

Chapter Title: The madwoman in the attic of Labuwangi: Couperus and colonial Gothic
Chapter Author(s): Rosemarie Buikema

Book Title: Gothic kinship

Book Editor(s): Agnes Andeweg, Sue Zlosnik

Published by: Manchester University Press. (2013)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18mbg63.8>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Manchester University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Gothic kinship*

JSTOR

The madwoman in the attic of Labuwangi: Couperus and colonial Gothic

Rosemarie Buikema

Haunting always implies a debt.

Jodey Castricano (2001)

If there is anything Gothic literature causes us to experience, then it is that life is a matter of dealing with the dead. We might as well get used to the idea, so the adage of many a Gothic tale runs, that people generally at some point in their personal or political history will encounter ghosts and spirits. The things animate and/or the living dead of Gothic narratives often embody, as it were, a symbolic debt that has not been settled and that goes beyond the physical presence of debtors. Injustice does not fade with the passage of time. The Gothic tale, in other words, has a long tradition of plot structures in which the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Inexorably each Gothic text forces the progressive insight upon the reader that the denial of one's indebtedness to the past will defy the realm of ghosts, and that the dead could be mightier than the living, the oppressed more powerful than the oppressors.¹

Usually in Gothic tales the living and the dead, the past and the present, are interconnected in a very specific mediated manner. In all cases, the embodiment of that relationship is situated in an intermediate area, a space turned Gothic, where one's reliance on the ability to perceive proves problematic. Did or didn't one hear the cries of souls, was it a ghost or just a patch of fog one just saw, is that writing materializing on the wall or does it just look like that? Not infrequently, access into the Gothic space is gained in the

narrative by a piece of text looming up, a found manuscript or an enigmatic letter. The texts emerging from the depths of the Gothic story are, however, difficult to interpret because they are difficult to read, either literally or metaphorically speaking. The texts are already intermediate in themselves. In the literal case the writing may be difficult to read because the paper has partly decayed or the ink has faded, or because one text was written over the other and we are dealing with a palimpsest. In the metaphorical case, the text may be difficult to read because its content, for example, breaks a taboo and its meaning must not or cannot become manifest. Above all, from the nature of things these manuscripts are always dissociated from the sender. The text stays on, the sender disappears. The author is present only in spirit, otherwise absent. Writings, in other words, function independently from either sender or receiver and as such exist autonomously in the Gothic tale.

The search for the role and meaning of a text hard to read and/or for the identity of the sender often forms the core of the genre of Gothic narrative and the driving force behind many a Gothic plot.² The Gothic context then determines that deciphering such an encrypted text inevitably involves a meeting with the proverbial madwoman in the attic as the embodiment of the spirits of a neglected past: a meeting eventually affecting the perception of the narrative present. The Gothic ghosts and spirits populating the narrative present do not, therefore, solely refer to the legacy of the past but also hold promises for a possible future.

The structure of obscure texts functioning as an index for unsettled debt also drives the plot of *The Hidden Force* (*De Stille Kracht*, 1900), the popular colonial novel by the Dutch author Louis Couperus (1863–1923). The novel was adapted for Dutch television in 1974. Couperus, indisputably a primary representative of the Dutch literary canon, is the Netherlands' major nineteenth century author. He is known for his psychological 'The Hague novels' (The Hague being the town where many so-called expatriates from the former Dutch East Indies settled after returning from the colony), as well as for historical novels and colonial novels including *The Hidden Force*. Couperus grew up in the East Indies in the city of Batavia on the island of Java, where his family owned a coffee plantation. In 1878 the family returned to The Hague. Later, in his adult life, the author on two occasions visited relatives in Java. Early twentieth-century critical reception designated his

work as decadent, immoral and perverse, but he was widely read nonetheless. Up to today Couperus has remained a very popular author in Dutch literature.

