

95 and Not Dead Yet: The Ruling Class on Heat

by [Reg Green](#) (August 2024)



Heat (Florine Stettheimer, 1919)

August: More blistering weather and prayers for the air

conditioning not to go out.

But adversity also brings out the best in creative people, people like Noel Coward, the dazzling English song-writer, lyricist, playwright and all-round satirist who, a hundred years ago, managed to draw from a stifling one-thousand-mile journey from Hanoi to Saigon some of the most biting rhymes in show business by focusing on the men who ran the British Empire who felt it was their duty to work through the heat of the day to demonstrate their fitness to rule.

“The toughest Burmese bandit can never understand it,” he wrote. Even “the smallest Malay rabbit deplores this foolish habit” and, although “in the mangrove swamps, where the python romps and there’s peace from twelve to two,” it was well known that the English “detest a...

...siesta.”

Like all hegemonies, Roman, Islamic, Russian, even Pax Americana, it eventually collapsed. So, dear reader, if like me you feel torpor harder to shake off after meals than it used to be, let’s remember the fate of those who came before us who couldn’t “put their Scotch or rye down...

...and lie down.”

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