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## The Sun Also Sets: British Authors and the Death of the Empire

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# THE SUN ALSO SETS: BRITISH AUTHORS AND THE DEATH OF THE EMPIRE

by

BRIAN BUTLER

(Under the Direction of Joe Pellegrino)

## ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the decline of the British Empire through the perspectives of prominent British authors, beginning with Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, which establishes the height of the British Empire. Thereafter, the Empire's decline is incisively chronicled through the various catalysts that contributed to the overall demise of the Empire: E.M Forster illustrates the impact of the introduction of British women into India in *A Passage to India*; George Orwell demonstrates the significance of burgeoning native dissent and the empowerment of the compradore class in Burma in *Burmese Days*; Anthony Burgess offers an exhaustive fictional meditation of the zenith of native resistance in Malaysia in *The Long Day Wanes*; and finally, Paul Scott provides insight into the death of the Empire where the inversion of British and native authority in liberated India has occurred in *Staying On*.

INDEX WORDS: Thesis, College of Graduate Studies, Brian Butler, Graduate degree, Georgia Southern University, British Empire, Imperialism

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by

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION: THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

“In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten;  
in the human kingdom, define or be defined.”

*The Second Sin*, Thomas Szasz

In 1858, the British Empire formally took possession of India through its official system of state control known as the Raj. This powerful organization was administered by British citizens, almost exclusively white males, who supervised natives in a monumental effort to maintain control of India and other countries conquered over a century of military conquest and imperial expansion. At stake were vast natural resources and reserves of labor that were exploited by the British in an effort to bolster the royal coffers and ensure global hegemony. While some natives benefitted from this process, the vast majority were victims robbed of their country's inherent wealth. Despite their efficiency, British dominion underwent both ascendancy and decline, just as all preceding empires. And through the literature of Britain's novelists, we have insight into what life under the Raj was like for both natives and Englishmen from its height, through its gradual dissolution, to its eventual demise. Over the course of this thesis I will argue that British supremacy was predicated upon a volatile mixture of dichotomous beliefs held by both natives and Englishmen alike, in India as well as Britain's other colonies in South Asia, specifically Burma and Malaysia. From the beginning, the natives were complicit in their own subjugation, essentially empowering their oppressors who concomitantly believed they were in equal measure civilizing the natives while exploiting them. The natives in turn embraced the

civilizing ethos of the British, accepting their own inferiority and espousing the superiority of their oppressors whose quintessential distinction was their white skin. Brown skin, in turn, ensured subservience and second-class status. While the oppressive nature of this system was obviously a burden for the natives, it was also equally onerous for those it benefitted most, for whites, or British, also had to adhere to the strictures of moral and ethical behavior foisted upon them by the designation of *pukka sahib*, which prescribed accepted modes of behavior for those who bore the title that were strictly enforced through peer pressure by their fellow Englishmen and the inherent need to project solidarity amongst the colonizers to the colonized. To act in a manner unbecoming a sahib was tantamount to treasonous behavior in the eyes of the British who implored their servants to toe the line and create a unified front against native sedition – any fracturing of the group would inevitably lead, at least within the minds of the British, to native insurrection. Failure to adhere to the code of conduct was the ultimate fear of many, as they undoubtedly feared the consequences of their failure; conversely, adherence to the code was equally deplorable to others, as they recognized how it morally compromised them. For all, it was a burden.

The ebb and flow of British supremacy and native subordination waxed and waned in equal measure for over a century of the Raj's rule. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* establishes the height of the British Empire, when the natives were most subservient and supportive of the Raj. Thereafter, its decline is incisively chronicled by British novelists who were as equally intrigued by colonialism as Kipling, albeit their novels focus on the decline of the Empire and its various major catalysts: E.M Forster illustrates the impact of the introduction of British women into India in *A Passage to India*; George Orwell demonstrates the significance of burgeoning native dissent and the empowerment of the compradore class in Burma in *Burmese Days*; Anthony



Burgess offers an exhaustive fictional meditation of the zenith of native resistance in Malaysia in *The Long Day Wanes*; and finally, Paul Scott provides insight into the death of the Empire where the inversion of British and native authority in liberated India has occurred in *Staying On*. With this last novel, we can see the bitter end of the Empire in what we expect to be the buttress of empiric design for generations, India.

Many writers have addressed the impact of British imperialism on the world; however, Rudyard Kipling was the most sympathetic author to the cause of British imperialism. Many of his works illustrate this sympathy, especially the poem “The White Man’s Burden” and his myriad short stories about imperial occupation, such as “The Man Who Would Be King.” With *Kim* his first-hand experience in India comes through because he, unlike any author I will discuss, understood the plight of both the natives and the British. This is apparent in his characterization of Kim, who is capable of succeeding in both native and British environs. Through Kim, we have a uniquely liminal character who must choose between his allegiances to both native and British causes. His eventual co-option by the Raj is indicative of the powerful process of British imperial conquest.

*Kim* is a *bildungsroman* that traces the life of Kimball O’Hara, a young Irish boy who is orphaned on the streets of Lahore and left to make his own way in the world. Despite the uncertainty of Kim’s future, of which we are apprised of at the very outset of the novel, Kim does quite well for himself, namely because he manages to navigate both sides of the river – native and British – convincingly and effectively. This unique talent positions Kim to explore the impact of imperialism in India on both natives and colonizers. Additionally, *Kim* is “firmly located ... within high colonialism and imperialism in the mid to late-Victorian period” (Mohanram 261) and it “is considered a definitive work of fiction about the British Empire,

because it gives imaginative form to quintessential British ideas about India,” and, I would argue, other British colonies as a whole (Joergensen 14). Finally, *Kim* provides insight into the Raj and its machinations with and against both British and natives through the power of its ideals, particularly British superiority, social stratification, and the delineation of space for individuals based on ethnicity and position. The success of the system hinged upon its efficacy in convincing the natives of its moral supremacy.

The British would have been utterly incapable of administering their vast empire had it not been for the complicity of the native inhabitants of the territories in which the British managed to plant the Union Jack. The British employed a time-tested strategy of dividing and conquering the natives in an effort to win over those whose ideals were much like their own. Those they managed to co-opt created a class of subalterns, or “those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes,” which for the purposes of this paper, translates to those Indians who were subservient to the British ruling class and complicit in the subjugation of their fellow countrymen (Ashcroft 215). India was administered by the Raj, a complex group of British officials and subalterns, comprised of some 2,000 British administrators, 20,000 Indian clerks and government employees, and some 40,000 Indian soldiers in a ratio that breaks down to 1:10:20, clearly demonstrating the culpability of the Indian populace in its own subservience to the British Crown (Kling 297-8). *Kim* covers this period, spanning the “1880s and 1890s, at the apex of the British Indian Empire” (Kling 297). Central to the British colonizer’s mindset was the notion that the native Indians were incapable of governing themselves, and that they were, in essence, children who would remain lost in the world without the benefit of their British parents to educate them and keep them in line in order to civilize them:

As a colony India was governed by an authoritarian government. British leaders of the latter nineteenth century rationalized the authoritarian system by arguing that Indians were too backward to govern themselves, that they were better off being governed by men who, like Plato's "guardians," were properly educated and morally suited to provide the best and most efficient government for the poor and ignorant masses. (Kling 298)

Such was the logic of the British administrators: save the Indians from themselves – a veritable self-fulfilling prophecy that could be brought to fruition at will by the British because they set the conditions of the country. In this position of superiority, the British managed to convince many natives of the innate moral and racial superiority of the British by a calculated effort that is at once incredibly efficient, but extremely tenuous, for it required native assent and cooperation as well as solidarity and discipline amongst the British.

The British were ever conscious of the tenuousness of their rule, which resulted in a pervasive fear of the natives uniting and rebelling against them – a common theme in each of the novels covered in this thesis. Despite the twenty years that elapsed since the Revolt of 1857 when *Kim* begins, the ordeal was still fresh in the minds of the British officials and the colonized, as evidenced through a subaltern in conversation with Kim and the lama aboard the train en route to northern India. The subaltern refers ominously to the revolt as "the Black Year," an obvious reference to the Black Hole of Calcutta in which over a hundred British prisoners died from suffocation and trampling in the confined quarters of a prison cell as a result of another native uprising in 1756 – both of these events were instrumental in inculcating the British with fear of rebellion (Kipling 47). He describes the mutiny as a "madness" that "ate into all the Army" causing them to turn "against their officers" (47). Mohanram observes that this

casual classification of the mutiny as “madness” is a convenient way to categorize the response to the numerous catalysts for the mutiny:

Thus, the Sepoy Mutiny [Revolt of 1857] and the causes that led to it – the racist policies of the East India Company’s armies, the onset of British colonialism, the fear of losing one’s religion, the relentless modernisation since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the vast disparity in income between the European officers and the native soldiers – get reduced to the signifier “madness” that made the rebellious soldiers behave illogically. (262)

The sepoy continues by relating the consequences of this transgression: “That was the first evil, but not past remedy if they had then held their hands. But they chose to kill the Sahibs’ wives and children. Then came the Sahibs from over the sea and called them to most strict account” (47). Not surprisingly, the subaltern does not empathize with or demonstrate any fealty for his countrymen. Instead, he relates that he fought in numerous battles against the rebels in an effort to squash the rebellion and to continue his subservience to the British, all for “recompense” (48). And so in this short retelling of one of the greatest tragedies in British-occupied Indian history (coupled with the allusion to another equally tragic event), we learn of the carrot and stick method employed by the British and how they enticed individuals into the military and administrative services with the promises of advancement and recognition above their peers who refrained from pledging fealty to the Empire, for it is through this co-option and alliance that the natives were inculcated with the notion of British superiority.

In reward for the fealty pledged to them, the British in turn engendered their own traits into those who proved most loyal, in effect, transposing western ideals to those Indians. The most notable example of this transference is embodied in the character of the Bengali Babu,

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee (Hurree Babu). Hurree Babu is obsessed with all facets of British intellectualism and academia, personifying “the 645 Indians who had earned an M.A. from Calcutta University in 1888” (Kling 299). Certainly, as a man with a British education, he would have enjoyed privileges beyond those of most Indians, and indeed the British saw “the emergence of ‘brown Englishmen’ as proof of the success of their civilizing mission,” but “To the British in India the Bengalis might be English educated, but they were still racially inferior and did not have the moral fiber, manliness, or common sense to warrant more than subordinate administrative appointments” (Kling 300). Hurree Babu fails to recognize that his brown skin will forever preclude him from being accepted by the British. Despite his best efforts to assimilate into British culture, his attempts are nothing more than mimicry of the colonizer, which is the adoption of “the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values” by the colonized that never exactly captures the essence of the colonizer. This makes mimicry, by its very nature, akin to mockery, as the native can, at best, only produce a “blurred copy” of the colonizer (Ashcroft 139). This proves to be a two-edged sword for the colonizer, for he achieves his aim of inculcating within the colonized his own cultural values, but he can never be quite sure if the native is genuine in his mimicry.

Kipling uses the tragedy of mimicry to generate pathos for Hurree Babu, because his personal identity is founded upon British ideals and a British education, not his native heritage. And despite his best efforts to become British, his ethnicity precludes that possibility. This injustice is highlighted when Hurree Babu is paired with Kim, for Kim rises higher than he with far less education, experience, and knowledge despite Hurree Babu’s advanced position, for he is Kim’s supervisor, or “handler,” in the parlance of espionage. Hurree Babu is Kim’s foil, the sole character in the novel designed in juxtaposition to Kim to demonstrate the arresting effects of

race on the individual in British India. In Hurree Babu, we can see that mimicry can benefit the native only so much, for the Raj's delineation of space forever relegates him beneath Englishmen, even the young Kim. However, for Kim the practice of mimicry gains him access to any environ in India, both native and British, while Hurree Babu only enjoys access to the native spaces, which is his true value to the British. Kim is also prized for this ability, but more importantly for his white skin, the one thing Hurree Babu does not possess.

Despite Kim's meager beginnings as "a poor white of the very poorest" and as an orphan living on the streets of Lahore, Kim is destined for greatness (3). Kim, whose full name is Kimball O'Hara, was the son of an Irishman of low character who died in abject poverty and drunkenness while in service as a British soldier. Even considering the lowliness of his station as a result of his birthright – after all, the Irish were only one step above the Indians in the eyes of the British – Kim is still a white child, and therefore worthy of preference over his native counterparts, a fact that is indicated repeatedly in the text, highlighting the dynamics of social stratification inherent in life under the Raj. This, coupled with his ability to "lie like an Oriental," – an observation illustrative of the casual racism that was both a product of and justification for the Raj – makes him an invaluable asset to the British (23). He can mimic the dress and speech of any native, enabling him to gain the trust of any group he comes across; he can lie like the natives, making him capable of duping those whose trust he has secured into revealing the secrets that they would keep from a white man; and his white skin connotes fidelity to those who share his race. This, ultimately, is the defining distinction between them, and the most important lesson of the text: white skin equals the possibility of sahibdom. In sum, Kim is a racial enigma born to play the Great Game, "a covert attempt starting in 1865 to map and claim as much of India's uncharted northern region as quickly as possible by training native Indians [to work] in

competition with similarly trained Russian cartographers moving in from the North” (Hooper 107). But before he can spy for the British, Kim must receive a proper British education, just as his supervisor Hurree Babu has done.