Evaluating the complex load of Gothic machinations in *The Hidden Force* therefore means that Couperus's great East Indies novel should not only be read against the background of the changing Dutch colonial policy of around 1900: in particular, it should also be related to the corresponding specific kinship relations such as they were engrained in notions of masculinity, femininity and European identity. As for the former: the Dutch East Indies colonial policy was characterized by a structure of so-called indirect rule. This meant that the various regions of the archipelago were governed by indigenous regents appointed by order of the colonial administration. These regents, local aristocrats from the archipelago's various regions, were presided over by a Dutch so-called 'resident'. The resident was initially supposed to grant regents an ample right of self-government, but growing economic and political interests would cause a change in colonial relations. Around 1900, it was considered necessary to impose a more efficient administration, to the effect that indigenous leaders were increasingly reduced to mere executors of colonial rule. Their power thus became largely ceremonial.³

Against this background it will probably come as no surprise to the post-colonial reader that the central conflict of *The Hidden Force* involves a confrontation between Resident Otto Van Oudijck and Regent Sunario Adingrat. This conflict is fascinating and also literarily interesting, not so much because of its historical and post-colonial relevance as regards relations between ruler and ruled, but rather for the way it is mixed up with the theme of incest that arises from the resident's private sphere. This well-meaning but complacent executor of colonial rule is blind in all respects to the hidden force, that is, to the specific spirituality of Asian culture and the coded response of the subaltern voice. This blindness to the perspective of the colonized Other turns out to be fatal in a parallel process of decay both in his professional life and in his private sphere. The colonial and industrial divide between private and public, rationality and irrationality, the visible and the invisible, the living and the dead, the knowable and the unknowable, cannot withstand the machinations of the hidden force. In Couperus's best-selling novel, colonial European power as well as the colonial patriarchal family suffer defeat. In this sense, this Gothic tale has turned out to be a visionary document.

Right from the first page *The Hidden Force* falls into the Gothic mode to make clear that something ominous is about to happen. Night is falling, with the blood pink full moon shining low behind the tamarind trees. Except for some melancholy *gamelan* sounds in the distance, it is quiet. Here and there some lights are lit. Light and dark, reason and the irrational, the visible and the invisible – the thematics of the Gothic tale are apparent right away in *The Hidden Force*. Resident Van Oudijck leaves his lit house and enters the dark, responding to the mystique of the East Indian night with an evening stroll towards the ocean. Hindering him is a sense of the uncanny that at first he blames on the fact that his wife has of late been away from home quite frequently. Consequently, his family is somewhat orphaned, but he instantly represses his unease – exacerbated by twilight melancholy – through breathing the fresh sea air. The fresh air connects him to European colonialist reason. His response to what becomes felt but as yet is not immediately comprehensible typifies his personality: ‘He denied mystery. It was not there: there was only the sea and the cool wind’.⁴ The unknown is not explored, but instantly reduced to the familiar and therefore temporarily covered up and sidelined. All in the name of Western reason characterized by a tradition of transformation or control of natural forces.⁵ So the seemingly innocent but ideologically loaded appropriation of the sea air turns Van Oudijck’s exchange with the sea on the novel’s very first pages into a symbol of the gulf stretching between the colonial authorities’ sphere of life on the one hand and that of the indigenous population on the other. The colonizer believes he can rule and maintain control, whereas the native sees a world full of uncontrollable phenomena one must simply endure. The indigenous servant accompanying Van Oudijck therefore observes his boss’s evening reverie with disquiet. In his view it is a very bad idea to provoke the spirits of the sea at nightfall. Caimans dwell in the water, and every caiman is a spirit ... ‘How strange, those Hollanders, how strange! ...’ (48). The natives have just brought offerings to the spirits; banana and rice are still floating on the waves on tiny bamboo rafts; and the resident should really leave the sea spirits in peace now. The tone of the novel is definitively set: there is a yawning chasm between the soul of the native and that of the colonizer. It is immediately evident that the impending calamity announced on almost every following page has to do with that unbridgeable gap between the worldview of colonial rulers and that of the natives. In the course of

the novel it becomes apparent that the political and ethical conflict is inextricably intertwined with Van Oudijck losing patriarchal control in the private sphere.

