Colony, Nation, and Globalisation

Not at Home in Singaporean and Malaysian Literature

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2

Discourses of Difference: Isabella Bird, Emily Innes, and Florence Caddy

Isabella Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883), Emily Innes' *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off* (1885), and Florence Caddy's *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland's Yacht 'Sans Peur'* (1889) are narratives by three very different women who were in Malaya under varied circumstances. By the time Bird embarked on her five-week visit to Malaya in 1879, she was already the renowned author of *The Englishwoman in America* (1856) and *The Hawaiian Archipelago* (1875); *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* was to be published the following year. In contrast, Emily Innes would most likely have faded into obscurity if she had not written her book. She was the wife of James Innes, a junior colonial official who lived in distant parts of Malaya from 1876 to 1882. Florence Caddy, as her book title makes clear, set out in 1888 for Siam and Malaya as a guest on the Duke of Sutherland's yacht. While the ostensible purpose of the duke's journey was to recuperate from an illness, it was actually because he was invited by Prince Devavongse of Siam to submit a bid for a railway construction project (Gullick xi).

Bird and Caddy were on extended journeys when they reached Malaya. Bird's included visits to Japan, Hong Kong, Canton, Saigon, and Singapore. She was hosted by prominent colonial administrators, and it was during her stay in Singapore that she was invited to venture northward into the Malay Peninsula. Caddy's journey lasted four months and included stops in India, Singapore, and Siam; she returned to England via Malaya, Ceylon, and Egypt. Her host was in turn hosted by Thai and Malay aristocrats. In contrast to Bird and Caddy, Emily Innes lived in isolation (and misery, according to her narrative) in Malaya for close to six years. As Susan Morgan puts it, within the hierarchy of the British colonial administration, "the wife of a junior government servant is the lowest position in the imperial hierarchy, her husband occupying the second lowest" (168). A significant portion of Innes' *The Golden Chersonese with the Gilding Off* is devoted to the plight of her husband, who was forced to resign from the colonial service for having refused to issue warrants for the arrest of runaway slaves and for having accused his immediate superior,

William Bloomfield Douglas, of withholding income from the Sultan of Selangor. James Innes was denied a significant portion of his compensation:

> Everything was refused—the compensation for six years' service, the compensation for privilege leave, and the passage-money ... As, however, the passage-money had been paid, the Government ... did not ask for it back again. (Innes *Vol. II* 233)

Thus, much of the way Malaya is represented in Innes' text is filtered through the bitter experience with colonial administration that she and her husband shared.

In *Discourses of Difference*, Sara Mills makes the point that since imperialism is constituted by an investment in "constructing *masculine* British identity", women who wrote about their travels to colonised regions "were unable to adopt the imperialist voice with the ease with which male writers did" [emphasis in original] (3). Given this, "how was [colonialism] negotiated in texts by women who were conventionally seen not to be part of the colonial expansion?" (Mills 1). We shall engage this question in the writings of Bird, Innes, and Caddy on Malaya, exploring the extent to which their work conforms to the idea that travel writing by women might constitute "discourses of difference". I argue that, apart from gender, there are yet other differences to be found within the "discourses of difference". These include differences in terms of class, marital status, and the particular circumstances that brought women to Malaya. It is through the articulation of these differences that their narratives amount to a discourse that superimposes the domestic space of the metropole onto British Malaya. Like Swettenham's writings, the works of these women are a response to the condition of being not-at-home in that there is an attempt to create through their writings an environment that is hospitable to the colonial enterprise, even if the voices are different.

Isabella Bird: The worlding of Malaya

While Malacca, Singapore, and Penang formed an administrative unit called the Straits Settlements in 1826, it was the Pangkor Treaty in 1874 that marked the true beginning of British expansion in the Malay Peninsula. The years following the signing of the treaty were fraught with hostilities between appointed British residents and the Malay rulers due to differing interpretations of the treaty. James Birch, as already noted, was killed during his time as resident in Perak because he sought to implement a system of revenue collection and to abolish debt slavery through the "public humiliation" of Malay chiefs: The homes of the unrelenting chiefs were set on fire and their followers were made to surrender their weapons (Andaya 164–165). It was just four years after Birch's death that Bird arrived in Malaya, and the incident is described in her book:

> The Pangkor Treaty was signed in January 1874. On November 2d, 1875, Mr. Birch, the British Resident, who had arrived the evening before at the village of Passir Salah to post up orders and proclamations announcing that the whole kingdom of Pêrak was henceforth to be governed by English officers, was murdered as he was preparing for the bath. (*Chersonese* 270)

In "The Rani of Sirmur", Gayatri Spivak employs the term "worlding" to describe a process of transforming a physical terrain into colonised space (133). It is this process of worlding, as enacted by Birch, legitimised by the treaty, and implemented through posters and proclamations, that is depicted in the above passage. The worlding of Malaya is further consolidated in Bird's narrative in terms of causes and effects: (1) the treaty was signed, (2) Birch was the legitimate representative of the imperial order, and (3) he was murdered while engaged in the vulnerable act of preparing for a bath. Yet what the passage avoids noting is Birch's reputation for his ill-treatment of the Malays and his insensitivity to their laws and customs. Frank Swettenham was to describe Birch in a diplomatic manner as follows: "Unfortunately, he did not speak Malay, or understand the customs and prejudices of the people, and to this cause more than any other his death must be attributed" (*British Malaya* 197). In consolidating the worlding of Malaya, no political agency is ascribed to the Malays—this is to say, the possibility that Birch's murder was an instance of anti-colonial resistance is not raised.

There is no denying that Bird was reproducing the colonised world of Malaya for readers back home. As mentioned previously, the second sentence of the book makes the point that: "the Golden Chersonese is still somewhat of a *terra incognita*; there is no point on its mainland at which European steamers call" (Bird *Chersonese* 1). The narrative employs the familiar strategy of depicting pre-colonised land as a *tabula rasa* that awaits colonial intervention. In fact, Bird tells us, most people, like herself, were unaware of it (*Chersonese* 1). Yet to say that a place is little known to herself and others is not the same as to say, as she does, that the place 'has no legitimate claim to an ancient history' (*Chersonese* 1). Plainly enough, the Golden Chersonese was not *terra incognita* to its inhabitants, whom Bird describes as "a race of semi-civilised and treacherous Mohammedans" (*Chersonese* 1). The implication here is that the claim to history, ancient or otherwise, has to be legitimised via recognition from the metropolitan centre. Malaya is thus mapped onto the world as existing within a Eurocentric framework.

In her descriptions, Bird depicts Malaya as a resource, emphasising its pragmatic and economic value to the empire. The Straits Settlements, we are told, are "prized as among the most valuable of our possessions in the Far East" (*Chersonese* 3). She points out that the import-export figures amount to more than thirty-two million pounds (Bird *Chersonese* 3). "Iron ores are found everywhere", we learn, "and are so little regarded for their metallic contents that, though containing, according to Mr.

Logan, a skilful geologist, sixty per cent of pure metal, they are used in Singapore for macadamising the roads" (*Chersonese* 5). Even the subject of food caters to the European palate: "At European tables in the settlements the red mullet, a highly-prized fish, the pomfret, considered more delicious than the turbot, and the tungeree, with cray-fish, crabs, prawns, and shrimps, are usually seen" (*Chersonese* 12).

The chief trait of Bird's text regarding the people of Malaya lies in its shifts in tone. At first, she suggests that the Malays are, like the British, the colonisers of Malaya: 'The Malays are not the Aborigines of this singular spit of land, and they are its colonists rather than its conquerors' (*Chersonese* 12). However, one page later, she asserts that their colonisation of Malaya is only a point of conjecture: "The conquest or colonisation of the Malay Peninsula by the Malays is not, however, properly speaking, [a] matter of history, and the origin of the Malay race and its early history are only matters of more or less reasonable hypothesis" (*Chersonese* 13). Another change in emphasis occurs a few pages further:

> The Malays undoubtedly must be numbered among civilised peoples. They live in houses which are more or less tasteful and secluded ... they have possessed for centuries systems of government and codes of land and maritime laws which, in theory at least, show a considerable degree of enlightenment. (*Chersonese* 18)

However, four pages later, we are told that these civilised Malays "have no knowledge of geography, architecture, painting, sculpture, or even mechanics" (*Chersonese* 22). These acts of writing and rewriting, of vision and revision, of assertions and qualifications in her portrayal of the Malays are a function of ambivalence; they are perhaps a function of fluctuations between moments of complicity and resistance in relation to colonial rule.

