

Reading the Club as Colonial Island in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and George Orwell's *Burmese Days*

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Abstract: This paper examines the “island effect” in two enormously influential colonial fictions published in the final decades of the British Empire in India. Through a detailed analysis of the Club scene in Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) and Orwell's pervasive use of the Kyauktada Club in *Burmese Days* (1934), this paper brings critical focus to the phenomenon of the Club in British India. It explores the way the Club functions as an ‘island’ microcosm within a larger framework of colonial isolation, and the way intimate colonial relations prevail within its walls and sustain an isolated community which fears for its survival outside its enclosing border.

Keywords: *A Passage to India*; British India; *Burmese Days*; colonial isolation; E.M. Forster; George Orwell; island effect; island microcosm

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Introduction

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 (Orwell, 1934: 14).

In “Discourses of the Island”, Gillian Beer draws attention to the way various concepts overlap with the idea of the island:

The island—the pocket—the house—the circle—the individual—the literary canon—the theatre—the book: with varying degrees of extension all these concepts overlap with that of the island, exaggerating one or another characteristic to form a new topography (Beer, 1989: 15).

Can we add the Anglo-Indian Club to Beer's list? Can we usefully use the work of island studies scholars to open up the possibility of new readings of *non-island* literary texts in the same way the language of island biogeography has been used by scholars to read island fictions? In beginning to answer those questions, this paper reads the Club as a colonial island in two enormously influential colonial fictions published in the final decades of the British Empire in India: E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) and George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934).

The Club, as Charles Allen (1975: 99) economically puts it, “was a peculiarly ‘Anglo-Indian’ institution”. The Club was the main focus of social life on civil and military stations, the place where, as Margaret MacMillan (1988: 52) explains, “every evening its members would gather for games and gossip”. On all but the smallest stations one could expect to find the Club equipped with a range of facilities including a library, a billiards room, and tennis courts, and the social calendar might include theatricals (as in *A Passage to India*), as well as picnics and sporting activities. Those who were eligible to join were expected to do so, whether they ever attended or not; those who failed to join were considered outcasts (Allen, 1975: 99-100). As E.M. Collingham (2001: 162) notes, the Club was “the most important site which daily reinforced collective identity”. In much the same way as the mess provided an exclusive venue for Army officers:

[T]he club provided a venue where specific groups of Anglo-Indians could relax together, stretch out in a planter’s chair, cement social ties, play sports together, swap gossip or talk “shop”. It was also the place where newcomers were initiated into the social code, or those who had been observed to stray from the narrow Anglo-Indian social path were chastised in a friendly manner for letting standards slip (Collingham, 2001: 162).

In *A Passage to India* Mr Turton’s indirect request that Fielding attend an informal meeting at the Club on the evening of the excursion to the caves, “to discuss the situation” (Forster, 1924: 174), is exactly the sort of reprimand to which Collingham alludes, while the relative newcomer Ronny Heaslop consciously adopts phrases and arguments that he has picked up at the Club (Forster, 1924: 54). Similarly, in *Burmese Days* Lieutenant Verrall’s failure to make an appearance at the Club on the evening of his arrival, a neglect of etiquette, is frowned on by the small European community of Kyauktada.

In the Introduction to her book *Problematic Shores: The Literature of Islands* Diana Loxley suggests the topos of the island in 19th century novels such as R.M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* (1858) or Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883) provides a site of rebirth or genesis. Moreover:

[T]he island draws a line around a set of relationships which do not possess the normal political, social and cultural interference: a simplification of existing colonial problems and thus an ideological process of wish-fulfilment (Loxley, 1990: 3).

While I do not wish to claim the Club in either novel should be read specifically as a site of rebirth or genesis as the isolated islands in 19th-century Robinsonades can (indeed Forster and Orwell reject the ideology of colonial indoctrination central to that genre), Loxley’s sense of the island as a process of simplification is a useful one in distinguishing the Club as a metaphorical island apart from Anglo-India (and indeed the Empire) as a whole, and one which I will draw on implicitly in my discussion of *A Passage to India* and *Burmese Days*.