From the outset of the novel, Kim’s education is presented as the central topic of the text in that while he clearly lacks a formal education, he has survived a veritable crash course in native education on the streets of Lahore, for he has learned the art of mimicry and can don any native identity he pleases to suit whatever situation. Essentially, he has mastered what cannot be taught in any schoolhouse, least of all in a British school: the art of blending in and surviving. Kipling establishes the conflict within Kim that will carry the reader through the novel, ultimately determining the course of events throughout the text:

By making Kim the orphan son of an Irish soldier, brought up as an Indian on the streets of Lahore and speaking Urdu rather than English as his first language, Kipling is presenting his readers with a hero who is more “native” than British and who has many reasons to regard the Anglo-Indian world with suspicious resentment. (Reid 16)

Whereas Hurree Babu embraces the world of the British, Kim shuns it, but, like Hurree, he must be indoctrinated in British culture before he will be entrusted with the task of conducting espionage. And despite his suspicions of the Anglo-Indian world around him, Kim’s destiny is dictated by the one trait he cannot elude, his white skin: “when Kim is discovered to be white, he is taught to behave like a white, thus underscoring race as a construction and a miming” (Mohanram 260). This inherent need to become white, to adhere to this construction, quickly becomes the impetus for all of Kim’s subsequent actions in the novel: “Indeed, the novel as it stands can be read as the moral education of a true sahib” (Reid 15). But how does an Irish

orphan, brought up on the rough streets of Lahore, whose first language is Urdu, not English, learn how to be white, to be a sahib?

St. Xavier's school proves to be the site of Kim's indoctrination in British culture and what it means to be a sahib, and not surprisingly, it is Hurree Babu, the faithful subaltern, who escorts him there. What is surprising about this entire enterprise is who foots the bill for the expense of Kim's education. Interestingly, it is the poor lama who manages to pay for Kim's education at St. Xavier's. Of course this serves as a plot device that will ensure the interaction of the lama and Kim throughout the remainder of the story, which the arc of the novel depends upon, but it also illustrates the complicity of the natives in their own subservience to the British. Granted, the lama is from Tibet and not India, but the lama holds most sacred what the Indians also revere: the Ganges and the country itself. He, more than anyone in the text, should be least complicit in the further subjugation of the subcontinent, but he, along with Hurree Babu and Mahub Ali, prove to be the most instrumental in Kim's transformation into *pukka* sahib.

While at St. Xavier's, Kim maintains his liminal status by managing to complete the requisite steps in English education while pining to get shut of the school and back on the road with the lama. On the surface, these two endeavors are at odds with one another, but in reality they serve as the impetus for the events that move the novel forward. In essence, they are two disparate types of education, both of which give Kim the tools to become a sahib as well as a spectacularly efficient spy. It is at St. Xavier's that Kim learns of his ultimate goal, which is the objective of his British education: to become a *pukka* sahib, "an imperial mediation of the domestic ideal of the gentleman, where the ethno-national or the racial/tribal code takes precedence over the personal-ethical code" (Gopinath 205).



The idea of being *pukka* sahib simply connotes that one is the genuine article, or of appropriate degree to be considered so by peers (the British), a true believer in the Empire: the peak achievement for any Anglo-Indian in service of the Raj. This is no small thing, because if Kim achieves the status of *pukka* sahib – and we can never know this, given the novel’s ending – it will effectively negate his previous relationships with the lama and India as a whole by eliminating the liminality of his character, engendering him with a new worldview of a white man:

Being a White Man was ... an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned position towards both the white and the non-white worlds. It meant – in the colonies – speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures. It was a form of authority before which nonwhites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend. In the institutional forms it took (colonial governments, consular corps, commercial establishments) it was an agency for the expression, diffusion, and implementation of policy towards the world, and within this agency, although a certain personal latitude was allowed, the impersonal communal idea of being a White Man ruled. Being a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought. (Said 227)

Being white and a sahib concomitantly couples unbridled freedom to single-minded social restrictions, necessitating that those who fall under this categorization are required to adhere to the code of the *pukka* sahib and its attendant world-view. Kim is well on his way to becoming a sahib, which necessitates that he must abandon much of what he has come to embrace in the

world. Mahbub Ali, Hurree Babu, Colonel Creighton, and even the lama repeatedly remind him that he is a sahib, and nothing he can do will prevent the eventualities of this status. Despite the inevitability of Kim becoming a *pukka* sahib, Kipling manages to stave off this outcome by compounding Kim's liminality through the competing interests of St. Xavier's and the road to become a white man and to live as a native, respectively:

In a novel that continually upsets readers' expectations about the hero's identity, it is no wonder that as one part of the narrative (Kim's growing involvement in the Game) threatens to reduce the protagonist to a *pukka* sahib, other parts function to stall the process. The youth's membership in the *Sat Bhai* represents one possible hedge against racial exclusivity; the boy's role as *chela* to the Buddhist Teshoo Lama constitutes another. (McBratney 118-119)

Kim's membership in the *Sat Bhai*, an Indian Free Masonry subset, is a consequence of the Masonic documents he inherited from his Irish father. The interests of Masonry, in comparison with his role as *chela*, or disciple to the lama, complicates Kim's destiny, as these choices offer wholly disparate fates for him. Tellingly, only the decision to be *chela* to the lama is his own; membership in the *Sat Bhai* is decided for him. In any case he must choose between the two, and this decision engenders tension in the novel through the overarching question that pervades the text: Will Kim become a white man? And the simple answer to this question is yes. For what other fate could happen to a young boy subject to the compromising strictures of his race and his birthright that is constantly ingrained and reinforced in him by his schooling, society, and even his mentors, who, let us not forget, are also natives?

And while the instruction of St. Xavier's, along with its reinforcement by his native companions, proves overwhelming, by far the most critical portion of Kim's education occurs in

his finishing school, the house of Lurgan Sahib. Here he learns the tradecraft of espionage that cements and entwines his past experience on the streets of Lahore with his education at St. Xavier's. And tellingly, his training with Lurgan Sahib is bookended by stints in St. Xavier's: together they form the basis of his education and molding to become a successful spy and a sahib loyal to the Crown. Kim learns all of the requisite skills to conduct espionage in India, the lessons that will enable him to survive and to collect intelligence through precise recall and disguise:

In Lurgan's house, which the proprietor characterizes as a different sort of *madrissah* (school), Kim perfects disciplines of mind and body by applying himself once again, but more exactly this time, to the games of his childhood at Lahore: the ever-watchful boy plays jewel-oriented games that teach him to see and remember more precisely; he rediscover[s] the pleasures of shape-shifting, reproducing a wide variety of cultural "identities" with ever greater exactitude. (Randall 122-3)

Lurgan manages to couple Kim's previous life experience on the streets of Lahore with the education he has received from St. Xavier's, equipping him with formidable combination of talents that enable him to blend into any environment and to collect intelligence clandestinely:

Lurgan's instruction puts finishing touches on the St. Xavier's education, but more importantly, it teaches the boy to make disciplined use of his earlier self; it serves to revive, reshape, and redirect the subjectivity that existed before the advent of lawful constraints. (Randall 123)

These "lawful constraints" conjointly provide him with the guidance to save his life in the field as well as ensure his fidelity to the Empire, bringing him ever nearer to becoming a *pukka* sahib.

Essentially, he must become a sahib to survive, for all of his talents and experience will be put to the supreme test as a player in the Great Game, the primary concern of the Raj, and therefore Kim's.

The first intimation of the larger stakes afoot in *Kim* appear in chapter one, where Kim meets Mahbub Ali, an Afghani who is employed by the British Raj. Like the lama, Mahbub Ali is another foreigner who is complicit in the co-option of Kim and instrumental in his transformation into a sahib. As a subaltern, he wields the same limited powers held by Hurree Babu. Kim's relationship with him further illustrates the imbalance of power between faithful natives and white men, for he, like Hurree Babu, is far superior in experience, cunning, and guile than Kim, but he must also play his part in coercing Kim. Despite Mahbub Ali's obvious importance to the Great Game, he is merely one of "the players [who] watch India" and these players "themselves are watched by the leader of the Intelligence Service, Colonel Creighton" (Joergensen 18). The Crown would never have entrusted to a non-white such as Mahbub Ali something as important as the Great Game, for the stakes were simply too high, because whoever eventually controlled those northern regions would inherit the economic assets of those areas: the primary goal of all colonial endeavors. And just as the stakes are high for the Empire, so are they for Kim, as Mahbub Ali relates: "When he comes to the Great Game he must go alone – alone, and at peril of his head. *Then*, if he spits, or sneezes, or sits down other than as the people do whom he watches, he may be slain" (110). With this quotation, we begin to understand the gravity of the situation in which these men have thrust Kim.

Despite the impromptu nature of his final mission, for Kim learns of it at the last minute through Hurree Babu while accompanying the lama on the road north, he not only accepts his fate, but also embraces it along with all the trappings that accompany it. Gone are the days of his

polite subservience to his elders, regardless of their race. Having embraced his whiteness and sahib status, Kim displays his superiority over his Indian peers, as evidenced in his exchanges with Hurree Babu. We recall that it was their race, or skin color, that determined both Hurree Babu's and Kim's identities and fates in British-ruled India. Mahbub Ali's constant reminding of Kim that he is a sahib has taken hold. Now Hurree Babu addresses Kim as "Mister O'Hara," and in their first encounter Kim reminds Hurree Babu that he is a sahib, to which Hurree Babu responds "You are subordinate to me departmentally at present" (185). This does not sit well with Kim – nor would it with any sahib – and he corrects Hurree Babu in the manner of a sahib: "I am not a child. Talk Hindi and let us get to the yolk of the egg. Thou art here – speaking not one word of truth in ten. Why art thou here? Give a straight answer" (185). With this upbraiding, Hurree Babu quickly assumes the role of subordinate, despite his vast field experience and superior rank, which would make anyone else the default leader in a situation of this magnitude, for the Great Game is a zero-sum game that only ends "When everyone is dead" and "Not before" (185). Considering this, one would think that the senior man (Hurree Babu) would be in charge, but this is not the case. The man, or child in this case, with white skin is calling the shots. Luckily for Kim and Hurree Babu they manage to best the Russians, and with the success of this mission, Kim's course has been charted. He is on his way to becoming a *pukka* sahib.

In *Kim*, Kipling sets before us an enigma in the form of the protagonist Kim that is difficult at best to judge without some understanding of the British Empire and its policies in India. We follow the maturation of an orphan boy from the streets of Lahore to young adulthood, with unfettered access to the whole of India as a spy for the Crown. Along the way, we discover, as Kim discovers, that he is white, and what significance his skin color entails in a country ruled by a white minority with power over a myriad of ethnically and religiously diverse peoples. His

personal identity is challenged repeatedly by the economic and political exigencies of the Empire until it is reshaped into an altogether new identity: he transitions from a lowly white orphan to a sahib. Although his English education is largely responsible for this change in state, it is equally important to remember that the very men who will eventually be subservient to him (Mahbub Ali and Hurree Babu) are most instrumental in inculcating within him the traits of his new identity. They constantly remind him that he is a sahib and that he must behave as a sahib. Kim has to conform to the strictures of his skin color. Such is the cosmic weight of the realities of being white in British-ruled India. And so we witness a manifestation of the popular British sentiment about its Empire, that the Indians were wayward children in need of the parentage of the British, for Kim, the child, has become a parent to the Indians who were instrumental in his maturation. All of this amounts to nothing more than the end result of the recognition of the superiority of Kim's white skin. Therefore, I conclude that the most important signifier of British identity was skin color. To be white was to be superior to the native, but also subservient to the larger interests of other whites, which necessitates that Kim must toe the line of the whites who have wrested him away from his native India. The novel ends with the intimation that Kim's future and very character will continue to be defined along this racial line, and as it waxes and wanes, so shall his identity.

*Kim* is a perfect model of the literary exploration of the competing interests of adherence to racial constructs of decorum and his contrary desire to empathize with the Other. The British colonization of vastly disparate worlds resulted in the intermingling of white administrators whose identity was predicated on their whiteness with the colonized whose identities were established by their non-whiteness. As a protagonist, Kim embodies the competing desires of both the colonizer and the colonized. Perhaps Kim would have been content to continue living

liminally between both worlds, but ultimately his white skin necessitated that he make a choice, which seems contrary to his nature. The ambiguousness of the novel's ending does not provide us with a clear indication of what his decision will be, but I contend that he will embrace his whiteness, since this is clearly what his peers and superiors want for him. Therefore, I find that skin color is the determining factor in the formation of British identity in countries colonized by the British, for Kim, who is not British but Irish, is embraced by the administration because he is white. This white skin, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, carries a weight that is as equally oppressive for those who possess it. For the Raj is the final convening authority on who will enjoy the privileges of superiority and who will suffer the degradations of inferiority. It accomplishes this by defining the prerequisites for success under its control. These characteristics limit and delineate space for individuals. Although preference was given to those who were British and white, those individuals also had to live within the confines of their delineated space just as the natives did, resulting in rules of decorum that governed the lives of both Englishmen and natives, forever driving a wedge between them, negating all hope of empathy and solidarity, as we shall see in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*.