One day after this exchange with the sea, the resident's wife Leonie returns from her mundane outings and Van Oudijck together with his son goes and picks her up from the railway station. The narrator lets no opportunity pass to slowly build the tension which, mediated by anonymous letters and other writings, will come to an outburst by the end of the novel. Initially Van Oudijck persists in feeling secured by the context of family and colony, despite the vague unease concerning his family and a simmering conflict with Sunario, the Javanese regent. Complacently he rattles off in his carriage, horses trampling as he drives through the velvet silence of fictional Labuwangi on the island of Java. He does not note how his town has fallen into decay. He does not see that the legacy of colonial villas, once testifying to planters' prosperity, is one of abandonment and neglect. Certain districts in the town of Labuwangi he governs are in the same state of disarray as the colonial family that is falling apart right before his eyes even though Van Oudijck does not yet acknowledge this. The tension between what the reader sees on the one hand and what protagonists see on the other is one component of the growing tension in the novel, producing the typically Gothic effect of the double perspective in which the two sides of same coin are active at the same time.

The family founded by Van Oudijck is a true reflection of the route taken by Dutch colonial rule in the nineteenth century. His marriage to the blonde Leonie was preceded by a so-called pre-marriage with an indigenous woman. She runs a gambling den and lives somewhere deep in the *kampong*, as we learn in passing much later in the story. The two almost adult children Theo and Doddy incorporated in the present family are therefore of mixed racial descent. This ethnic marker appears at the very first introduction of these characters, because their language bears characteristics of the Indo-Dutch syntax familiar to the Dutch reader. Later in the novel the description of the two pre-marriage children continuously plays on the clichés of an identity formed in the tropics, such as precocious sexuality (Doddy being described as a hurried rose blossoming too soon, [50]), a slow rhythm of moving (there's nothing brisk in Doddy's and Theo's stroll), no excess of vigour and/or intelligence (Theo failing in many jobs). Often we read about such

external features as full lips, olive skin and so on. As for Leonie, she is white, but on the grounds that she was born in the Dutch Indies she has, according to the prevailing views at the time, in a sense become Creole. She is a pretty phlegmatic blonde woman who spends the time purchasing luxuries and conducting extramarital affairs, which partly explains her being outside the home so often. Outside the narrative her being away from the family initially takes shape in the form of visits to Batavia, but in the course of the story these outward trips gradually take place at closer range. Her transgressive and semi-incestuous relationship with her stepson Theo also turns her own home into an uncanny place.

Apart from the adulterous nature of Leonie which I will presently explore extensively, the ethnically mixed family situation of the Van Oudijcks is quite typical for the composition of the Indo-European community around 1900. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the colony was not deemed a safe destination for European women. At the end of the nineteenth century a change in this situation was brought about by the increasing institutionalization of colonial rule, improved hygiene, the invention of the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal, and the development of the railway system. The distance between the Dutch Indies and Europe had become more manageable. Where at first the journey from the Netherlands to Java was a matter of months, it only took a few weeks around 1900. European men were from the turn of the century encouraged to take along a wife from Europe or to make one join him later. European women were then supposed to reinstall and fortify European culture within the European community. The single European colonizers had in the preceding period massively resorted to indigenous housekeepers, *nyais*, who looked after them in all respects. They were therefore not only increasingly going native (the Dutch term being '*verindischt*', become Indian), but also caused a whole new population group to emerge: Eurasians, or 'Indos' as the Dutch said. Indos are the children born of the union between colonial men and indigenous women. Some of these children were legitimized and incorporated in the European father's new European family, as was the case with Theo and Doddy Van Oudijck. Many of these children, however, were not acknowledged and were in danger of not being accommodated by society. A contemporary from the Indies characterized their state as follows: that they float between indigenous and European society, scraping

a living and constituting an unhappy, dissatisfied, and damaging part of the population.⁶ They were too Indian to be European and too European to be incorporated in the indigenous village community. Eventually they often lived in miserable conditions. They were there and they were not there. Thus around 1900 a Eurasian proletariat began to take shape which constituted a threat to the colonial values of economic prosperity and racial purity.⁷ This is the proletariat that in the end becomes a disturbing force in *The Hidden Force*.

