



Colonial Anxiety Through Literary Signifier: The Case of Max Havelaar and Burmese Days

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Abstract

*This article seeks to broaden the ongoing debate surrounding the nature and structure of colonial anxiety by incorporating elements of literary discussion into the conversation. It is a commonly experienced problem that the current definition of colonial anxiety is not mutable, and is often viewed as a singular indivisible whole. This, of course, cannot be the case due to the inherent links between anxiety generally, and its subset "colonial anxiety". Whilst there are many methods of examining colonial anxiety, the current study seeks to examine the problem through literature. The investigation will examine George Orwell's *Burmese Days* and Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* as core texts. Whilst Orwell's anti-imperial feelings have been well publicized, as has Multatuli's anti-colonial standpoint, the notion that they were individual colonial servants who likely, it is argued, suffered from colonial anxiety, has not. Also crucial to the discussion will be the attempt to more fully integrate diverse regions such as Burma and Indonesia into the wider debate on colonial anxiety.*

INTRODUCTION

An overarching issue contained in the study of personal histories within empire is how to situate the individual experience alongside the canon of colonial anxiety. Colonial anxiety has, for many years now, been dominated by the assumption that it was constrained to notions ranging from fear of attack to fear of the unknown, and indeed to the certain vulnerability of Europeans in empire. Ranajit Guha's famous piece "Not at Home in Empire" (1997) is perhaps the most well-known work which deals with colonial servants' sense of isolation and inability to make a home

for themselves in the colonies. Recent studies have also made use of Lacanian thought into anxiety to better structure the understanding of colonial anxiety (Teggin, 2020). The use of the anxiety–desire dialectic has been effective in this manner, and as such shall inform the present study.

Through the use of relevant literary material, such as *Burmese Days* by George Orwell and *Max Havelaar* by Multatuli, new areas of discussion for colonial anxiety may be opened up. This is in agreement with John V. Knapp's (1975: 12) assertion that Orwell made a definite attempt to render his experiences

into literary form. Evidently, so, too, did Multatuli. Already, the nascent suggestion is that colonial Burma and Indonesia were regions ripe for the discussion of colonial anxiety, with the after-effects of Multatuli's and Orwell's service greatly influencing their later lives. In this regard, it is vital that these nations are included in the wider debate. The specific causes of colonial anxiety will also be strongly interrogated to investigate potential deviations from the existing wider definition.

The dichotomy of Orwell's role in *Burmese Days* and Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* will form the key method of this study's investigation. Colonial anxiety, for the purposes of this study, may serve to confirm pre-existing notions in the wider debate begun by Guha (1997: 483–8). Standpoints, such as Jon Wilson's (2010: 47) suggestion that the colonial state can be viewed as an unstable structure with no clear direction, thus negatively impacting colonial servants, or Brian Keith Axel's (2002: 17–21) arguments surrounding the fragility of the European presence in empire in general, are particularly important milestones of the debate. This study may also, however, act as a catalyst which will push the stakeholders in colonial anxiety into new areas of discussion. The novelty of which is to open up new dimensions of investigation in the regions of Burma and Indonesia. This is seen as an important development, whereby future debates comparing them to the much more widely discussed South-Asian example can be attempted.

EUROPEAN SPACE AND THE BEYOND: THE PROBLEM OF THE CLUB IN BURMESE DAYS

The English club as a form of private space for cultural stability does of course also double-up as a physically defensive

zone for the Europeans. In *Burmese Days* the English of Kyauktada viewed their club as inviolable, despite it not being a fortified compound. This may have been in part due to its status as a “spiritual citadel” (2009a: 14) in Orwell's description of Kyauktada, or a sense of alleged superiority maintained through appearances. Either way, the English of Kyauktada had seen their position as secure and safe from the innumerable unknowns of the outside world. In *Burmese Days*, however, Orwell demonstrated his understanding what could have happened if native frustrations and a perceived English vulnerability were exploited. After the bigoted Ellis injures a young Burmese child, who subsequently goes blind after botched medical care, a large group of natives assault the English club demanding retribution on Ellis. Through this scene, quoted below, Orwell suggests how utterly vulnerable colonial servants were in rural colonial stations, and more generally the point must be made, if the communal balance was not maintained. This is what Orwell (2009b: 35) was tapping into when he stated that “when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib”. Without the fallacy that was European supremacy, the English were vulnerable to attack along the lines of the wider understanding of colonial anxiety. Mark Condos (2017: 12–3) has summed this up succinctly in his discussion of colonial anxiety as state security.

