21

Colonized and Colonizers

Europeans in Africa and Asia, 1850–1930

■ HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first stage of European colonialism, beginning with Columbus, was a period in which Europeans—led by the Spanish and Portuguese—settled in the Western Hemisphere and created plantations with African labor. From 1492 to 1776, European settlement in Asia was limited to a few coastal port cities where merchants and missionaries operated. The second stage—the years between 1776, when Britain lost most of its American colonies, and 1880, when the European scramble for African territory began—has sometimes been called a period of free-trade imperialism because Europeans, especially the British, believed "free trade" would allow them to control Asians and Africans economically without the expense of occupation and outright ownership.

The British used to quip that their second global empire was created in the nineteenth century "in a fit of absentmindedness." But colonial policy in Britain and the rest of Europe was more planned and continuous than that comment might suggest. British control of India (including Burma) increased throughout the nineteenth century, as did British control of South Africa, Australia, the Pacific, and parts of the Americas. At the same time, France, having lost most of India to the British, began building an empire that included parts of North Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific.

When economic depression struck in 1873, European governments turned again to the promise of political control. A third stage of colonialism reached a fever pitch with the partition of Africa after 1880. The period between 1888 and 1914 spawned renewed settlement and

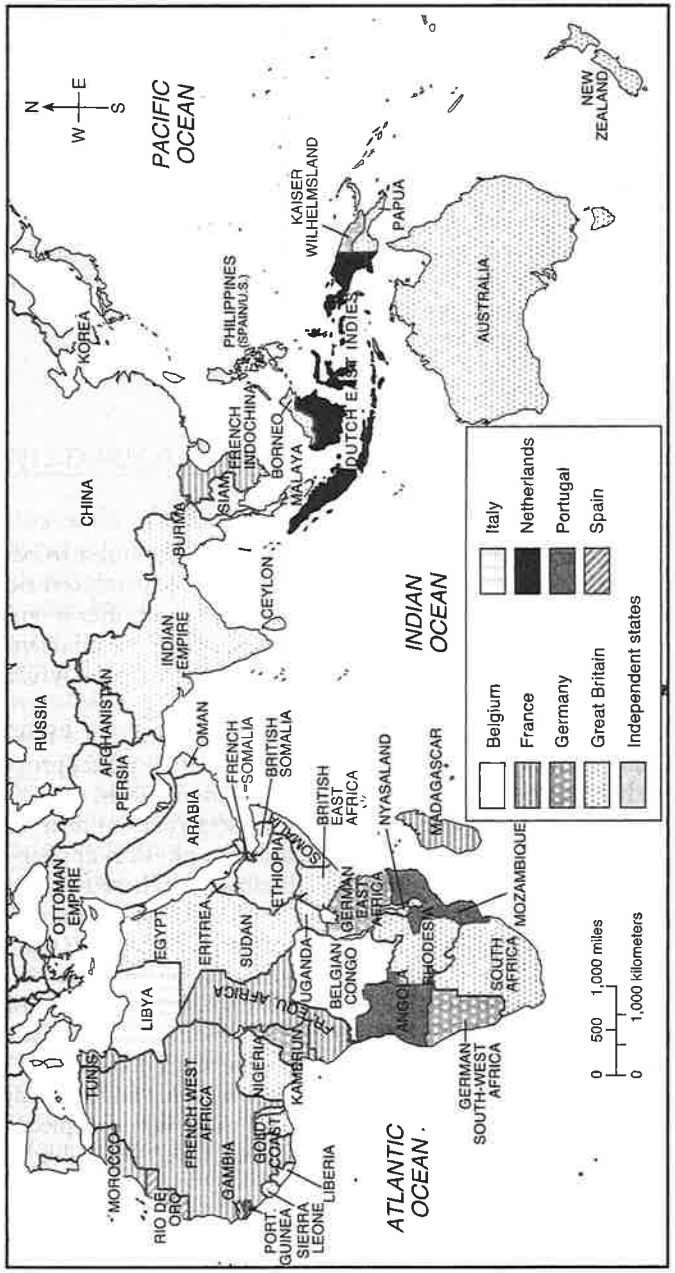
massive population transfers, with most European migrants settling in the older colonies of the Americas (as well as in South Africa and Australia). Even where settlement remained light, however, Europeans took political control of large areas of the Earth's surface (see Map 22.1). The conflict of European empires led to war in 1914 and again during the depression of the 1930s. By the end of World War II, European armies, treasuries, and imperial desires were exhausted. Except for the United States, Israel, and South Africa, the West entered a postcolonial age. The British relinquished India in 1947 (along with what are now Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma [Myanmar]); the French fought to retain their colonies by force until they were defeated in Vietnam in 1954 and Algeria in 1962. Both Britain and France gave up their control of sub-Saharan African colonies after 1960.

■ THINKING HISTORICALLY

Using Literature in History

This chapter explores how literature can be used in the quest to better understand history. The European colonial experience produced rich, evocative literature, which—when used carefully—can offer a wide range of detail and insight about the period and about colonialism. We examine a number of fictional accounts of colonialism, some written by the colonizers, others by the colonized.

Historical novels are particularly tricky. The structure of a novel bears certain similarities to history—a description of a place, proper names and biographies, descriptions of human interactions, an accounting of change, and a story. There are also structural differences in a novel—a lot of dialogue, greater attention to physical appearance and character, and a more prominent narrative. These fictional elements are often unattainable for historians. Dialogue—a person's actual words, and especially thoughts—is mostly absent from the historical sources. A good novelist creates these elements based on historical research and familiarity with the time and place. Such details provide a great sense of verisimilitude (resemblance to reality). We feel as if we are there, a feeling that further reinforces our sense of the novel's truth. As you read the selections, keep in mind the following questions: How successfully do the authors of these fictional pieces show you something about the past that is likely true? What might be the drawbacks of such verisimilitude?



Map 21.1 European Colonialism in Africa and Asia, 1880–1914.

1

GEORGE ALFRED HENTY

With Clive in India: Or, the Beginnings of an Empire, 1884

George Alfred Henty (1832–1902) was a war correspondent and popular British novelist, especially of young adult fiction for boys. He practically invented the imperialist adventure story with its celebration of colonial conquests and its patronizing and often racist views of "natives." This type of tale was the first course of instruction for generations of British young men who would fight for and rule the British Empire. In this story, a young man serves under the legendary Major Robert Clive (1725–1774), who commanded the forces of the British East India Company against Indian and French armies to secure eastern India.

As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What does this chapter suggest about the kind of young men who went to work for the British East India Company? What does it imply about their motivations?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Historical novels often obscure or embroider on actual historical incidents and institutions. For example, we learn that the British East India Company played a significant role in English colonization of India. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: What historical facts does this selection convey? What else do we learn?

Chapter 1: Leaving Home

A lady in deep mourning was sitting, crying bitterly, by a fire in small lodgings in the town of Yarmouth. Beside her stood a tall lad of sixteen. He was slight in build, but his schoolfellows knew that Charlie Marryat's muscles were as firm and hard as those of any boy in the school. In all sports requiring activity and endurance, rather than weight and strength, he was always conspicuous. Not one in the school could compete with him in long-distance running, and when he was one of the hares there was but little chance for the hounds. He was a capital swimmer, and one

G. A. Henty, *With Clive in India: Or, the Beginnings of an Empire* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), 9–13, 24–25.

of the best boxers in the school. He had a reputation for being a leader in every mischievous prank; but he was honourable and manly, would scorn to shelter himself under the semblance of a lie, and was a prime favourite with his masters, as well as his schoolfellows. His mother bewailed the frequency with which he returned home with blackened eyes and bruised face; for between Dr. Willet's school and the fisher lads of Yarmouth there was a standing feud, whose origin dated so far back that none of those now at school could trace it. Consequently, fierce fights often took place in the narrow rows, and sometimes the fisher boys would be driven back on to the broad quay shaded by trees, by the river, and there being reinforced from the craft along the side, would reassume the offensive and drive their opponents back into the main street.

It was but six months since Charlie had lost his father, who was the officer in command at the coast guard station, and his scanty pension was now all that remained for the support of his widow and children. His mother had talked his future prospects over, many times, with Charlie. The latter was willing to do anything, but could suggest nothing. His father had but little naval interest, and had for years been employed on coast guard service. Charlie agreed that, although he should have liked of all things to go to sea, it was useless to think of it now, for he was past the age at which he could have entered as a midshipman.

The matter had been talked over four years before, with his father; but the latter had pointed out that a life in the navy, without interest, is in most cases a very hard one. If a chance of distinguishing himself happened, promotion would follow; but if not, he might be for years on shore, starving on half pay and waiting in vain for an appointment, while officers with more luck and better interest went over his head.

Other professions had been discussed, but nothing determined upon, when Lieutenant Marryat suddenly died. Charlie, although an only son, was not an only child, as he had two sisters both younger than himself. After a few months of effort, Mrs. Marryat found that the utmost she could hope to do, with her scanty income, was to maintain herself and daughters, and to educate them until they should reach an age when they could earn their own living as governesses; but that Charlie's keep and education were beyond her resources. She had, therefore, very reluctantly written to an uncle, whom she had not seen for many years, her family having objected very strongly to her marriage with a penniless lieutenant in the navy. She informed him of the loss of her husband, and that, although her income was sufficient to maintain herself and her daughters, she was most anxious to start her son, who was now sixteen, in life; and therefore begged him to use his influence to obtain for him a situation of some sort. The letter which she now held in her hand was the answer to the appeal.

"My dear Niece," it began, "Since you, by your own foolish conduct and opposition to all our wishes, separated yourself from your family, and went your own way in life, I have heard little of you, as the death of your parents so shortly afterwards deprived me of all sources of

information. I regret to hear of the loss which you have suffered. I have already taken the necessary steps to carry out your wishes. I yesterday dined with a friend, who is one of the directors of the Honorable East India Company, and at my request he has kindly placed a writership in the Company at your son's service. He will have to come up to London to see the board, next week, and will probably have to embark for India a fortnight later. I shall be glad if he will take up his abode with me, during the intervening time. I shall be glad also if you will favour me with a statement of your income and expenses, with such details as you may think necessary. I inclose four five-pound bank notes, in order that your son may obtain such garments as may be immediately needful for his appearance before the board of directors, and for his journey to London. I remain, my dear niece, yours sincerely,

"Joshua Tufton."

"It is cruel," Mrs. Marryat sobbed, "cruel to take you away from us, and send you to India, where you will most likely die of fever, or be killed by a tiger, or stabbed by one of those horrid natives, in a fortnight."

"Not so bad as that, Mother, I hope," Charlie said sympathizingly, although he could not repress a smile; "other people have managed to live out there, and have come back safe."

"Yes," Mrs. Marryat said, sobbing; "I know how you will come back. A little, yellow, shrivelled up old man with no liver, and a dreadful temper, and a black servant. I know what it will be."

This time Charlie could not help laughing.

"That's looking too far ahead altogether, Mother. You take the two extremes. If I don't die in a fortnight, I am to live to be a shrivelled old man. I'd rather take a happy medium, and look forward to coming back before my liver is all gone, or my temper all destroyed, with lots of money to make you and the girls comfortable.

"There is only one thing. I wish it had been a cadetship, instead of a writership."

"That is my only comfort," Mrs. Marryat said. "If it had been a cadetship, I should have written to say that I would not let you go. It is bad enough as it is; but if you had had to fight, I could not have borne it."

Charlie did his best to console his mother, by telling her how everyone who went to India made fortunes, and how he should be sure to come back with plenty of money; and that, when the girls grew up, he should be able to find rich husbands for them; and at last he succeeded in getting her to look at matters in a less gloomy light.

"And I'm sure, Mother," he said, "Uncle means most kindly. He sends twenty pounds, you see, and says that that is for immediate necessities; so I have no doubt he means to help to get my outfit, or at any rate to advance money, which I can repay him out of my salary. The letter is rather stiff and businesslike, of course, but I suppose that's his way; and you see he asks about your income, so perhaps he means to help for the

girls' education. I should go away very happy, if I knew that you would be able to get on comfortably. Of course it's a long way off, Mother, and I should have liked to stay at home, to be a help to you and the girls; but one can't have all one wishes. As far as I am concerned, myself, I would rather go out as a writer there, where I shall see strange sights and a strange country, than be stuck all my life at a desk in London." . . .