## CHAPTER 2

## TOEING THE LINE

In Kipling's *Kim*, the novel's namesake transitions from street orphan to *pukka* sahib, a natural consequence of being white under the Raj. Kim embraces his new white identity because he must: both the British and the natives demand it of him – in fact, the natives prove most instrumental in this process, establishing their own culpability in the ascension of British sovereignty in India. This is the ideal for the British, for it ensured their hegemony over India and the greater Empire as a whole without having to resort to military action and overt oppression; however, this was not to last forever, for the natives quickly became aware that the British civilizing mission was secondary to the exploitation of nature resources and native labor.

In E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, we can see the beginnings of native unrest and vexation with the colonial enterprise. Granted, by the time of Forster's masterpiece, Indians had endured some forty years of British hegemony since Kipling's *Kim* and were beginning to become dissatisfied with British rule; however, it was the introduction of British women into Indian society that proved to be a catalyst for native revolt, beginning in India and taking hold in the other colonies of the Empire. But as established in the introduction, what affects the colonized also affects the colonizer, and the arrival of Englishwomen necessitated fundamental shifts in English and Indian male behavior in India, particularly with regard to relationships between Indian and British men. And just as this development affected males, it also affected women, negating previous relations between British men and Indian women as well as between British women and Indian males, foisting upon the country a social code that was destined to plague personal relationships and the *status quo*.



*A Passage to India* was published twenty-three years after *Kim*, following a long “period of gestation” spanning from “Forster’s first visit to India in 1912 and his second in 1921” in “a timespan that includes World War I, the repressive measures of the Rowlatt Acts, the upsurge of nationalist feeling, the civil disobedience movement, the rise of Gandhi, the First Government of India Act, and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre” (Gopinath 206). Certainly, Forster’s India had undergone many changes since Kipling had lived there and completed *Kim*. Gopinath observes that although “the British empire was at its largest and most expansive in the 1920s and ‘30s, the same period was also the beginning of the end of imperial authority” heralding “the gaining momentum of the Indian independence movement” (202). Whereas Kipling is sympathetic to the cause of British Imperialism, Forster proves to be one of its staunchest critics, laying a foundation for novelists such as Orwell, Burgess, and Scott to erect their own criticisms of England’s imperial endeavors. Despite falling on opposite sides of the divide over their motherland’s imperialism, both Forster and Kipling are cognizant of the cultural difficulties of self-identification within the Empire, due to the liminal nature inherent in service to the Crown in India. British characters are forced to adhere to the strictures of their class and race, while concurrently attempting to understand the natives who are socially beneath them:

The problem of culture within *A Passage to India* is, then, fundamentally one of misrecognition: the recognition of oneself in the field of the Other is always shown to be a misrecognition, in which some essential feature, the very thing that defines the truth of one’s being, is withheld or concealed. Yet, it is from this very sense of distortion that one is born as English or Indian. (Christensen 162-3)

The same failings of misrecognition are also present in *Kim*, for it is Kim’s whiteness that governs his identity, which necessitates his loyalty to the Crown, for he is compelled by both the

colonizers and the colonized to assume the mantle of a white man in colonial India: it is what is expected of him. And like Kim, the British characters of *A Passage to India* must also make a decision between their colonial responsibilities and their humanity.

Whereas *Kim* is practically devoid of women characters, *A Passage to India* is complicated by the introduction of British women into the already established and tumultuous class system. This class system is largely based on the inherent delineations of space necessitated by the imbalance of power created by the Raj, which requires subservience from the natives and dominance by the British, as evidenced in *Kim*. The complication of the introduction of British women into Indian society flows naturally from the colonizers assigning them a niche between the native Indians and British male rulers, further muddling an already immensely tenuous setup. British men not only had to contend with their waning control over the indigenous peoples, but also with the formidable task of protecting and entertaining their women now accompanying them on assignment. Additionally, previous relations between British men and Indian women had created a class of half-castes, or children of mixed race, that further complicated the class system, for these individuals were tentatively accepted by the natives and wholly shunned by the British largely because they were a reminder to British women of the deplorable conduct of their men in their absence.

Such a setup is ripe for misunderstanding and violence. In America, following the end of the Civil War in the Reconstruction South, the press fanned the flames of racial fear and hatred in whites with headlines of black males raping white women, which were largely fabricated for nothing more than inciting fear and discord. But this was not a fear unique to the American South, because it was also present in India: "*A Passage to India* holds up for public scrutiny the racialization of colonial relations by generating its narrative desire through the indeterminate

status of a rape” (Sharpe 118). Certainly, racially inspired thinking was part and parcel of the overwhelming majority of British colonialists long before the introduction of British women, but this persistent fear of sexual advancement by Indians exacerbated the consequences of this thinking. And so the conflict of the novel stems from the supposed rape of Adela Quersted by Dr. Aziz in the Marabar Caves, establishing “an opposition between the English woman and Indian man,” placing British men in the middle (Sharpe 118). Coupling this with cultural misrecognition and innate racism, the British system of rule chronicled in the novel creates an inflexible colonial government that will not suffer any indications of subversion or sexual impropriety:

If one decides, in keeping with its anti-imperialist theme, that the crime lies in a system capable of reducing an Indian man to his pathological lust for white women, then even the slightest hint of an actual rape cannot be entertained. Conversely, a defense of Adela’s accusation involves condemning the Indian patriarchy and Aziz’s objectification of women as sex objects. The ambiguity surrounding the alleged rape thus forces the critic to defend either the native man or the white woman against his/her opponent. (Sharpe 118-9)

Thus we have a group of individuals, both English and Indian, who are at the mercy of the ingrained prejudices of the system that governs their societal roles and behaviors, a system that “distorts human relations” and determines “possibilities for friendship” by focusing on the “individual members of British institutions – and more particularly wives” (Sainsbury 60). This creates a situation in which “Friendship between Indian and English men is impossible mostly because Englishwomen prevent it” (Sainsbury 61). As Ashis Nandy observes, the introduction of British women into Indian society (among other geopolitical decisions) not only stymied

British/Indian relations and integration, but also degraded and ruined what was once a relatively peaceful (but always skewed) *status quo*:

The British conquest of India during its first phase showed all the signs of being similarly integrated into Indian society. What probably stopped the integration was mainly the digging of the Suez Canal, which allowed the British to have stronger links with their cultural base than they previously had, and the entry into the Indian scene of British women, which, combined with the Indian castes system and the cultural self-confidence of large parts of Indian society, ensured endogamy. (11)

Although British men had been marrying and having children with Indian women prior to the introduction of Englishwomen into colonial India, the very idea of Indian men coupling with British women was anathema to British men as a whole, as were previous relationships between British men and Indian women to Englishwomen in particular. In short, the potential for exogamy was extirpated upon the arrival of Englishwomen, thereby ensuring endogamy.

Whether Englishwomen found the relations between Indian women and British men threatening or outrageous is immaterial. More significant was the import of their induction into the Indian colonial enterprise: British women stood as both moral and sexual impediments for Indian and British men.

In the very beginning of *A Passage to India*, the role of British women in Indian society is at question and a source of discontent, particularly for native Indians. The novel begins with a group of Indian men smoking a hookah at a dinner party. Dr. Aziz arrives just as they are beginning their discussion of the relationships between Indian and British men, where the central question of the novel is posed: “whether or not it is possible to be friends with an Englishman”

(Forster 6-7). Although their responses conflict, the men around the water pipe agree that they could be friends with an Englishman in England, but not in India, because shortly after arriving in country the sensibilities of British men change, making friendship an impossibility. They transition from discussing Englishmen to Englishwomen, and the tenor of the conversation plummets just as quickly. Aziz eventually agrees with the other members of the party, that “all Englishwomen are haughty and venal,” but this conclusion is quickly undercut when he meets Mrs. Moore in the mosque following the dinner (9). In this fateful scene, there occurs the only instance of pure reciprocated human understanding in the entire novel that is not plagued by racism or adherence to social mores. Shortly into their encounter, Aziz judges that Mrs. Moore must be “newly arrived in India” solely on the basis of how she addresses him (18). Since there is nothing genteel about Mrs. Moore’s *tête-à-tête* with Aziz, ostensibly the implication is twofold: Mrs. Moore does not understand the social dynamics governing relations between British women and Indian men; and, once she apprehends the significance of their relative positions in the social stratification, she will no longer address Aziz in the same polite fashion. Indeed, this initial encounter is the high point of Mrs. Moore’s (who arguably is the most astute feminine character with regard to her intuitive apprehension of the true nature of English/Indian relations in the novel) social interactions with Indians, because hereafter she becomes increasingly disillusioned with the entire colonial endeavor, ultimately electing to return to England when her presence and voice are needed most in Chandrapore.

This fateful encounter between Aziz and Mrs. Moore establishes the high point of relations between Indian men and British women in the novel; Aziz’s encounter with Adela in the caves is the low-point and the catalyst for the novel’s conflict.

Before Aziz meets Adela, Forster focuses the narrative on Aziz's relationship with Cyril Fielding, the local principal of Government College. Their relationship has been the fodder of much recent criticism, especially in light of Forster's own sexuality, as it has been construed as either homoerotic or homosocial: "More recently, critics have argued that the novel attempts to breach colonial differences through the transformation of the homosocial terrain of empire by a racially transgressive homorerotic desire" (Gopinath 206). Gopinath contends that the introduction of British women into this homosocial mixture precludes the ability of Indian and British men to form bonds that would transcend the otherwise debilitating aspects of the imbalanced colonizer/colonized relationship:

In this homosocial space where Indian and English women become the counters through which imperial power is consolidated (and hence also bear the burden for the impossibility of colonial camaraderie between Englishmen and Indian men), I consider the imperial trajectories of Ronny Heaslop and Cyril Fielding as two concurrent types of public school manliness. There is no community. Through the character of Heaslop, Forster parodies the gender ideal by transporting it back to the imperial terrain that helped constitute it. Fielding, on the other hand, represents the Englishman whose gentlemanliness stretches the boundaries of the ideal – much like Forster himself – as it is altered by the changes in the imperial situation, and more crucially the erotics of empire. (206)

Gopinath compares the disparate personalities of Ronny Heaslop and Cyril Fielding, both of whom are products of the English public school system that instills the ideals of *noblesse oblige* that enable them both to look down upon Aziz and other Indians as inferiors whom they must either assist or govern. Although their comparison would seem to be a perfect model of polar

opposites, I contend that Fielding makes this an imperfection because his character development over the novel shifts by gradations that are quite fine, but nonetheless monumental for my purposes here. Ultimately, unlike Ronny, Fielding's trajectory arcs from a sympathetic friendship with Aziz, one of mutual respect and admiration, to a less sympathetic friendship that is eventually rejected by Aziz. Of course, the major reason for this shift is Fielding's insistence that Aziz not seek damages from Adela for falsely accusing him of rape, even though she clears him of all charges through her testimony. This falling out between them illustrates the divisive effect of British women on Anglo/Indian male relations.

The focus of the novel is devoted to the relationship between Aziz and Fielding, with Adela and Ronny serving as a counterpoint. As Ronny and Aziz become more polarized from their original intendeds, Adela and Fielding are impelled to one another. The friendship between Aziz and Fielding "adequately shows the complex tensions between East and West and the limits of human communication" (Colmer 33). Their relationship eclipses all other relations between Indians and English men in that it "proves that good will, spontaneity, and generous impulses can temporarily bridge the great gulf – linguistic and cultural – that separates the two men," but their relationship is beset with "the imminent danger of a break-down in communication, which must produce misunderstanding, distrust and suspicion" (Colmer 34). In fact, Aziz reveals his singular confidence in Fielding when he thinks, "No Englishman understands us except Mr. Fielding" (Forster 108). Despite Aziz's belief and Fielding's ethos that "The world ... is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence," Forster reminds Fielding (and readers), through his discovery, that "it is impossible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen," for "he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians," since "The two wouldn't combine" (Forster 65-6). And

so, like his relationship with Mrs. Moore, Aziz's friendship with Fielding is destined for failure, and, ultimately, it is Fielding's sympathy for Adela that severs the bond between them.

