Egypt, in the course of which he and several of his companions were ambushed, taken prisoner and shot (hence Burton’s ‘lamented’). These details are taken from Elizabeth Baigent, ‘Palmer, Edward
Notes

Henry (1840–1882)’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography in Association with the British Academy, from the earliest times to the year 2000*, Vol. 42, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Burton was sent to investigate Palmer’s death, but the bodies were discovered before he arrived in Cairo. Further details of the affair and Burton’s involvement in it, as well as of his friendship with Palmer, can be found in Mary S. Lovell, *A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1998), 671–74, where it is remarked that ‘the Palmer affair marked the end of Richard’s physical adventures’ (674).


17. This reason for the succession is given by James Hunt in the Dedication to Paul Broca attached to Vogt’s *Lectures on Man*, which Hunt edited; there he tells us that Crawfurd and his party wanted ‘to place the Ethnological Society on a footing with the Royal Geographical Society, and to render its meetings fashionable and popular by the admission of ladies’ (James Hunt, ‘Dedication,’ in Carl Vogt, *Lectures on Man: His Place in Creation and in the History of the Earth*, ed. James Hunt [London: Longman for the Anthropological Society, 1864], viii).


20. Ibid.


22. Quoted in Ibid., 132–3.

23. This was, in fact, at its inception a collaborative venture:

> This translation is a natural outcome of my Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah and Meccah. Arriving at Aden in the (so-called) winter of 1852, I put up with my old and dear friend, Steinhaeuser, to whose memory this volume is inscribed; and, when talking over Arabia and the Arabs, we at once came to the same conclusion that, while the name of this wondrous treasury of Moslem folk-lore is familiar to almost every English child, no general reader is aware of the valuables it contains, nor indeed will the door open to any but Arabists. Before parting we agreed to ‘collaborate’ and produce a full, complete, unvarnished, uncastrated copy of the great original. [Nights 1.ix]

24. Letter from Burton to Payne, dated Sept. 9 [1884], in ‘Edward H. Metcalf Collection of Richard Burton’ Box 11, Letter 30, held by Huntington Library, California. Call number in process. This item is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California*. 

26. Letter from Burton to Payne, dated Sept. 1 1882, in ‘Edward H. Metcalf Collection of Richard Burton’ Box 11, Letter 8, held by Huntington Library, California. Call number in process. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

27. Letter from Burton to Payne, dated 12 May 1883, in ‘Edward H. Metcalf Collection of Richard Burton’ Box 11, Letter 18. Call number in process. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.


30. Colette Colligan, ‘“A Race of Born Pederasts”: Sir Richard Burton, Homosexuality, and the Arabs,’ Nineteenth-Century Contexts 25:1 (2003), 1–20, 4. Colligan explains further that this new, clearer criminalization was introduced alongside a relaxation of the law with regard to sodomy, which was now deemed a misdemeanour punishable by two years hard labour, where previously the penalty had been ten years to life. This later sentence, itself, was only introduced in the Offences Against the Persons Act of 1861, prior to which the act had been punishable by the death penalty.

31. Burton’s copy of Nights, vol. 10 (proof copy), held by the Huntington Library, California, shelfmark BL91, 247.


34. Ibid., 75.

35. Ibid., 82.

36. As Burton tells us, ‘the “Devil’s Brother” [Napier] presently quitted Sind leaving in his office my unfortunate official: this found its way with sundry other reports to Bombay and produced the expected result. A friend in the Secretariat informed me that my summary dismissal from the service had been formally proposed by one of Sir Charles Napier’s successors’ (Nights 10.206).


40. Ibid., 59 (Burton’s underlining).
42. Ibid., 98.
43. Ibid., 25.
44. Ibid., 19.
45. Ibid., 175.
46. Ibid., 25–6.
47. Ibid., 109.
48. Ibid., 108.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 149.
53. Ibid., 26.
55. Young, Colonial Desire, 2.
57. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 218.
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I only give details here of the works of Burton to which I have referred in the book. More exhaustive bibliographical references are available elsewhere. I have found the most useful source to be James A. Casada, *Sir Richard F. Burton: A Biobibliographical Study* (London: Mansell, 1990). This work not only lists almost all of Burton’s published works, but also provides information about manuscript collections and details of a range of secondary material relating to Burton. The earlier Norman M. Penzer, *An Annotated Bibliography of Sir Richard Francis Burton* (London: A. M. Philpot, 1923) also remains of value.