The remainder of Charlie's stay in London passed most pleasantly. They visited all the sights of town, Mr. Tufton performing what he called his duty with an air of protest, but showing a general thoughtfulness and desire to please his visitors, which was very apparent even when he grunted and grumbled the most.

On the evening before he started, he called Charlie down into his counting house.

"Tomorrow you are going to sail," he said, "and to start in life on your own account, and I trust that you will, as far as possible, be steady, and do your duty to your employers. You will understand that, although the pay of a writer is not high, there are opportunities for advancement. The Company have the monopoly of the trade of India, and in addition to their great factories at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, they have many other trading stations. Those who, by their good conduct, attract the attention of their superiors, rise to positions of trust and emolument. There are many who think that the Company will, in time, enlarge its operations; and as they do so, superior opportunities will offer themselves; and since the subject of India has been prominently brought before my notice, I have examined the question, and am determined to invest somewhat largely in the stock of the Company, a step which will naturally give me some influence with the board. That influence I shall, always supposing that your conduct warrants it, exercise on your behalf.

"As we are now at war with France, and it is possible that the vessel in which you are proceeding may be attacked by the way, I have thought it proper that you should be armed. You will, therefore, find in your cabin a brace of pistols, a rifle, and a double-barrel shotgun: which last, I am informed, is a useful weapon at close quarters. Should your avocations in India permit your doing so, you will find them useful in the pursuit of game. I hope that you will not be extravagant; but as a matter of business I find that it is useful to be able to give entertainments, to persons who may be in a position to benefit or advance you. I have, therefore, arranged that you will draw from the factor at Madras the sum of two hundred pounds, annually, in addition to your pay. It is clearly my duty to see that my nephew has every fair opportunity for making his way.

"Now, go upstairs at once to your mother. I have letters to write, and am too busy for talking."

So saying, with a peremptory wave of his hand he dismissed his nephew.

2

OLIVE SCHREINER

Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland (1897)

While some young Englishmen went off to India to fight for Clive and the British East India Company, others joined the troops of the British South Africa Company under Cecil Rhodes. Olive Schreiner (1855–1920), daughter of a German missionary father and a British mother, lived in the Cape colony of South Africa. Her novels evolved from evocations of a young woman's life on *An African Farm* (1883) to critiques of war, racism, and imperialism in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897). As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What does the novel suggest were the motivations for European colonialism in South Africa? What does the novel imply were the consequences?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Historians describe actions and thoughts that are written down or spoken. Unrecorded dreams, memories, and fantasies are normally unavailable to the historian; a novelist invents them. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: How do these inventions in this selection add to your understanding of the history of British or European imperialism in general or specifically in South Africa? How might they mislead you?

It was a dark night; a chill breath was coming from the east; not enough to disturb the blaze of Trooper Peter Halket's fire, yet enough to make it quiver. He sat alone beside it on the top of a kopje.[1]

All about was an impenetrable darkness; not a star was visible in the black curve over his head.

He had been travelling with a dozen men who were taking provisions of mealies and rice to the next camp. He had been sent out to act as scout along a low range of hills, and had lost his way. Since eight in the morning he had wandered among long grasses, and ironstone kopjes, and stunted bush, and had come upon no sign of human habitation, but the remains of a burnt kraal,[2] and a down-trampled and now

[1] *kopje:* hill. [Ed.]
[2] *kraal:* enclosure. [Ed.]

Olive Schreiner, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1897), 1–3, 5–15. Also available at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1431/1431-h/1431-h.htm.

uncultivated mealie field, where a month before the Chartered Company's forces had destroyed a native settlement.

Three times in the day it had appeared to him that he had returned to the very spot from which he had started; nor was it his wish to travel very far, for he knew his comrades would come back to look for him, to the neighbourhood where he had last been seen, when it was found at the evening camping ground that he did not appear.

Trooper Peter Halket was very weary. He had eaten nothing all day; and had touched little of the contents of a small flask of Cape brandy he carried in his breast pocket, not knowing when it would again be replenished.

As night drew near he determined to make his resting place on the top of one of the kopjes, which stood somewhat alone and apart from the others. He could not easily be approached there, without his knowing it. He had not much fear of the natives; their kraals had been destroyed and their granaries burnt for thirty miles round, and they themselves had fled: but he feared, somewhat, the lions, which he had never seen, but of which he had heard, and which might be cowering in the long grasses and brushwood at the kopje's foot:—and he feared, vaguely, he hardly knew what, when he looked forward to his first long night alone in the veld.

By the time the sun had set he had gathered a little pile of stumps and branches on the top of the kopje. He intended to keep a fire burning all night; and as the darkness began to settle down he lit it. It might be his friends would see it from far, and come for him early in the morning; and wild beasts would hardly approach him while he knelt beside it; and of the natives he felt there was little fear.

He built up the fire; and determined if it were possible to keep awake the whole night beside it.

The darkness of the night above him, and the silence of the veld about him, oppressed him. At times he even wished he might hear the cry of a jackal or of some larger beast of prey in the distance; and he wished that the wind would blow a little louder, instead of making that little wheezing sound as it passed the corners of the stones. He looked down at his gun, which lay cocked ready on the ground at his right side; and from time to time he raised his hand automatically and fingered the cartridges in his belt. Then he stretched out his small wiry hands to the fire and warmed them. It was only half past ten, and it seemed to him he had been sitting here ten hours at the least.

After a while he threw two more large logs on the fire, and took the flask out of his pocket. He examined it carefully by the firelight to see how much it held: then he took a small draught, and examined it again to see how much it had fallen; and put it back in his breast pocket.

Then Trooper Peter Halket fell to thinking.

It was not often that he thought. On patrol and sitting round camp fires with the other men about him there was no time for it; and

Peter Halket had never been given to much thinking. He had been a careless boy at the village school; and though, when he left, his mother paid the village apothecary to read learned books with him at night on history and science, he had not retained much of them. As a rule he lived in the world immediately about him, and let the things of the moment impinge on him, and fall off again as they would, without much reflection. But tonight on the kopje he fell to thinking, and his thoughts shaped themselves into connected chains.

He wondered first whether his mother would ever get the letter he had posted the week before, and whether it would be brought to her cottage or she would go to the post office to fetch it. And then, he fell to thinking of the little English village where he had been born, and where he had grown up. He saw his mother's fat white ducklings creep in and out under the gate, and waddle down to the little pond at the back of the yard; he saw the school house that he had hated so much as a boy, and from which he had so often run away to go a-fishing, or a-bird's-nesting. He saw the prints on the school house wall on which the afternoon sun used to shine when he was kept in; Jesus of Judea blessing the children, and one picture just over the door where he hung with his arms stretched out and the blood dropping from his feet. Then Peter Halket thought of the tower at the ruins which he had climbed so often for birds' eggs; and he saw his mother standing at her cottage gate when he came home in the evening, and he felt her arms round his neck as she kissed him; but he felt her tears on his cheek, because he had run away from school all day; and he seemed to be making apologies to her, and promising he never would do it again if only she would not cry. He had often thought of her since he left her, on board ship, and when he was working with the prospectors, and since he had joined the troop; but it had been in a vague way; he had not distinctly seen and felt her. But tonight he wished for her as he used to when he was a small boy and lay in his bed in the next room, and saw her shadow through the door as she bent over her wash-tub earning the money which was to feed and clothe him. He remembered how he called her and she came and tucked him in and called him "Little Simon," which was his second name and had been his father's, and which she only called him when he was in bed at night, or when he was hurt.

He sat there staring into the blaze. He resolved he would make a great deal of money, and she should live with him. He would build a large house in the West End of London, the biggest that had ever been seen, and another in the country, and they should never work any more.

Peter Halket sat as one turned into stone, staring into the fire.

All men made money when they came to South Africa,—Barney Barnato,[3] Rhodes—they all made money out of the country, eight millions, twelve millions, twenty-six millions, forty millions; why should not he!

[3] Barney Barnato: Diamond-mining baron, rival of Cecil Rhodes. [Ed.]

Peter Halket started suddenly and listened. But it was only the wind coming up the kopje like a great wheezy beast creeping upwards; and he looked back into the fire.

He considered his business prospects. When he had served his time as volunteer he would have a large piece of land given him, and the Mashonas and Matabeles would have all their land taken away from them in time, and the Chartered Company would pass a law that they had to work for the white men; and he, Peter Halket, would make them work for him. He would make money.

Then he reflected on what he should do with the land if it were no good and he could not make anything out of it. Then, he should have to start a syndicate; called the Peter Halket Gold, or the Peter Halket Iron-mining, or some such name, Syndicate. Peter Halket was not very clear as to how it ought to be started; but he felt certain that he and some other men would have to take shares. They would not have to pay for them. And then they would get some big man in London to take shares. He need not pay for them; they would give them to him; and then the company would be floated. No one would have to pay anything; it was just the name—"The Peter Halket Gold Mining Company, Limited." It would float in London; and people there who didn't know the country would buy the shares; THEY would have to give ready money for them, of course; perhaps fifteen pounds a share when they were up!—Peter Halket's eyes blinked as he looked into the fire.—And then, when the market was up, he, Peter Halket, would sell out all his shares. If he gave himself only six thousand and sold them each for ten pounds, then he, Peter Halket, would have sixty thousand pounds! And then he would start another company, and another.

Peter Halket struck his knee softly with his hand.

That was the great thing—"Always sell out at the right time." That point Peter Halket was very clear on. He had heard it so often discussed. Give some shares to men with big names, and sell out: they can sell out too at the right time.

Peter Halket stroked his knee thoughtfully.

And then the other people, that bought the shares for cash! Well, they could sell out too; they could all sell out!

Then Peter Halket's mind got a little hazy. The matter was getting too difficult for him, like a rule of three sum at school when he could not see the relation between the two first terms and the third. Well, if they didn't like to sell out at the right time, it was their own faults. Why didn't they? He, Peter Halket, did not feel responsible for them. Everyone knew that you had to sell out at the right time. If they didn't choose to sell out at the right time, well, they didn't. "It's the shares that you sell, not the shares you keep, that make the money."

But if they couldn't sell them?

Here Peter Halket hesitated.—Well, the British Government would have to buy them, if they were so bad no one else would; and then no one would lose. "The British Government can't let British share-holders suffer." He'd heard that often enough. The British taxpayer would have to pay for the Chartered Company, for the soldiers, and all the other things, if IT couldn't, and take over the shares if it went smash, because there were lords and dukes and princes connected with it. And why shouldn't they pay for his company? He would have a lord in it too!

Peter Halket looked into the fire completely absorbed in his calculations.—Peter Halket, Esq., Director of the Peter Halket Gold Mining Company, Limited. Then, when he had got thousands, Peter Halket, Esq., M.P. Then, when he had millions, Sir Peter Halket, Privy Councillor!

He reflected deeply, looking into the blaze. If you had five or six millions you could go where you liked and do what you liked. You could go to Sandringham. You could marry anyone. No one would ask what your mother had been; it wouldn't matter.

A curious dull sinking sensation came over Peter Halket; and he drew in his broad leathern belt two holes tighter.

Even if you had only two millions you could have a cook and a valet, to go with you when you went into the veld or to the wars; and you could have as much champagne and other things as you liked. At that moment that seemed to Peter more important than going to Sandringham.

He took out his flask of Cape Smoke, and drew a tiny draught from it.

Other men had come to South Africa with nothing, and had made everything! Why should not he?

He stuck small branches under the two great logs, and a glorious flame burst out. Then he listened again intently. The wind was falling and the night was becoming very still. It was a quarter to twelve now. His back ached, and he would have liked to lie down; but he dared not, for fear he should drop asleep. He leaned forward with his hands between his crossed knees, and watched the blaze he had made.