Either way, Bird's narrative is certainly intended to depict the benevolence of British imperialism. This can be seen in the way she contrasts British imperialism to that of the Portuguese and the Dutch. Malacca in the sixteenth century was utilised by Portugal as a collection point for spices. This was after 1511, when Afonso de Albuquerque led a military expedition that ended in its seizure after more than a month of fighting (Andaya 58). In her chapter on Malacca, Bird has this to say: "my sober judgement is that Albuquerque and most of his Portuguese successors were little better than buccaneers" (*Chersonese* 150). The Dutch presence in the region can be traced to the amalgamation of small trading companies into the Dutch East India Company in 1602 (Andaya 40). Of the Dutch, Bird writes: "If the Portuguese were little better than buccaneers, the Dutch who drove them out were little better than hucksters—mean, mercenary traders, without redeeming qualities, content to suck the blood of their provinces and give nothing in return" (*Chersonese* 151).

These sweeping statements are in contrast to Bird's moving portraits of the British colonial administrators she met during her trip. In Singapore, she met Cecil Clementi Smith, then the colonial secretary; in Malacca, she was hosted by Captain E. W. Shaw, the lieutenant-governor; in Sungei Ujong, she was met by the official resident, Patrick James Murray; in Penang, she had lunch with Hugh Low, the resident in Perak; W. E. Maxwell, the assistant resident, and William Robinson, the governor of the Straits Settlements. Her descriptions of these administrators reinforce the idea of the benevolence of British colonial rule. Of W. E. Maxwell, then assistant resident in Perak, Bird says:

> He is a man on whose word one may implicitly rely. Brought up among Malays, and speaking their language idiomatically, he not only likes them, but takes the trouble to understand them and enter into their ideas and feelings. He studies their literature, superstitions, and customs carefully, and has made some valuable notes upon them. I should think that few people understand the Malays better than he does ... I have the very pleasant feeling regarding him that he is the right man in the right place, and that his work is useful, conscientious, and admirable. As Assistant Resident he is virtually dictator of Larut, only subject to Mr. Low's interference. He is a judge, and can inflict the penalty of death, the regent's signature, however, being required for the death-warrant. (*Chersonese* 285–286)

In this passage, though we are told that Maxwell is "virtually dictator" because of his position, he is not so in person. Rather, he is a friend to the Malays: He understands them, likes them, speaks their language, enters into their thoughts and sentiments. Even though he has power over life and death, this is checked, as secondary authorisation is required. The passage at once testifies to the power of a colonial administrator while assuring readers that this power is restrained—first by the administrator's respect for Malay culture and, second, because of administrative checks put in place.

In the passage, the justification for British presence in Malaya is supplemented with affective qualities. The author confides to the reader her personal feelings for the man—her "right-man, right-place" intuition. Morgan identifies this narrative move as the "rhetoric of emotion", which "blends feminine domestic with colonial ideology" (159). She observes that in Bird's text, "colonial administrators are judged ... according to a British domestic ideology which values sympathy and tenderness over a more aggressive representation of manliness" (Morgan 153). Bird's depiction of Maxwell is congruent with liberal values in Victorian England, wherein we find an endorsement of personal qualities such as benevolence and kindness. At the same time, it is in keeping with the civilising mission of imperialism, whereby other cultures are brought into the ambit of civilisation and transformed—not by force but by compassion.

One feature of *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* that requires mention is that the journey as narrated begins not in Malaya but in Hong Kong, Canton,

and Saigon. "Why begin a book on British Malaya with chapters on Canton?" asks Morgan (150). The answer, she writes, is so that the "narrative order … reiterate[s] the British trade route", beginning with China and ending with her departure for the Bay of Bengal, thus framing the chapters "within their primary imperial meaning" (Morgan 151). Travelling along this trade route, Bird was to compare the different governments of Hong Kong, Canton, and Saigon so as to bring to the forefront her argument about the benevolent nature of British colonialism, a theme elaborated in her chapters on Malaya.