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A comprehensive catalogue of Burton’s library is provided in Kirkpatrick, B. J., ed., *A Catalogue of the Library of Sir Richard Burton, K.C.M.G. held by the Royal Anthropological Institute*. London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1978. The library has since changed hands, although the shelfmarks provided by Kirkpatrick remained the same when I consulted the library in September 2003. I provide here a list of only those sources that I have cited in the book.


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Index

A
Abeokuta and the Camaroons Mountains, 28, 101, 108, 182n36
Abraham, Nicolas and Torok, Maria, 57, 63–64, 68, 78
Acton, William, 50
Afghanistan, 11, 20–21, 155, 157
Albuquerque, Afonso de, 27
Alloula, Malek, 48, 52
America: Burton in, 118; races, 107; and slavery, 89–91, 180n6, 181nn15–16. See also South America
Ananga Ranga, The, 39–41, 175n27
Anderson, Benedict, 34
androgyne, 160–161
Anthropological Society of London, 111, 128, 151–152, 166, 181n16; foundation of, 89
anthropology, 89–90, 109–111; and Freud, 141–142; and The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, 151–152, 162, 168; anthropological gaze, 16, 51, 141, 162; anthropological psychology, 114; physical, 102–103, 113, 114. See also racial theory
anthropophagy. See cannibalism
appropriation, 35, 81, 140; and disguise, 71; and The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, 37–38, 43, 48, 52–53, 54; imperial, 5, 6–7, 37–38, 57, 78, 167; marriage as, 29–30
Arabian Nights. See Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, The
Ashbee, Henry Spencer, 36, 39–41, 46, 47–48, 50–51, 54
B
Baudelaire, Charles, 9, 14, 25, 130
Benjamin, Walter, 14, 25
Bersani, Leo, 158, 161, 165–166, 167
Bhabha, Homi K., 34; on Anderson, 34; on appropriation, 37–38, 53; on hybrid, 6–7, 34, 38
Bhide, Shivaram Parshuram, 42
Bible, The: and history of man, 95, 104, 110, 127; in India, 37–38, 41, 43, 49, 53
Bishop, Jonathan, 16
Bivona, Daniel, 4, 141–142
Borges, Jorge Luis, 148
Brantlinger, Patrick, 117
Brazil, 139–141, 143, 145, 147, 161
Bristow, Edward, 173n2
British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), 89–94, 111, 113, 127, 128
British Empire. See imperialism
Broca, Paul, 163
Bühler, Georg, 45, 46
Bull, Mr. John, 10–26, 28, 29, 32, 34, 66, 83, 115, 172n43
Burke, Edmund, 109, 184n60
Burnes, Alexander, 20–21
Burnes, James, 21
Burton, Antoinette, 176–177n67
Burton, Isabel, 23, 36, 82, 87–88, 149–150
Buzard, James, 13
C
Camoens, 27
cannibalism, 122–124, 133–145; and incorporation, 64; and King Kong, 134; and primal horde, 141–145; Burton on, 134, 136–139, 142, 143, 145; du Chaillu on, 118, 119–120, 134–135, 136, 138–139; Reade on, 134–136, 139; Stade on, 139–141, 143
Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse, The, 139–141, 143, 145
Carlyle, Thomas, 91
Carmina of Caius Valerius Catullus, The, 149
castration, 129; and circumcision, 60, 64–65, 73; and counter-castration, 65, 77, 116, 148, 149, 164; and father, 81, 148; and The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, 148–149, 152, 162
Chamberlain, Lori, 147–148, 151
circumcision, 60, 64–65, 68, 69, 73, 153, 154
City of the Saints, The, 181n15
civilizing mission, 49, 91, 94, 96–97, 100
climate, 109; and sexuality, 156–157, 161, 165; Indian, 27, 32–33, 45
Colligan, Colette, 149, 191n30
colonial desire, 6, 112–116, 131–132, 162–168
Congo, 96, 98, 127, 128
Craft, Ellen, 89, 180n6
Crawfurd, John, 89–90, 180n9, 190n17
cross-dressing, 19–26. See also Abdullah; disguise
Crow, Nathan, 12