Then, after a while, Peter Halket's thoughts became less clear: they became at last, rather, a chain of disconnected pictures, painting themselves in irrelevant order on his brain, than a line of connected ideas. Now, as he looked into the crackling blaze, it seemed to be one of the fires they had make to burn the natives' grain by, and they were throwing in all they could not carry away: then, he seemed to see his mother's fat ducks waddling down the little path with the green grass on each side. Then, he seemed to see his huts where he lived with the prospectors, and the native women who used to live with him; and he wondered where the women were. Then—he saw the skull of an old

Mashona blown off at the top, the hands still moving. He heard the loud cry of the native women and children as they turned the maxims on to the kraal; and then he heard the dynamite explode that blew up a cave. Then again he was working a maxim gun, but it seemed to him it was more like the reaping machine he used to work in England, and that what was going down before it was not yellow corn, but black men's heads; and he thought when he looked back they lay behind him in rows, like the corn in sheaves.

3

RENÉ MARAN

Batouala, 1921

The problem with colonial novels is that they often ignored the colonized—or worse. In the previous selection we glimpse the colonized Shona people of southern Africa only through the flicker of the camp fire or the barrel of a maxim gun. René Maran (1887–1960), a French Guyanese poet and novelist, introduced European readers to an African view of imperialism with this novel, based on his experience as a colonial official in French Equatorial Africa among the Banda people in the savanna north of the Congo. Awarded the prestigious French Goncourt Prize in 1922, Maran's instant celebrity brought on the condemnation of many of the French public who refused to accept an African voice or his critique of French imperialism. The book was banned and consigned to oblivion until after the author's death.

The novel is set during the period of World War I when the French and Germans were drafting their African colonial subjects to fight each other in Africa and Europe. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What does the novel tell you about African perceptions of the conflict? What does it tell you about French or European imperialism?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Novels, unlike histories, are full of dialogue. Maran lived among these Banda people and wrote later that he was careful to capture how they talked. A work of art cannot simply record reality. A novel must select, imagine, and invent in order to tell a story. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: How does this selection enrich your historical understanding? What are the pitfalls of dialogue to historical understanding?

René Maran, *Batouala*, trans. Barbara Beck and Alexandre Mboukou (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987), 66–77.

A marvelous assembly. All the M'bis and all the N'gapous were there with their elders. Batouala was very animated and held forth in the center of the group formed by his old relatives, the "capitas" or vassals placed under his protection, and the old folks, repositories of the surest Banda traditions.

The volume of his voice kept increasing. People were saying that several whites had just died at Bangui. They were saying that in a little while Mister Governor was to go to Bandorro. They were even saying that in France, in M'Poutou over there beyond the Big Water, the French were fighting with the Germans and that they were beating them as one beats a dog.

Even while speaking this way he filled with hemp and tobacco all the "garabos" found in his reach and those passed to him, lit them, took a few puffs according to the custom, and passed them around.

"Ho! Batouala," abruptly exclaimed the great Mandjia chief Pangakoura, "Ho! Batouala."

"Shhh! . . . Obo katé . . . Obo katé . . . Silence . . . Silence!" was cried out from everywhere.

"Listen to Pangakoura."

"Pangakoura is going to speak."

Batouala raised his hand to ask for quiet. Then, turning to his guest:

"Now you may speak, Pangakoura. Our ears are near your mouth."

"You know, Batouala," began Pangakoura, "and you who listen to me know also, that I've just come back from Krébédjé. I had gone there to talk to the great commandant Kotaya—the river people nicknamed him that because of his big belly—about the strange actions of Davéké, that Portuguese who stops from time to time in our villages and conducts himself like a pirate.

"I told him my problem. In my own language, of course. Do you know what he had his interpreter, who laughed out loud about it, answer me? You would never guess. No use trying. He had this answer for me, which proves among other things that there are whites and there are whites, and that they hate each other: 'I thought you were an idiot, Pangakoura. But I am quite obliged to realize that you are even more so than I thought . . . Ah! what . . . You still don't know that a Portuguese is less than nothing? You imbecile! . . . Monkey's child! . . . Bacouya's behind . . .'"

Some laughs burst out. . . .

"Don't you find," asked Batouala when the last laughs had died down, "that the current lack of a market for rubber is unexpected good luck for us?

"We ought to be grateful for it and weigh N'Gakoura down with offerings so that he may prolong it as long as possible . . . Fortunate, triply fortunate lack of a market! . . . Without it, we wouldn't have been able to come to the outpost to entertain our livers, even if the commandant had been on his rounds, as he has been for several days.

"We would have always had on our back one of those "Boundjoudoulis" of bad luck, who make us pay a 'pata,' that is to say five times one franc, for what costs the whites a 'méya': ten sous."

"Your word is pure truth," grumbled Yakidji. "Surely we must give thanks to N'Gakoura for this fortunate crisis.

"With the crisis, all the merchants have gone home, some to Krébédjé, some to Bangui, some to M'Poutou. May they all stay where they are. And may they all die there, open-mouthed and their feet in rot."

"But all the 'boundjous' are not bad," ventured someone whose opinion was greeted with boos.

"That's not all, that's not all, hey! Batouala," bellowed another. "It seems they are beginning to send all the 'yongorogombés' to M'Poutou because of the big argument that is going on now between the French whites and the German whites."

"Eh hey! . . . eh hey! . . . They send all the riflemen, all the Senegalese riflemen are sent to M'Poutou."

"May our commandants go join them there as soon as possible!" Yabada took up. "Perhaps they too won't be long in going."

"Yabao!" quavered Batouala's old father, "as true as my hair is white, I believe, as far as I'm concerned, that you're too easily taking mountains for rivers, and your desires for realities.

"Now then, just take a little time to think . . . It's almost three rainy seasons since the French and the Germans began exchanging rifle shots. Is that true? Hey! well, tell me, do the French around here seem to want to go away? Certainly not. On the contrary, not one of them has ever stayed this long in our country. In their country, over there, there is danger of death. Why would they go get themselves killed there? Holding on to one's skin, Yabada, is the first word in wisdom . . ."

The laughter began again with renewed zeal. But Yabada was already replying:

"You are always right, old man. I am the first to admit that. However, let me wish that these French whom I hate be beaten by the Germans."

"laha! Yabada 'boundoua.' Ah! Yabada fool. Fine thing. To think that I used to believe you hadn't nursed for a long time! How could I have been so wrong?

"Yabada, ho! Yabada . . . Yabada . . . Yabadao! . . . Germans, French, French, Germans: aren't they all still 'whites'? So, why change? The French have enslaved us. Now we know their qualities and their faults. That's already something, I assure you, even though I'm well aware that they amuse themselves with us as Paka the wildcat does with a mouse.

"Paka almost always ends up devouring the mouse he was playing with. Why wish other Pakas than those we have, since we must sooner or later be killed and eaten?

"After all, such a man avoids a herd of wild bulls only to meet a waiting panther."

The discussion slowly became livelier, more general.

"Batouala's old father is right."

"His words are wisdom itself."

"Why change? It's far too late."

"We should have massacred the first one who came to our land."

"Unfortunately, we didn't do that."

"It would be better now to resign ourselves."

"Eh hey! . . . Let's keep the French . . ."

"As one keeps his own lice."

"Perhaps their successors would be worse."

"However, not only do they not like us, but they scorn us and detest us."

"Let's be fair . . . We'll pay them back."

"Let's massacre them then!"

"That's it."

"Ayayayayaille! . . . We will massacre them . . ."

"One day . . ."

". . . which isn't far from dawning . . ."

". . . when Banziris, Yakomas, Gobous, Sabangas, Dacpas, in short all those who speak Banda, Mandjia or Sango, will have given up their old feuds . . ."

". . . iahayaya! . . . become brothers . . ."

"In that time, Macoudé, you will be able to catch the moon easily in your nets."

"Then the Bamba will go back to its source."

The laughter began again, and prolonged itself so that the vague and distant noise which, each moment, seemed to rise from the horizon, was scarcely heard.

Batouala bounded to his feet.

"Either you are all cowardly dogs drunk with hemp and 'kéné," he screamed, "or you are all already drunker than I!

"Are you men, yes or no? I believe the answer is no. The Senoussou 'Bazi'nguérs' still haven't castrated you. I just don't know. But answer me then! In any case, I, who speak to you now, I cannot help hating these 'boundjous' . . . To hate them it's enough for me to remember the time when the M'bis lived happy and tranquil along the big Nioubangui river, between Bessou-Kémo and Kémo-Ouadda.

"What beautiful days were those! Not a worry! No portering. No rubber to make nor roads to clear. We thought only about drinking, eating, sleeping, dancing, hunting, and mounting our women.

"Yaba! That was a great time . . . The first whites appeared. And then my people and their vassals, carrying fetishes, cooking pots, chickens, mats, dogs, women, goats, children, and ducks, retreated to Krébédjé.

"I was quite little then. There were fights to wage against neighboring populations, houses to build and fields to sow. We hadn't yet begun to breathe in peace when some 'boundjous' appeared out of nowhere, set foot in Krébédjé, and established themselves there forever.

"The most urgent task we have is to put a few river branches between them and us. We arrive at Griko, on the shores of the Kouma, whose waters are fresh and full of fish. The place pleases us. We decide to stop there. Naturally, the same difficulties as before occur during our settling. Armed conferences. Taking possession of the lands from which we had dislodged our enemies. And I don't know what else. And all would be for the best if the whites hadn't decided one beautiful day to land on Griko too, like a flight of vultures on carrion.

"We take to the bush again, one more time. Grimari! We are at Grimari. We soon found a site to our liking between the Bamba and the Pombo. We hurried our task of settling down. Lalala! We hadn't finished building our houses and tilling the lands belonging to our plantations when those damn whites were already on us.

"Then, sick at heart, discouraged, tired, disheartened—we had lost so many of our brothers in the course of our warlike migrations—then we stayed where we were and forced ourselves to show a good countenance for the 'boundjous'."

The loud distant noise slowly drew closer.

"Our submission," resumed Batouala, whose voice was getting feverish, "our submission did not even earn us their good will. And, at first, not happy with trying to suppress our most cherished customs, they didn't cease until they had imposed theirs on us.

"In the long run, they have succeeded only too well there. Result: the gloomiest sadness reigns, henceforth, through all the black country. Thus the whites have made the zest for living disappear in the places where they have taken up residence.

"Since we have submitted to them, we have no more right to bet any money at all at the 'patara.' We have no more right to get drunk either. Our dances and our songs disturb their sleep. But dances and songs are our whole life. We dance to celebrate Ipeu, the moon, or to praise Lolo, the sun. We dance for everything, for nothing, for pleasure. Nothing is done or happens, but we dance about it forthwith. And our dances are innumerable. We dance the dance of the water of the land and of the water of the sky, the dance of the fire, the dance of the wind, the dance of the ant, the dance of the elephant, the dance of the trees, the dance of the leaves, the dance of the stars, the dance of the earth and of that which is within it, all the dances, all the dances. Maybe it is better to say that we danced them all not long ago. Because as far as these times are concerned they allow us to do them only rarely. And still we have to pay a tithe to the government. . . .

"The 'boundjous' are worth nothing. They don't like us. They came to our land just to suppress us. They treat us like liars! Our lies don't hurt anybody. Yes, at times we elaborate on the truth; that's because truth almost always needs to be embellished; it is because cassava without salt doesn't have any taste.

"Them, they lie for nothing. They lie as one breathes, with method and memory. And by their lies they establish their superiority over us.

"They say, for example, that blacks of one tribe hate those of another. Ayayaille! But the 'boundjoulis' or merchants, the 'mon pères' or missionaries, the 'yon-gorogombés' or riflemen, can they get along with the commandants? And why shouldn't we be like them, on this point. Man, whatever his color may be, is always a man, here as in M'Poutou."

The loud distant noise, like the buzzing of thousands of green or blue flies swarming on carrion, became more distinct from moment to moment.

"I will never tire of telling," uttered Batouala, "of the wickedness of the 'boundjous.' Until my last breath, I will reproach them for their cruelty, their duplicity, their greed.

"What haven't they promised us since we have had the misfortune of knowing them! 'You'll thank us later,' they tell us. 'It is for your own good that we force you to work.

"'We only take from you a small part of the money we force you to earn. We use it to build you villages, roads, bridges and machines which move by fire on iron rails.'

"The roads, the bridges, those extraordinary machines, so where are they! Mata! Nini! Nothing, nothing! Moreover, instead of taking only a part of our gains, they steal even our last sou from us! And you don't find our lot unbearable? . . .