But Mrs. Moore and Fielding are not entirely to blame for their part in this failure to maintain lasting and meaningful connections in India. As Edward Said observes, this failure results from Aziz's co-option by "jejune nationalist sentiment" (203). Coupled with this superficial "nationalist sentiment" is Aziz and Fielding's equal devotion to a "new chivalry" based on Victorian precedents that negate the basis for their homosocial relationship:

The traditional chivalric model followed by the Victorian segment of this imperial society, represented by most of the Anglo-Indian characters, stresses heterosexuality, the rules of public school, the powerlessness of women, and continued British rule in India; the more modern and ostensibly forward-thinking characters, Aziz and Fielding, follow a seemingly antithetical model, the 'new chivalry.' This new movement substitutes a homoerotic relationship for the heterosexual one in traditional chivalry and looks forward to the end of British rule over the colonies. The imperial romance desired by the novel is thus that between Indian and Anglo-Indian men, but the relationship is destined to fail, if only because of the power disparity inevitable in a still-existing Anglo-India.

(Davidis 260)

In the end, Aziz's maltreatment resulting from Adela's false accusation of rape and the ensuing trial is the catalyst for his election to bow out of the new chivalric society that he and Fielding have previously participated in. The trial does not open his eyes to the power imbalance between Indians and Anglos, for he is already quite aware of that. Instead the trial serves to eradicate all hope in Aziz of ever being on an equal footing with characters like Fielding, Mrs. Moore, and



Adela; he realizes that the colonial system can never allow this as a result of the Raj's social stratification and delineation of space based on ethnicity, position, and now, sex.

Fielding and Aziz's relationship, strong as it may have been, cannot withstand the cosmic weight of the colonial system inherently designed to deter and nullify such relationships. Marx contends that their relationship "bears the full weight of India's colonial past and, through its intimacy and animosity, prefigures the post-colonial India to come" (64). This evolution from a past of amicable relations to bitter enmity is chronicled through Aziz's interactions with each of the main British characters:

Forster pairs Aziz first with Mrs. Moore, then with Adela Quested, and finally with Cyril Fielding. As we move from couple to couple, Forster traces for us the declining importance of imperial Englishwomen in preserving the ties between Britain and its colony and forecasts the emergence of a new kind of Englishman. Before we can reach that new man, however, we must begin with a Victorian holdover, Mrs. Moore, who represents nothing less than the maternal presence in India of Queen Victoria herself. (Marx 66)

Therefore, Aziz serves as a vehicle for Forster's critique on the devolution of British/Indian relations, prefiguring the dissolution of the Raj and the rise of Indian independence. Harkening back to their fateful encounter in the mosque at the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Moore and Aziz "express the dream of Victorian empire" wherein Indian men and British women could interact in a mutually acceptable fashion, albeit out of public view (Marx 66). This is the fiction of Kipling, espousing a British-ruled Indian utopia for the English reading public that was far from accurate and dependent upon British superiority and Indian inferiority, mutually recognized by

both parties. Instead, Forster presents the counterpoint to this dream – which is much closer to reality – enacted through the nightmare relationship between Aziz and Adela (Marx 66).

But before this nightmare is fully realized in the text, Adela must have the required instruction in British superiority and her role in the caste system, which she receives in the most Victorian, sectarian, and imperialistic of venues: the club. For the British, the club serves as home away from home wherein they can essentially separate themselves from the natives, breed exclusivity, and reinvigorate their racist superiority. The club adheres to ideals inherent in imperialism, placing “whites on the verandah [and] Indians at the bottom of the garden,” physically and symbolically demonstrating the imposed hierarchy between the colonizer and the colonized (Maclean 23). “The whites-only club that is the hub of English social life” serves as a bastion for the British, preventing them from intermingling with Indians and constantly reminding both of the exclusive privileges of whiteness (Christensen 171). At the club, Adela is indoctrinated in the social mores that she must adhere to if she is to become an Anglo-Indian accepted by her female peers. The club becomes her sanctuary after the incident in the caves, shielding her from the chaos that grips Chandrapore. There she becomes “a national symbol” (Christensen 171) for the British, giving them a figure, akin to the flower of Southern womanhood that the KKK was to protect, “worth fighting and dying for” (Forster 200). Of course, none of this has anything to do with Adela as an individual, but everything to do with her victimhood: she is proof-positive of the basest fears inherent in the racist British mindset shaped by the club and the Raj, which posits “All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart” (Forster 184). In the club, ensconced from public view and safe from the natives, Adela and the other Englishwomen are apprised of the situation by the Collector, who rallies the British against the natives.

Despite the rallying effect on the British of Adela's rape, the Collector makes it clear that there is division within their ranks, specifically when he singles out Fielding for his subversion in the form of his reticence to condemn Aziz and the natives collectively. In this scene, Forster illustrates that the English "are divided among themselves" because "Those who have been for some time in India are different in outlook from the newcomers, who have not yet retreated behind the defenses of tradition, race, caste, and position" (White 645). Fielding and Adela represent these newcomers whose leniency and forthrightness lead to Aziz's eventual acquittal, whereas the old hands of empire, such as Majors McBryde and Callendar, along with the Collector, want to "flog every native" they see, "but ... do nothing that would lead to a riot or to the necessity for military intervention" so as not to jeopardize their already tenuous control over the country (Forster 202). While Adela manages to escape the chastising of the old guard, Fielding receives the brunt of it when he is told what his dissent truly means to the established order: "The man who doesn't toe the line is lost.... He not only loses himself, he weakens his friends. If you leave the line, you leave a gap in the line. These jackals ... are looking with all their eyes for a gap" (Forster 190). This statement provides another example of the dichotomous nature of British thought: although McBryde and Callendar want to avoid endangering their control over the natives by resorting to military intervention, their descriptions of the situation are all in military terms, which illustrates the inherent falsity in the idea of bringing light to the benighted, the supposed ethos behind imperialism. Their us versus them mentality, exhibited by their assessment the current state of affairs, is also the foundation for their criticism of Fielding. Rightly, Adela and Fielding both leave the line and, despite their inability to prevent the trial and thwart the rallying of the British prior to events getting out of hand, manage to instrumentally assist in Aziz's acquittal. It is this shared experience that leads to their ostracism from both the

British and native ranks. Both eventually return to England, but only Fielding comes back to India.

And so through both of their inability to conform to the strictures of their British identity, Adela and Fielding exemplify the fates of those who do not conform to the system of British rule. Fielding, who “had been caught by India late” (63), and, Adela, who came “to see the *real* India,” (22) both discover an India that is not Indian, but British instead, for both the Indians and the British adhere to an implicit code of conduct foisted upon them by the Raj that will not suffer subversives and malcontents, which Fielding and Adela certainly are. As they become increasingly aware of the sheer reach of the Empire in all matters of social life and conduct – Fielding through Aziz; Adela through Ronny; both through the club – they become disheartened and retreat to England. Fielding’s career is ruined, and Adela’s hopes of marriage are sabotaged: these are their rewards for disservice to the Crown. Most poignant is the dissolution of Fielding and Aziz’s friendship, which looms over the entire text as a cosmic warning against the dangers of imperialism that destroys humanity and common decency. And as tragic as Adela and Fielding’s fates are, neither compare to Aziz’s, for he is the biggest victim of this tragic tale and Forster’s ultimate condemnation of British imperialism.

As sympathetic as Fielding and Adela are, they are morally weak, certainly not as weak as their fellow Englishmen, but weak just the same. Aziz, the lowly native, derided and ridiculed throughout the entire narrative, finally resolves to teach his children to speak of Adela, the woman who nearly ruined his life, “with the greatest affection and respect” (356). This sentiment echoes the native subservience I address in Kipling’s *Kim*, for it is this same practice of praising the colonizer in spite of his degradation that enabled the British to establish and maintain sovereignty in India and their colonies for as long as they did. But now, through Aziz, we can see

that this sentiment is waning, and appropriately, so is British control over the colonized. Aziz, who represents the burgeoning nationalism of Indian Muslims, serves as a counterpoint to the popular British nationalist sentiment espoused by veteran colonial servants such as Major Callendar. And while these two factions battle it out, those who could be most instrumental in this debate remain voiceless due to their reticence to defend what is truly more important in the novel: humanity. Both Godbole and Mrs. Moore, the two characters who could be most useful in this struggle, for they both apprehend the nature of the Caves and the events that transpired there between Aziz and Adela, fail to stand up when they are most needed, relegating the British and Muslim nationalists to a pluralism that is equally unpalatable to both parties. Forster has captured in these two characters yet another moral foundering inherent in the colonial enterprise: the indifference of those with the most insight into the intrinsic debasement of humanity in colonialism. We shall see in subsequent chapters that this struggle, aided even further by the inefficacy of those who understand the plights of both colonizer and colonized, will ultimately lead to cataclysmic events in which the *status quo* is gradually manipulated by the colonized and finally violently overthrown.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE DEATH OF AGENCY

In his famous essay, “Why I Write,” George Orwell reveals that his service to the British Empire was an impetus for his becoming a writer. Of his time in the Imperial Police in Burma, he states that it was “an unsuitable profession” that “increased [his] natural hatred of authority and made [him] for the first time fully aware of the existence of the working classes,” which had “given [him] some understanding of the nature of imperialism” (*Essays* 4). In fact, he decided to leave the security of his imperial career for the precarious one of a writer while on leave in England after some five years of service in Burma. Indeed, five years is a significant investment of time for any person in any job, and one wonders what could have provoked such a response from Orwell. The answers are readily apparent in his essays and fiction regarding his experiences in Burma, particularly in “Shooting an Elephant” and *Burmese Days*, the latter of which is the focus of this chapter.

In “Shooting an Elephant,” Orwell recounts the harrowing ordeal of having to chase down an elephant that had terrorized a local village and trampled an Indian coolie to death. As he narrates his movements through the village, he concedes that by this time in his career he had “made up [his] mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner [he] chucked up [his] job and got out of it the better” (*Essays* 236). Despite the candidness of this admission, what is even more disconcerting for his audience is his confession that he “was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British,” which, of course, is an odd sentiment for an agent of empire to hold (236). In what he describes as “the dirty work of Empire at close quarters,” Orwell had to lock up prisoners, escort them to executions, and, yes, even hunt down charging elephants (236). Perhaps, Orwell simply was not law enforcement material, but I believe his

dissatisfaction with imperial service stemmed from his keen insight into the colonial process and how it objectifies and dehumanizes the colonized. In retrospect, he admits that he “did not even know that the Empire [was] dying,” because he believed – like so many others, both native and British – that “the British Raj [was] an unbreakable tyranny” (236). Certainly, his service in Burma made a lasting impact on him, because he would later devote the bulk of his writing career to attacking tyrannous regimes and totalitarianism in the myriad forms it took. Despite the praise he has received for his accomplishments in exposing the contemptuousness of these systems, Orwell was not always a clear-cut champion of the disenfranchised and exploited. Quite frankly, in his personal letters and essays, he reveals that he did not always take the moral high ground, for his time in Burma ultimately forced him to choose between two disparate positions: sympathizer or colonizer. After he reveals in his essay his empathy for the plight of the Burmese, he states that his “greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest’s guts” in retaliation for their incessant jeering (236). Indeed, Orwell was a walking contradiction who openly espoused contempt for the Burmese in front of his peers, but was secretly empathetic to their plight in the privacy of his own mind and in his journals. Such is the liminal position many British servants of the Crown found themselves in during their imperial service.

It is not coincidental that Orwell held these dichotomous beliefs, for he, like so many of the characters heretofore discussed in this thesis, was impelled to hold these views due to the nature of service to the Crown. His competing desires to sympathize with the Burmese while wanting to physically harm them reflects the truly dubious nature of being an Englishman serving in the colonies, who had to serve two masters: the Raj and his conscience. And just as his essays reflect the divergent thinking he held, as so many others must have, so do his British characters in *Burmese Days*, as do Kipling’s and Forster’s. The difference between Orwell and

Forster/Kipling was that he actually was an imperial servant who had to do more than observe and report, for he actually had to get his hands dirty, to interrogate and arrest the Dr. Aziz. With Orwell, we diverge from observation of imperial effects to experiencing them, as we shall do through Burgess and Scott, who were also servants of the Crown performing the dirty work of the Empire. Their writing reflects the shift in the paradigm from the prototypical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized to the burgeoning resistance and ultimate deposition of the British and the Raj.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the liminality of Adela Quested and Cyril Fielding, both of whom are placed in precarious situations where they must choose between helping a native – which they know to be the morally right decision – or “toeing the line” in order to conform to the cultural pressures of their race and citizenship. And like these characters, John Flory, the protagonist of *Burmese Days*, must also make this difficult decision. The similarities between *Burmese Days* and *A Passage to India* are numerous, which certainly speaks to their authors’ insight into the evils of imperialism; however, it is their differences that illuminate the significant decline in the British Empire, chiefly through the character of John Flory and the symbolism of his death, for his suicide marks the waning agency of the imperial servant whose last recourse is to either opt for a voluntary death or bend to the imperial forces governing his person.