D
Dahomey, 89, 91–93, 151–152
Darwin, Charles, 82, 99, 120, 122, 124–125, 127, 132, 186n40; and Freud, 141; on graft-hybrid, 38
de Man, Paul, 142–143, 144
death drive, 112, 116, 166–167
derrida, Jacques, 36, 57, 64, 66–67, 68, 83
despotism, 31, 34, 112, 142, 184n60
disavowal, 18; and Abdullah, 68–69, 71, 77–78, 86–87, 114, 167; and friendship, 61, 66, 67, 68–69; and hybrid, 7, 116, 165; and primal horde, 144
disguise: Bivona on, 4; in East Africa, 113, 115, 116; in India, 11, 20, 21, 25–26, 34–35; in the Sotadic Zone, 159, 167, 168; on pilgrimage, 1, 3, 69–76, 82; Roy on, 71; translation as, 84–85. See also Abdullah; cross-dressing
Doniger, Wendy and Kakar, Sudhir, 54
Drysdale, George, 54
Ducros, Albert and Ducros, Jacqueline, 130

E
East India Company, 11, 12, 17, 20–21, 58, 59, 109, 180n9
Eastwick, Edward, 10, 12, 15
Edmond, Rod, 52, 188n118
Ellis, Havelock, 117, 174–175n22
erotic, the: and the exotic, 14–16, 37, 44, 48, 50–51, 54–55; and the Sotadic Zone, 159; ars erotica (erotic art), 39–40, 47, 51, 54; erotic literature, 36–37, 39, 43–44, 46–47
ethnography. See anthropology; racial theory
Ethnological Society of London, 89, 152, 180n9, 190n17
evolution, theory of, 91, 99, 120–127; and Burton, 82, 95, 186n40
exhibitionism, 25–26, 34–35, 149, 154
erotic, the: Africa as, 138; and the erotic, 14–16, 37, 44, 48, 50–51, 54–55; version of home, 100, 111
Eyre, Edward John, 91

F
Fabian, Johannes, 110–111
Falconry in the Valley of the Indus, 11, 20, 56, 57–69, 70, 159, 170n8; friendship with Ibrahim Khan Talpoor, 58–61, 63, 64–69, 80
Fantasy: and Africa, 129–130; and crypt, 64, 67, 115–116; authorized, 164, 165; homophobic fascimatic, 158, 161, 162; imperial, 2–3, 6, 141–145; of harem, 48, 53, 54
Farwell, Byron, 181n28
Fetissism, 104–105
First Footsteps in East Africa, 102, 108, 113, 114–116, 147
Fitzgerald, Edward, 82, 85
flaneur, 14–15, 25
foreign body, 23, 28, 34, 140; and graft, 38; rejection of, 22, 67, 70, 114
Forster, E.M., 56
Foucault, Michel: on modern man, 31–32; on sex, 48, 54
Frémiet, Emmanuel, 130
Freud, Sigmund, 60; on dream-work, 129–130, 138; on mourning, 64; on primal horde, 141–142, 143, 144–145
friendship: and crypt, 66–69; in Africa, 115–116; in Egypt and Arabia, 80–81; with Ibrahim Khan Talpoor, 58–61, 63, 64–69, 80

G
G-, Major, 17–18, 24, 34
Galland, Antoine, 148
Gandhi, Leela, 5

gerographical morality, 107–111, 112, 114, 115, 156, 184n60
Gerard, Jules, 92–93
Ghose, Indira, 49