"Thirty moons ago, they still bought our rubber at the rate of three francs per kilo. From one day to the next, with no explanation, they paid us only fifteen sous for the same quantity of 'banga.' Eh hey, fifteen sous: one 'méya' and five 'bi'mbas.' And it's just at that moment that the government chose to raise our poll tax from five to seven or even ten francs!

"Well, everybody knows that from the first day of the dry season to the last of the rainy season, our work only pays taxes, when it doesn't fill, at the same time, the pockets of our commandants.

"We are only taxable flesh. We are only beasts of burden. Beasts? Not even that. Dogs? They feed them, and they care for their horses. Us?

We are for them less than those animals; we are lower than the lowest. They are slowly crushing us."

A crowd sweating with drunkenness pressed behind the group made up of Batouala, the elders, the chiefs and their vassals.

There was abusive language and insults. Batouala was right a thousand times over. They used to be happy in other times, before the arrival of the 'boundjous.' Working a little, and only for oneself, eating, drinking and sleeping; at long intervals, some bloody ceremonies when they took out the livers of the dead in order to eat their courage and to absorb it—those were the only tasks of the blacks in other times, before the arrival of the whites.

At present, the blacks were no more than slaves. There was nothing to hope for from a heartless race. For the 'boundjous' didn't have any hearts. Didn't they abandon the children they had by black women? Knowing themselves sons of whites, when these children grew up they wouldn't stoop to associate with negroes. And these white-blacks, good 'boundjouvoukous' that they were, lived a life apart, full of hatred, burning with envy, detested by all, riddled with faults, spiteful and lazy.

As for white women, useless to speak of them. For a long time they had been believed to be precious matter. They were feared, they were respected, they were venerated on a par with fetishes.

But they had had to lower their opinion. As loose as black women, but more hypocritical and more mercenary, they were full of vices which the latter hadn't known about until then. Why go on about it? The worst is that they demanded respect. . .

Batouala's old father stretched out his hand. The tumult quieted as if by magic, but not that noise of songs and music which floated in the warm air bathed with fragrance.

"My children, what you're saying is truth itself. But you should understand that it's too late to think about correcting our mistakes. There's nothing more to do. Resign yourselves. When Bamara the lion roared, no antelope in the area dared to make a sound. It is the same for us as for the antelope. Not being the strongest, we can only remain quiet. Our peace depends on it.

"Besides, let me remind you that we are not here to curse our masters. I am old. My tongue has dried out during your harangues. We would do better to complain less about the whites and to drink more. You know as well as I that except for the bed, Pernod is the only important invention of the 'boundjous.' I may be nearsighted, but only an instant ago, I believe I saw several bottles of absinthe. Batouala, my son, were you perhaps planning to open them?"

Everybody burst out laughing. That remark was enough to set them off. And laughing until he too cried, Batouala hurried to fulfill the wish of the roguish old man, while ten, twenty, one hundred voices sang around him the song of Koliko'mbo.

Koliko'mbo, Koliko'mbo, Koliko'mbo
Is a dwarf.
As long as the rainy season lasts,
And thunder twists in the air,
And the tornado turns and roars,
He burrows in the caverns
Which he inhabits on the heights.
E-hé! E-éé!
Koliko'mbo! Koliko'mbo!. . .

4

E. M. FORSTER

A Passage to India, 1924

Colonizers shared many similarities, but the people they colonized were often very different. E. M. Forster (1879–1970) wrote in *A Passage to India* of the British colonization of Indian Hindus and Muslims whose civilizations were older than the British. In this selection from the opening of the novel, Forster introduces the reader to Indian Muslims whose ancestors had colonized India hundreds of years before. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: How do Dr. Aziz and his friends view English colonialism? What are their grievances?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

A good novelist or historian helps the reader enter the mind of another. Forster was neither Indian nor Muslim. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: How does Forster's writing help you understand aspects of colonialism? What—if anything—does he tell you about colonialism that a history would not or could not?

Abandoning his bicycle, which fell before a servant could catch it, the young man sprang up on to the verandah. He was all animation. "Hamidullah, Hamidullah! am I late?" he cried.

"Do not apologize," said his host. "You are always late."

"Kindly answer my question. Am I late? Has Mahmoud Ali eaten all the food? If so I go elsewhere. Mr. Mahmoud Ali, how are you?"

"Thank you, Dr. Aziz, I am dying."

E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1924), 9–23. Used by permission of The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge and The Society of Authors as their Representative.

"Dying before your dinner? Oh, poor Mahmoud Ali!"

"Hamidullah here is actually dead. He passed away just as you rode up on your bike."

"Yes, that is so," said the other. "Imagine us both as addressing you from another and a happier world."

"Does there happen to be such a thing as a hookah in that happier world of yours?"

"Aziz, don't chatter. We are having a very sad talk."

The hookah had been packed too tight, as was usual in his friend's house, and bubbled sulkily. He coaxed it. Yielding at last, the tobacco jetted up into his lungs and nostrils, driving out the smoke of burning cow dung that had filled them as he rode through the bazaar. It was delicious. He lay in a trance, sensuous but healthy, through which the talk of the two others did not seem particularly sad—they were discussing as to whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman. Mahmoud Ali argued that it was not, Hamidullah disagreed, but with so many reservations that there was no friction between them. Delicious indeed to lie on the broad verandah with the moon rising in front and the servants preparing dinner behind, and no trouble happening.

"Well, look at my own experience this morning."

"I only contend that it is possible in England," replied Hamidullah, who had been to that country long ago, before the big rush, and had received a cordial welcome at Cambridge.

"It is impossible here. Aziz! The red-nosed boy has again insulted me in Court. I do not blame him. He was told that he ought to insult me. Until lately he was quite a nice boy, but the others have got hold of him."

"Yes, they have no chance here, that is my point. They come out intending to be gentlemen, and are told it will not do. Look at Lesley, look at Blakiston, now it is your red-nosed boy, and Fielding will go next. Why, I remember when Turton came out first. It was in another part of the Province, You fellows will not believe me, but I have driven with Turton in his carriage—Turton! Oh yes, we were once quite intimate. He has shown me his stamp collection."

"He would expect you to steal it now. Turton! But red-nosed boy will be far worse than Turton!"

"I do not think so. They all become exactly the same, not worse, not better. I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any Englishwoman six months. All are exactly alike. Do you not agree with me?"

"I do not," replied Mahmoud Ali, entering into the bitter fun, and feeling both pain and amusement at each word that was uttered. "For my own part I find such profound differences among our rulers. Red-nose mumbles, Turton talks distinctly, Mrs. Turton takes bribes, Mrs. Red-nose does not and cannot, because so far there is no Mrs. Red-nose."

"Bribes?"

"Did you not know that when they were lent to Central India over a Canal Scheme, some Rajah or other gave her a sewing machine in solid gold so that the water should run through his state?"

"And does it?"

"No, that is where Mrs. Turton is so skilful. When we poor blacks take bribes, we perform what we are bribed to perform, and the law discovers us in consequence. The English take and do nothing. I admire them."

"We all admire them. Aziz, please pass me the hookah."

"Oh, not yet—hookah is so jolly now."

"You are a very selfish boy." He raised his voice suddenly, and shouted for dinner. Servants shouted back that it was ready. They meant that they wished it was ready, and were so understood, for nobody moved. Then Hamidullah continued, but with changed manner and evident emotion.

"But take my case—the case of young Hugh Bannister. Here is the son of my dear, my dead friends, the Reverend and Mrs. Bannister, whose goodness to me in England I shall never forget or describe. They were father and mother to me, I talked to them as I do now. In the vacations their Rectory became my home. They entrusted all their children to me—I often carried little Hugh about—I took him up to the Funeral of Queen Victoria, and held him in my arms above the crowd."

"Queen Victoria was different," murmured Mahmoud Ali.

"I learn now that this boy is in business as a leather merchant at Cawnpore. Imagine how I long to see him and to pay his fare that this house may be his home. But it is useless. The other Anglo-Indians will have got hold of him long ago. He will probably think that I want something, and I cannot face that from the son of my old friends. Oh, what in this country has gone wrong with everything, Vakil Sahib? I ask you."

Aziz joined in. "Why talk about the English? Brrrr . . . ! Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends? Let us shut them out and be jolly. Queen Victoria and Mrs. Bannister were the only exceptions, and they're dead."

"No, no, I do not admit that, I have met others."

"So have I," said Mahmoud Ali, unexpectedly veering. "All ladies are far from alike." Their mood was changed, and they recalled little kindnesses and courtesies. "She said 'Thank you so much' in the most natural way." "She offered me a lozenge when the dust irritated my throat." Hamidullah could remember more important examples of angelic ministration, but the other, who only knew Anglo-India, had to ransack his memory for scraps, and it was not surprising that he should return to "But of course all this is exceptional. The exception does not prove the rule. The average woman is like Mrs. Turton, and, Aziz, you know what she is." Aziz did not know, but said he did. He too

generalized from his disappointments—it is difficult for members of a subject race to do otherwise. Granted the exceptions, he agreed that all Englishwomen are haughty and venal. The gleam passed from the conversation, whose wintry surface unrolled and expanded interminably.

A servant announced dinner. They ignored him. The elder men had reached their eternal politics, Aziz drifted into the garden. The trees smelt sweet—green-blossomed champak—and scraps of Persian poetry came into his head. Dinner, dinner, dinner . . . but when he returned to the house for it, Mahmoud Ali had drifted away in his turn, to speak to his sais. "Come and see my wife a little then," said Hamidullah, and they spent twenty minutes behind the purdah. Hamidullah Begum was a distant aunt of Aziz, and the only female relative he had in Chandrapore, and she had much to say to him on this occasion about a family circumcision that had been celebrated with imperfect pomp. It was difficult to get away, because until they had had their dinner she would not begin hers, and consequently prolonged her remarks in case they should suppose she was impatient. Having censured the circumcision, she bethought her of kindred topics, and asked Aziz when he was going to be married.

Respectful but irritated, he answered, "Once is enough."

"Yes, he has done his duty," said Hamidullah. "Do not tease him so. He carries on his faintly, two boys and their sister."

"Aunt, they live most comfortably with my wife's mother, where she was living when she died. I can see them whenever I like. They are such very, very small children."

"And he sends them the whole of his salary and lives like a low-grade clerk, and tells no one the reason. What more do you require him to do?"

But this was not Hamidullah Begum's point, and having courteously changed the conversation for a few moments she returned and made it. She said, "What is to become of all our daughters if men refuse to marry? They will marry beneath them, or—" And she began the oft-told tale of a lady of Imperial descent who could find no husband in the narrow circle where her pride permitted her to mate, and had lived on unwed, her age now thirty, and would die unwed, for no one would have her now. While the tale was in progress, it convinced the two men, the tragedy seemed a slur on the whole community; better polygamy almost, than that a woman should die without the joys God has intended her to receive. Wedlock, motherhood, power in the house—for what else is she born, and how can the man who has denied them to her stand up to face her creator and his own at the last day? Aziz took his leave saying "Perhaps . . . but later . . ."—his invariable reply to such an appeal.

"You mustn't put off what you think right," said Hamidullah. "That is why India is in such a plight, because we put off things." But seeing that his young relative looked worried, he added a few soothing words, and thus wiped out any impression that his wife might have made.

During their absence, Mahmoud Ali had gone off in his carriage leaving a message that he should be back in five minutes, but they were on no account to wait. They sat down to meat with a distant cousin of the house, Mohammed Latif, who lived on Hamidullah's bounty and who occupied the position neither of a servant nor of an equal. He did not speak unless spoken to, and since no one spoke kept unoffended silence. Now and then he belched, in compliment to the richness of the food. A gentle, happy and dishonest old man; all his life he had never done a stroke of work. So long as some one of his relatives had a house he was sure of a home, and it was unlikely that so large a family would all go bankrupt. His wife led a similar existence some hundreds of miles away—he did not visit her, owing to the expense of the railway ticket. Presently Aziz chaffed him, also the servants, and then began quoting poetry, Persian, Urdu, a little Arabic. His memory was good, and for so young a man he had read largely; the themes he preferred were the decay of Islam and the brevity of Love. They listened delighted, for they took the public view of poetry, not the private which obtains in England. It never bored them to hear words, words; they breathed them with the cool night air, never stopping to analyse; the name of the poet, Hafiz, Hali, Iqbal, was sufficient guarantee. India—a hundred Indias—whispered outside beneath the indifferent moon, but for the time India seemed one and their own, and they regained their departed greatness by hearing its departure lamented, they felt young again because reminded that youth must fly. A servant in scarlet interrupted him; he was the chuprassi of the Civil Surgeon, and he handed Aziz a note.