They all made for the front door, which someone, presumably the butler, had closed. A fusillade of small pebbles was rattling against it like hail. ... There were about twenty Burmans on the path, with dahs or sticks in their hands.

Outside the fence, stretching up the road in either direction and far out on to the maidan, was an enormous crowd of people. It was like a sea of people, two thousand at the least, black and white in the moon, with here and there a curved dah glittering. (Orwell 2009a: 255–6)

As Paul Melia (2015: 15) has articulated, whilst Orwell rejects imperialist notions, his overriding impression is one of pity for colonial servants more so than colonial subjects. This also dovetails with what Ria Vanderauwera has written of *Multatuli's* motivations regarding the publication of *Max Havelaar*. Effectively, she has argued that the dynamic force within the text was hate, not sympathy with the Javanese, and that the work was framed as a satire on the Dutch bourgeois and colonial administration (Vanderauwera, 1982: 116). In this way we may comment that the novel was less a defense of abused natives, and more an argument for a reformed and strengthened colonial state. Orwell's pity for colonial servants is borne out in the below quote:

When he left home he had been a boy, a promising boy and handsome in spite of his birthmark; now, only ten years later, he was yellow, thick, drunken, almost middle-aged in habits and appearance. ... And it occurred to him—a thing he had actually forgotten in the stagnant air of Burma—that he was still young enough to begin over again. (Orwell, 2009a: 70–1)

Orwell's revelation that he was part of a distasteful imperial system which brought shame on him personally, latterly understood through his reflections, can readily be witnessed in both *Burmese Days* and *Shooting an Elephant*. In the

latter, Orwell (2009b: 32) makes clear early on that he viewed his past service as a misstep on his part: "As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters".

I don't want the Burmans to drive us out of the country. God forbid! I'm here to make money, like everyone else. All I object to is the slimy white man's burden humbug. The pukka sahib pose. It's so boring. Even those bloody fools at the Club might be better company if we weren't all of us living a lie the whole time. ... Why, of course, the lie that we're here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them. (Orwell, 2009a: 37)

The above quote is instructive of the kinds of narratives that surrounded colonial and imperial service in the nineteenth century in particular. There is, however, a divergence in the ideology of Orwell's and *Multatuli's* heroes. Whereas Flory admits that he seeks personal gain as a European in empire, Havelaar has a genuine concern for those under his protection (*Multatuli*, 1868: 129–42). Despite Havelaar's sincerity, however, there is also an overt naivety to his actions in believing that he could expect the Dutch colonial government in Java to fundamentally change on the back of his protestations against abuses. *Multatuli's* own description of Havelaar, quoted below, in this regard is interesting, suggesting that Havelaar—whilst highly intelligent, sympathetic and capable—was also childlike in his understanding of people and society. This is reminiscent of Fyodor Dostoevsky's (1887: 64) character Prince Myshkin from his novel *The Idiot*, in which Myshkin is depicted as a wholly good person dedicated to his naïve worldview. Ultimately, it is the

same misunderstanding of social and political conventions that condemns both Havelaar and Myshkin to be tragic heroes. John Flory, however, is a more complicated case as he sought to both push against the *pukka sahib* order and remain within it. Certainly, naivety was involved here as well, though Flory—unlike Havelaar and Myshkin—was aware that his transgressions had consequences beyond his control.

Yet often he did not understand the most simple thing, which a child could have explained to him. Full of love for truth and justice, he often neglected his most simple and nearest obligations to remedy an injustice which lay higher, or further, or deeper, and which allured him more by the perhaps greater exertion of the struggle. (Multatuli, 1868: 90–1)

THE CULTIVATION SYSTEM AND NAIVETY IN MAX HAVELAAR

Attempts to bring about changes in the colonial government of Java cannot, according to Cornelis Fassuer (1991: 44), be seen out of the context of the East Indies surplus which flowed into the Dutch treasury every year. This is a pertinent point in our discussion since what the character of Havelaar was attempting to do was to bring about change, not considering that his actions would frustrate his masters in both Batavia and the Netherlands. The difficulty in this assertion, however, is that in both Banten and the province of Lebak, there was hardly any cultivation of cash crops. Taken in isolation this may seem problematic, though in the context of the wider Dutch East Indies it can easily be broached through the assumption that any change in Lebak, for example, would have had knock-on effects for the wider colonial state. As

such, the argument is effective in demonstrating the reluctance of colonial officials to countenance change. This social satire, and not necessarily the documentary authenticity of the past, is, in the way of Vanderauwera (1982: 116), precisely what made the text relevant for readers in America and the United Kingdom into the early nineteenth century. It is argued that Orwell's *Burmese Days* fed into this same category of satire, making the comparison between it and *Max Havelaar* very useful.