*Goa and the Blue Mountains*, 11, 12–13, 17–18, 27, 29

*Goa*, 27, 28, 29, 98, 111


graft, 105, 168; and crypt, 57, 64, 69, 78, 88; and hybrid, 6–7, 38, 114, 116; and translation, 37–38, 45–47, 48, 53–55, 148–149

*Guide Book, The*, 162

H

Hanno, 117, 119

Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio, 171n30

harem, 48–54, 62–63

Hastings, Warren, 109, 184n60


Hillard, Charles, 92

Hinduism, 39, 43–46

homosexuality, 115–116, 129, 150, 154–162, 188n118, 191n30; and androgyny, 160–161; and female sexuality, 156–159, 161, 166; and hybridity, 164–167; and primal horde, 144–145

Hulme, Peter, 134

Hunt, James, 89–91, 93–94, 96, 103, 111, 113, 127–129, 151, 152, 181n16, 182n31, 186n40, 190n17

Huxley, Thomas Henry, 120–125, 127–128, 185n35

hybrid, 111–112; and colonial desire, 112–116, 163–165, 166, 167; and graft, 6–7, 38, 105, 114, 116; and imperial order, 30, 101; and polygenism, 103; political space, 26–27, 98–99, 111. *See also* negroid

I


incorporation, 110, 140, 141; and crypt, 64, 67, 78; of the Orient, 45, 64, 69, 78


Indraji, Bhugwuntal, 42, 45

Irwin, Robert, 148


Islam, Syed Manzurul, 75

J

Jones, William, 5, 170n8

K

Kabbani, Rana, 178n92

Kama Shashtra Society, 36, 39, 41, 46, 174n18, 175n22


Kayf, 1–3, 168

Kennedy, Dane, 4–5, 6, 28, 85–86, 113

King Kong, 133–134
Index

Korte, Barbara, 12

L
Lake Regions of Central Africa, The, 68, 94, 95, 97, 103–108, 114, 137
Lane, Edward, 77, 148–149, 153
Leask, Nigel, 10, 26–27
lesbianism, 53, 131, 159
Linnaeus, 118, 122, 123
Lovell, Mary, 42, 175n31, 190n13

M
Macnaghten, Francis, 21
Macnaghten, William Hay, 20–21
Makdisi, Saree, 109
Mannoni, Octave, 30
McClintock, Anne, 102
McCook, Stuart, 118
McMurdo, James, 31
Messeh, Anund, 37, 43
Mill, John Stuart, 91
Miller, Andrew and Adams, James, 173n5
Milnes, Richard Monckton, 36–37, 49–50, 53, 152
modernity: and sex, 48; European, 86–87; modern man, 31–32, 33–35
Mohammed, the boy, 75, 81
Müller, Friedrich Max, 44–48

N
Nandy, Ashis, 30
Napier, Charles, 11, 30, 31, 59, 159
Nautch, 14–16, 17–18, 115
negro, 89–91, 93–94, 138–139; analogy with ape, 125–133; and colonial desire, 136, 162–163; and negroid (see negroid); as feminine, 129–130; psychology, 103–108, 114; relation to Abdul-lah, 113–114
negroid, 94–102, 106, 111, 114, 116, 138
Niranjana, Tejaswini, 39

O
Obeyesekere, Gananath, 135, 136
Obscene Publications Act, 36, 46
Orient, the: as exotic and erotic, 14–16, 48, 50–51, 54–55; as stage, 33–35; incorporation of, 45, 64, 69, 78; Oriental despotism, 31, 184n60; Orientalist translation, 39, 45–47, 82, 84–86, 148; Said on Orientalism, 2–3, 5, 33, 63–64, 77–78; the Oriental, 106–107
Ovid, 39–40, 41, 174n22