"Old Callendar wants to see me at his bungalow," he said, not rising. "He might have the politeness to say why."

"Some case, I daresay."

"I daresay not, I daresay nothing. He has found out our dinner hour, that's all, and chooses to interrupt us every time, in order to show his power."

"On the one hand he always does this, on the other it may be a serious case, and you cannot know," said Hamidullah, considerately paving the way towards obedience. "Had you not better clean your teeth after pan?"

"If my teeth are to be cleaned, I don't go at all. I am an Indian, it is an Indian habit to take pan. The Civil Surgeon must put up with it. Mohammed Latif, my bike, please."

The poor relation got up. Slightly immersed in the realms of matter, he laid his hand on the bicycle's saddle, while a servant did the actual wheeling. Between them they took it over a tintack. Aziz held his hands under the ewer, dried them, fitted on his green felt hat, and then with unexpected energy whizzed out of Hamidullah's compound.

"Aziz, Aziz, imprudent boy. . . ." But he was far down the bazaar, riding furiously. He had neither light nor bell nor had he a brake, but what use are such adjuncts in a land where the cyclist's only hope is to coast from face to face, and just before he collides with each it vanishes? And the city was fairly empty at this hour. When his tyre went flat, he leapt off and shouted for a tonga.

He did not at first find one, and he had also to dispose of his bicycle at a friend's house. He dallied furthermore to clean his teeth. But at last he was rattling towards the civil lines, with a vivid sense of speed. As he entered their arid tidiness, depression suddenly seized him. The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India. He felt caught in their meshes. When he turned into Major Callendar's compound he could with difficulty restrain himself from getting down from the tonga and approaching the bungalow on foot, and this not because his soul was servile but because his feelings—the sensitive edges of him—feared a gross snub. There had been a "case" last year—an Indian gentleman had driven up to an official's house and been turned back by the servants and been told to approach more suitably—only one case among thousands of visits to hundreds of officials, but its fame spread wide. The young man shrank from a repetition of it. He compromised, and stopped the driver just outside the flood of light that fell across the verandah.

The Civil Surgeon was out.

"But the sahib has left me some message?"

The servant returned an indifferent "No." Aziz was in despair. It was a servant whom he had forgotten to tip, and he could do nothing now because there were people in the hall. He was convinced that there was a message, and that the man was withholding it out of revenge. While they argued, the people came out. Both were ladies. Aziz lifted his hat. The first, who was in evening dress, glanced at the Indian and turned instinctively away.

"Mrs. Lesley, it *is* a tonga," she cried.

"Ours?" enquired the second, also seeing Aziz, and doing likewise.

"Take the gifts the gods provide, anyhow," she screeched, and both jumped in. "O Tonga wallah, club, club. Why doesn't the fool go?"

"Go, I will pay you to-morrow," said Aziz to the driver, and as they went off he called courteously, "You are most welcome, ladies." They did not reply, being full of their own affairs.

So it had come, the usual thing—just as Mahmoud Ali said. The inevitable snub—his bow ignored, his carriage taken. It might have been worse, for it comforted him somehow that Mesdames Callendar and Lesley should both be fat and weigh the tonga down behind. Beautiful women would have pained him. He turned to the servant, gave him a couple of rupees, and asked again whether there was a message.

The man, now very civil, returned the same answer. Major Callendar had driven away half an hour before.

"Saying nothing?"

He had as a matter of fact said, "Damn Aziz"—words that the servant understood, but was too polite to repeat. One can tip too much as well as too little, indeed the coin that buys the exact truth has not yet been minted.

"Then I will write him a letter."

He was offered the use of the house, but was too dignified to enter it. Paper and ink were brought on to the verandah. He began: "Dear Sir,—At your express command I have hastened as a subordinate should—" and then stopped. "Tell him I have called, that is sufficient," he said, tearing the protest up. "Here is my card. Call me a tonga."

"Huzoor, all are at the club."

"Then telephone for one down to the railway station." And since the man hastened to do this he said, "Enough, enough, I prefer to walk." He commandeered a match and lit a cigarette. These attentions, though purchased, soothed him. They would last as long as he had rupees, which is something. But to shake the dust of Anglo-India off his feet! To escape from the net and be back among manners and gestures that he knew! He began a walk, an unwonted exercise.

He was an athletic little man, daintily put together, but really very strong. Nevertheless walking fatigued him, as it fatigues everyone in India except the new-comer. There is something hostile in that soil. It either yields, and the foot sinks into a depression, or else it is unexpectedly rigid and sharp, pressing stones or crystals against the tread. A series of these little surprises exhausts; and he was wearing pumps, a poor preparation for any country. At the edge of the civil station he turned into a mosque to rest.

He had always liked this mosque. It was gracious, and the arrangement pleased him. The courtyard—entered through a ruined gate—contained an ablution tank of fresh clear water, which was always in motion, being indeed part of a conduit that supplied the city. The courtyard was paved with broken slabs. The covered part of the mosque was deeper than is usual; its effect was that of an English parish church whose side has been taken out. Where he sat, he looked into three arcades whose darkness was illuminated by a small hanging lamp and by the moon. The front—in full moonlight—had the appearance of marble, and the ninety-nine names of God on the frieze stood out black, as the frieze stood out white against the sky. The contest between this dualism and the contention of shadows within pleased Aziz, and he tried to symbolize the whole into some truth of religion or love. A mosque by winning his approval let loose his imagination. The temple of another creed, Hindu, Christian, or Greek, would have bored him and failed to awaken his sense of beauty. Here was Islam, his own

country, more than a Faith, more than a battle-cry, more, much more . . . Islam, an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable, where his body and his thoughts found their home.

His seat was the low wall that bounded the courtyard on the left. The ground fell away beneath him towards the city, visible as a blur of trees, and in the stillness he heard many small sounds. On the right, over in the club, the English community contributed an amateur orchestra. Elsewhere some Hindus were drumming—he knew they were Hindus, because the rhythm was uncongenial to him,—and others were bewailing a corpse—he knew whose, having certified it in the afternoon. There were owls, the Punjab mail . . . and flowers smelt deliciously in the station-master's garden. But the mosque—that alone signified, and he returned to it from the complex appeal of the night, and decked it with meanings the builder had never intended. Some day he too would build a mosque, smaller than this but in perfect taste, so that all who passed by should experience the happiness he felt now. And near it, under a low dome, should be his tomb, with a Persian inscription:

> Alas, without me for thousands of years
> The Rose will blossom and the Spring will bloom,
> But those who have secretly understood my heart—
> They will approach and visit the grave where I lie.

He had seen the quatrain on the tomb of a Deccan king, and regarded it as profound philosophy—he always held pathos to be profound. The secret understanding of the heart! He repeated the phrase with tears in his eyes, and as he did so one of the pillars of the mosque seemed to quiver. It swayed in the gloom and detached itself. Belief in ghosts ran in his blood, but he sat firm. Another pillar moved, a third, and then an Englishwoman stepped out into the moonlight. Suddenly he was furiously angry and shouted: "Madam! Madam! Madam!"

"Oh! Oh!" the woman gasped.

"Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all; you should have taken off your shoes; this is a holy place for Moslems."

"I have taken them off."

"You have?"

"I left them at the entrance."

"Then I ask your pardon."

Still startled, the woman moved out, keeping the ablution-tank between them. He called after her, "I am truly sorry for speaking."

"Yes, I was right, was I not? If I remove my shoes, I am allowed?"

"Of course, but so few ladies take the trouble, especially if thinking no one is there to see."

"That makes no difference. God is here."

"Madam!"

"Please let me go."

"Oh, can I do you some service now or at any time?"

"No, thank you, really none—good night."

"May I know your name?"

She was now in the shadow of the gateway, so that he could not see her face, but she saw his, and she said with a change of voice, "Mrs. Moore."

"Mrs.——" Advancing, he found that she was old. A fabric bigger than the mosque fell to pieces, and he did not know whether he was glad or sorry. She was older than Hamidullah Begum, with a red face and white hair. Her voice had deceived him.

"Mrs. Moore, I am afraid I startled you. I shall tell my community—our friends—about you. That God is here—very good, very fine indeed. I think you are newly arrived in India."

"Yes—how did you know?"

"By the way you address me. No, but can I call you a carriage?"

"I have only come from the club. They are doing a play that I have seen in London, and it was so hot."

"What was the name of the play?"

"*Cousin Kate.*"

"I think you ought not to walk at night alone, Mrs. Moore. There are bad characters about and leopards may come across from the Marabar Hills. Snakes also."

She exclaimed; she had forgotten the snakes.

"For example, a six-spot beetle," he continued. "You pick it up, it bites, you die."

"But you walk about yourself."

"Oh, I am used to it."

"Used to snakes?"

They both laughed. "I'm a doctor," he said. "Snakes don't dare bite me." They sat down side by side in the entrance, and slipped on their evening shoes. "Please may I ask you a question now? Why do you come to India at this time of year, just as the cold weather is ending?"

"I intended to start earlier, but there was an unavoidable delay."

"It will soon be so unhealthy for you! And why ever do you come to Chandrapore?"

"To visit my son. He is the City Magistrate here."

"Oh no, excuse me, that is quite impossible. Our City Magistrate's name is Mr. Heaslop. I know him intimately."

"He's my son all the same," she said, smiling.

"But, Mrs. Moore, how can he be?"

"I was married twice."

"Yes, now I see, and your first husband died."

"He did, and so did my second husband."

"Then we are in the same box," he said cryptically. "Then is the City Magistrate the entire of your family now?"

"No, there are the younger ones—Ralph and Stella in England."

"And the gentleman here, is he Ralph and Stella's half-brother?"

"Quite right."

"Mrs. Moore, this is all extremely strange, because like yourself I have also two sons and a daughter. Is not this the same box with a vengeance?"

"What are their names? Not also Ronny, Ralph, and Stella, surely?"

The suggestion delighted him. "No, indeed. How funny it sounds! Their names are quite different and will surprise you. Listen, please. I am about to tell you my children's names. The first is called Ahmed, the second is called Karim, the third—she is the eldest—Jamila. Three children are enough. Do not you agree with me?"

"I do."

They were both silent for a little, thinking of their respective families. She sighed and rose to go.

"Would you care to see over the Minto Hospital one morning?" he enquired. "I have nothing else to offer at Chandrapore."

"Thank you, I have seen it already, or I should have liked to come with you very much."

"I suppose the Civil Surgeon took you."

"Yes, and Mrs. Callendar."

His voice altered. "Ah! A very charming lady."

"Possibly, when one knows her better."

"What? What? You didn't like her?"

"She was certainly intending to be kind, but I did not find her exactly charming."

He burst out with: "She has just taken my tonga without my permission—do you call that being charming?—and Major Callendar interrupts me night after night from where I am dining with my friends and I go at once, breaking up a most pleasant entertainment, and he is not there and not even a message. Is this charming, pray? But what does it matter? I can do nothing and he knows it. I am just a subordinate, my time is of no value, the verandah is good enough for an Indian, yes, yes, let him stand, and Mrs. Callendar takes my carriage and cuts me dead . . ."

She listened.

He was excited partly by his wrongs, but much more by the knowledge that someone sympathized with them. It was this that led him to repeat, exaggerate, contradict. She had proved her sympathy by criticizing her fellow-countrywoman to him, but even earlier he had known. The flame that not even beauty can nourish was springing up, and though his words were querulous his heart began to glow secretly. Presently it burst into speech.

"You understand me, you know what others feel. Oh, if others resembled you!"

Rather surprised, she replied: "I don't think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them."

"Then you are an Oriental."

She accepted his escort back to the club, and said at the gate that she wished she was a member, so that she could have asked him in.

"Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club even as guests," he said simply. He did not expatiate on his wrongs now, being happy. As he strolled down-hill beneath the lovely moon, and again saw the lovely mosque, he seemed to own the land as much as anyone owned it. What did it matter if a few flabby Hindus had preceded him there, and a few chilly English succeeded?