Set in 1920s imperial Kayauktada, Burma, *Burmese Days* follows the life of Flory, who is a forester collecting timber for exportation back to Britain. Like Fielding, Flory is quite different than his imperial counterparts, for he has befriended a native of Burma, Dr. Veraswami, who also happens to be Indian. Flory, as a *pukka* sahib, enjoys the benefits of his status, which, for Veraswami, is constituted primarily in his membership in the Kyauktada Club. In Burma at



that time, in an effort to acquiesce to the natives' desire for inclusion and self-determination, the British instituted "diarchy," or "joint rule whereby Burmese politicians could attend the country's parliament sessions" (Larkin 244) In response to these concessions the natives also exerted "pressure to open up the clubs to higher-ranking Burmese officials" (244). Veraswami wants very much to become a member of the club, for he believes that it will improve his status, especially since he would be the only native member, placing him in a position of respect and envy, above other Burmese:

In any town in India the European Club is the spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power, the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain. It was doubly so in this case, for it was the proud boast of Kyauktada Club that, almost alone of Clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an Oriental to membership. (Orwell 17)

But Veraswami is not the only native with his sights set on this exclusive privilege, for the antagonist of the novel, the dastardly U Po Kyin (who is Burmese), has also fixated on attaining the appointment. Through these two characters and their competition to become members of the club, Orwell proffers an example of aspirational mimicry in U Po Kyin, for he is not attempting to mimic the British, but an Indian, which is indicative of the Burmese desire to move up the pecking order as a colony and illustrative, once again, of the complicity of natives in their own subservience to the British. From the outset of the novel we learn U Po Kyin is a subaltern of a different variety, for he serves the British administration successfully, but exclusively for his own ends. He accomplishes this through bribery and intimidation of the local Burmese, but also, and more importantly, through his understanding of the British social mores of the *pukka sahib*, which he uses for advantage over Flory. U Po Kyin is a comprador, a powerful class of natives,

with enough financial and political clout to sustain and profit the Empire and themselves. U Po Kyin is acutely aware of the machinations of both the Raj and Burmese society. Through his acumen he manages to blackmail and inveigle his way to unprecedented wealth and prestige in the eyes of both the British and Burmese. His final goal is to become a member of the Kyauktada Club, but Veraswami and Flory are impediments to his appointment, and, as such, they become the targets of his perniciousness.

After bribery fails, U Po Kyin resorts to disinformation and threats through anonymous letters, denouncing both Flory and Veraswami. At stake are their reputations, chiefly with the British who gradually come to view both with vitriolic contempt, culminating in Ellis's condemnation of Flory as "a nigger's Nancy Boy" and Veraswami as "that little nigger Very-slimy" (Orwell 190-1). Veraswami, who believes that "Prestige iss all," cannot attain the prestige he so desires because his only inroad into the club where he might achieve it is Flory (Orwell 149). But Flory, through his relationship with Veraswami, compounded by U Po Kyin's meddling, becomes increasingly ineffectual, which results in his fellow Englishmen ostracizing him. Ellis, the quintessential imperialist, in a discussion about the induction of natives into the club, states, "No natives in this Club! It's by constantly giving way over small things like that we've ruined the Empire. This country's only rotten with sedition because we've been too soft with them. The only possible policy is to treat 'em like the dirt they are" (Orwell 31). Clearly, for Flory, to side with Veraswami is to concede his prestige and to betray the beatitudes of the *pukka sahib* (delivered in sermon-like fashion by Ellis, and quoted below), which is a perfect capturing of imperialist racist sentiment, and the very cement that keeps the Empire intact:

Keeping up our prestige,

The firm hand (without the velvet glove),

We white men must hang together,  
 Give them an inch and they'll take an ell, and  
 Espirit de corps.

(Orwell 191)

U Po Kyin's apprehension of this code enables him to exploit and capitalize on Flory's already "vexed relationship with the ideal of the pukka sahib," driving a wedge between him and Veraswami as well as between him and his fellow countrymen (Gopinath 211). And as the men begin to turn on Flory, so do the women, which proves to be his *coup de grace*.

Just as in India, the presence of British women in Burma had a significant impact on the operations of the British imperial machine. For women prove to be the easiest targets for the wily U Po Kyin to exploit, enabling him to effectively destabilize Flory and Veraswami as well as the British as a whole. He sends a letter to Mrs. Lackersteen which has the twofold effect of further subverting Veraswami's reputation among them as well as scaring both British men and women:

U Po Kyin had even sent one of his anonymous letters to Mrs. Lackersteen, for he knew the power of European women. Dr. Veraswami, the letter said, was inciting the natives to abduct and rape the European women – no details were given, nor were they needed.... Whatever good regard the Europeans might once have had for the doctor was crumbling rapidly. (137-8)

Since the women do not have a vote in club matters, and therefore have no overt influence on his induction into the club, it seems obvious that the intent of this letter is to simply besmirch Veraswami, but it accomplishes much more than that, for U Po Kyin is capitalizing on the dynamic between British men and women: even though women do not have a vote, they are "revered and yet resented" by British Men (Woodcock 104). They are revered because they are

placed on a pedestal above the native women, owing to their race. They are resented because of the impediments attendant to their presence: namely the perceived need for their protection, of which U Po Kyin is acutely aware. Indeed, all of the Englishmen have a vested interest in protecting Englishwomen, even Flory, who eventually meets and falls in love with Mrs. Lackersteen's niece, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth proves to be the catalyst for Flory's eventual suicide in that she multifariously represents all of the things he has rejected, yet longs for, proving to be the conundrum that he must solve for his own salvation. But he is ill-equipped to pursue her; he has a hideous birthmark on his face and he has been away from England far too long, which has made him unpracticed in the social niceties that woman fresh from the metropole would expect. Despite the fact that she has been in France, she still is definitively English in her worldview, and this is ultimately what plagues their relationship: Flory's love for Burma, her disdain for it. In a telling scene, on one of their many dates, Flory takes her to his favorite tea-shop where she is "seized with terror" by the incessant wailing of one of the children in the shop and the abject poverty surrounding her (Orwell 133). Flory is unaware of what exactly has upset her so much, but it is certainly more than the child's behavior:

It was the first time they had definitely quarreled. He was too miserable even to ask himself how it was that he offended her. He did not realize that this constant striving to interest her in Oriental things struck her only as perverse, ungentlemanly, a deliberate seeking after the squalid and the "beastly". He had not grasped even now with what eyes she saw the "natives" He only knew that at each attempt to make her share his life, his thoughts, his sense of beauty, she shied away from him like a frightened horse. (133)

This scene speaks to the liminality of Flory's position, for he has become so enmeshed in the culture of Burma that he has come to love it, to see its beauty that is much deeper than the squalid trappings of a low-rent tea-shop. Elizabeth will never see this, and ultimately this leads to the impasse in their relationship and the determining factor in why she will not marry him. Flory has failed to uphold the code of the *pukka* sahib, and even as ignorant as Elizabeth is of this code, she knows inherently that he is not a true sahib; if anything, he is perhaps become so enamored with the native culture to ever hope of becoming a true sahib.

Compounding the difficulty of this tumultuous relationship are the introduction of a true *pukka* sahib, Verrall, a military policeman, whom Elizabeth falls madly in love with, and, thanks to U Po Kyin, her discovery that Flory has been in a relationship with a Burmese woman, Ma Hla May. Both of these discoveries prove equally disastrous for them: for Elizabeth, because she falls for Verrall and hopes that he will marry her, which he has no intention of doing; and, for Flory, because his involvement with Ma Hla May proves to be a fact Elizabeth can neither forgive nor forget.

Following the dissolution of her relationship with Flory, Elizabeth seeks the shelter of the club, which envelops her in the comfort of Englishness and the respectability of more civilized company and culture. But by this point in the novel, the club is no longer a safe haven, as it was for Adela in *A Passage to India*, for the Burmese openly challenge the authority of the club. This reaction is a result U Po Kyin's engineered faux rebellion to incite a violent British reaction, which Ellis obliges when he shoots a Burmese man. The Burmese in turn march on the club where the British have holed up in defense. The Burmese throw stones at the club, hitting Macgregor in the face. The British inside the club panic, and Flory, in turn, makes his first of three fateful decisions when he bravely leaves the club and heads upriver to find the police to

save them. When he finds the subahdar of the military police, he instructs him not to aim low to kill, as Ellis instructed him to do, but to instead shoot over the heads of the faux rebels. The rioters disperse, and Flory is a hero to his fellow Englishmen without having to massacre the Burmese. Both the club and British rule in Kyauktada are preserved. What follows is the novel's ultimate comment on the decline of the empire.

Despite the fact that the club is saved and order is restored, Flory, who is the embodiment of Orwell's critique of imperialism, levies the criticisms that bespeak the decline of the empire. After being disgraced by Ma Hla May in church, Flory corners Elizabeth and asks her to marry him. But he is asking her for much more than her hand; he is asking her to save him:

Elizabeth, listen to me. I've tried again and again to tell you what you mean to me – oh, it's so useless talking about it! But do try and understand. Haven't I told you something of the life we live here? The sort of horrible death-in-life! The decay, the loneliness, the self-pity? Try and realise what it means, and that you're the sole person on earth who could save me from it. (Orwell 277)

Elizabeth refuses to offer him salvation and rebuffs him. And so Flory goes home and makes his final fateful decision: he shoots himself. As is the case with all suicides, the first question that is always asked is: why? Why did Flory kill himself? How is one to find answers in what ensues when these events undercut everything that Flory worked so hard to accomplish? Veraswami is ruined, U Po Kyin is appointed to the Kyauktada Club, and Elizabeth becomes a *burra* memsahib by marrying Macgregor, a man twice her age and not even of remote interest to her throughout the entirety of the novel.

If the novel offers any answers to this final question that its pathetic ending begs one to ask, one need only look to the first time the narrator asks "why?." Shortly after Flory meets

Elizabeth he falls in love with her. His very essence changes, he is reinvigorated, and his life takes a new direction counter to the code of the *pukka sahib*, which Flory had so assiduously adhered to:

Why? ... Why, after all these years – circumspect, *pukka sahib*-like years – break all the rules so suddenly? He knew why. It was because Elizabeth, by coming into his life, had so changed it and renewed it that all the dirty, miserable years might never have passed. Her presence had changed the whole orbit of his mind. She had brought back to him the air of England – dear England, where thought is free and one is not condemned forever to dance the *danse du pukka sahib* for the edification of the lower races. Where is the life that late I led? he thought. Just by existing she had made it possible for him, she had even made it natural to him, to act decently. (Orwell 151-2)

Elizabeth, in all her youth and beauty, her vibrancy and promise, offered Flory a chance to relive his ephemeral past that he had abandoned and all but forgotten, a memory of a life less complicated, of freedom and hope that was England, which he had so long ago left behind and had always planned to return to – all of which was eradicated by his suicide. As Flory changed over the years, so had his beloved country. And with that change it had relegated him to a lesser state of being: *pukka sahib* – a man who must toe the line, repress all innate feelings of humanity and decency, the very fiber of his being, in short, killing him over a career of mindless drudgery procuring timber in pursuit of wealth for the homeland. This is the novel's critique of imperialism, for it illustrates the fates of all men, who in answering England's call that is belied by patriotism and *esprit de corps*, wither and die while their motherland profits. The choices for those Englishmen who serve the Empire are simple: toe the line or die. Flory's suicide is his one

final act of defiance, his last vestige of agency, for the Empire has robbed him of options and autonomy. But Flory is not the focal point of this novel. He is but a vehicle to illustrate the true power behind British hegemony: native compliance.

Through the competing interests of U Po Kyin and Dr. Veraswami we see the real catalysts behind the trajectory of the novel, its conflict and denouement, for the novel does not end with Flory's suicide, but U Po Kyin's death after becoming a member of the club, his established goal from the beginning of the novel. The fact that he does get to enjoy his victory over Veraswami and Flory, and by extension, the British, illustrates the significance of his actions, for he almost destroyed British rule through his subversion to become a full-fledged member of the hierarchy embodied in club membership. Veraswami represents the waning power and values of the old class of natives who respect the authority of the British and believe in the civilizing mission of the Empire, the vital lifeblood of British hegemony. U Po Kyin, by comparison, represents the burgeoning class of powerful compradores whom the Empire relies upon to sustain its hegemony, for they are the true power players in the colony: they shape native opinion and provide the British with stability and financial opportunity. U Po Kyin is acutely aware of the tenuousness of British rule and exploits it, while Veraswami delusionally believes in British sovereignty. The fact that U Po Kyin dies at the novel's end demonstrates the dire straits the British are in, for if he had survived they would have had an enemy in their midst capable of single-handedly orchestrating insurrection. In *Burmese Days* we see the Empire in decline, and in the next chapter we shall see the consequences of innumerable U Po Kyins permeating every echelon of the Raj in Anthony Burgess's *The Long Day Wanes*: the death throes of the Empire.