After describing in detail the horrifying conditions of the Chinese prison in Canton, where the innocent and guilty alike are incarcerated and subjected to torture, Bird quotes the prisoners' words, implying that Hong Kong under the British is governed by compassion:

> "Would I were in your prison in Hongkong," and this was chorused by many voices saying, "In your prison at Hongkong they have fish and vegetables, and more rice than they can eat, and baths, and beds to sleep on; good, good is the prison of your Queen!" (*Chersonese* 71)

Of Saigon, Bird exclaims with some indignation that it "has the wild ambition to propose to itself to be a second Singapore!" (*Chersonese* 94). Of course, a statement such as this reflects the prevailing Anglo-French animosities at that point in time. After describing several scenes of extreme poverty, and after inspecting an army barracks she calls a "sickly station", where forty per cent of the soldiers are receiving hospital treatment for disease, Bird concludes that "The French don't appear to be successful colonists" (Bird *Chersonese* 103). The comparisons between the prison systems in Canton and Hong Kong, and between poverty-stricken Saigon and prospering Singapore, are intended, plainly enough, to legitimise the claims of British imperialism. Again, the implicit point is that British imperialism is guided not by economic interests but by compassion.

This repeated emphasis in *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* has to be seen in the light of the Indian "Mutiny" of 1857. As Morgan puts it, in Malaya "the very notion of the glory of the British Empire [could be salvaged], tarnished as it had been by recent events in India" (147). Much of Bird's writing was based on her letters to her sister, Henrietta. In a letter to her publisher, John Murray, Bird describes Henrietta as her "best public, [her] home and fireside" (*Letters* 305). If Henrietta was to Bird the embodiment of her domestic reading public, then one of the key issues for Bird in her representation of Malaya was to write of it in such a way as to assure readers that it would not turn out to be another India. We must note in this connection that a section regarding William Bloomfield Douglas, the resident of Selangor, was excised from the final version of the book. In a letter to John Murray, Bird indicated that she planned to include the section; she wanted

confirmation from Murray that Douglas had resigned from the colonial service to avoid an inquiry on charges of corruption. As Bird puts it, this would validate her descriptions of him as presiding over "a rule of fraud, hypocrisy, and violence"; at the same time, as Kay Chubbuck points out, Bird would also be protected from accusations of libel (*Letters* 267–268). In the end, Bird decided to exclude the section despite having received confirmation that Douglas had indeed resigned. The reason given was that she was abiding by the proverb, "Never kick a man when he's down" (*Letters* 268). One may suggest another reason for excluding the section on Douglas: It would have undermined her portrayal of the compassionate nature of British colonial rule in Malaya.

Bird's writing demonstrates that it is entirely possible to possess a *feminine* imperialist voice. At various moments in her writing, the emphasis on affect and the sympathetic portrayals of male colonial administrators are evidence that the feminine voice is an adjunct to masculine constructs of imperialism.

Emily Innes: Colonialism and its discontents

In *The Golden Chersonese with the Gilding Off*, Emily Innes has this to say of Bird:

> Miss Bird was a celebrated person, and wherever she went was well introduced to the highest officials in the land; Government vessels were placed at her disposal, and Government officers did their best to make themselves agreeable, knowing that she wielded in her right hand a little instrument that might chastise or reward them as they deserved of her. (*Vol. II* 242–243)

We can forgive Innes the touch of jealousy. Unlike Bird, whose visit lasted five weeks, Innes was in Malaya for almost six years. She accompanied her husband, James Innes, who was sent to Kuala Langat to take up the post of the revenue collector and magistrate. In *The Golden Chersonese with the Gilding Off*, she wrote of the difficulties of living in isolation. A dilapidated building served as office, courthouse, and living quarters. The only steam launch belonging to the Selangor government was not at their disposal. When her husband took a rowboat on inspection trips to tin mines and fishing villages, Innes was left on her own for days with no means of contact with the outside world.

Like Bird's text, that of Innes displays a certain measure of ambivalence in its depictions of the natives of Malaya. Some passages come close to paranoia and constitute instances of colonialist prejudice at its worst:

> The women who go out as ayahs [servants] in Malaya are the most degraded in the land. They are ready to steal, lie, drink, poison their master and mistress, or join in a plot for murdering them at any moment. (Innes *Vol. I* 24)

At other times, the text takes pains to vouch for the nobility of the Malay character:

> It seems to be the general impression in England that the Malay nature is 'treacherous, bloodthirsty, and cruel;' but I am so far from having found it so … [the] country was far more peaceful than England, and life and property were more secure in it than in London … and I know no 'civilized' country where it would be possible to leave your house perfectly open night and day for years as we did, without any serious loss of property. (Innes *Vol. I* 41–42)

The text moves between racist and empathetic portrayals of the local populace, between repulsion and acceptance, between loathing and approval. On the one hand, native women servants are depicted as deceitful, dangerous, and cunning; on the other, the racist image of Malays as "treacherous, bloodthirsty, and cruel" is to be challenged.