While Van Oudijck tries to solve his conflict with a dissolute and drunken regent, using the familiar colonial rhetoric of the benevolent patriarch who acts in the best interests of his children, Leonie Van Oudijck abandons herself into an affair with her stepson. The family rhetoric of the colonizer towards the native implies, as the authoritative post-colonial critic Anne McClintock conclusively analyses, that hierarchical relations within the colony are not constructed in history and geopolitics, but are a natural given fact, just like relations between family members. Just as it is the father who bears responsibility for his children, so the colonial ruler is the one who knows best how the natives under his administration may come to fulfilment.⁸ It also follows therefore that if the colonizer is no sensitive father, he fails in his role as governor and guardian of the law. In *The Hidden Force* the rhetoric of failing fatherhood becomes the theme of the novel in the simultaneous development of the two storylines relating to Van Oudijck as resident and as head of the family. Van Oudijck is so convinced of his role as protector of the natives and so uncomplicated in his adoration for his wife, that he barely heeds the anonymous letters reaching him with great regularity. These letters inform him about the turmoil in the kampong as well as the adulterous behaviour of his wife. Van Oudijck does not want to know or see anything. Right under his nose his son Theo and his wife Leonie are having an affair, but 'his eyes blinked, as though tired from working' (178). When at long last Van Oudijck becomes aware of Leonie's semi-incestuous relationship and, above all, when this affair has been threatened too often by a series of incidents – apart from the anonymous letters, a hidden force unaccountably causes the casting of stones during her secret meetings with Theo; white *hajis* appear; the trees are filled with the wailing voices of children's souls; and then the incomprehensible low point: when taking a bath Leonie is spattered with blood-red betel juice

– Leonie shifts to an affair with Addy, her daughter Doddy’s lover and another Indo. Her role as femme fatale has reached completion: ‘it made her husband jealous – perhaps for the first time, for she had always been very careful – and made Theo and Doddy jealous. She aroused the jealousy of every young married woman and of every girl, and since she, as the resident’s wife, stood above them all, she had an ascendancy over all of them’ (195). Leonie is the woman who is conscious of her colonial power not only over colonized women but also over colonized men. Even though her erotic power is compounded by her social standing, she leaves the actual execution of the function of resident’s wife and guardian of European culture to another woman altogether: Eva Eldersma, the gentle wife of Onno Eldersma, secretary of the resident. Eva is the only protagonist Van Oudijck actually relates to. Oriented on Europe, she is the one to hold, as a European woman is expected to do, the European community together, performing charitable works and organizing receptions at the residency where Leonie behaves as the indifferent, languid guest. Above all, Eva is a monogamous wife and a loving mother to her son. Potential lovers are amiably converted to platonic friends. Eva’s only weakness is that she is too vulnerable to the hidden force and cannot resist the menace emanating from a hostile landscape and a climate alien to her. Her creativity, her artistic home as well as her exquisite wardrobe become mouldy in the course of the story and are corroded by moisture and termites.

Although, as already noted, there are quite a few Gothic signs of domestic and colonial decay in the story, as well as numerous indications of a simultaneous process of increasing tension between the different communities, culminating in the conflict between the regent and the resident, it seems that the real cause of the collapse of Van Oudijck’s universe lies in the fact that his wife Leonie in all respects withdraws from her role as his wife. Not only does she neglect her duty to keep the European community European, she is above all explicitly sexually active. One could also say: because she is sexually active – and on top of that with members of the Indo community (Addy is the son of the prominent Indo family De Luce) – she neglects her duty to keep the European community together, that is, racially pure and distinct from the other ethnic communities. Her body is a guilty body.⁹ Instead of bearing European children, taking care of her husband’s pre-marriage children and doing her duty as the resident’s wife, she violates the laws that gender, race

and class impose upon her by being actively promiscuous. The red betel spit inexplicably descending on her body while she is taking a bath suggests that incest, the violation of patriarchal and colonial laws, are the cause of the decline steadily setting in after the bathing scene: the decay of the houses in Labuwangi, the collapse of the colonial community, the disintegration of the Van Oudijck family. But there is more.