Specifically, this paper explores the way the Club functions as an ‘island’ microcosm within a larger framework of colonial isolation, and the way intimate colonial relations prevail within its walls and sustain an isolated or remote (in all its myriad meanings) community which fears for its survival outside its enclosing border. As islands are to the ocean, so are the Anglo-Indian Clubs to India (*see* Edmond, 2006: 200). The Club as colonial island becomes the site for the authors’ explorations of Anglo-Indian culture, and ultimately in both novels “island stories serve to ... repudiate colonialism” (Beer, 1989: 10). The Club, a potent signifier of Empire, in each novel is both territorially and racially other, and operates as a site where the enormity of colonialism is revealed and ultimately repudiated.

The concept of an island conjures up ideas of isolation, loneliness, and the rhythm of the sea lapping on the land; in both Forster’s and Orwell’s novels the Club functions as a habitat where the Anglo-Indian community gathers in isolation, apart from the rhythm of India or Burma which ebbs and flows around it. “Islandness,” as John Gillis and David Lowenthal (2007: iii) remind us, “is no longer associated only with waterbound places”. According to Stephen Royle (2001: 11), the “Two factors that make islands special are isolation and boundedness”; the Club in these novels is both isolated from and bounded by India or Burma. As a space it is fundamentally different from its surroundings. And as Beer (1989: 17) succinctly explains:

The characteristic of the island concept conserved in island biogeography is that of *difference* from the surrounding environment. [...] The *distinctiveness* of the island habitat makes of it both a fruitful ecosystem for a limited range of species and an enclosure which may speed extinction.

Chris Bongie (1998: 18) argues that the island must be read as both “a space complete unto itself” and “as a fragment, a part of some greater whole from which it is in exile”. The Club, which is simultaneously separate from and part of both the wider Anglo-Indian community and India neatly conforms to Bongie’s definition. India and Burma (which was part of the British Empire in India) in these novels function as the other, as places of possible adventure, of mutiny, of threats to the established order. Or to place the Club in the dialectic of health and disease Rod Edmond employs in “Writing Islands,” the Club, in turn, acts as a place of refuge for those wishing to escape the diseased world of India (2006: 201). Thus the Club can be read as the most anglomorphous site in India, the antithesis of the bustling bazaars of India, its walls serving “as a metaphor for its bounded and limited culture” (DeLoughrey, 2004: 302).

Whilst on one level Anglo-India itself can be seen to operate as a metaphorical island within the Indian subcontinent (*see* Crane, 2011), on another, the social pretensions within the European community led to social divisions that separated the “elite” from the lower classes, as David Arnold observes in his influential essay, “European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century”:

Current writing about the British in India would lead an otherwise uninformed reader to suppose that its European community consisted almost entirely of civil servants, army officers, planters and businessmen. That, no doubt, was how the Raj chose to see itself. Apart from Kipling's *Kim*, a rare if over-sentimental glimpse of a poorer European world, the fiction of the period, as much as its winsome monochrome self-portraiture, maintains the illusion of an essentially elite European community (David, 1979: 104).

This illusion was maintained in part by excluding poor Europeans in India—railway workers, British Other Ranks, and, as in *A Passage to India*, missionaries (Forster, 1924: 58)—from the European Clubs, which became islands separate from the Anglo-Indian community as a whole, as well as from India.

As Beer (1989: 16) notes, in ecology and population studies the topography of “island” has been revised to mean an enclosed habitat: a besieged residency or an Anglo-Indian club, for example. The impossibility of the Turtons or Burtons surviving outside the “cultural fortress of the British Club” (Kaplan, 2007: 162) exaggerates the element of enclosure, the need for defensive fortifications (real in the case of a besieged residency; rules of exclusion in a club).

Anglo-India itself, the cantonment, the civil lines, the Club, or even the isolated planter's bungalow can all be read as island topographies, both part of and apart from India. The position of the Chandrapore Club in *A Passage to India*, atop a rise, highlights Beer's “double nature of the island” (1989:13). All are topographies that depend on the segregation of the races.

