Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

File 17 Exotic Britain

Egyptomania p. 200

Simon and Linnet Doyle set off on their expedition to Philae[1] about eleven o'clock the following morning. Jacqueline de Bellefort, sitting on the hotel balcony, watched them set off in the picturesque sailing boat. [...] Hercule Poirot decided to pass the remaining two hours before lunch on the island of Elephantine immediately opposite the hotel.

He went down to the landing stage. There were two men just stepping into one of the hotel boats and Poirot joined them. […]

It was very peaceful on the water, the great smooth slippery black rocks gliding by and the soft breeze fanning their faces. Elephantine was reached very quickly and on going ashore Poirot and his loquacious acquaintance made straight for the museum.

Agatha Christie, *Death on the Nile*, 1937

1. an island in the Nile River with Egyptian temples

The Jewel in the Crown p. 201

Abdul Karim was twenty-four years old when he arrived in England from India. He became Queen Victoria's servant and confidant.

Abdul Karim was painted in cream, red and gold by the Austrian artist. The portrait showed a handsome young man in a reflective mood, holding a book in his hand. He looked more like a nawab[1] than a servant. The artist seemed to have captured the Queen's romantic vision of the subject. I learned later that Queen Victoria had loved the painting so much she had copied it herself.

Along the Indian corridor of Osborne House[2] were portraits of Indian craftsmen, specially commissioned by the Queen. Weavers[3], blacksmiths[4] and musicians stared back from the walls, all meticulously painted so the Queen could glimpse[5] the ordinary people of India. The striking life-size portrait of Maharajah Duleep Singh painted by Winterhalter stood out amongst the canvases. It captured the Queen's fascination for the young boy who had presented her with the Koh-i-Noor — one of the world's largest diamonds and still a part of the Crown Jewels — when the British had defeated the Sikhs and annexed the Punjab after the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849.

The Durbar Room, restored by English Heritage to mark the centenary of the Queen's death, had its own revelations. The room spoke to me of the Queen's love for India, the country she knew she could never visit, but which fascinated and intrigued her. If the Queen could not travel to India, then she would bring India to Osborne. The marble ceiling, the intricate carvings, the balconies with their Indian-style jali work were the Queen's Indian haven. Here she sat as Empress of that faraway land to sense its atmosphere. Fittingly, it was at her beloved Osborne, with its collection of Indian antiquities, that she had died. Was her love for Abdul an extension of her love for India and the Empire, her way of touching the Jewel in the Crown?

Shrabani Basu, *Victoria and Abdul*, 2010

1. *nabab* **2.** a former royal residence on the Isle of Wight **3.** *tisserands* **4.** *forgerons* **5.** *avoir un aperçu de*

Dreams of the exotic p. 202

[…] The Poet wandering on, through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian[1] waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire[2], far within
Its loneliest dell[3], where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower[4],
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veilèd maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven[5] sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof[6] and shifting hues[7].
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty[8] hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire: wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits

Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen: at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering[9] eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled[10]
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:... she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms. […]

Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude”, 1815

1. Persian **2.** region in India **3.** *vallon* **4.** *tonnelle* **5.** *tissés, mêlés* **6.** woven fabric
7. shades, tints **8.** morally high **9.** trembling **10.** calm

Imperial roots p. 203

The travel agency of Britain's far-flung 19th-century empire is dead.

The British travel agency Thomas Cook, which announced its bankruptcy today (Sept. 23), was born with a railway journey that took place in 1841—the same year that Hong Kong was ceded to Britain, then at the peak of its imperial power.

Historians often refer to the period between 1815 and 1915 as Britain's "imperial century." It was a time when Britain would come to control the lives of some 400 million people globally, as well as enormous swathes[1] of territory around the world. While Thomas Cook, a cabinetmaker[2] in his 30s, started out by offering short day trips by rail in England in 1841 initially for free, he soon began organizing for-profit trips. After successes that included bringing 150,000 travelers from rural England to London for the Great Exhibition of 1851, he expanded into offering trips to far-flung[3] locales, taking his first party[4] of British travelers on a trip to Egypt and Palestine in 1869.

"Tourists were part of the growing number of westerners—missionaries, teachers, traders, developers, bankers, messianic dreamers, and empire builders—who arrived each year in Jerusalem, Cairo, and other cities of the eastern Mediterranean," wrote historian F. Robert Hunter. [...] "The tourist enterprise accompanied British armies to Egypt and the Sudan in the 1880s and 1890s. Tourism was inseparable from the west's conquest of the Middle East."

The company, which often worked closely with the British government overseas, was able to provide travelers reassurance of their safety in destinations that were under British protection or outright rule[5]. Egypt, in particular—a British protectorate from 1882—became a huge draw, which is why graffiti of travelers of that era can still be found at sites there. [...]

The agency also helped imperial subjects travel between parts of the empire. Prior to visiting Mumbai in the 1880s, John Thomas Cook (the "& Son" of the enterprise) mused, "…while it would be well to arrange for the visits of Englishmen to India, it would be even more serviceable if the wealthy natives of India could be induced[6] to visit Europe." One such visit was organized for Queen Victoria's jubilee celebrations—the travel party in 1887 included 200 servants and 33 tame tigers.

Tripti Lahiri, *QZ.com*, September 23, 2019

1. parts **2.** *ébéniste* **3.** remote **4.** group **5.** government **6.** persuaded

Maintaining of the Empire p. 204

This speech was given in 1872 at the Crystal Palace by Benjamin Disraeli, Member of Parliament and Leader of the Conservative Party.