5

GEORGE ORWELL

Burmese Days, 1934

The lives of the colonizers, as well as the colonized, were transformed by European imperialism. George Orwell (1903–1950), drew on his experience in the British police in Burma from 1922 to 1927 to show the impact of imperialism on the colonizers.

This selection from the novel captures the life of the British colonial class in a remote "upcountry" town in Burma in the 1920s, a hundred years after British conquest and settlement had begun and fifty years after all of Burma had been integrated into the British Indian empire.

The central character is Flory, the only Englishman at all sympathetic to the Burmese. Though he has befriended the Indian physician, Dr. Veraswami, Flory is too weak to propose him as the first "native" member of the club. The other main characters are Westfield, district superintendent of police; Ellis, local company manager and the most racist of the group; Lackersteen, local manager of a timber company who is usually drunk; Maxwell, a forest officer; and Macgregor, deputy commissioner and secretary of the club.

As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: Why does the club loom so large in the lives of these Englishmen? If they complain so much, why are they in Burma? How does the author account for the virulent racism of these men? Why does Ellis "correct" the butler's English? What does this story suggest about women in the colonial world?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Orwell knew Burma quite well. He was born in India in 1903, and his father worked in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service. After attending school at Eton in England, Orwell spent five years as a member of the Indian Imperial Police in Burma and remained politically engaged throughout his life. Orwell's mother had grown up in Burma, and his grandmother continued to live there in the 1920s. In his various postings, Orwell no doubt spent time in British social clubs like the one that serves as the setting for this chapter. Orwell, therefore, had a broad knowledge of Burma on which to base his story. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: Is there any way to determine what Orwell invented and what he merely described in this account? Would political ideas make him better or worse as a historian or novelist? How so?

Flory's house was at the top of the maidan,[1] close to the edge of the jungle. From the gate the maidan sloped sharply down, scorched and khaki-coloured, with half a dozen dazzling white bungalows scattered round it. All quaked, shivered in the hot air. There was an English cemetery within a white wall half-way down the hill, and nearby a tiny tin-roofed church. Beyond that was the European Club, and when one looked at the Club—a dumpy one-storey wooden building—one looked at the real centre of the town. 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[2] to membership. Beyond the Club, the Irrawaddy flowed huge and ochreous, glittering like diamonds in the patches that caught the sun; and beyond the river stretched great wastes of paddy fields, ending at the horizon in a range of blackish hills.

The native town, and the courts and the jail, were over to the right, mostly hidden in green groves of peepul trees. The spire of the pagoda rose from the trees like a slender spear tipped with gold. Kyauktada[3] was a fairly typical Upper Burma town, that had not changed greatly between the days of Marco Polo and 1910, and might have slept in the Middle Ages for a century more if it had not proved a convenient spot

[1] Parade-ground. [Ed.]

[2] The term *Oriental* included all Asians or people of the "East" as opposed to Occidentals or Westerners, as in Rudyard Kipling's *Barrack-room Ballads*: "East is East and West is West, and never the twain [two] shall meet" (1892). But in this case, Orwell means Indians and Burmese as well as the few Chinese. [Ed.]

[3] Fictional name for Katha or Kathar, a town on the Irrawaddy (or Ayeyarwady) River and the railroad, in northern Burma, where Orwell lived from 1926 to 1927. [Ed.]

for a railway terminus. In 1910 the Government[4] made it the headquarters of a district and a seat of Progress—interpretable as a block of law courts, with their army of fat but ravenous pleaders, a hospital, a school, and one of those huge, durable jails which the English have built everywhere between Gibraltar and Hong Kong. The population was about four thousand, including a couple of hundred Indians, a few score Chinese and seven Europeans. There were also two Eurasians named Mr. Francis and Mr. Samuel, the sons of an American Baptist missionary and a Roman Catholic missionary respectively. The town contained no curiosities of any kind, except an Indian fakir[5] who had lived for twenty years in a tree near the bazaar, drawing his food up in a basket every morning.

Flory yawned as he came out of the gate. He had been half drunk the night before, and the glare made him feel liverish. "Bloody, bloody hole!" he thought, looking down the hill. And, no one except the dog being near, he began to sing aloud, "Bloody, bloody, bloody, oh, how thou art bloody" to the tune of "Holy, holy, holy, oh how Thou art holy," as he walked down the hot red road, switching at the dried-up grasses with his stick. It was nearly nine o'clock and the sun was fiercer every minute. The heat throbbed down on one's head with a steady, rhythmic thumping, like blows from an enormous bolster. Flory stopped at the Club gate, wondering whether to go in or to go farther down the road and see Dr. Veraswami. Then he remembered that it was "English mail day" and the newspapers would have arrived. He went in, past the big tennis screen, which was overgrown by a creeper with starlike mauve flowers.

In the borders beside the path swathes of English flowers, phlox and larkspur, hollyhock and petunia, not yet slain by the sun, rioted in vast size and richness. The petunias were huge, like trees almost. There was no lawn, but instead a shrubbery of native trees and bushes—gold mohur trees like vast umbrellas of blood-red bloom, frangipanis with creamy, stalkless flowers, purple bougainvillea, scarlet hibiscus, and the pink, Chinese rose, bilious-green crotons, feathery fronds of tamarind. The clash of colours hurt one's eyes in the glare. A nearly naked *mali*[6], watering-can in hand, was moving in the jungle of flowers like some large nectar-sucking bird.

On the Club steps a sandy-haired Englishman, with a prickly moustache, pale grey eyes too far apart, and abnormally thin calves to his

[4] The British government eliminated the Burmese monarchy, exiling the king to India, and abolished the traditional role of the Buddhist monks, imposing instead the kind of bureaucracy they used to rule India. [Ed.]

[5] Originally a term for a Muslim Sufi mystic, here used to mean any ascetic, Hindu or Muslim, or even a beggar. [Ed.]

[6] Gardener. [Ed.]

legs, was standing with his hands in the pockets of his shorts. This was Mr. Westfield, the District Superintendent of Police. With a very bored air he was rocking himself backwards and forwards on his heels and pouting his upper lip so that his moustache tickled his nose. He greeted Flory with a slight sideways movement of his head. His way of speaking was clipped and soldierly, missing out every word that well could be missed out. Nearly everything he said was intended for a joke, but the tone of his voice was hollow and melancholy.

"Hullo, Flory me lad. Bloody awful morning, what?"

"We must expect it at this time of year, I suppose," Flory said. He had turned himself a little sideways, so that his birthmarked cheek was away from Westfield.

"Yes, dammit. Couple of months of this coming. Last year we didn't have a spot of rain till June. Look at that bloody sky, not a cloud in it. Like one of those damned great blue enamel saucepans. God! What'd you give to be in Piccadilly now, eh?"

"Have the English papers come?"

"Yes. Dear old *Punch*, *Pink'un*, and *Vie Parisienne*. Makes you homesick to read 'em, what? Let's come in and have a drink before the ice all goes. Old Lackersteen's been fairly bathing in it. Half pickled already."

They went in, Westfield remarking in his gloomy voice, "Lead on, Macduff." Inside, the Club was a teak-walled place smelling of earthoil, and consisting of only four rooms, one of which contained a forlorn "library" of five hundred mildewed novels, and another an old and mangy billiard-table—this, however, seldom used, for during most of the year hordes of flying beetles came buzzing round the lamps and littered themselves over the cloth. There were also a card-room and a "lounge" which looked towards the river, over a wide veranda; but at this time of day all the verandas were curtained with green bamboo chicks. The lounge was an unhomelike room, with coco-nut matting on the floor, and wicker chairs and tables which were littered with shiny illustrated papers. For ornament there were a number of "Bonzo" pictures,[7] and the dusty skulls of sambhur.[8] A punkah,[9] lazily flapping, shook dust into the tepid air.

There were three men in the room. Under the punkah a florid, fine-looking, slightly bloated man of forty was sprawling across the table with his head in his hands, groaning in pain. This was Mr. Lackersteen, the local manager of a timber firm. He had been badly drunk the night before, and he was suffering for it. Ellis, local manager of yet another company, was standing before the notice board studying

[7] Bulldog puppy cartoons created by G. E. Studdy in the 1920s for magazines like *Punch*. [Ed.]

[8] Large South Asian deer, like elk. [Ed.]

[9] Large cloth panel fan hanging from the ceiling, usually pulled by a rope to move the air. [Ed.]

some notice with a look of bitter concentration. He was a tiny wiry-haired fellow with a pale, sharp-featured face and restless movements. Maxwell, the acting Divisional Forest Officer, was lying in one of the long chairs reading the *Field*, and invisible except for two large-boned legs and thick downy forearms.

"Look at this naughty old man," said Westfield, taking Mr. Lackersteen half affectionately by the shoulders and shaking him. "Example to the young, what? There, but for the grace of God and all that. Gives you an idea what you'll be like at forty."

Mr. Lackersteen gave a groan which sounded like "brandy."

"Poor old chap," said Westfield; "regular martyr to booze, eh? Look at it oozing out of his pores. Reminds me of the old colonel who used to sleep without a mosquito net. They asked his servant why and the servant said: 'At night, master too drunk to notice mosquitoes; in the morning, mosquitoes too drunk to notice master.' Look at him—boozed last night and then asking for more. Got a little niece coming to stay with him, too. Due tonight, isn't she, Lackersteen?"

"Oh, leave that drunken sot alone," said Ellis without turning round. He had a spiteful cockney voice. Mr. Lackersteen groaned again, "—the niece! Get me some brandy, for Christ's sake."

"Good education for the niece, eh? Seeing uncle under the table seven times a week.—Hey, butler! Bringing brandy for Lackersteen master!"

The butler, a dark, stout Dravidian[10] with liquid, yellow-irised eyes like those of a dog, brought the brandy on a brass tray. Flory and Westfield ordered gin. Mr. Lackersteen swallowed a few spoonfuls of brandy and sat back in his chair, groaning in a more resigned way. He had a beefy, ingenuous face, with a toothbrush moustache. He was really a very simple-minded man, with no ambitions beyond having what he called "a good time." His wife governed him by the only possible method, namely, by never letting him out of her sight for more than an hour or two. Only once, a year after they were married, she had left him for a fortnight, and had returned unexpectedly a day before her time, to find Mr. Lackersteen, drunk, supported on either side by a naked Burmese girl, while a third up-ended a whisky bottle into his mouth. Since then she had watched him, as he used to complain, "like a cat over a bloody mousehole." However, he managed to enjoy quite a number of "good times," though they were usually rather hurried ones.

"My Christ, what a head I've got on me this morning," he said. "Call that butler again, Westfield. I've got to have another brandy before my missus gets here. She says she's going to cut my booze down to four pegs a day when our niece gets here. God rot them both!" he added gloomily.

[10] Dated racial term used to refer to darker-skinned inhabitants of southern India. [Ed.]

"Stop playing the fool, all of you, and listen to this," said Ellis sourly. He had a queer wounding way of speaking, hardly ever opening his mouth without insulting somebody. He deliberately exaggerated his cockney accent, because of the sardonic tone it gave to his words. "Have you seen this notice of old Macgregor's? A little nosegay for everyone. Maxwell, wake up and listen!"

Maxwell lowered the *Field*. He was a fresh-coloured blond youth of not more than twenty-five or six—very young for the post he held. With his heavy limbs and thick white eyelashes he reminded one of a carthorse colt. Ellis nipped the notice from the board with a neat, spiteful little movement and began reading it aloud. It had been posted by Mr. Macgregor, who, besides being Deputy Commissioner, was secretary of the Club.

"Just listen to this. 'It has been suggested that as there are as yet no Oriental members of this club, and as it is now usual to admit officials of gazetted rank, whether native or European, to membership of most European Clubs, we should consider the question of following this practice in Kyauktada. The matter will be open for discussion at the next general meeting. On the one hand it may be pointed out'—oh, well, no need to wade through the rest of it. He can't even write out a notice without an attack of literary diarrhoea. Anyway, the point's this. He's asking us to break all our rules and take a dear little nigger-boy into this Club. *Dear* Dr. Veraswami, for instance. Dr. Very-slimy, I call him. That *would* be a treat, wouldn't it? Little pot-bellied niggers breathing garlic in your face over the bridge-table. Christ, to think of it! We've got to hang together and put our foot down on this at once. What do you say, Westfield? Flory?"