In a large portion of her book, Innes casts herself as a central character, laying bare her thoughts and reactions to her surroundings. While in a village shop, Innes is confronted with a crowd anxious to catch its first glimpse of a European lady. In response to this, she writes:

> It was no doubt flattering to find one's self looked on as the dove and olive-branch were on their return to the ark—a token that the troubled waters were abated; but I think if the original dove had been mobbed at the ark window by as motley and unpleasant a crowd of animals as the population of Klang, she would have flown away again very fast. (Innes *Vol. I* 8–9)

Here, her regard for the local populace is made clear. The affective quality that stands out is repulsion. There is an insistence on the differentiation of the self from the native: The local population is to Innes what a "motley and unpleasant … crowd of animals" is to a dove, a symbol of innocence and purity. This depiction of the crowd as a threat, as an undifferentiated mass of Chinese, Indians, and Malays threatening to invade her innocent and vulnerable personal space, is metonymic of her encounters with the local populace.

The Chersonese with the Gilding Off is certainly a gendered text, gendered in the sense that it reproduces the Victorian roles of the woman as inhabiting the space of domestic economy circumscribed within the harsh landscape of Malaya. We are told, for instance, that Langat is no place for a woman. Langat, Innes writes,

> is nothing but a mud-swamp … the house is an attap (palm-leaf) one, with no bath-room attached to it, the bathing-place being at some distance; there is no garden, not a tree, no flowers, scarcely even any grass … and no society. The mere landing is an acrobatic feat, and the isolation is such that it would be sheer imprisonment to any Englishwoman … remember, there is no European within a day's journey, man nor woman. (Innes *Vol. I* 3–4)

The landscape is presented as a colonial frontier, harsh and devoid of natural beauty. The relative isolation from a European community, the lack of an attached bathroom, and the fact that the house is made of attap would offer no security to a woman.

Innes writes of her considerable efforts to maintain a Victorian home in such an environment. She writes of saving eighty pounds a year by obtaining groceries from England instead of from Singapore (Innes *Vol. II* 25). She laments the difficulties of obtaining fresh food and supplies. At one point, an order for condensed milk and biscuits resulted in a delivery of milk biscuits (Innes *Vol. II* 32). She writes of having to prepare a meal for ten persons: She "arranged as fine a banquet as the combined resources of Singapore and Langat could be made to yield", only to be told at the last minute that the party was not coming (Innes *Vol. II* 35).

Given Innes' geographical isolation and the problems it entailed, it is no surprise that she describes her plight with resentment. In a discussion with Hugh Low, then the Perak resident, regarding her husband's refusal to issue warrants for the arrest of runaway slaves in his capacity as magistrate, Low, in an unguarded moment, remarked that since all married women are slaves, Emily is a slave herself (Innes *Vol. II* 139). "Just so", Innes retorted. "That is precisely why I can sympathize with other slaves" (*Vol. II* 139). It may seem that Innes, as a woman subjected to Victorian gender conventions, is at this point expressing sympathy for colonised subjects in Malaya. However, the book ends with a call for the annexation of the protected Malay States, so contradicting such a reading:

> I wish to point out that almost all the miseries from which we suffered in the Far East were a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the system of 'Protection.' Had the Malay Native States been annexed, how different would have been our position! … the solitude and isolation which formed one of our greatest trials would have been modified, if not done away with altogether. (Innes *Vol. II* 245–246)

Annexation, as far as Innes is concerned, implies a change of colonial administration. That annexation is called for so as to protect junior colonial officials (and their wives) from being oppressed by their superiors indicates that Innes' experience of Malaya and her views on its people were shaped by her resentment of the colonial administration, an administration that had relegated her to being the wife of a minor official sent to an obscure outpost of the empire. Thus, Innes' call for annexation is motivated not by empathy with the colonised subject but by her envy of the positions of senior officers. Her narrative does not question the basic tenets of colonialism; rather, it draws attention to inequalities that exist among officers in the colonial administration.

What would happen to the Malays after annexation? "Whether Annexation would be good for the Malays is another question", Innes concludes (*Vol. II* 248). The final sentence of the book constitutes a dismissal of colonised subjects based on

the assumption that they are unable to cope with modernity. Referring to what is for her the archetypal Malay, Innes remarks that "he cannot move with the times; and unless he moves out of the way … he will certainly be crushed beneath the wheels of the car of progress" (*Vol. II* 250).