Few critics have so far ventured an interpretation of the novel's crucial bathing scene. The novel has become known for it, but the secret has not been fully disclosed in interpretations, as befits a good Gothic plot. In his preface to the English translation of the novel, E.M. Beekman indicates that the hidden force refers to the overwhelming power of 'the other' which is destructive of the European subject.¹⁰ The 'other' then is the flip side of the whole package of values representing Cartesian thinking; it represents the insignificance of man against the backdrop of Nature in Asia, the non-linear relation between cause and effect, the unity of body and mind. But Beekman also takes care to point out that the perception figuring so prominently in *The Hidden Force* of falling stones, the moaning *pontianaks* (tree-dwelling souls), and the appearance of *hajis* and other phenomena are not only widely reported in colonial writings and thus rely on historical sources, but that these supernatural phenomena still form part of Indonesian consciousness today. In support, he cites president Sukarno's 1958 injunction which proclaimed that spiritual and mystical practices should not slip into black magic.¹¹ It is therefore important to see these phenomena not as symbols alone, but also as the essential elements of a culture. Just like the Gothic tale, in other words, non-Western culture features the intertwining of the perceptible and the imperceptible, the living and the dead, those present and those absent. Nevertheless, with the dramatic betel spit incident a text is written on Leonie's body by an unknown hand, causing to appear more specifically, to those knowledgeable in the post-colonial, the intersection of three invisible pillars of colonial policy: gender, class and race. The text on the body of Leonie is the ultimate and equivocal Gothic script figuring a constellation of returning instances of the repressed in such a way that relations in the narrative present are irrevocably changed. So the question is: how should we read the script on Leonie's body? What kind of text is it, who wrote it? Whose ghost is stirring in Van Oudijck's house and why?

To begin with, the dramatic incident is the only moment in the story where Leonie's cool, indifferent sensuality overtly loses out to her wild panic. Often when she and Theo met there had been bats, white *hajis*, falling stones and the cries of souls, *pontianaks*. On the evening prior to the bathing scene the wailing souls are stirring again and Leonie confesses to Theo that she is beginning to feel afraid and that their incestuous affair might have defied the spirits. Then when during her evening bath 'slimy spittle' (184) inexplicitly descends on her body, on 'her eyes, her breasts, her lower belly ... and the red dripped from her buttocks', she flees naked and screaming for help into the nocturnal garden. The only one she allows to approach her is her servant Oerip: 'In her utter madness, with her eyes staring wildly, she felt ashamed not of her nudity but of her defilement' (184). In order to understand what is actually happening here in this crucial scene, it is important to highlight a third storyline here. The affair of Leonie and Theo leads, at a relatively late point in the narrative, to Si-Oudijck, Van Oudijck's forgotten bastard son who lives on the *kampong*. As I mentioned above, Leonie's flirtation with Addy, the potential son-in-law, arouses at some point the jealousy of stepson Theo. He decides to go to search for Addy to settle the matter. But Addy is Leonie's male counterpart: sensual, beautiful, feminine, made to love and be loved. Addy remains completely indifferent to Theo's wrath and manages to win Theo over in a fraternal way. The two young men exchange confidences and Addy informs Theo about the existence of a half-brother, Si-Oudijck, on the *kampong*. (The prefix 'si' indicates son, the Dutch Indies version of the suffix 'son' as in Stevenson for example). This unknown son of his father was conceived in a relationship with a now deceased housekeeper that preceded the one with Theo's biological mother. When the two lovers of Leonie, stepson and son-in-law, look up the third Indo deep in the *kampong* where he lives in a ramshackle hut amid soured opium fumes, Theo experiences an identity constitutive kinship with this illiterate half-brother who lives in such miserable conditions. They are both sons of an indigenous mother. Both were sired by a European father who actually looks down on them. Van Oudijck, that is, shares with his contemporaries an increasingly less veiled dislike of the Indo. He does not want Doddy to marry the Indo young man Addy, preferring instead a thoroughbred European as son-in-law (197). And he considers his son Theo as lazy and unintelligent, refusing to help him climb the social

ladder. The manifest hatred of the abandoned illegitimate son with respect to the father now suddenly mobilizes the latent hatred Theo, equally quite unsuccessful socially, feels for a father who is perfect in all respects. The encounter between the two brothers therefore epitomizes the fates of both the impoverished-class and middle-class Indo communities.

Based on contemporary reports on poor relief, Meijer argues that the position of Indo children was marginal and without perspective.¹² They were at the fringe of Dutch Indies society. Because of their poor education and fluency in Dutch, Indo children barely qualified for a job with a Dutch company. Around 1900 their chances even diminished because of the sugar crisis, which caused a dramatic growth in unemployment rates among the Indo population, compounded by the arrival of Dutch young men who often had left their homeland not for the best of reasons, seeking refuge in the Indies. Indos came to be mocked for their ‘funny talk’ and saw how these newcomers appeared to land all the jobs. It is plausible therefore that the anonymous letters Van Oudijck receives are sent by this forgotten son on the *kampong*. The dark hut is strewn with papers and there is a man with the boy who is writing for him.