## CHAPTER 4

## SACRIFICE OF THE REARGUARD

Anthony Burgess' *The Long Day Wanes* is "a massive fictional study of the disintegration of the British power in Malay" (Woodcock 207) at "the very twilight of the British Empire" (Stinson 29). Unlike the other texts I have discussed thus far, *The Long Day Wanes* is not a single novel, but a collection of three novels that were published annually while Burgess was a colonial educator serving in Malaysia. These three novels are the earliest of six novels Burgess first published that deal with "the clash of Eastern and Western cultures, as seen from the point of view of a major character associated with the British hierarchy" (Coale 18). Central to these texts is the protagonist Victor Crabbe, whom Burgess uses as a vehicle to illustrate the waning effectiveness of British authority in the country. Although he is an education officer, as was Burgess, this commonality, I think, is more significant than a mere coincidence, for education was the primary means for the British to inculcate their ideals and establish their superiority in the hearts and minds of the natives. Tellingly, Victor is ineffective as an educator, and his lack of efficacy illustrates the demise of British authority in Malaysia.

And like the death of British authority chronicled in *Burmese Days*, the dwindling power of the British in *The Long Day Wanes* is gradually undermined and capitalized upon by the natives who have largely rejected British values in favor of their own eclectic blend of traditions. Although they differ stylistically by huge degrees, Burgess and Orwell are largely of the same mind, as evidenced by their insights into the natives' animosities for British imperialism and how they attack and undermine that authority:

I would say Burgess is closer to Orwell in his sensibility. Both understand the tempers of peoples pitted against the Western brand of progress, self-consciously

and nationalistically dedicated to their own emergence. But unlike Orwell, who views Burma as a force of homogenous wills (and consequently *one* will) bent upon undermining and overturning white power, Burgess sees Malaya in all its heterogeneity; sees its timeless conflicts arising as much from indigenous human nature as from abstractions like the “brutality and jingoism” (to quote Orwell on Kipling) of imperialism; sees its people given to the same vices, vanities, corruptions, frustrations, desires, and excesses, be they English, Chinese, Eurasian, Malayan, or Indian, Christian, Moslem, Buddhist, or Hindu. (Morris 22-3)

Indeed, as Morris has cogently elucidated, *The Long Day Wanes* is a seminal study of not only the demise of the British Empire, but also of the culture and society that will eventually replace it, for Malaysia is unlike any other country the British colonized: it is not a contiguous landmass, so it much more difficult for the British to project military force in support of interventions to quell native revolts; additionally, the myriad ethnicities and religions make India seem a homogenous society by comparison. These difficulties made Burma a veritable nightmare for the British to govern, and much more so for the divergent natives who shall assume control once the British leave. This, of course, is both the most difficult challenge for imperialists and for the Malaysians. Fittingly, it is the overriding focus of Burgess in the trilogy. Essentially, Burgess is picking up where Orwell left off with *Burmese Days*: their shared experience as imperial servants gave them a penetrating insight into the machinations of British imperialism in countries where the natives subverted, challenged, and eventually overthrew British authority, rendering the time-tested strategies of divide and conquer ineffective.

Although there are legion subplots over the course of the trilogy that follow the lives of various natives, Burgess centers on the narrative on Victor Crabbe. Like Orwell, who concentrates his narrative on John Flory, Burgess's protagonist is not the true focus of the novel, but a vehicle by which to illustrate the effects of waning British power. Crabbe's peculiar name is not without significance, for it is rife with British literary and political connotations. John Stinson appropriately notes the contradictions that exist solely in Victor's first name when he states, "His first name, Victor, suggests conqueror and also suggests Victoria, the queen in whose long reign the full magnificence of the Empire was achieved. The name, though, also suggests victim" (30). And although this is a fairly astute observation in and of itself, his next analysis truly gets to the marrow of who Victor Crabbe is – apropos for his character development over the course of the novels: "With his obvious feelings of vulnerability and with a last name suggesting crab, Crabbe is intended to remind the reader of Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock" who is "A sensitive man unable to adjust to the whirlwind of change in a period of historic transition when it is with its hard shell" (30).

Indeed, Crabbe is ill-equipped to deal with the approaching chaos of Malayan revolt and independence; and, like Prufrock, he fails to make lasting connections with people that either impact his own life or theirs – in short, he is ineffectual, and this ineffectiveness is emblematic of the demise of British authority, which is equally incapable of effecting meaningful change in Malaysia or sustaining British hegemony (Baluch 105). In fact, his primary focus over the course of the novels is "to blot out a past that he dreads" through "indentifying with Malay" in the "hopes to lose his identification as an Englishman," which ultimately proves to be an impossibility for him (Morris 24). This past is largely haunted by the memory of his first wife, whose tragic death has inculcated him with fears of driving and of water; additionally, her

memory looms over his marriage to Fenella, serving as a major catalyst for their eventual separation. Seemingly he attempts to escape these bitter memories through his rise in the imperial education service, but, as he rises, the Empire slowly disintegrates, and Crabbe is subsumed in the ensuing chaos. As he creeps ever forward to his eventual demise, a series of characters are placed in his life that serve as foils to illustrate his obliviousness in the face of ever-worsening conditions – where they wisely retreat, he blindly charges ahead. Three of these characters are significant in each of the three novels respectively: Nabby Adams in *Time for a Tiger*, Rupert Hardman in *The Enemy in the Blanket*, and Fenella in *Beds in the East*.

*Time for a Tiger* begins with the story of Nabby Adams, a colonial police officer whose predilection for Tiger Beer (however, he will drink anything wet and alcoholic) and resultant alcoholism govern his every waking hour. Nabby begins the novel appropriately with a drunken lament over the demise of the Empire. As an aged man and experienced colonial servant, Nabby is dissatisfied with the current state of Malaysia, and longs to return to the old days when the Empire was on more stable footing. In the dilapidated police station, symbolic proof of the Empire's decline, Nabby longs to be somewhere else other than Malaysia: he “thirst[s] for Bombay,” harkening back to better days when colonial service was a more rewarding experience (Burgess 19). In his quest for more money to buy beer, he crosses paths with the Crabbes, who ply him with money and booze. Their friendship grows to accommodate both of their respective needs: Nabby for money and alcohol, and the Crabbe's – especially Crabbe's wife, Fenella – for British companionship. Although Nabby would seem beneath them socially, he has the advantage of being able to take them to parties and events that are predominantly native, which is particularly enticing to Crabbe who wishes to embed himself in the culture.

Despite his obvious zeal for his colonial role, Crabbe's career is in a precarious position, owing to past flirtations in college with Communist thought and his discussion of Communism with his class, which places him at loggerheads with the school's director, Bootheby. As an escape from the maddening environment of the Mansor School in Kuala Hantu, he befriends Nabby and his partner Alladad Khan, who, incidentally, is infatuated with Fenella, which is illustrative of the slipping power of the British in their Empire, for Alladad's attempts at cuckoldry and even his *tête-à-têtes* with Fenella would have been a distinct impossibility in Kipling's *Kim*, Forster's *A Passage to India*, and even Orwell's *Burmese Days*. In this way Fenella both manifests and contributes to Crabbe's waning authority throughout the novel, eventually cuckolding him and leaving him behind in Malaysia to return to England.

Nabby Adams also abandons Crabbe by the end of the first novel through his fortuitous winning of the lottery, which enables him to return to his beloved Bombay. The symbolism of this action is twofold: it evidences the underlying nostalgia that grips the waning Empire and its desire to somehow regain the age when British rule was supreme; and, it is the first of a series of rearguard actions that cover the retreat of the British back to England from their rebelling colonies. Rearguard actions are performed in the event of a retreat by positioning troops to guard the rear of the retreating army as it returns home. Implicit in this action is the sacrifice of these troops in order to save the larger army. In the case of this trilogy, Crabbe is the rearguard, and Nabby is but the first of many English men and women who will abandon him.

In *The Enemy in the Blanket*, Crabbe establishes a friendship with Rupert Hardman, which will serve as yet another illustration of the rearguard action. Hardman, whose name betrays his plastic nature, is "not in the Colonial Service, but he [is] still a white man. A very white man" (191). While being white certainly has its advantages, it is not as advantageous as it

would have been fifty years prior and in India, as in the case of Kimball O'Hara and Henry Fielding. Instead it is more of a novelty in the Malaysia of the novel. Hardman is penniless, and, like Nabby, has to rely on the beneficence of the natives to survive. His financial difficulties and white skin make him a worthy candidate for marriage to a native woman, especially one who is wealthy. The affluent 'Che Normah becomes his wife and benefactor, but at the high cost of Hardman's conversion to Islam and adoption of Malayan customs, which he readily does, both out of fear of her, for she has had her previous husbands assassinated when they displeased her, and also because of the dire financial straits he finds himself in.

Meanwhile, Crabbe has been promoted to a new posting as headmaster of Haju Ali College, which further propels him to his demise, for here his previous flirtations with Communism are further scrutinized and used as leverage against him. Despite his promotion, he is still under a Malayan, Jagnathan, due to the impending transition from British rule to Malayan rule. Jagnathan has managed to procure Crabbe's journals from his college days, which clearly prove his affinity for Communism, placing his career in peril. Crabbe's only recourse is to defend himself legally, but his friend Hardman, a lawyer, has been rendered ineffective by his marriage to 'Che Normah – seemingly it is every man for himself, as Burgess gives us another manifestation of the dissolution of British solidarity, which echoes the power dynamic between Flory and U Po Kyin found in *Burmese Days*, where the lone Englishman is at the mercy of the duplicitous subaltern who is ever aware of the precarious position of the British servant of the dissolving Empire. These “gaps in the line,” created by Adams and Hardman's departures, would have been a cardinal sin scant years earlier, as evinced by Major Callendar in *A Passage to India*, are now the *status quo*.

As Crabbe struggles to find a way ahead with Jagnathan, Hardman endeavors to get shut of 'Che Normah, as the consequences for his displeasing her could very well result in his assassination at the hands of the axe-men featured prominently at the outset of the novel. He eventually uses the ruse of a pilgrimage to Mecca to get out of the country and away from Normah, who is by this time pregnant with his child, so he can abandon his marriage and take a lecture post in England. Crabbe's marriage to Fenella has also dissolved as a result of the combination of her relationship with the Abang of Dahaga, the local womanizing Burmese aristocrat (who is more like a local mafia don) the Crabbes eventually sell their car to who foots the bill for Fenella to return to England and serves as her benefactor, and Crabbe's trysts with Anne Talbot, the promiscuous wife of the Chief Education Officer. Eventually, Crabbe is abandoned by all of the British characters who had previously supported him, and with his final posting as Chief Education Officer of Dahaga, he is left to complete the required sacrifice of the rearguard.

In the final installment of the trilogy, *Beds in the East*, Crabbe is sent on a mission to investigate the murder of the Durian Estate School headmaster that turns out to be an eerily reminiscent *Heart of Darkness* journey down the river and deeper into the interior of Malaysia, away from what the British would call civilization. On this mission, Crabbe encounters a variety of characters who are markedly different than himself. En route to Durian, he encounters the loquacious Tommy Jones, who sells beer and has made a fortune doing so in Malaya and Borneo, and discovers a poem Fenella has published in *The New Presbyterian*. The fact that these two events happen simultaneously is not without significance, for it reminds the reader that Fenella is still an important foil to Crabbe, even though she is absent, and that Tommy Jones is a foil as well, albeit a minor one. Both of these characters highlight Crabbe's inadequacies and

failures to adapt to the imminent changes in Malaysia: Tommy has found a niche from which to profit by selling imported beer to the Malaysians, while Fenella has abandoned the colonial enterprise altogether and found success by her Malayan gangster lover. Eventually, Crabbe admits to Tommy that he “cant’s see any future beyond being here” to which Tommy rejoins, “You’ll go home leaving your black bastards like the rest of them” (Burgess 429). But Crabbe shall never return home, despite his desire to remain alive, because “there was plenty for him to do still, all over the dwindling Colonial Empire” (452). Both Tommy and Fenella symbolize those who realized that change was afoot and that their only options were to either evolve to fit the needs of the new economic imperialism (the hallmark of American foreign policy), or to retreat back to England in an attempt to regain some semblance of the life they had abandoned so many years ago. The obverse of this decision is, of course, to immerse oneself in the culture to the point of losing one’s former identity or to cling to the vestiges of the dying Empire. And by choosing to continue on his journey, Crabbe in essence decides that he can still somehow make a difference. The litany of characters he encounters as he goes deeper into the interior, ever closer to Durian, presents him with much the same choices that both Tommy and Fenella represent: either reinvent or abandon. He can do neither.