The threat to the island, to the Club, in each novel is brought about by actions which resist this segregation of the races: by Fielding's friendship with Dr Aziz in Forster's novel and by Flory's friendship with Dr Veraswami in Orwell's work. And in both novels the diseased world of India is brought in to the Club, indirectly in *A Passage to India* through Adela and Fielding, and directly in *Burmese Days* by Flory who proposes his Indian friend, Veraswami, for membership. To turn to evolutionary theory via Beer, the Anglo-Indian members of the Club—the likes of the Turtons and Burtons, and the Lackersteens—can be classified as the ‘inhabitants’, while Fielding, Adela Quested, Mrs Moore, and Flory are ‘intruders’ who threaten the ecology of the Club (Beer, 1989: 10-11). Yet, while Forster and Orwell both carefully construct the Club as cut off from its Indian environment (the stereotypical myth of an isolated island), they do so only in order to show that the very idea of a colonial edifice, complete within itself, is doomed to collapse.

A Passage to India

In E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, the sensuous description of the Indian part of the city in the opening paragraph is followed by a description of the sterile Anglo-Indian Civil Station, which “provokes no emotion. It charms not, neither does it repel” (Forster, 1924: 32). Metaphorically, the Anglo-Indian enclave is a colonial island, simultaneously part of

the continent and topographically apart from it, built on a rise that separates it from the Indian town below. On the brow of the hill, isolated still further, stands the solid red-brick¹ Club, while around it, “swelling here, shrinking there” (Forster, 1924: 31), laps the ever-changing sea of India. The Club is Jung’s “defensive zone, a last outcropping of resistant consciousness, as he puts it, ‘a precarious island idyll’” (Beer, 1989: 8). It is an “island” hill surrounded by a hostile culture. The topography is fluid: the hill, the Civil Station, the red-brick club, are equivalent forms (Beer, 2003: 32); the built enclosure is interchangeable with the natural landform. Each is a version of the island.

And throughout the book Forster is concerned with borderlands or liminal spaces, the meeting places of East and West—the Bridge Party in the Club gardens, the tea party at Government College, the excursion to the Marabar Caves—where Anglo-Indians and Indians meet on shifting sand, as it were.

The Club is carefully established as the epicentre of the Civil Station when, in Chapter 3, we are finally introduced to the Anglo-Indian community,² who are discovered watching a production of H.H. Davies’ light comedy *Cousin Kate* (Davies, 1903) behind barred windows “lest the servants should see their memsahibs acting” (Forster, 1924: 45). Here Forster emphasizes both the separateness of the Club, and, ironically, the way it stifles the Anglo-Indian community who are prisoners to its oppressive, excluding culture; moreover, the emphasis on maintaining British culture is seen here to inhibit any engagement with India. From the moment it is introduced to the reader, the Chandrapore Club, as Laurie Kaplan aptly puts it:

[R]esonates with ... nationalistic potential, with sentimental reminders of England and empire, and with images of white solidarity, all of which haunt the rest of the novel (Kaplan, 2007: 168).

Mrs Moore, a newcomer, wishes she was a member of the Club so that she could have asked Aziz in; but he knows that Indians, who are neither the right colour, nor the right class, “are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club even as guests” (Forster, 1924: 45). The gulf that separates the Club from India is emphasized further at the end of the evening’s dramatic production when the British National Anthem is played by the orchestra, “remind[ing] every member of the Club that he or she was British and in exile” (Forster, 1924: 47). The closed doors and windows emphasize difference: the cultural difference between East and West, between India and Anglo-India, between those within the Club and those beyond its red-brick walls, between the inhabitants of the human island, and those who are outsiders. Ronny Heaslop, an Anglo-Indian, prefers his smoke “at the Club amongst [his]own sort” (Forster, 1924: 50), while his mother, Mrs Moore, “whom the Club had stupified” (*ibid.*), is a visitor to Anglo-India.

¹ The significance of the red-bricks, which represent the building of Britain’s imperial vision in India, is playfully undermined by J.G. Farrell in *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973). In that novel, the Krishnapur Residency is “built of enormous numbers of the pink, wafer-like bricks of British India” (Farrell, 1973: 12), which suggest an altogether more fragile vision of Empire.

² In all his novels, Forster introduces his most sympathetic characters first; here, following the description of Chandrapore, which establishes a division between the two communities, Aziz and his friends are introduced before any British characters enter the novel.