Westfield shrugged his thin shoulders philosophically. He had sat down at the table and lighted a black, stinking Burma cheroot.

"Got to put up with it, I suppose," he said. "B_____s of natives are getting into all the Clubs nowadays. Even the Pegu Club, I'm told. Way this country's going, you know. We're about the last Club in Burma to hold out against 'em."

"We are; and what's more, we're damn well going to go on holding out. I'll die in the ditch before I'll see a nigger in here." Ellis had produced a stump of pencil. With the curious air of spite that some men can put into their tiniest action, he re-pinned the notice on the board and pencilled a tiny, neat "B. F." against Mr. Macgregor's signature—"There, that's what I think of his idea. I'll tell him so when he comes down. What do *you* say, Flory?"

Flory had not spoken all this time. Though by nature anything but a silent man, he seldom found much to say in Club conversations. He had sat down at the table and was reading G. K. Chesterton's article in the *London News*, at the same time caressing [his dog] Flo's head with his left hand. Ellis, however, was one of those people who constantly nag others to echo their own opinions. He repeated his question, and Flory looked up, and their eyes met. The skin round Ellis's nose suddenly turned so

pale that it was almost grey. In him it was a sign of anger. Without any prelude he burst into a stream of abuse that would have been startling, if the others had not been used to hearing something like it every morning.

"My God, I should have thought in a case like this, when it's a question of keeping those black, stinking swine out of the only place where we can enjoy ourselves, you'd have the decency to back me up. Even if that pot-bellied, greasy little sod of a nigger doctor *is* your best pal. *I* don't care if you choose to pal up with the scum of the bazaar. If it pleases you to go to Veraswami's house and drink whisky with all his nigger pals, that's your look-out. Do what you like outside the Club. But, by God, it's a different matter when you talk of bringing niggers in here. I suppose you'd like little Veraswami for a Club member, eh? Chipping into our conversation and pawing everyone with his sweaty hands and breathing his filthy garlic breath in our faces. By God, he'd go out with my boot behind him if ever I saw his black snout inside that door. Greasy, pot-bellied little———!" etc.

This went on for several minutes. It was curiously impressive, because it was so completely sincere. Ellis really did hate Orientals—hated them with a bitter, restless loathing as of something evil or unclean. Living and working, as the assistant of a timber firm must, in perpetual contact with the Burmese, he had never grown used to the sight of a black face. Any hint of friendly feeling towards an Oriental seemed to him a horrible perversity. He was an intelligent man and an able servant of his firm, but he was one of those Englishmen—common, unfortunately—who should never be allowed to set foot in the East.

Flory sat nursing Flo's head in his lap, unable to meet Ellis's eyes. At the best of times his birthmark made it difficult for him to look people straight in the face. And when he made ready to speak, he could feel his voice trembling—for it had a way of trembling when it should have been firm; his features, too, sometimes twitched uncontrollably.

"Steady on," he said at last, sullenly and rather feebly. "Steady on. There's no need to get so excited. *I* never suggested having any native members in here."

"Oh, didn't you? We all know bloody well you'd like to, though. Why else do you go to that oily little babu's house every morning, then? Sitting down at table with him as though he was a white man, and drinking out of glasses his filthy black lips have slobbered over—it makes me spew to think of it."

"Sit down, old chap, sit down," Westfield said. "Forget it. Have a drink on it. Not worth while quarrelling. Too hot."

"My God," said Ellis a little more calmly, taking a pace or two up and down, "my God, I don't understand you chaps. I simply don't. Here's that old fool Macgregor wanting to bring a nigger into this Club for no reason whatever, and you all sit down under it without a word. Good God, what are we supposed to be doing in this country? If we aren't going to rule, why the devil don't we clear out? Here we

are, supposed to be governing a set of damn black swine who've been slaves since the beginning of history, and instead of ruling them in the only way they understand, we go and treat them as equals. And all you silly b———s take it for granted. There's Flory, makes his best pal of a black babu who calls himself a doctor because he's done two years at an Indian so-called university. And you, Westfield, proud as Punch of your knock-kneed, bribe-taking cowards of policemen. And there's Maxwell, spends his time running after Eurasian tarts. Yes, you do, Maxwell; I heard about your goings-on in Mandalay with some smelly little bitch called Molly Pereira. I supposed you'd have gone and married her if they hadn't transferred you up here? You all seem to *like* the dirty black brutes. Christ, I don't know what's come over us all. I really don't."

"Come on, have another drink," said Westfield. "Hey, butler! Spot of beer before the ice goes, eh? Beer, butler!"

The butler brought some bottles of Munich beer. Ellis presently sat down at the table with the others, and he nursed one of the cool bottles between his small hands. His forehead was sweating. He was sulky, but not in a rage any longer. At all times he was spiteful and perverse, but his violent fits of rage were soon over, and were never apologised for. Quarrels were a regular part of the routine of Club life. Mr. Lackersteen was feeling better and was studying the illustrations in *La Vie Parisienne*. It was after nine now, and the room, scented with the acrid smoke of Westfield's cheroot, was stifling hot. Everyone's shirt stuck to his back with the first sweat of the day. The invisible *chokra*[11] who pulled the punkah rope outside was falling asleep in the glare.

"Butler!" yelled Ellis, and as the butler appeared, "go and wake that bloody *chokra* up!"

"Yes, master."

"And butler!"

"Yes, master?"

"How much ice have we got left?"

"'Bout twenty pounds, master. Will only last to-day, I think. I find it very difficult to keep ice cool now."

"Don't talk like that, damn you—'I find it very difficult!' Have you swallowed a dictionary? 'Please, master, can't keeping ice cool'—that's how you ought to talk. We shall have to sack this fellow if he gets to talk English too well. I can't stick servants who talk English. D'you hear, butler?"

"Yes, master," said the butler, and retired.

"God! No ice till Monday," Westfield said. "You going back to the jungle, Flory?"

"Yes. I ought to be there now. I only came in because of the English mail."

"Go on tour myself, I think. Knock up a spot of Travelling Allowance. I can't stick my bloody office at this time of year. Sitting

[11] Person who pulls the punkah rope that moves a large panel to let in a breeze. [Ed.]

there under the damned punkah, signing one chit after another. Paper-chewing. God, how I wish the war was on again!"

"I'm going out the day after to-morrow," Ellis said. "Isn't that damned padre coming to hold his service this Sunday? I'll take care not to be in for that, anyway. Bloody knee-drill."

"Next Sunday," said Westfield. "Promised to be in for it myself. So's Macgregor. Bit hard on the poor devil of a padre, I must say. Only gets here once in six weeks. Might as well get up a congregation when he does come."

"Oh, hell! I'd snivel psalms to oblige the padre, but I can't stick the way these damned native Christians come shoving into our church. A pack of Madrassi servants and Karen[12] school-teachers. And then those two yellow-bellies, Francis and Samuel—they call themselves Christians too. Last time the padre was here they had the nerve to come up and sit on the front pews with the white men. Someone ought to speak to the padre about that. What bloody fools we were ever to let those missionaries loose in this country! Teaching bazaar sweepers they're as good as we are. 'Please, sir, me Christian same like master.' Damned cheek."

[12] An ethnic minority group in Burma. [Ed.]

6

R. K. NARAYAN

Waiting for the Mahatma, 1955

Burmese Days ends with a revolt against the colonialists; actual Burmese and Indian independence was won after many protests and the passive resistance campaign led by Gandhi. R. K. Narayan (1906–2001) captures the Indian combination of anger and civility in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, which is about a fictional visit of Mahatma Gandhi to a town in South India. The main character Sriram prepares for the visit by painting "Quit India" signs throughout the town. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following questions: What grievances against British colonialism does Sriram have? What is Mathieson's response? How might have the idea of "passive resistance" slowed or quickened British withdrawal from India?

THINKING HISTORICALLY

This technically is a postcolonial novel since India became independent in 1947. Narayan lived through much of the colonial period and knew it well. Keep in mind the following question as you read the selection: How might the success of the independence movement have colored Narayan's view in 1955?

There was a plantation 4,000 feet above sea level, whither Sriram carried his pot of paint and his brush. It meant nearly half a day's job for him. He arrived at the estate late one afternoon. He saw a picturesque gate-post with the sign, 'Mathieson Estates,' over it. There wasn't a single human being to be seen for miles around. Sriram wondered for a moment: 'Is it worth writing any message here?' He looked about and hesitated, but dismissed the doubt as unworthy. He briskly dusted a portion of the gate-post and wrote in a beautiful round handwriting: 'Quit India,' and turned to go.

An estate labourer who was passing, stopped to look at the message and asked: 'Are you writing a board?'

Sriram explained at length the import of the message. The man listened for a while and said: 'Go away. That *Dorai*[1] is a bad fellow. Always with a gun. He may shoot you.'

Sriram hesitated for a moment, wondering whether it would be more worthwhile to get shot or to go away peacefully. He suddenly felt he need not have come up so far if it were only to go back safely. He hadn't climbed 4,000 feet above sea level for nothing. The labourer with the pick-axe went away after uttering his warning. Sriram walked forward towards an ancient bungalow that he saw in front. 'Hope he doesn't have bull-dogs,' he reflected. He pictured the scene ahead in a somewhat gory way. He would approach the steps and the *Dorai* would level his double-barrelled gun, and Sriram would go up in smoke and blood. Probably that would fill Bharati with remorse. She would tell herself: 'I wish I had shown my love more definitely when he was alive.' Anyway why was he doing this? The High Command had not instructed him to go and bare his chest before a gunman.

A seven-foot figure with a red face and sandy hair accosted him by the porch. He was smoking a pipe, and had one hand comfortably tucked in his trouser pocket. For a second Sriram felt a little reluctant to go forward.

'Hullo! Who may you be?'

Sriram felt dwarfed by his side. He went up and said in a shrill voice: 'I have brought a message.'

'Oh, good. From where?'

'From Mahatmaji.'

[1] gunman

The man took out his pipe and said: 'Oh! What?'

'From Mahatma Gandhi.'

'Well? What is it?'

'That you must quit India.'

The other looked abashed for a second. But he recovered his composure in a moment. He said: 'Why do you say that?'

'I'm not saying it. I'm merely giving you the message.'

'Oh! Come in and have a drink, won't you?'

'No. I never drink.'

'Oh, yes, yes. I didn't mean spirits, but you can have anything you want, sherbet, or coffee or tea.'

'I need nothing.'

'You look tired, come in, let us have a chat anyway. Boy!' he shouted and his bearer appeared. 'Two glasses of orange juice,' he ordered. 'Look sharp.'

'Yes, sir,' said the Boy, going away.

The servant wore a white uniform with a lot of buttons. Sriram reflected, 'This man wants even a particular kind of dress for Indians who act as his servants,' and felt an inexplicable rage. The other watched his face for a while, then said, 'Come along, let us go on the veranda.' He conducted him up the steps to the veranda, which had been furnished with wicker chairs covered with a beautiful chintz: there were also a few decorative plants in large pots here and there. Sriram contrasted it with his own surroundings, a ruined building built thousands of years ago, full of snakes and scorpions and with only a mat to sleep on. He could not help asking, 'How do you manage to do all this? May I know?'

'Do what?' asked Mathieson.

'Manage so much decoration and luxury so far away?' said Sriram and pointed at all the things around.

Mathieson laughed gently and said, 'I wouldn't call this luxury, my friend.'

'And all this while millions of people here are going without food or shelter!' he said in a general way, the statistics he had picked up from Bharati deserting him for the moment.

'It is our prayer,' said Mathieson, 'that all of them may have not only enough to eat soon but also beautiful houses to live in, something, I hope, better than this, which is only a make-shift.'

Sriram put down this explanation to racial arrogance. 'It is his prosperity and the feeling of owning the country that makes him talk like this,' he reflected, and wanted to shout at the top of his voice, 'Quit, quit, we shall look after ourselves, we don't care for wicker furniture and gaudy coverings for them, we don't care even for food, what we care for———' He was not clear how to end his sentence. He merely said aloud, 'What we most care for is to do what Mahatmaji tells us to do.'

'And what has he advised you to do?'

'We will spin the *charka*,[2] wear Khadi, live without luxury, and we shall have India ruled by Indians.'