His final fateful encounter with George Costard reveals the overall thrust of the trilogy, which is that Crabbe has never mattered, and that despite the apparent focus on him, in reality the novels are about the future of Malaysia and the demise of British authority that Crabbe represents. As in the case with John Flory, Cyril Fielding, and even Kim, single actors, no matter how extraordinary they are, are powerless to resist the cosmic weight of imperialism: the only choice is to bend to its will or to bow out, as Mrs. Moore, Adela Quested, Nabby Adams, Crabbe Hardman, and Fenella Crabbe did. Crabbe’s great failure is his assumption that he can somehow



effect change in a system designed to resist change and to stymie interpersonal relationships outside of those that benefit the Empire. Proof of this arises when Crabbe meets the quintessential colonialist in Costard, who eclipses him in every aspect of manliness. He misjudges Costard as “a commercial man,” not unlike Tommy Jones, but Costard readily admits that money is not his ultimate aim, for his sole purpose, like the Empire he represents, is to delay the inevitable collapse of that Empire for as long as possible:

Do you think the money matters to me? I’m in this game to keep something alive that’s very, very beautiful. The feudal tradition, the enlightened patriarchal principle. You people have been throwing it all away, educating them to revolt against us. They won’t be happy, any of them. It’s only on the estates now that the ultimate ideas can be preserved. I’m the father of these people. They can look up to me, bring me their troubles and let me participate in their joys. (482-3)

Costard’s diatribe smacks of Conrad’s Kurtz, who is determined to hold out in his jungle hideaway, safe from the oversight of civilization, where he can command the natives as he sees fit *vis-à-vis* his own brand of imperialist patriarchy to the bitter end. This interpretation is reinforced by Costard’s name, as it is eerily reminiscent of another famous agent of empire whose foolhardy devotion to imperialism led him to his demise: George Custer, who died at Little Big Horn as a result of his failure to retreat in the face of overwhelming native superiority without the aid of adequate support from the empire. (Costard mentions this obvious association in the text; his hasty dismissal of it, like both Kurtz and Custer would do with any information they found disagreeable, intensifies the correlation.) Furthermore, Costard is managing a rubber plantation, which was also the chief natural resource exploited in King Leopold II’s colony, which Conrad visited in 1890 – the atrocities he witnessed there inspired the equally horrific acts

of depravity he wrote about in *Heart of Darkness*, and one suspects he met several Kurtzes and Costards on his own journey up the Congo. In the face of Costard's unabated zealotry, it becomes clear that Crabbe, the educator, has utterly wasted his time and energy in support of the civilizing mission of the Empire, for Costard's mission of plunder and exploitation is the true overriding enterprise of imperialism. This is evident in his encouragement of the musical prodigy Robert Loo, whom he hopes will create a national Malayan music for all to unite under, which eventually comes to nothing. His efforts have been effectively flushed down the toilet, as symbolized by the futile venture with Robert Loo, whose name alludes to the British slang for toilet. He and Costard are the rearguard, but they differ in their acceptance of the role: for Costard, it is an honor, for Crabbe, it is a blow from which he cannot recover. Costard is the embodiment of the type of imperial servant Crabbe has failed to become, despite his best efforts, which were half-hearted at best over the course of the novels.

The pathos created by Crabbe's discoveries about the nature of imperialism and himself through his conversation with Costard is further exacerbated when he learns that Costard and his first wife were lovers. This proves to be the ultimate debilitating blow to Crabbe, for he learns "That she loathed [his] guts" and was going to leave him for Costard (484). It is his memory of her that serves as the single governing force in his life: his fear of water and of driving stems from his troubled memory of her – she is the impetus for his every decision over his trajectory in the novel, for she lingers incessantly in his mind. And as his conversation with Costard ensues, he learns that everything he thought he knew about his life has been a lie, a crushing epiphany, reminiscent of Gabriel Conroy's in "The Dead," which unveils how mortifyingly insignificant he really is. This, along with the discovery that he is not the favored son of the Empire, devastates him. Whether these truths are the catalysts that precipitate his suicide or if he simply slips on the

gunwale and drowns in the river remains ambiguous. What is certain is that the river washes away all memory of Crabbe, just as the Malaysians will wash away all memory of British colonialism over time.

Crabbe's abject failures to educate his students, to salvage his marriage to Fenella, to recognize the infidelity of his first wife and the utter contempt she held for him, to anticipate the demise of the Empire, and to save himself are all attributable to his naïve belief in the nobility of British imperialism. The Empire, for Crabbe, "is a vision of justice, peace, freedom, and equality, of the pax Britannica and of the fulfillment by Britain of its trusteeship mission, to see the countries in its charge brought safely and in due course to independence – a far from ignoble dream" (Richards 51). In the twilight of the Empire, Crabbe has arrived too late to truly make a difference, and his only contribution, which is ultimately meaningless, is to buy the British time to withdraw before the country collapses around them. As evidenced by the retreats of Fenella, Nabby Adams, and Rupert Hardman, the final days of Empire were rewarding for those who saw the coming demise, and brutal – as illustrated by Crabbe – for those who failed to see it. Just as he was propelled by a memory that was at odds with the facts of his first wife's true feelings for him and her infidelity to him, he could not accept his own insignificance in a global power struggle for economic resources in the belief that he could somehow make a difference in a country controlled by a power that was utterly indifferent to him, just as the Empire he served was. Ultimately, Crabbe's death was his only recourse because he could not accept the true nature of the Empire he served. And for those the truth does not destroy, it places in a permanent state of paralysis and stasis, as we shall see in Paul Scott's *Staying On*.

## CHAPTER 5

## OBLIVION

Paul Scott's poignant final novel, *Staying On*, recreates the world of a retired Anglo-Indian couple who have decided to remain in India following its independence from British control. Scott, himself an imperial servant of the Raj in India, devoted his entire writing career to tales about India under British rule, from his first novel *Johnnie Sahib*, to his magnum opus, *The Raj Quartet*. Indeed, *Staying On* is a fitting conclusion to a distinguished career, as it earned Scott the Booker Prize in 1977, garnering him the recognition from the literary establishment that he sought his entire career.

Scott's novels consistently provide candid glimpses into Anglo-Indian life under the Raj that other authors fail to capture in their prose. Of course this could be the result of his having devoted his writing career solely to India, which enabled him to chronicle the evolution and dissolution of the British Empire there, whereas other writers only intermittently dwelled on the subject. Nevertheless, his *Raj Quartet* and its "postscript or pendant," *Staying On*, provide us with insight into the dynamic lives of both Indians and Englishmen in the waning years of imperial India (Spurling 378). Because of this, I have chosen to conclude my thesis with *Staying On*, for it provides a fitting dénouement. Gone are the days of unfettered British power over its colonies. Now, Englishmen, if they have remained, are no longer exalted, but are second-class citizens, as evidenced by the couple this novel centers on, the Smalleys.

The Smalleys, Tusker and Lucy, were not new characters created by Scott for *Staying On*, but were established, albeit minor, ones who appeared in *The Raj Quartet*. Through their eyes, but predominantly Lucy's eyes, we can view "India after Independence" from their drab and meager apartment in Smith's Hotel in Pankot. This hotel is their chosen home and indeed the

very place they both intend to face the final moments of their lives, certainly so in Tusker's case at least. And this is quite fitting because the hotel, like the couple, has experienced both the best of times and worst of times that India has had to offer, and like the couple, it is in decline and nearing death: "After the *raj* went there had been bad times, good times, near-disastrous times, times of retrenchment, times of ebullient hope, as Pankot waxed, waned, waxed again in popularity. But for Smith's now it all seemed to be coming to an end" (Scott 7). From this vantage point, we can ascertain a sense of the tenuousness of post-independence Indian society, an environment in a constant state of flux, where the kings of today might prove to be tomorrow's paupers, which is certainly true of the Smalleys:

In postindependent [sic] India while Tusker Sahib and Lucy "mem" are still Colonel Sahib and Memsahib to their longtime Indian servant Ibrahim, they are no longer in command. 12 Upper Club Road (the former Rose Cottage) is presided over by Colonel and Mrs. Menektara, and Tusker's savings cannot be stretched too much longer. His past Raj connections and white skin are no longer the valid passport to the world of privilege. (Rao 139)

As in most societies, housing is a signifier of status, and the Smalleys have lost prestige as a result of Independence. Englishness and white skin no longer command respect and engender cooperation or ensure wealth. Tusker and Lucy are practically living hand-to-mouth on Tusker's meager pension, with few viable alternatives. Therefore, the rundown Smith's Hotel in juxtaposition to their former home, the Rose Cottage (now inhabited by an Indian military family), delineates the inversion of power in post-independence Indian society. This marks the final phase in a movement of native protest of the *status quo* that began with the rumblings of native dissent in *A Passage to India*, gained traction and challenged that authority in *Burmese*

*Days*, and realized its full potential in *The Long Day Wanes*. With *Staying On* we see how powerless the British are when the natives resist being co-opted by the Raj: they are not longer complicit in their subjugation.

Scott's decision to center the novel on the Smalleys was fitting because they were not prominent or wealthy imperial servants of the Empire, but were average English citizens whose livelihood was predicated upon the continued existence of British rule, for when it ended, so did their lives. And in comparison with the vast majority of natives around them, their lives are in decline, while the natives are ascendant, as evidenced by the Bhoolabhoyes and the Desais, who are now free of the yoke of imperialism. The image of the corpse of the Empire, already dead, but still on display, looms over the novel, just as Tusker's does, for the text "begins and ends with Tusker's death," chronicling the events that lead up to the climactic incident "Through a series of flashbacks and a mastery of the antichronological time sequence ... to reveal ... [the] dim, disappointed lives" of the Smalleys (Rao 140). Unlike their counterparts in *The Raj Quartet*, the Smalleys cannot recover from the collapse of the Empire. Their ordinariness and irrelevance preclude them from finding and pursuing any lifestyle other than the one given them by the Crown, and as such, theirs is the story of the average Englishman, the cog in the wheel, that enabled the Empire to function and to sustain itself:

In a sense, *Staying On* is the story of Everyman – that is, ordinary man – and his struggle for survival, for happiness and fulfillment. Smalleys, their very name suggests their position in society. As Mildred insists in the *Quartet*, they were nonentities in the colonial world, and remain so to the British present in India after Independence. The Indians do not pay them respect as such, certainly not as

sahib and mem-sahib, but they [the Indians] are human to the couple.

(Goonetilleke 839)

Despite this generalized good treatment, perhaps produced out of a mixture of respect and pity, they are nonetheless second-class citizens in India, remnants of a time that too few cherish or lament the passing of.

The Smalleys are holdovers from a bygone era, incapable of navigating the currents of the new stream they find themselves in. Indeed they “had been *pukka-log* in the days of the *raj*, had been in India for forty years and although still *pukka* they were often very peculiar ... Sometimes they did not know what time of day it was” (Scott 50). Seemingly, not much has changed in their lives since their brief appearances in *The Raj Quartet*, both professionally and socially:

In the new novel we are reminded of the parts they played. Lucy was much in demand at the Pankot ladies’ committee meetings because of her excellent shorthand. The fact that she had had to go out to work to acquire that proficiency, however, worked against her in the memsahib social scene. It means she was not quite *pukka*. (Swindon 103)

Likewise, Tusker had never excelled in imperial administration, despite whatever grand illusions he espouses – their finances are indicative of his lack of industriousness and foresight – in praise of his own past, not unlike Simon Dedalus. It would seem that he had not counted on Indian independence and certainly not the dissolution of the Empire, which illustrates that the death of the Empire was unthinkable, so there was no need to prepare for the future because he naively thought it would endure. One wonders what would have become of them had they been *pukka*, but what is certain is that they were not, and as a result they find themselves in truly dire straits:

financially almost incapable of remaining in Pankot, and too broke to return, much less live in England. Now, twenty-five years after Independence, mediocre talents, frailty, and a dwindling income have forced them to accept a fate one suspects they would probably not have chosen.

Throughout the narrative, both Tusker and Lucy harken back to their time in Mudpore and service in the Pankot Rifles, to the days of relative ease, respectability, superiority, security, and importance. The pathos of their story lies not only with Tusker's heart attack, but also with their unvoiced indignation over being abandoned by an Empire that they loved (but admittedly did not serve to their fullest potential). One gets the sense that they had come to a carnival and decided to stay after it had closed, only to find on the following day that it had reopened under new management that would no longer give them free rides and cotton candy:

Tusker and Lucy are the only permanent English residents in Pankot now. Their story is about what "staying on" means to two people when the place in which they have stayed has declined to stay with them. Pankot has undergone traumatic changes during a quarter-century without the raj. In a way the Smalleys have altered too, in keeping with their changed fortunes and diminished expectations. But the way they have altered is not such as is best calculated to equip them of life in an ex-British hill station in Mrs Gandhi's India. (Swindon 104-5)

Their white skin and Englishness cannot insulate them from the precarious world they now inhabit. Now they are subject to the whims of the ruthless entrepreneur Mrs. Bhoolabhoy, a comprador whose insidiousness is reminiscent of Orwell's U Po Kyin. However, unlike U Po Kyin, she can now operate openly without fear of reprisal for offending an Englishman, free of the strictures of imperialist decorum and the notion of British supremacy. Her letter of eviction, a direct assault on the British that is illustrative of her rapaciousness and their helplessness, is the



catalyst for Tusker's heart attack at the outset of the novel. The Smalleys cling to the memory of a past long since gone that will never return, while Mrs. Bhoolabhoy revels in her newfound power.