This satire, as suggested above, is tied up in the concept of the anti-colonial novel in which Multatuli sought to highlight abuses in order to reform the colonial service. Again, he did not seek to abolish empire, but rather to make its operation more effective. As Darren Zook (2006: 1176) has argued, Multatuli's vision of the injustice of empire was very much tied up in his understanding of the injustice done to him personally. This is not to suggest that desire for reform is a negative thing, but that the reforms proposed must be understood for what they were and not what an anti-imperialist vision would make them out to be. This can be borne out in portions of Havelaar's below conversation with the Controller of Lebak, Verbrugge, in which Havelaar clearly expresses his zeal for what he sees as a noble colonial project:

I will not suffer injustice; God help me, I will not suffer that! ... I do not care to know too exactly what has happened. But all that happens *henceforth* is on *my* responsibility; I shall, therefore, take care of that. ... Do you know, Verbrugge, that our vocation is noble indeed? But, do you know, also, that I ought to have heard from *you* all that I have just told you? I know *you* quite well, as well as I know who are in

revolt on the South coast: you are a good man, I know; but why did not you tell me of so much wrong going on here? You have been for two months temporary Assistant Resident, and moreover, you have been here a long time as Controller; you ought to know it.

Mr. Havelaar, I never served under any one like you; —there's something very peculiar about you: don't be offended. ... You communicate to others conceptions and ideas never heard of before. (Multatuli, 1868: 147–8)

Here we have our first signifier of colonial anxiety in the case of Havelaar. It is plain to see that Havelaar is not comfortable in his specifically colonial surroundings, a problem brought on by what he sees as the injustice of the Dutch colonial state. This injustice was largely seen through Multatuli's eyes as being endemic of the cultivation system. However, the attack voiced through his character of Havelaar was not necessarily conducted out of disgust at the abuses of the system. Rather, it was because the Dutch administrators and native elites exploited native farmers together in the name of the Dutch empire (Zook, 2006: 1173).

Whilst there were examples apart from the titular Havelaar who were uncomfortable—and indeed anxious about abuses in their jurisdiction—such as Verbrugge and Lieutenant Duclari, these men ultimately decided to do or say nothing (Multatuli, 1868: 359). The choice between speaking out and remaining silent can be seen in both *Max Havelaar* and *Burmese Days*, with varying degrees of effect. The dichotomy of the choice is reminiscent of Albert Memmi's arguments in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Memmi opines that the colonial servant becomes an

illegitimately privileged usurper; the experience of colonial anxiety in this way lies in the decision whether to live with and facilitate the known oppression, or act out and refuse to condone the abuse. In the case of the latter, the servant then becomes a problem for his colleagues and superiors who may have decided to remain silent (Memmi, 1965: 9). Havelaar, ultimately having chosen to speak out, suffers the consequences of his actions and is forced to leave the colonial service when his superiors refuse to hear his case (Multatuli, 1868: 396–406).

In pursuing this line of thought, the conclusion may be brought about that there was a sort of apparatus of anxiety prevalent in the colonial sphere, incorporating diverse geopolitical regions from South Asia to South East Asia. To develop this point, we must consider the various forms of anxiety that are displayed in *Max Havelaar's* colonial hierarchy. We have already touched on Max's own anxiety, and that of Verbrugge and Duclari, though due attention must be given to those at the bottom of the hierarchy: the ordinary cultivators. It is pointed out that whilst the farming community may have suffered dreadfully from abuses of power, the consequences of reporting these abuses could be far worse. Whereas a colonial official may serve in a province for a period of months and years, the native chiefs and regents would remain for generations. In this way, they could exact their revenge once the zealous Dutch official had left (Multatuli, 1868: 72–3). Recourse to justice was—in this way—very much a doubled-edged sword.