The sense of the Club as a metaphorical island is reinforced and most fully explored in two set pieces which take place in the Club or its grounds. The first and most important is the “Bridge Party” (Chapter 5) which, because it includes Indians, takes place in the gardens of the Club, a liminal space between the Club itself and India. Organized by Mr Turton, the Collector, in response to Adela Quested’s naïve desire to see the “*real* India” (Forster, 1924: 46), the Bridge Party emphasizes the sense of the Club as an island. As the guests gather in the gardens the island metaphor is abundantly clear:

A little group of Indian ladies had been gathering in a third quarter of the grounds, near a rustic summer-house, in which the more timid of them had already taken refuge. The rest stood with their backs to the company and their faces pressed into a bank of shrubs. At a little distance stood their male relatives, watching the venture. The sight was significant: an island bared by the turning tide, and bound to grow (Forster, 1924: 61).

Here, in a third space between the Club and India, the group of Indian ladies emerge as one island amongst an archipelago of small islands. This group of Indian ladies reflects other similar groups dotted around the garden: of purdah ladies, of male relatives. That these small islands are seen from the perspective of the English members of the Club, notably Mrs Turton, the burra-memsahib, again invites a reading of the Club as an island itself: in this instance, the larger island from which the chain of smaller ones is viewed as the tide ebbs and flows around them—locating the Club in what Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2001: 23) usefully labels “a system of archipelagraphy”. And while most of the guests—British and Indian—remain ensconced on their own islands, Fielding, the Principal of Government College, “romped” (Forster, 1924: 65) between the human islands dotted around the grounds of the Club. Significantly, “though he came to the Club it was only to get his tennis or billiards, and to go” (Forster, 1924: 80). Fielding is thus positioned as a visitor, rather than an inhabitant, and able to move, like Mrs Moore and Adela Quested (to a point), between islands, and more broadly in the novel as a whole, between east and west.

The second important set piece which develops the island metaphor is the scene (Chapter 20) where the Anglo-Indian community gathers in the Club following the alleged assault on Miss Quested. The whole chapter conjures up the Mutiny, through direct references, to “1857” (Forster, 1924: 194), and through the use of tropes borrowed from Anglo-Indian Mutiny fiction which highlight the sense of the Club, where the British have gathered behind “the palisade of cactuses” (Forster, 1924: 188), as an island apart and under threat of invasion: the trope of the siege is invoked through a reference to the Residency at Lucknow, and Mrs Blakiston, who “symbolized all that is worth fighting and dying for” (Forster, 1924: 188); and the counter-insurgency trope, or the trope of passing, is introduced through Mr McBryde, the District Superintendent of Police, who, the Club members are told reassuringly, is down in the city, “disguised as a Holy Man” (Forster, 1924: 189). And more specifically, the metaphor of the island is reinforced in this chapter when the Club is described as “an outpost of Empire” (Forster, 1924: 190).

And finally, after the trial at the end of the second section of the novel, “Caves,” the dramatic climax of the novel, the Anglo-Indian story of the novel is completed when the British residents of Chandrapore gather once more at the Club in an attempt to re-affirm their battered identity. Mrs Moore is dead, and Miss Quested has already departed for England, and after being compelled to attend “the grim little function” (Forster, 1924: 272) at the Club, Fielding, too, departs for England, leaving the inhabitants of the Club alone once more on their sinking island.

Burmese Days

The Club, in Emma Larkin’s (2009: viii) words, is “the physical and spiritual centrepiece of *Burmese Days*”, and as in *A Passage to India* it is the enclosed space in which the action of the novel is concentrated, though Orwell’s Club is a much darker habitat than Forster’s. This may be due in no small part to the fact that, while administratively a Province of British India, Burma had been excluded from the reforms of the Government of India Act in 1919, which introduced a measure of dual government to India, and this was bitterly resented by the Burmese.