Passage after passage in Innes' writing runs contrary to Sara Mills' argument, noted earlier, that women travel writers could not assume "the imperialist voice" as male writers did. Innes' voice, indeed, cannot be separated from the male experience of colonialism; she was married to a junior colonial officer and subjected to the same tribulations.

Florence Caddy: 'High life in Asia'

Innes was jealous of the attentions afforded to Bird by senior colonial administrators, and we can assume she would have been bitter if she had known of Florence Caddy's associations with the British aristocracy and the way she had been hosted by members of the Thai and Malay aristocracies during her trip. Caddy embarked on her journey with the Duke of Sutherland in 1888. She was already the author of two novels, two books on how to manage a household, and two biographies (Gullick xii). While writing the biographies—of Linnaeus and Joan of Arc—Caddy had covered the routes traversed by her subjects, and she was thus already a seasoned traveller and writer (Gullick viii).

In *To Siam and Malaya in The Duke of Sutherland's Yacht 'Sans Peur'*, Caddy compares her work with that of Bird and Innes, declaring that she has "shown … in how much comfort it is possible sometimes to leave the beaten tracks of travel":

> We had read the 'Golden Chersonese' by Miss Bird, and heard of the 'Chersonese with the Gilding off,' by a resident in Singapore … but we found we must lay more gilding on, and deck our tale with jewels. (278)

Caddy wasted no opportunity in narrating the material ease and comfort of her travels. (One of the chapters in her book is entitled "High Life in Asia".) The yacht she sailed in is described as a luxurious vessel:

> The deck-house is lined with sofas; it has doors on each side and windows nearly all round, so that one can see the views while sitting at work or with a book. Above the wide, easy staircase that leads down to the saloon a folding table is spread, large enough to dine eight people, or a dozen at a pinch; the servants stand at the head of the staircase to wait, and the table does not impede their use of this short cut to the pantry, while the dishes are brought hot from the galley to the doors. (3)

"We have no privations on board the *Sans Peur*", writes Caddy (4). Indeed, the spaciousness of the yacht allows for space itself to be distinguished as for pleasure and for utility. From the pantry to the galley, from the head of the staircase to the staircase itself: These spaces are marked by differences of class, status, and privilege.

"We always speak of the yacht as home", writes Caddy, and this English domestic space outside of England is to be defended against possible intruders (18). Just as the ordering of space within the yacht distinguishes nobility from service, the ordering of space inside and outside of the yacht distinguishes the civilised from those construed as the barbaric Other. While the yacht moves from place to place, this ordering of space remains rigid and immobile. An array of weapons on board, including boarding pikes, personal revolvers, and a rifle, provides security for both passengers and crew. As the crew assures her, they are there "in case the savages come … In case those heathens think there is anything worth taking in a vessel of this sort, we'll give them a warm reception" (Caddy 6).

Such an ordering of space—distinguishing, on the one hand, between nobility and service and, on the other, between English domestic space and the world beyond—is metonymic of the text's collusion with the economic dimensions of colonialism. As Caddy points out, one of the reasons for the trip was that the duke was interested to see "if the application of English capital can benefit a colony or further British influence abroad … This is a thing that the workers cannot do for themselves. It requires leisure and capital" (77). The colonised subject is regarded as human labour just as colonies are regarded as sources of raw material. At one point in the narrative, Caddy remarks on the lush greenery and the easy availability of natural resources—lamenting, however, that because of the tropical climate, "we [the British] … cannot dig, but only direct the digging" (279).

The narrative draws a distinction between ruling and working classes among Malays, as well. Referring to those of the working class, Caddy laments that they refuse to work (279). In contrast, those of the ruling class are mentioned in a positive light, even though this might contradict colonial discourses as to the Malays' inability to govern themselves. They are regarded as enlightened in that they are willing middlemen for the British, amenable to the capitalist interests of the colonial regime:

> Sultan Abubeker is opening up the country energetically. He has attracted a multitude of Javanese, Chinese, and other settlers here; he has made Johore Baru a free port, with only small dues, and gives a free grant of land to settlers. He makes good roads, and villages spring up beside them as if by magic. By these and other enlightened measures the Sultan is yearly increasing his influence and his income. Instead of being crushed by the prosperity of Singapore, he is using the Lion City as a market, or rather a central depôt for the distribution of his native productions. (248)