Connected to this was the anxiety felt by the Dutch residents and assistant residents who also faced consequences if they unearthed abuses. The general rule, according to Multatuli (1868: 261), was to never investigate abuses, lest it cause

problems for you or your superiors. This can be seen through Havelaar's naïve attempt to seek assistance in his investigations from his immediate master: the Resident. Whilst Havelaar had expected the Resident to uphold the virtues of his office, he instead sought to cover up the abuses and chastised Havelaar as a trouble maker (Multatuli, 1868: 379–81). The Resident—anxious that reported abuses would reflect badly on him—acted in a condoning manner. We may also witness hierarchical anxiety in the case of the regent of Lebak due to financial shortcomings in his treasury. Havelaar correctly identified this as a factor which might have led to hierarchical abuses, with unpaid labor by the Javanese resulting from this. Rather than criticize such practices, however, Havelaar worked within the colonial framework to advance the regent funds and prevent him needing to order forced labor (Multatuli, 1868: 143–4). In this way, Multatuli's creation again reveals itself to be anti-colonial in nature. Yes, he felt a specific colonial anxiety for the situation, but his decision was very much to advocate for structural reform of empire rather than abolition.

We may further contend that Multatuli's understanding of the question of anxiety pervaded into the concept of colonial governance itself. In particular, what Havelaar described as the trauma linked to the elevation of power, quoted below. This is something very closely linked to traditional understandings of colonial anxiety in the way of Guha's (1997: 483) description of being lost in empire. The argument has been made in the wider scholarship that there is an inherent connection between anxiety and the loss of agency or power in situations of colonial anxiety (Teggin: In Press). This is linked to what Søren Kierkegaard has written of anxiety being akin to the dizziness associated with looking down

into a deep abyss. The fault, he contends, lies equally with the abyss and the individual, cementing the bond between anxiety and a loss of free choice (Kierkegaard, 2015: 75). In *Max Havelaar*, we see that the departing governor-general feared for his reputation should a scandal arise, and chose to ignore Havelaar before his departure to Europe. Facing an unpleasant situation personally, he felt it easier to do nothing—or remain in a state of dizziness—than to deal with the issue (Multatuli, 1868: 400–6).

Against such transitions, the nerves of vision and the brain are no match, even when they are of extraordinary strength. ... *First period*—DIZZINESS, INCENSE-DRUNKENNESS, SELF-CONCEIT, IMMODERATE SELFCONFIDENCE, DISDAIN OF OTHERS, above all of persons who have been long in India. ... *Second Period*—FATIGUE, FEAR, DEJECTION, INCLINATION TO SLEEP AND REST, IMMODERATE CONFIDENCE IN THE COUNCIL OF India, HOME-SICKNESS AND DESIRE FOR A DUTCH COUNTRY-SEAT. (Multatuli, 1868: 291–3)

It is curious that Havelaar, whilst having such a great insight into the psyche of colonial servants in the above manner, was also so badly lacking in the understanding of people and politics. The reader was, however, alerted to this lack and childlike approach early on in the novel, as mentioned above. It was this naivety which was the crucial factor in Havelaar's fall, and was also a defining point in Multatuli's satire. In portraying Havelaar in such an idealistic manner, Multatuli succeeds in offering a critique of Romanticism. The objective of Multatuli is seemingly to argue that

change can be achieved, though through a type of action that individuals such as Havelaar are incapable of engaging in (Feenberg, 1997: 827). Again, this returns to the anti-colonial restructuring of empire that is the hallmark of *Max Havelaar*.

DESIRE AND THE SITUATION OF COLONIAL ANXIETY

Whilst Orwell has constructed a vision in which colonial anxiety can be seen through the lens of isolation, threat of attack, corruption and despotism, he has also left traces of something more intricate and intimate. It has been mentioned above that there are two plot strands to *Burmese Days*: first, there is the intrigue of U Po Kyin to secure his membership of the English club in Kyauktada, and second, that of Flory's courtship of the newly arrived Elizabeth Lackersteen. The attainment of Elizabeth's love—and thus a more stable existence—is revealed to be what Flory wants, or demands, more than anything as the course of the novel proceeds. However, demanding is not the same as desiring, and so an intriguing discussion can develop surrounding Flory's courtship of Elizabeth in conjunction with his colonial anxiety. Effectively, this means that what Flory demanded—the person of Elizabeth—was not necessarily what he truly desired, i.e., the phallus as the veiled signifier of desire (Lacan, 2017: 79–80). A similar study has been conducted with colonial servants and their dreams (Teggin: 2020). How may this be developed with regard to *Burmese Days* then? The solution, it is argued, is to view Flory's contributions regarding Elizabeth as separate fragments of a single vision. The structural approach, in which the location of desire and considerations of a colonial hierarchy of anxieties are discussed, is important in this regard.