P
Palmer, Edward Henry, 150, 189–190n13
panorama, 12, 14
Payne, John, 153–5
pederasty, 154–162, 166, 168
performance. See theatricality
Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah, 1–3, 56, 57, 63, 69–82, 83, 86; and disguise, 1, 3, 69–76; and friendship, 80–81; and writing, 73–79; disavowal in, 68–69, 71, 78; title of, 72
Phillips, Richard, 155–156, 159
pilgrimage, 18, 168; and pederasty, 159–160; to Mecca and Medina, 1–3, 69–82, 85
polyandry, 96, 109, 156
polygamy, 20, 53, 109, 142
Postans, Thomas, 31
postcolonialism, 4–5
Pottinger, Henry, 12
Pratt, Mary, 94, 97
Prichard, James Cowles, 102–105, 107, 110, 112–113, 183n56
primal horde, 141–145
Progress, 86, 99–100, 110, 124–125
psychoanalysis, 4–5

R
and negroid, 94–102, 106, 111, 114, 116, 138; negro-ape analogy, 125–133. See also anthropology


Rehatsek, Edward, 5, 46, 175–176n31 relativism, 4, 6, 85, 86–87. See also geographical morality

Rhodes, Cecil, 171n30

Rhys, Jean, 89

Roman Empire, 40

Roy, Parama, 70, 71

Royal Asiatic Society, 42, 46

Royal Geographical Society, 72, 79, 118, 184n7, 190n17

S

Sacred Books of the East, The, 45–47

sado-masochism, 164–168

Said, Edward, 2–3, 5, 33, 39, 63–64, 77–78

sanitaria. See hill stations

Savage, Thomas, 130, 141; and Wyman, Jeffries, 117–118

Scinde, 10–17, 19–26, 28–35, 56, 58, 61, 66, 80, 83, 172n44; and cross-dressing, 19–26; and imperialism, 20–22, 25–26, 28–29, 30–35; and tourism, 10–11, 12–16, 18, 25; and voyeurism, 14–16, 25, 28, 34

Sen, Sudipta, 27

sex: and climate, 156–157, 161, 165; and marriage, 29; Foucault on, 48, 54; knowledge of, 37, 40, 43–44, 47–55, 151–152. See also colonial desire; homosexuality; lesbianism

Sind Revisited, 11, 17, 23–25, 28, 32–33

Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus, 11, 17, 56, 61

slavery, 89, 90–92, 132, 136, 142, 181nn15–16, 185n35; anti-slavery movement, 95, 111–112, 125–127, 180n6

Society for the Suppression of Vice, 36, 173n2

something, 18, 23, 33, 36, 55, 78, 84, 168

Sotadic Zone, 155–162, 165–166, 167, 168

South America, 26–27, 98; Brazil, 139–141, 143, 145, 146–147, 161

spectatorship, 10, 14–16, 23, 25, 32, 143–144, 167. See also voyeurism

Stade, Hans, 139–141, 143, 145

Sufism, 82

syphilis, 157–158, 160

T

Talpoor, Meer Ibrahim Khan, 57–61, 64–69, 73, 80

Thanatos. See death drive


Todorov, Tzvetan, 10
tomb: of Burton, 87–88; of Major G-, 18, 19

Tootal, Albert, 139

Torok, Maria and Abraham, Nicolas, 57, 63–64, 68, 78

tourism, 10–11, 12–16, 18, 25, 66, 76, 100

Toury, Gideon, 84


Two Trips to Gorilla-Land and the Cataracts of the Congo, 28, 98, 101, 107, 108, 135, 136, 137, 139, 172n31

V

Vatsyayana. See Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana, The

voyeurism, 14–16, 25, 28, 34, 48, 51–52, 145, 168. See also spectatorship

W

Waitz, Theodor, 102, 146, 183n41

Wali, Haji, 70–71, 73
Wanderings in West Africa, 30, 95, 98, 105, 107, 114, 127, 130
Warner, Marina, 134
white man: and desire, 131, 136, 163–165; and negro, 101–103, 104, 105–107, 110, 111, 114, 128, 133, 136; as foreign body, 34, 67; as imperial authority, 30–32, 34–35, 37, 38, 53, 80–81; on top, 5–6, 165; something of, 33
Wyman, Jeffries and Savage, Thomas, 117–118

Y
Young, Robert, 6, 128, 131, 163–166, 181n16
Youngs, Tim, 11, 34

Z
Zanzibar, 9–10, 114
zenana, 48, 49, 176–177n67