And just as the Smalleys shall fade along with their past, so shall the Bhoolabhoy rise with their future, for they are binaries to the Smalleys. Lucy's subservience is mirrored in Mr. Bhoolabhoy, Tusker's cantankerousness in Mrs. Bhoolabhoy. Smith's Hotel is their battleground – the Smalleys desperately cling to it, while Mrs. Bhoolabhoy hastens to get shut of it – these conflicting desires illustrate the shifting social dynamics in the vacuum created by the absence of British authority, where the new Indian entrepreneurial class reigns supreme:

Their symbol is the Shiraz hotel, and their stranglehold over the old India is demonstrated in their conspiracy with Mrs Bhoolaboy, to take over Smith's in order to raze it to the ground and extend their own monstrous building. The Smalleys, Mr Bhoolaboy, Ibrahim and Joseph [servants of the Smalleys] are simply nuisances who will have to be got out of the way. (Swindon 113)

The elimination of the Smalleys and their home will mark the final chapter in the era of British rule in India. New economic models are developing attendant to the ascension of Indians such as the Desais, who are set on removing all remnants of British authority that stand between them and financial gain. (Perhaps this seems overly critical, but their methods are no worse than the imperialists who governed for a century – they are in essence capitalizing on the vacuum created by the exit of the British by continuing the imperial hegemony against their own people.) Roles have reversed, and the Smalleys have the misfortune of being the newly disenfranchised. Such a position proves to be unbearable for Tusker, who is “of the old school of British” (Scott 4). And like Major Callendar of *A Passage to India* and Ellis of *Burmese Days*, both also “of the old

school of British” who wax indignant when natives dare to challenge their colonial or personal authority, Tusker is faced with a new development in the power relationship between colonizer and colonized, for the comprador class has taken control of the former colony and its assets. Unfortunately for Tusker, the natives no longer have to fear him and operate in the shadows like U Po Kyin, because British authority is now nonexistent. In essence, the British prepared and empowered the very people to supplant them that they relied upon most for the success of the Empire.

But Tusker and Lucy are not the only characters who reminisce about the old days of the Raj, for Ibrahim, their faithful servant, is also melancholic about the end of the Empire. Through him greater insight is relayed to the reader about the Smalleys and the truly disastrous impact staying on has had on them:

Ibrahim regretted the passing of the days of the *raj* which he remembered as days when the servants were treated as members of the family, entitled to their good humours and bad humours, their sulks, their outbursts of temper, their right to show who was really boss, and their right to their discreetly appropriated perks, the feathers they had to provide for the nest when the nest they presently inhabited was abandoned by homeward-bound employers. (Scott 22)

He is keenly aware of the Smalleys’ feelings of abandonment, neglect, and insignificance. This speaks well of his character, for he is one of a dwindling number of native allies they have in India. And despite his tumultuous relationship with Tusker that results almost daily in his firing by Tusker and then rehiring by Lucy, he even chooses to stay on with them. His sulky commitment to the Smalleys throws Tusker’s obstinacy into relief while accentuating Lucy’s tolerance, for without their concerted efforts, one suspects that Tusker would have died long ago.

Ibrahim's compassion and fidelity echoes that of Dr. Veraswami, who also believed in maintaining the *status quo* of the Raj. And like Veraswami, Ibrahim is one of the ever-diminishing minority of those who, full of nostalgia, long for the days of the Raj. As such he serves to illuminate the growing resistance to what is left of British authority: He and Veraswami represent the old values of the Empire, from the days of *Kim*, where native complicity was a given and was in fact necessary to ensure the British hegemony.

Perhaps his greatest service, though, is to act as an intermediary, a line of connectivity, between Tusker and Lucy. This is satisfyingly fitting, because India itself performs the same function. His connection with Lucy drives the story, for he is her confidant, and it is through Lucy that we receive the greatest insights about the Smalleys and their inability to truly separate from their past. In lamenting their current treatment at the hands of Mrs. Bhoolabhoy, Lucy remarks to Ibrahim that "There was a time when we, when *we*, did not have to go in for such things, a time when as my poor father used to say, An Englishman's word is as good as his bond because he is known throughout the world to be an honest man." To which Ibrahim rejoins, "Honest because British, Memsahib." Lucy responds, "Yes, Ibrahim. But that is all so long ago" (Scott 44). It is Lucy who provides us with the deepest analysis of the Smalleys' situation; perhaps this is because she stands to lose the most in this new India, for Tusker is her sole source of support, and without him, she will have to live a life of incomprehensible fear and uncertainty:

I'm afraid when he dies the interest on the capital sum dies with him – so far as *we're* concerned. It's never yielded much, but as a little cushion it's always been helpful to him. ... It's been particularly useful to us in retirement, if only helping to defray the cost of what he has to pay into the Indian Military Widows and Orphans fund to make sure I have some income if I'm left alone. His army

pensions stops at his death, you know, and heaven knows it's little enough. In England it would put us on the poverty line. Whatever I get from IMWOF as we call it will probably have to be supplemented by a Royal Warrant pension. (Scott 135-6)

What is she to do upon Tusker's death? Obviously she must rely on the beneficence of the British government, but considering the Smalley's status as detritus from the imperial, one assumes that this is not certain. In fact, nothing in her life is certain. As she voices more and more of her fears to Ibrahim, she acknowledges that they are in this precarious financial state largely because Tusker has frittered away a great deal of their money, so much so that he precluded them from being able to afford to live again in England. And even after his death, it will still be impossible even for Lucy by herself to survive back home. Tusker's decision to stay on has necessitated that Lucy must stay on too.

Despite the inevitability of her looming dreary existence, Lucy remains steadfast, a character worthy of admiration: "But Lucy is never made fun of. Her composure and dignity never fail her in public, and while they hide her sorrows they reveal her strength too. The source of this strength is partly the determination to retain her dignity, but partly, too, a genuine selflessness" (Banerjee 78). And it is through her that the greatest indictment of the Empire is levied: "It is only in her old age, in an interior monologue running right through *Staying On*, that Lucy takes a long, clear, critical look at her past, reviewing her own attitudes and other people's, her inability to flower or flourish within the system that had given her such meagre and grudging nourishment" (Spurling 12).

Despite their feelings and all outward appearances, in a very real sense, the Smalleys have not been abandoned, for an essential part of abandonment is the act of relinquishing

support, and if the British government never supported them, then how could it abandon them? This is the great tragedy of their lives; they have been hoodwinked by an Empire which laid claim to their loyalty and has showed none to them in return. This is a woman who must practically beg for her “sachets of Martin and William’s Belle Madame Special Blue Rinse No. 3” from England, brought to her only when she is fortunate enough to entreat a tourist coming out to the subcontinent to reminisce or enquire about the good old days of Empire in India. This is a woman who faces a life of perilous uncertainty because her husband’s pension is so meager it can barely cover the costs of a modest existence in Pankot, and is wholly insufficient for life in England. Just as their sense of abandonment is unjustified, because one cannot be abandoned if one has never truly been supported, so their choice to stay on in Pankot is not really a choice. They did not stay on: they remained where they could eke out an existence.

In the waning years of British hegemony, the Empire took steps to ensure its safe exit from the colonies that it had exploited for decades and, in the case of India, for well over a century. An essential step in this process of retreat was to use a rearguard. Just as we saw with Crabbe in *The Long Day Wanes* and here again with the Smalleys in *Staying On*, the sacrifice of these people is implicit in this process. Whereas Crabbe was oblivious to his role, as he was of nearly everything in his life, the Smalleys, for better or worse, stayed in the only place where keeping food on the table and roof over their heads was possible. The level of awareness of the consequences of their actions, that they would be the victims of Mrs. Bhoolabhoy’s machinations, subject to the whims of the rising comprador class, suffer the loss of prestige, and be forced to live in abject poverty without British friends or support, is debatable. What is certain is that their actions, especially their financial decisions, were ultimately the reason why they had to stay on. One can imagine them, so many years ago, looking ahead to a life of colonial service,

a future of prosperity and security, and perhaps even a little adventure. Granted, Tusker was certainly no Kimball O'Hara, his lack of ambition precludes any comparison; nor was he a Cyril Fielding or Victor Crabbe, both educators and purveyors of the cause, albeit with reservations and some acts of seditious behavior, but what else would we expect from academics?; nor was he a John Flory, who fell in love with the native culture, but was torn between that love and the code of *pukka* sahib foisted upon him. Tusker, in many ways, is the antithesis of these men, for he lacks their ingenuity, their passion, as well as their humanity and decency. One begins to wonder if he is in fact the nadir (personnel-wise) of what the Empire could muster so late in the imperial game, and perhaps this is how Scott generates the degree of pathos he achieves in the novel, for Tusker, through his financial irresponsibility and ineptitude, has effectively relegated Lucy, who is clearly the hero of the novel, to life of abject poverty, and therefore a life devoid of security and happiness.

If Tusker is symbolic in any way of the Empire – and I believe that he is, for he is now dead like his beloved Raj, and what he has left behind will now be exploited by the natives – then his enslavement to finance speaks volumes about that Empire, because the implication is that the entire colonial enterprise was predicated upon the exigencies of financial necessity. The Empire may have started out, at least in the minds of its many British servants and, indeed, many native subalterns, as a civilizing mission, but what we find by the time we get to *Staying On*, and upon reflection of the other novels discussed in this thesis, is that this was an enterprise undertaken solely for the exploitation of native resources and labor for profit. For what other reason would the British enlist the services of a child such as Kim, train him to be a spy, and then send him into the dangerous wilds of northern India to match wits with men twice his age in the precarious game of espionage? For what other reason would the British hole up in a club where

they encourage Adela Quested to give false testimony against Dr. Aziz and then ostracize Cyril Fielding for seeing the humanity in and befriending the same man? For what other reason would they again hole up in a club, praying for a native rebellion so they could shoot them down like dogs? For what other reason would they permeate every echelon of native education to inculcate their culture and religion, to supplant that of the natives and then deny them the fidelity of equals? For what other reason would they abandon those most loyal to them, those who had been most instrumental in maintaining the *status quo*, to die alone and forgotten? The simple answer is that there was no civilizing mission, for there is nothing civilized in this type of behavior. Every answer to the questions I have posed is the same: to ensure hegemony in order to exploit resources and generate capital through the co-option, marginalization, and enslavement of the natives. This was a business, a cold and heartless one at that. Evidence of this abounds in the plots of these novels and in the lives of the characters that inhabit them.

And this is what ties each of these novels together, for they chronicle the impact of British imperialism on those it should have benefitted most: the agents of empire, like Kim, Cyril Fielding, John Flory, Victor Crabbe, and Tusker Smalley. Who among these men did not have a relationship with a native that was not impacted by the rules of the *pukka sahib*, the code of conduct that sustained and ensured British solidarity and superiority? Kim is pressured by both the whites and especially by the natives to become *pukka sahib*. And like Kim, Cyril Fielding actually chooses to live by the code, which ruins his friendship with Dr. Aziz. John Flory, overcome by the burden of choosing between the two, chooses to remove himself from the imposed act of choosing through his suicide, his one final act of agency. Flory's suicide is symbolic because it is a milestone in the relationship between the Empire and its servants: the Empire's insatiable urge for more took a toll on its most loyal servants that manifests itself at

first in Flory's suicide, then in Crabbe's ambiguous death in the jungles of Malaysia, and finally in Tusker's helplessness to combat Mrs. Bhoolabhoy and his resultant heart attack.

The common criticism of the imperial project in each of the novels I have chosen is that British imperialism was predicated upon a tenuous imbalance of power, which hinged upon British superiority and native assent to that authority. This system was based on racism and social stratification, privileging those who adhered to its strictures and condemning those who did not. With Kipling's *Kim*, we see the establishment of this system embodied in the young and enterprising Kim, the child who becomes father to the man: the young British Empire rises to a position of parent over the ancient Indian Empire. And with Forster's *A Passage to India*, we see the first major challenge to this power dynamic that is not from the natives, but from British women, who by their very presence upset the delicate system, for they are given precedence over the native men owing to British racism, which in turn disturbs the Indians, especially those who had grown accustomed to the prevailing dynamic. With Orwell's *Burmese Days*, we see the first overt challenge to British authority, engineered single-handedly by the duplicitous subaltern, U Po Kyin, who, in his attempt to satisfy two conflicting desires (he wishes both to destroy British authority in Burma and to ingratiate himself with the representatives of that authority), almost destroys his own livelihood. Orwell, through Flory, illustrates that faithful British servants cannot withstand the burgeoning influence of the compradors. The ensuing shift in the power dynamic between the compradors and the Empire is a result of their competition for financial gain. The Empire's desire for lucre supersedes even the most embedded elements of British fidelity and fealty. Through Burgess, we can see the concomitant obliviousness of the faithful colonial servant in Victor Crabbe, who fails to see what his Empire and everyone around him sees because he believes in the cause so much: the coming end. And with Scott, we can see the



pathetic end for those who stayed on, who continued to believe in the civility of British imperialism that was never a part of it, even from the beginning.

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