In *A Passage to India* no Indian could enter the Chandrapore Club even as a guest; similarly “it was the proud boast of Kyauktada Club that, almost alone of Clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an Oriental to membership” (Orwell, 1934: 14), establishing the Club at the outset as a metaphorical island, set apart from what is described as “a fairly typical Upper Burma town” (Orwell, 1934: 15). The “dumpy one-storey wooden building” is described as “the real centre of the town” (Orwell, 1934: 14), separated from the surrounding countryside by the Irrawaddy, and hidden from the native town by “green groves of peepul trees” (Orwell, 1934: 15). As Forster did in *A Passage to India*, so Orwell emphasizes early in the novel both the separateness of the Club and its stifling culture:

Inside, the Club was a teak-walled place smelling of earth-oil, 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 was 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 chinks. The lounge was an unhomelike room, with coconut 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, and the dusty skull of *sambhur*. A punkah, lazily flapping, shook dust into the tepid air (Orwell, 1934: 17).

Here, the shabby, musty rooms, the dust and tepid air, suggest a culture in decay, while the closed chinks inhibit interaction with Burma. Indeed the sense of the Club as an all-white island amidst a sea of black natives is emphasized by Westfield, one of the seven Europeans in Kyauktada, when he comments that “We’re about the last Club in Burma to hold out against ’em” (Orwell, 1934: 20), or when Ellis, the most overtly racist of the small

European community, giving full voice to the atmosphere of imperialism that envelops the island Club, rants against the idea of “niggers” being allowed in. As Flory explains to his Indian friend Dr Veraswami, “They’ve made a perfect fetish of keeping this Club all-white, as they call it” (Orwell, 1934: 47). Island communities are prone to be xenophobic, to fear those who come from across the sea, metaphorical or otherwise, and Orwell goes on to highlight the imperial xenophobia of the Kyauktada Club, when Flory imagines himself sitting year after year:

“... in Kipling-haunted little Clubs, whisky to the right of you, *Pink’un* to the left of you, listening and eagerly agreeing while Colonel Bodger develops his theory that these bloody Nationalists should be boiled in oil” (Orwell, 1934: 69).

The multiple layers of allusion Orwell employs here—to Kipling’s jingoistic and racist short fiction, the salmon-pink *Financial Times*, Tennyson’s “Charge of the Light Brigade” (Page, 1995) and, presumably, P.G. Wodehouse’s *Uneasy Money* (1916), in which Colonel Bodger is a committee member of the Club—emphasizes the Kyauktada Club as an island apart from Burma, whose members are out of step with both the lives of the natives who surround them and the ideas and values of their countrymen ‘at home’ in Britain. Indeed, the clubs in both novels are doubly isolated, cut off from the native worlds which surround them and from the metropolitan culture to which they cling. The Club, as Forster demonstrates so clearly in the opening chapters of *A Passage to India*, is an anachronism, a caricature of the British world it attempts to imitate, but which its members no longer know. *Cousin Kate*, the play the Chandrapore Club members are performing, a comedy by H.H. Davies, was first produced in 1903 and revived in 1911, ten years before Adela Quested and Mrs Moore visit India.

The sense of the Club as a place of refuge from Burma and the Burmese is seen clearly on each of the two occasions Elizabeth Lackersteen—the niece of a timber firm manager who has recently arrived in Burma in search of a husband—ventures into the bazaar with Flory. Watching the *pwe*-dancing, she wishes herself “back at the Club with the other white people” (Orwell, 1934: 108), and again in front of Li Yeik’s shop “What Elizabeth had really wanted was to go straight back to the Club” (Orwell, 1934: 131). On each occasion as she abruptly retreats towards familiar territory she quarrels with Flory, and on each occasion her mood is only restored as they approach the safety of the Club and “the reassuring atmosphere of Club-chatter” (Orwell, 1934: 137).

Following the murder of Maxwell—“cut almost to pieces with *dahs* by two relatives of the man whom he had shot” (Orwell, 1934: 247)—and the attack on Ellis after he had blinded a schoolboy with his cane (Orwell, 1934: 252), the European community gathers at the Club where they are surrounded and attacked by an enormous crowd of Burmans. The island metaphor is reinforced here when the Europeans are described as being “in the soup” with the Burmans “all round” them (Orwell, 1934: 257). The use of the phrase “in the soup” to describe their difficult situation conjures up images of the sea or of an enveloping fog which bounds the island Club. This metaphor of the Club as an island surrounded by a violent sea is further emphasized during the riot scene where the crowd of hostile Burmans is described as “[a] sea of bodies” which “closed in upon [Flory] and

flung him from side to side, bumping his ribs and choking him” (Orwell, 1934: 262), before “a dozen men rolled against him like a wave and drove him deeper into the heart of the crowd” (Orwell, 1934: 262). As he recovers from his near drowning Flory finds himself “wading neck-deep through a viscous sea” (Orwell, 1934: 263) until “[a]t last, more from the natural eddying of the crowd than by his own effort, he found himself flung out into the open” (Orwell, 1934: 263), beached, as it were.