If Caddy's admiration for the Sultan of Johore is undisguised, it is because the latter shares the same vision of Malaya: The Chinese, along with the Javanese and other settlers, are the workers of the land, transforming it and excavating it for raw material. It is the Chinese that are singled out as representatives of the ideal worker:

> Sultan Abubeker encourages the industrious Chinese; he says he finds them valuable as original settlers, as they are indefatigable labourers, clearing the jungle, cultivating the ground, and turning everything to account: then, as he sees openings,—and he is always looking for them,—he can set up companies for working mills, mines, &c., with Chinese labour under European direction. (265–266)

For Caddy, what is admirable about working-class Chinese is that, in contrast to their Malay counterparts, they labour willingly for British capital. They are diligent, and they further the commercial interests of the British. In Singapore, Caddy is fascinated by the spectacle of Chinese industry:

> This China town swarms like an ant-hill with the yellow race, who appear [*sic*] industrious to the last degree. Chinamen here are always carrying loads in their pairs of baskets, or pails, slung on a bamboo across the shoulders. Exception: when not busily carrying about something, they are being shaved.
>
> There are plenty of jinrickshas, or 'rickshas as they call them here … these are all drawn by Chinamen, some of them extremely fine men, often admirable models for a worker in bronze. (80–81)

From the point of view of an outsider, the Chinese are first depicted as a mass of undifferentiated bodies at work, carrying loads, bearing bamboo poles, and pulling rickshaws. Their bodies are scrutinised so as to distil from them the quality of physical strength, a quality objectified as bronze metal. When her gaze rests on individual men, they are idealised as model workers.

As in the case of Bird's text, where comparisons are made between Canton, Hong Kong, and Saigon so as to extol the benefits of British influence, Caddy's text makes comparisons between the peoples of Malaya and Siam. The private secretary to the Sultan of Johore finds favour in Caddy's eyes because he displays outward signs of British influence: "[He is] a highly intelligent young man in European dress … speaking English fluently" (233). In contrast, of the Siamese she writes, "It seems a grievous pity after the young Siamese have been educated in England to plunge them back into the semi-barbarism of the native habits" (126). At one point, Caddy goes so far as to remark, "In Siam civilization is potential; in Johore it is at work" (254). As mentioned earlier, the reason for the duke's trip to Siam was to bid for a railway project. As it turned out, the contract was awarded to Sir Andrew Clarke, the governor of the Straits Settlements (Gullick xi). As John Gullick suggests, it may be that the Thai aristocracy required the duke's competing presence so as to speed up their negotiations with Clarke (xi). One may surmise, then, that Caddy is displaying a measure of loyalty to the duke when she makes the above remarks in her book.

"A yacht", writes Caddy, "is something like the magic carpet of the Arabian Nights, that can transport its owner where he wishes, or, better still, like Hans Andersen's 'Flying Trunk,' for you pack up and get into it, and it carries you where you wish" (1). Caddy's narrative projects and superimposes the multiple discourses of class, capitalism, and colonialism onto Malaya. Her magic carpet allows her to see precisely what she wishes to see—a land where British capitalists, aided by enterprising Malay middlemen and diligent Chinese workers, are involved in the work of harnessing raw material to be imported back home.

Taken together, these three accounts of British presence in Malaya demonstrate the variety of ways in which colonialism was articulated by women writers in Malaya between 1879 and 1888. If Swettenham's trope of amok exceeds its colonialist frame, it is these narratives written by these women writers that restore Malaya as a homely space in the empire. In each of these three books, we witness attempts to refashion Malaya as a quasi-domestic space of the imperial nation. The women travel writers arrived in Malaya under different conditions. Bird was a celebrated writer and wrote of colonialism as a benevolent endeavour, Innes lived in isolation from the British community and wrote of what she perceived as unfair treatment, and Caddy took part in a business enterprise and laid bare the economic basis of colonialism—Malaya as a space of industry, a space of labour and natural resources that was an extension of the imperial nation and so sustained it.

Others have noted that travel allowed Victorian women to secure public positions as writers "with experience enough to write about the wider world" (Frawley 27). However, the three women authors we have considered secured public positions as writers whose narratives conformed to the domestic ideology prevalent in the imperial nation. They wrote of what they saw from the vantage point of their various social stations under the aegis of colonialism. If travel entails the act of leaving one's home and transcending one's immediate social and cultural surroundings to engage with other cultures, then it may be said that at many points in their journeys, these women writers had never truly left home.