Of course this son might be after his father’s downfall for the obvious Oedipal reasons, but it is more likely that this socially underprivileged son is after his father’s money and a better life. When Van Oudijck has to face up to the existence of this son, he does indeed hand him that money later in the story without, however, acknowledging that he actually is his son. More disruptive for familial relations within the Van Oudijck family is the effect on Theo of this encounter with Van Oudijck’s interracial sexual history. This interracial son who fails to achieve social standing now for the first time experiences the Oedipal triumph of possessing his father’s wife: ‘And Theo hid his secret, hid his weapon deep down within himself’ (121). Having access to Leonie assures Theo that he is superior to both his father and his half-brother, although he has little use for this knowledge apart from cultivating the seeds of hatred to further fruition, causing in the end the implosion of the Van Oudijck family. Van Oudijck ends up a lifeless man, without office, sickly and abandoned by his wife and children. The position of the sexually active resident’s wife therefore plays a crucial part in the complex constellation of father and sons, colonizer and

colonized. As Pamela Pattynama concludes in her lucid post-colonial and feminist inspired analysis of the novel, the fact that Leonie neglects her role as guardian of the patriarchal and colonial family announces the demise of both organizational structures and reveals the intrinsic and geopolitically specific enmeshment of private and public, the personal and the political.¹³

Yet this all still does not quite explain why in a visionary novel like *The Hidden Force*, which treats the consciousness of the indigenous population with such respect and empathy, Leonie's body should be defiled with betel spit. She undermines colonial and patriarchal authority, and in this sense her body symbolizes guilt and decay, but that as such should not cause the *pontianaks* to be disturbed. According to popular belief, a *pontianak* is a demon alluding to women who died in childbirth. The term is a contraction of *perempuan beranak mati*, the woman who died in childbirth. This spirit is often disguised as a beautiful woman and announces its presence through the cries of children's souls.¹⁴ If we associate this particular meaning of the wailing souls with beautiful Leonie, it suddenly becomes clear which repressed is manifested here, whose ghost is seeking revenge among the living.

In the analysis of Anne McClintock as well as that of Ann Stoler, Western imperialism is based on three principles: the transmission of white, male power through control of colonized women; the emergence of a new global order of cultural knowledge; and the imperial command of commodity capital.¹⁵ Part of this contract is the complex position of the colonial woman who is, as McClintock puts it, no hapless onlooker of empire, but ambiguously complicit both as colonizer and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting.¹⁶ It is clear that Leonie has tried to manoeuvre away from that ambivalent position. It is also clear that she has used her colonial power to wrest herself from patriarchal laws by her consummation of sexual freedom. The *pontianak* unmistakably recalls the way in which colonial women have benefited from the oppression of indigenous women. The only voice systematically remaining unvoiced in the novel and unaddressed in its reception is that of the mothers of Indo sons. That is the voice which writes itself in and on Leonie's body.

In this perspective Leonie embodies the position of the colonial woman who, with her arrival, drove the indigenous wife off the colonial stage. If up to 1900 it was common practice for white men

to live with an indigenous woman, after the turn of the century this practice was exchanged for one of regulated ethnic segregation. The aversion against interethnic relations gained ground rapidly and the *nyai* disappeared from the colonial picture.¹⁷ Often they could only survive through prostitution (cf. Theo's mother leading a gambling den), or they just died an early death (as Si-Oudijck's mother). It is the *nyai*, the indigenous woman who was used colonially but who now has become disposable, who writes back in *The Hidden Force*. The *nyai* is the madwoman in the attic of Labuwangi. While the resident is embattled with the regent and slowly loses his grip on both colonial relations and his family, the *nyai* reminds white Leonie's body of an unpaid debt.