'But you have rejected the opportunity to try it. Don't you think it is a pity you should have turned down Cripps's offer?'

Sriram did not reply for a while. It seemed to him a technical point with which he was not concerned. Such intricate academic technicalities refused to enter his head, and so he merely said, 'Mahatmaji does not think so,' and there was an end to the discussion. He knew a jumble of phrases—Dominion Status, Reservation for Muslims, and this and that, but although he had gathered all these from the newspapers they seemed to him beside the point, the only thing that mattered was that Mahatmaji did not think the proposals had anything to do with the independence of India. 'It is just eyewash,' he said, remembering a newspaper comment. 'We don't want all that. We have no use for such proposals. We don't want charity.'

This last thought so worked him up that presently when the butler came bearing a tray with two glasses of orange juice he wanted to knock the tray down dramatically and say, 'I don't want it,' but it was a beautiful drink, yellow and fresh, in a long and almost invisible tumbler, and the climb and exertion had parched his throat. He hesitated.

Mathieson handed him a glass and, raising his own, said, 'Here's to your health and luck.'

Sriram could merely mumble, 'Thanks,' and drained his glass. The passage of the juice down his throat was so pleasant that he felt he could not interrupt it under any circumstance. He shut his eyes in ecstasy. For a moment he forgot politics, Bharati, strife, and even Mahatmaji. Just for a second the bliss lasted. He put down his glass and sighed. The other had taken an invisible infinitesimal layer off the top level in his glass and was saying, 'Care to have another?'

'No,' said Sriram and started to leave. The other walked with him half-way down the drive. Sriram said, 'Don't rub off the message I have painted on your doorway.'

'Oh, no, I shan't. It is a souvenir and I shall keep it proudly.'

'But won't you be leaving this country, quitting, I mean?' asked Sriram.

'I don't think so. Do you wish to quit this country?'

'Why should I? I was born here,' said Sriram indignantly.

'I was unfortunately not born here, but I have been here very much longer than you. How old are you?'

'Twenty-seven, or thirty. What does it matter?'

'Well, I was your age when I came here and I am sixty-two today. You see, it is just possible I am as much attached to this country as you are.'

'But I am an Indian,' Sriram persisted.

[2] spinning wheel

'So am I,' said the other, 'and perhaps I am of some use to the people of this country seeing that I employ five thousand field labourers and about two hundred factory hands and office workers.'

'You are doing it for your own profit. You think we can only be your servants and nothing else,' said Sriram, not being able to think of anything better, and then he asked, 'Aren't you afraid? You are all alone, if the Indians decide to throw you out, it may not be safe for you.'

Mathieson remained thoughtful for a moment and said, 'Well, I suppose I shall take my chance, that is all, but of one thing I feel pretty sure—I am not afraid of anything.'

'It is because Mahatmaji is your best friend. He wants this struggle to be conducted on perfectly non-violent lines.'

'Of course that is also a point. Well, it was nice meeting you,' he said, extending his hand. 'Goodbye.'

Sriram went down the pathway, overhung with coffee shrubs, hedge plants, bamboo clusters, and pepper vine winding over everything else, with very dark green grass covering the ditches at the side. He felt so tired that he wondered why he did not lay himself down on the velvet turf and sleep, but he had other things to do. He had unremitting duties to perform.

7

BÙI HIỂN

Jealousy

Some colonies were only able to win their independence through extended armed campaigns. This was the case for Vietnam against France before World War II, against Japan during the war, against France again until 1954, and then against the United States. Bui Hen (1919–2009) was one of the Vietnamese who fought and wrote during that long struggle. This selection is a short story that, like so much of Vietnamese literature of the period, expresses the agonies of war in the context of the family and personal emotions. Colonialism was brought to an end by popular movements and guerilla war—a kind of war where the people and soldiers were one. As you read the selection, keep in mind the following question: What signs do you see in this story of popular or guerilla warfare?

Nguyen Khac Vien and Huu Ngoc, *Vietnamese Literature* (Hanoi: Red River Foreign Languages Publishing House, n/d), 694–698.

THINKING HISTORICALLY

History books tend to make popular revolution or anticolonial war a matter of ideals and ideologies, such as freedom, democracy, anticommunism, and anticolonialism. Keep in mind the following questions as you read the selection: How does an understanding of a personal experience enrich our understanding of the larger political issue of colonialism and anticolonial war? How does the emotion of jealousy serve as metaphor for anticolonialism?

Luyen had joined the guerillas a year ago, though not without careful consideration. It would have been too risky to remain in the village to continue his underground work. He had been tailed the last time he left a meeting: despite his precautions—he had concealed his activities even from his wife—he had no doubt been spotted.

He had no hesitation as far as he himself was concerned. But the fate of his wife and their very small girl worried him because of the impossibility of taking them with him. So, after having explained to his wife how to behave with the puppet authorities in order to avoid any trouble he had had himself "kidnapped" by his guerilla friends amid the crying and lamentations of his young wife, who had played her part admirably well on this occasion.

To be sure, he regularly received news from them, but a letter, however tender, cannot replace the presence of the beloved. They had married for love, contrary to custom. No need for a go-between, nor for an official introduction. They had met somewhere along the road and had felt attracted to each other. The wedding had been celebrated in the simplest way possible. Their happiness would have been perfect with the arrival of their daughter, had it not been for that "dirty colonial war." . . .

Luyen would have liked to come and pay them a furtive visit, which would not have presented any big difficulty. But he was afraid that his homecoming might get known. The enemy's collaborators wouldn't fail to use it as an excuse to give his wife a tough time. A year had passed when he received orders to lead a convoy through the forest. And it was on the way back that he met his wife.

He was wearing ordinary peasant clothes. With a hoe on his shoulder and his trousers rolled up he was in this way able to go about without arousing suspicion, even close to enemy posts. It was late morning when he arrived near his village. From afar, he saw at the foot of a banyan a group of young women chatting gaily with some soldiers from the post.

"They're too busy to cause me any trouble." said Luyen to himself.

He slowed down and looked straight ahead like a peasant who had nothing to reproach himself with. Suddenly he heard a laugh which made his blood freeze, for he recognised the voice of his wife. He stole a furtive glance at the group. It was her all right. His wife, in the midst of the enemy soldiers! Leaning against the tree, her face beaming, there

she was fanning herself with her conical hat! But that huge stomach couldn't belong to his wife. He looked again: there was no mistake ! It was certainly his wife with a protuberant stomach! She had caught sight of him too. Her laugh remained in mid-air, she paled and held the palm-leaf hat in front of her.

A quick look was exchanged. Luyen continued walking steadily, gazing into the distance. But the laughter followed him and tortured him. He sighed heavily. His head was a jumble of thoughts. There was no further doubt possible: his wife was expecting a child. His heart contracted painfully. People had told him before his marriage that one couldn't trust a young girl who didn't wait for a go-between to choose a husband. So much the worse for him if he had listened only to his heart! And to think he'd worried about her! Might the poor girl have been forced by the puppet authorities to remarry, since he was supposed to have died at the hands of the guerillas? No, it wasn't possible! She wouldn't have the cheek to display such immodest gaiety in public, to neglect her daughter and have a good time with the troopers!

His daughter! With a mother like that, what had become of his daughter? She must be suffering the sad fate of abandoned children! What would become of her when she had a half-brother?

What was to be done now? Should he slow down to try and meet his wife and have a frank talk with her? He hadn't the time. He still had a few posts to pass before arriving at the meeting point. It would be madness to keep comrades waiting in occupied areas.

"Now then! Don't be a fool!" he said to himself, going on his way.

It was easy enough to say. But how was he to get rid of the picture of his wife laughing heartily among the soldiers, with her stomach sticking out! He was absent-minded and preoccupied and his friends asked the reason. He daren't tell them the truth, even suspecting that his misfortune was known to them. If they had hidden it from him, it must be out of sheer pity.

That evening, as he was getting ready to go to a meeting, a guerilla came and asked:

"Is comrade Luyen here?"

"It's me!" he replied with some apprehension. "What's the matter?"

"A young woman is asking for you."

"What is she like?"

"I didn't see her. It's the group head who sent me to fetch you with orders to take you to Mrs Thang's to meet the visitor."

"It must be her," thought Luyen. Had she come to justify herself and beg his forgiveness? He felt unreasonably angry, and followed the guide with quick steps. He tripped over tree roots. "It can't be my wife," he thought, "she couldn't have come as far as this."

He stepped over the threshold and caught sight of the visitor: his wife.

"I heard you were here for a meeting . . ." she said haltingly, red with emotion.

Luyen felt something rise in his throat. Only after some time could he open his mouth:

"With whom did you leave our child so that you could come here?" he asked.

"With mother."

"And then, tell me . . ."

He stopped, not knowing what he wanted to ask his wife. But now she smiled radiantly:

"What a shock I had when I saw you near the watch post!"

This reminder brought back the man's anger. He clenched his teeth to avoid crying out. He couldn't see his wife's waist, as it was hidden behind the table. However, she continued:

"My stomach wasn't a pretty sight this afternoon, was it?"

It was too much. Never would he have thought his wife capable of such impudence. He wanted to shout and pound on the table with his fist, before what he thought was a real provocation. But there was still the lump in his throat.

She looked straight at him, still smiling:

"It was the "C.O.,"[1] you guessed straight away, didn't you?"

Luyen didn't understand immediately. What was this tale about flags? Suddenly he understood! His wife had made herself a false stomach with the newly-made flags so as to get them to the comrades preparing for the anniversary of the Revolution! To hide his confusion, Luyen feigned surprise:

'So you can spell now?"

"I can even read, for I've attended the alphabet courses in the hamlet. It was only afterwards that this job was entrusted to me."

She had said the word "job" with a glance at her husband which betrayed her pride.

"Aren't you afraid?"

Luyen stared at his wife, whose eyes opened wide beneath the perfect curve of her eyebrows, her mouth parting in a mischievous and tender smile.

[1] Spelling of the word "cò" (pronounced [ko]), "flag" in Vietnamese [Ed.].

■ REFLECTIONS

Many of the selections within this chapter as well as its title point to the dual character of colonial society. There are the colonized and the colonizers, the "natives" and the Europeans, and, as racial categories hardened in the second half of the nineteenth century, the blacks and the whites. Colonialism centered on the construction of an accepted inequality. The dominant Europeans invested enormous energy in keeping the double standards, dual pay schedules, and separate rules and residential areas—the two castes.

One problem with maintaining a neat division between the colonized and the colonizers is that the Europeans were massively outnumbered by the indigenous people. As a result, the colonizers needed a vast class of middle-status people to staff the army, police, and bureaucracy. These people might be educated in Paris or London, raised in European culture, and encouraged to develop a sense of pride in their similarity to the Europeans and in their differences from the other "natives." Often, like the Indian Dr. Veraswami, they were chosen for their ethnic or religious differences from the rest of the colonized population.

In short, colonialism created a whole class of people who were neither fully colonized nor colonizers. To the extent that the colonial enterprise was an extension of European social class differences, these in-between people could be British as well as "native." Orwell's Flory is only one of the characters in *Burmese Days* caught between two worlds. After 1900, when steamships brought English women through the Suez Canal in a matter of weeks rather than months, new anxieties were raised about the sexual mixing of the "races." The fear of Indians raping English women became the shared nightmare of English men despite the fact that they always had their way with Indian women and were in the process of raping the subcontinent of its wealth. Forster's novel revolved around the specious charge that Dr. Aziz raped young Adela Quested, who was to be married to Mrs. Moore's son. All the novels excerpted in this chapter are well worth reading in their entirety, and many other excellent colonial novels can be chosen from this period as well as from the 1930s and 1940s. The advantage of becoming engrossed in a novel is that we feel part of the story and have a sense that we are learning something firsthand. Of course, we are reading a work of fiction, not gaining firsthand experience or reading an accurate historical account of events.

On the other hand, a well-written novel can whet our appetite and inspire us to learn more. Choose and read a novel about colonialism or some other historical subject. Then read a biography of the author or research his or her background to determine how much the author knew about the subject. Next, read a historical account of the subject. How much attention does the historian give to the novelist's subject? How does the novel add depth to the historical account? How does the historical account place the novel in perspective? Finally, how does the author's background place the novel in historical context?