What becomes apparent in Flory's development is that he comes to view his burgeoning relationship with Elizabeth as the solution to all of his problems and worries about life in Burma. The problem for Flory, however, is that in placing her upon a pedestal, he incorrectly assumes that she will assist him in breaking free of the *pukka sahib* identity he has been required to adopt: "They would be free for ever of the smell of *pukka sahibdom*. He would forget Burma, the horrible country that had come near ruining him" (Orwell, 2009a: 71). The primary issue in this case is that whilst Flory has expectations about what Elizabeth could do for him, she also has her own expectations—driven by societal norms—about how he should behave. Praseeda Gopinath sums up this problem neatly in her discussion of *pukka sahibdom*. According to Gopinath, *pukka sahibdom* is an imperial mediation of the domestic ideal of the gentleman, where the ethno-national or racial understanding takes precedence over personal ethical codes. As such, race becomes the defining characteristic of the Englishman (Gopinath, 2009: 205). This is problematic for Flory's character, who seeks to push against accepted norms by bringing Elizabeth to a *pwe* dance and a Chinese tea shop, and his intent on proposing Veraswami to the English club (Orwell, 2009a: 105–7; 133–6; 243–5). Such deficiencies also served to bring into question Flory's masculinity in the eyes of Elizabeth. Despite his missteps and initial misappraisal of Elizabeth's character, Flory remained convinced that she was the conduit through which to deal with his colonial anxiety:

There was, he saw clearly, only one way out. To find someone who would share his life in Burma—but really share it, share his inner, secret life, carry away from Burma the same memories he carried. ...

A friend. Or a wife? The quite impossible she. Someone like Mrs. Lackersteen, for instance? Some damned memsahib, yellow and thin, scandalmongering over cocktails, making kit-kit with the servants, living twenty years in the country without learning a word of the language. Not one of those, please God. (Orwell, 2009a: 72–3)

Contained in the above quotation is a rather incisive point put across by Orwell. That is, that for Flory, it was not merely a wife that was deemed acceptable, rather a life companion whose sensibilities would align with his own. Flory's pursuit of Elizabeth along this line is problematic, in that he is trying to get her to assume his own fondness for the natives; she is, however, seemingly wholly committed to the values of the English club and *pukka sahib* order. Despite the reader's understanding that Flory's attempts are doomed to failure, Flory persists due to what he perceives as the rejuvenating presence of Elizabeth. She is—to his mind—someone who will remake his life in Burma and restore his identity as an English gentleman, not a mere colonial *pukka sahib*:

It was because Elizabeth, by coming into his life, had so changed it and renewed it that all the dirty, miserable years might never have passed. Her presence had changed the whole orbit of his mind. She had brought back to him the air of England—dear England, where thought is free and one is not condemned forever to dance the danse du pukka sahib for the edification of the lower races. ... Where is the life that late I led? he thought. Just by existing she had made it possible for him, she had

made it natural to him, to act decently. (Orwell, 2009a: 156)

Here again we may see the concept of freedom, in both *Burmese Days* and *Max Havelaar*, being so intricately tied up in the understanding of colonial anxiety. Whereas one's freedom may have been taken away due to seclusion in private spaces or by being forced into a defined series of actions—much like Multatuli's thesis on dizziness—so, too, could it be taken through a lack of companionship. Lack, once again, is spurring the onset of anxiety. What is most curious about the character of Flory is that, despite the character being oblivious to his specific desire, Orwell himself as the author appears masterful in identifying and constructing the image of desire in relation to colonial anxiety. Flory is noted to demand Elizabeth as a means to alleviate his loneliness and unhappy existence, yet in his dialogue he very clearly describes what she, as the object, would do for him regarding his colonial anxiety (Lacan, 2017: 79–80). In doing this, he is effectively identifying his own signifiers of anxiety and relegating Elizabeth to an object that would suffice to alleviate his anxiety. As argued above, whilst Flory appears to demand Elizabeth as his salvation, what he is really desiring is the more generally understood notion of companionship. This again demonstrates the hidden nature of desire, with the following quote neatly supporting this:

It was so important that she should understand something of what his life in this country had been; that she should grasp the nature of the loneliness that he wanted her to nullify. ... Have I made myself at all clear to you? Have you got some picture of the life we live here? The foreigners, the solitude, the melancholy! Foreign trees,

foreign flowers, foreign landscapes, foreign faces. Its all as alien as a different planet. But do you see—and it's this that I do want you to understand — do you see, it mightn't be so bad living on a different planet, it might even be the most interesting thing imaginable, if you had even one person to share it with. One person who could see it with eyes something like your own. This country's been a kind of solitary hell to me—it's so to most of us—and yet I tell you it could be a paradise if one weren't alone. (Orwell, 2009a: 185–6)

Despite Flory's suicide over his loss of Elizabeth at the end of the novel, his loss of Elizabeth—the character in particular—was relatively unimportant. It might have been a woman of any English description or mannerisms that he had lost and the result would have been the same. It was, rather, the loss of the immediate possibility of companionship which drove Flory to suicide.

Intriguingly, the homesickness and desire for an established European home seen in *Burmese Days* is also witnessed in *Max Havelaar*, though through a very interesting mechanism. In extracts from the poem “Padang, 1843”, quoted below, emotions ranging from homesickness to regret are expressed, suggesting that Havelaar had a longing for home, and indeed for the home life he had lost. Intriguingly, in connection with Lacan's arguments on desire and its location, Havelaar appears to be unsure as to what he desires (Lacan, 2017: 256; Multatuli, 1868: 362). Contained in the novel are examples of Havelaar's almost Quixotic quest to right wrongs and help the disadvantaged—at the expense of his own family—as well as scenes of deep love and tenderness for his family

(Multatuli, 1868: 90–3). We may derive from this that Havelaar already had a sort of ideal home-life with his wife and young son, thus nullifying such a comparison between him and Flory. Havelaar's quest for justice may on the outside seem akin to a desire, but given Lacan's (2017: 79–80) assertion that we are unable to locate desire, it cannot be. This directs us to the assumption that Havelaar was striving towards a higher goal, be it Christ-like or Napoleonic, as suggested by the narrator (Multatuli, 1868: 95; 120). In tandem with Multatuli's critique of romantic dogma, such stargazing may be attributed to Havelaar truly lacking the knowledge of what he wanted in the colonial setting. And, according to Lacan (2016: 75–6; 138), anxiety is composed of a defined lack on the part of the individual.

O mother dear, I'm far from home,
The land that gave me birth:
All hopeless and forlorn I roam,
A stranger upon earth.

But Destiny destroyed the band
That joined us two in one;
And now upon a foreign strand
I am, with God, alone.

I'm far away from all but
thought
Of yonder better sphere;
The joys of early youth I've sought:
I cannot find them here. (Multatuli,
1868: 29–31)

CONCLUSION

The problem of colonial anxiety is one which presents itself in a myriad of ways. As has been demonstrated above, it can be examined through the lens of many different texts and strategies in order to identify signifiers of anxiety. The point has also been made that colonial anxiety is a far more complex notion than the relatively oversimplified wider understanding which incorporates fear of assault, isolation and boredom.

The aspect of companionship in particular is one which has, as yet, been underdeveloped in the wider debate. Through the usage of Lacanian discourse, for example, it has been demonstrated how desire could come to be intimately associated with difficulties surrounding colonial anxiety. Flory's demand for Elizabeth highlights this, yet also betrays something of the nature of demand and desire. That is, that to demand is not to desire; by demanding Elizabeth, Flory necessarily pointed to the fact that she was not what he desired. It was, as argued above, the companionship of an English wife which was truly desired.

The investigation of *Burmese Days*, in tandem with *Max Havelaar*, has also demonstrated much about the potential for interdisciplinary studies of personal histories in empire. Orwell and Multatuli, as the authors and architects, have left many signifiers of their own experiences and anxiety within the pages of these texts. The legacy of *Max Havelaar* in particular is intriguing given its popularity amongst modern Indonesian readers, despite the structure in its approach to empire. Whilst the anti-colonial and anti-imperial question has been well documented by the likes of Feenberg, Zook and Fasseur, the utility of *Max Havelaar*—and other texts like it—going forward, will be to draw diverse regions such as Indonesia into wider debates on empire. The colonial anxiety question is a good example of this. Comparative studies such as the present investigation are a good start, though to truly blossom, concerted efforts using multidisciplinary approaches must be attempted. Categorically, this may or may not revise contemporary understandings of texts such as *Burmese Days* or *Max Havelaar*, but it will certainly make their study more relevant to a wider audience and field of debate.

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