Leonie's emancipatory behaviour, her liberal morality and her subversion of colonial and patriarchal laws are achieved at the cost of silencing her indigenous sisters, just as in *Jane Eyre*, as Gayatri Spivak has shown us, the heroine emancipates herself at the expense of Bertha Mason.¹⁸ Unlike that novel, the title of *The Hidden Force* alludes to the non-Western underpinnings of Western culture. As with Spivak's inescapable vision of Bertha Mason's role in the *Bildung* of *Jane Eyre*, however, a post-colonial and complex feminist perspective is needed for a reading of the Gothic manuscript in *The Hidden Force*, in order to allow for colonial, Western and patriarchal taboos being challenged by a Gothic plot.

Notes

- 1 See Jodey Castricano, *Cryptomimesis* and David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*.
- 2 See Rosemarie Buikema and Elisabeth Wesseling, 'Contesting consensus culture: the case of Dutch Gothic'; and Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness*.
- 3 J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, p. 299; Hans Meijer, *In Indië geworteld*, p. 29. See also Gert Oostindie, *Postkoloniaal Nederland*.
- 4 Louis Couperus, *The Hidden Force*, p. 47. Subsequent page numbers are cited parenthetically in the text.
- 5 Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason*, p. 3.
- 6 See Victor Ido, *De Paupers*.
- 7 For the persistent stereotype of the Indo, see also Meijer, *In Indië geworteld*, p. 36.
- 8 See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality*.

- 9 See Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over her Dead Body* for a detailed analysis of this trope.
- 10 E.M. Beekman, Introduction to *The Hidden Force*, p. 31.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 12 See Meijer, *In Indië geworteld*.
- 13 Pamela Pattynama, 'Secrets and danger: interracial sexuality in Louis Couperus's *The Hidden Force* and Dutch colonial culture around 1900'.
- 14 For a discussion of the *pontianak*, see Marion Valent, 'Over De Stille Kracht van Louis Couperus'.
- 15 See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; and Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.
- 16 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 7.
- 17 See Pollmann, 'Bruidstraantjes: de koloniale roman'; and Locher-Scholten, 'Monogamous marriage and female citizenship'.
- 18 See Gayatri Spivak, 'Three women's texts and a critique of imperialism'.

References

- Beekman, E.M., 'Introduction', in *The Hidden Force* (London: Quartet Books, 1992).
- Bronfen, Elizabeth, *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).
- Buikema, Rosemarie and Elizabeth Wesseling, 'Contesting consensus culture: the case of Dutch Gothic', *Journal of European Studies*, 41:2 (2011), 123–43.
- Castricano, Jodey, *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press, 2001).
- Couperus, Louis, *The Hidden Force* (London: Quartet Books, 1992).
- Furnivall, J.S., *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939).
- Gouda, Frances, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies, 1900–1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995).
- Ido, Victor, *De Paupers: Roman uit de Indo-Europeesche Samenleving* (Amersfoort: Valkhoff & Co., 1915).
- Lloyd, Genevieve, *The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy* (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1993).
- Locher-Scholten, Elsbeth, 'Monogamous marriage and female citizenship in the Dutch East Indies 1898–1938', in M. Grever and F. Dieteren (eds), *Een vaderland voor vrouwen. A Fatherland for Women: The*

- 1898 'Nationale tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid' in *Retrospect* (Amsterdam: IISG/VVG, 2000).
- McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).
- Meijer, Hans, *In Indië geworteld. De 20ste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Uitgave Bert Bakker, 2004).
- Oostindie, Gert, *Postkoloniaal Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Prometheus, 2010).
- Pattynama, Pamela, 'Secrets and danger: interracial sexuality in Louis Couperus's *The Hidden Force* and Dutch colonial culture around 1900', in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds), *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville, VA and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998).
- Pollmann, Tessel, 'Bruidstraantjes: de koloniale roman, de njai en de apartheid', in Jeske Reijs et al. (eds), *Vrouwen in de Nederlandse Kolonien, Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis*, 1986), pp. 98–126.
- Punter, David, *The Literature of Terror*, Vol. II: *The Modern Gothic* (Harlow: Pearson ELT, 1996).
- Smith, Andrew and William Hughes (eds), *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).
- Spivak, Gayatri, 'Three women's texts and a critique of imperialism', *Critical Inquiry*, 12:1 (1985), 243–62.
- Stoler, Ann Laura, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).
- Valent, Marion, 'Over de stille kracht van Louis Couperus', *Literatuur*, 1 (1984), 203–9.
- Williams, Anne, *Art of Darkness* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).