Tropes from Mutiny fiction are borrowed as the Europeans barricade themselves inside the Club; shouts of “Call out the police at once!” (Orwell, 1934: 257) are heard, and Flory escapes to the river in search of relief forces to rescue them from “the crowd besieging the Club” (Orwell, 1934: 261). And finally, after Ma Hla May, Flory’s ex-mistress, creates a humiliating scene in front of the whole Christian community of Kyauktada, who have gathered in the church for the evening service, the Europeans, with the exception of Flory, hurry to the Club to regroup in a scene reminiscent of the way in *A Passage to India* the inhabitants of the Club return to their island, to regroup, following the dramatic conclusion to the court case without the outsiders Mrs Moore, Adela Quested, and Fielding. Flory, an outcast now, after the scene in the church and Elizabeth’s subsequent cruel treatment of him, commits suicide, leaving the inhabitants of the Kyauktada Club alone once more on their sinking island, in much the same way as the European residents of Chandrapore are left at the end of the second section of Forster’s novel, but forced to grant membership to UPo Kyin, the scheming Sub-divisional Magistrate, to allow him onto their island.

Conclusion

Literature, particularly through its use of metaphor, helps us to interpret the material world. Lisa Fletcher (2010: 24) has suggested that:

[T]he general assumption of island studies scholars who turn to novels, poems and plays for their examples seems to be that literature closes down meaning, whereas, in seeking to describe reality, geography opens the pathway to a fuller appreciation of places, peoples and their imbrication.

In line with Fletcher, I want to argue that far from closing down meaning, literature opens up new ways of exploring the concept of islands and islandness; and to reverse the coin, as I have set out to demonstrate in this paper, applying island studies scholarship to literature can open up new ways of reading novels, poems, or plays, by, as Fletcher (2010: 25) puts it, resisting “the idea that we can make neat distinctions between representation and reality”.

Pete Hay (2006: 26), for example, suggests that literary scholars working within the field of island studies “exhibit an understandable tendency to see the reality of islands as of less interest and import than the ‘virtual’ status of the island as metaphor”. Yet, when literary scholars work with island studies scholarship, and the hierarchical importance of one field over another is elided, an understanding of the material world of islands can enrich our reading of metaphorical islands just as metaphor can enrich our appreciation of the

material world. In other words, is it necessary, to always maintain a distinction between literal and metaphorical islands?

It is particularly apposite to consider the island motif in relation to *A Passage to India* and *Burmese Days* because, as Dorothy F. Lane (1995: 4) has shown in her study of the literature of the Caribbean and New Zealand:

the island is not *merely* a geographical reality but emerges as a primary expression of coloniality—and therefore postcoloniality—in many areas.

And while I have taken *A Passage to India* and *Burmese Days* as my points of departure in this paper, the metaphor of the Club as island can be found in many other Anglo-Indian fictions, right up to Paul Scott's post-imperial masterpiece, *The Raj Quartet* (1966-1975). The emphasis on keeping out the other, whether that be Indians or the lower classes of Anglo-India, is in the end a threat to the survival of the island's population; unreplenished, it moves to extinction at a more rapid pace than those lands with open borders (Beer, 1989: 17), as both Forster and Orwell demonstrate.

Finally, it is important to remember that liminal spaces abound in both *A Passage to India* and *Burmese Days*, and in both novels there are people like Fielding and Flory who refuse to observe the island boundaries. The Club may be depicted as insular by both Forster and Orwell, but in practice, like a geographical island, it is not and can never be. A truly insulated island, real or metaphoric, remains to be discovered.

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