Gentlemen, there is another and second great object of the Tory party[1]. If the first is to maintain the institutions of the country, the second is, in my opinion, to uphold the Empire of England. If you look to the history of this country since the advent[2] of Liberalism[3] – forty years ago – you will find that there has been no effort so continuous, so subtle, supported by so much energy, and carried on with so much ability and acumen[4], as the attempts of Liberalism to effect the disintegration of the empire of England. […]

Well, what has been the result of this attempt during the reign of Liberalism for the disintegration of empire? It has entirely failed. But how has it failed? Through the sympathy of the colonies with the mother country. They have decided that the Empire shall not be destroyed, and in my opinion no minister in this country will do his duty who neglects any opportunity of reconstructing as much as possible our colonial empire, and of responding to those distant sympathies which may become the source of incalculable strength and happiness to this land. Therefore, gentlemen, with respect to the second great object of the Tory party also – the maintenance of the Empire – public opinion appears to be in favour of our principles – that public opinion which, I am bound to say, thirty years ago, was not favourable to our principles […].

When you return to your homes, when you return to your counties and your cities, you must tell to all those whom you can influence that the time is at hand, that, at least, it cannot be far distant, when England will have to decide between national and cosmopolitan principles. The issue is not a mean one. It is whether you will be content to be a comfortable England, modelled and moulded upon continental principles and meeting in due course an inevitable fate, or whether you will be a great country, – an imperial country – a country where your sons, when they rise, rise to paramount[5] positions, and obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world...

Benjamin Disraeli, “The Maintenance of Empire”, 1872

1. Conservative Party **2.** coming **3.** the Liberal Party wanting a lot of political and economic freedom and supporting gradual social and political change **4.** *perspicacité* **5.** more important than anything else

Shooting the elephant? p. 205

In this essay, George Orwell describes an eye-opening experience for the English narrator (possibly himself), while working as a police officer in Burma.

One day something happened which in a roundabout[1] way was enlightening[2]. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism—the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old 44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorem[3] [...] The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to its heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it. [...]

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant, I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. [...] But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish[4] clothes—faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer[5] about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realised that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived

in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy[6], the conventionalised figure of a sahib[7]. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the “natives,” and so in every crisis he has got to do what the “natives” expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant.

George Orwell, *Shooting an Elephant*, 1936

1. indirect **2.** instructive **3.** Latin expression meaning “by way of intimidation” **4.** very brightly coloured **5.** magician **6.** model **7.** word used in colonial India to address a European man

In the heart of Africa p. 206

The story centres around Marlow, a British sailor working for a Belgian trading company in Africa. As he travels up the Congo River to meet Kurtz, he comes across widespread inefficiency and brutality in the Company's trade stations.

A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up[1] the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags[2] were wound round their loins[3], and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights[4] swung between them, rhythmically clinking. Another report from the cliff made me think suddenly of that ship of war I had seen firing into a continent. It was the same kind of ominous[5] voice; but these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea. All their meagre breasts panted together, the violently dilated nostrils quivered, the eyes stared stonily uphill. They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages. Behind this raw matter one of the reclaimed[6], the product of the new forces at work, strolled despondently[7], carrying a rifle by its middle. He had a uniform jacket with one button off, and seeing a white man on the path, hoisted his weapon to his shoulder with alacrity. This was simple prudence, white men being so much alike at a distance that he could not tell who I might be. He was speedily reassured, and with a large, white, rascally grin[8], and a glance at his charge, seemed to take me into partnership in his exalted trust. After all, I also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings.

Instead of going up, I turned and descended to the left. My idea was to let that chain-gang[9] get out of sight before I climbed the hill. You know I am not particularly tender; I've had to strike and to fend off. I've had to resist and to attack sometimes [...]. I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! these were strong, lusty[10], red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men—men, I tell you. But as I stood on this hillside, I foresaw that in the

blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 1902

1. *peiner pour grimper* **2.** pieces of old clothes **3.** *aine* **4.** *(ici) cordes* **5.** threatening **6.** a black man forced to guard the others **7.** without hope **8.** a wide smile without respect **9.** a group of prisoners chained together and forced to work **10.** *vigoureux, robuste*

Understanding Africa p. 207

Chinua Achebe: 'Heart of Darkness' is inappropriate

Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe redefined the way readers understood Africa in his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Published in 1958, that book told the story of the English coming to Africa — from the perspective of Africans. It stands in stark contrast to Joseph Conrad's 1902 novella *Heart of Darkness*, which follows an Englishman named Marlow who embarks on a journey up the Congo.

Though Achebe was attracted to Conrad's book as a child, he excoriated[1] it in the 1970s, and he continues to dismiss it today.

"Conrad was a seductive writer. He could pull his reader into the fray[2]. And if it were not for what he said about me and my people, I would probably be thinking only of that seduction," Achebe tells Robert Siegel.

Achebe says that once he reached a certain age, he realized that he was "not on Marlow's ship" but was, instead, one of the unattractive beings Marlow encounters in passing. At one point, Conrad describes an African working on the ship as a "dog wearing trousers".

"The language of description of the people in *Heart of Darkness* is inappropriate," says Achebe. "I realized how terribly, terribly wrong it was to portray my people — any people — from that attitude."

Though Achebe dislikes Conrad's description of Africans, he does not feel that *Heart of Darkness* should be banned: "Those who want to go on enjoying the presentation of some people in this way — they are welcome to go ahead. The book is there. ... I simply said, 'Read it this way, ' and that's all I have done."

NPR, October 15, 2009

1. criticise severely **2.** *entraîner son lecteur avec lui*