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Colonial Issues in the Work of George Orwell

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Předmětem bakalářské práce bude vybraná próza britského spisovatele George Orwella. Autorka se zaměří na jeho ranou tvorbu, ve které se objevuje téma britského kolonialismu (román *Burmese Days*, eseje *A Hanging*, *Shooting an Elephant*, atd.). Na základě relevantní sekundární literatury se bude nejdříve zabývat teoretickými východisky kolonialismu. Poté provede detailní analýzu vybraných textů s cílem charakterizovat Orwellovo zobrazení života v koloniích a kolonialismu obecně s důrazem na kulturní rozdíly, mentalitu britské společnosti, integrace dvou kultur, atd. Práci uzavře kapitola shrnující předchozí zjištění a úvahy.

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Abstract

This bachelor paper is concerned with the early works of the British author George Orwell which are closely related to the British colonial expansion. The first part of the thesis deals with the terms colonialism and imperialism, and then it focuses on Orwell's direct experience with the British Empire. Further, the analysed works are briefly introduced. The main part of the paper, the detailed analysis of the texts, is divided into two main subchapters. In the first part of the analysis, the works are examined in terms of their depiction of relations of superiority and inferiority between members of the ruling nation and the indigenous population. The second subchapter is then devoted to their portrayal of negative impact of the colonial regime on individuals, who are involved in it.

Key words

George Orwell; colonialism; imperialism; superiority; British Empire; colonial system; loneliness

Abstrakt

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je raná tvorba britského spisovatele George Orwella úzce související s britskou koloniální expanzí. Úvodní část práce se nejprve zabývá pojmy kolonialismus a imperialismus, a poté se zaměřuje na Orwellovu vlastní zkušenost s Britským impériem. Dále jsou stručně uvedena analyzovaná díla. Hlavní část práce, samotná detailní analýza textů, je rozdělena do dvou hlavních podkapitol. V první části analýzy jsou díla rozebírána z hlediska jejich zobrazení vztahů nadřazenosti a podřazenosti mezi příslušníky vládnoucí rasy a původním obyvatelstvem. Druhá podkapitola se následně zaměřuje na to, jakým způsobem díla zobrazují negativní dopad koloniálního režimu na jednotlivce, kteří jsou jeho součástí.

Klíčová slova

George Orwell; kolonialismus; imperialismus; nadřazenost; Britské impérium; koloniální systém; osamělost

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1. Introduction

George Orwell, the author of well-known dystopian novels *1984* and *Animal Farm*, is one of the most renowned writers of twentieth century. But long before Orwell becomes such a significant figure of literary world, the future severe critic of totalitarian regimes was, quite paradoxically, involved in another regime that would be later the subject of his criticism as well – the British Empire. In 1920s, he worked as a police officer in Burma, then one of Great Britain's colonies, and had the chance to closely observe how such a regime functioned. The outcome of Orwell's observations is the novel *Burmese Days* and the essays "A Hanging" and "Shooting an Elephant", which are one of his first published pieces of work and are set in British colonies. Their specific position among other works dealing with colonial expansion consists, among other things, in the fact that Orwell was "the only major English writer to serve in the British colonial civil service and to write about that experience." (Baldwin and Quinn, 2007d, p. 214) Therefore, his works provide the unique insight into the nature of the phenomenon of colonialism that, to use Ronald J. Horvath's words, "[...] ranks with the most influential processes in human history [...]." (1972, p. 45)

The main aim of this bachelor paper is to analyse above mentioned works of George Orwell and characterise how they portray relationships between colonisers and members of indigenous population, and the impact of the system they are involved in on both groups.

As for the structure, the paper consists of a theoretical and a practical part, both of them divided into two subchapters. As the subject matter of the thesis is the discussion about issues connected with colonialism, it is necessary to determine what the term actually represents. Therefore, the first subchapter of the theoretical part attempts to define terms colonialism and imperialism, which, as Ania Loomba claims, "are often used interchangeably." (1998, p. 1) Further, the nature of the colonial expansion is discussed. The second subchapter is devoted to the introduction of the author himself along with the analysed literary works. It focuses primarily on George Orwell's direct experience with the colonial system and demonstrates what the impact of his involvement in the colonial administration was in terms of formation of his opinions as well as his literary career. The purpose of both subchapters is to lay the theoretical ground to enable further analysis of Orwell's early works.

In the practical part, the novel and the essays are analysed in terms of their portrayal of several specific issues¹ connected with colonial expansion. The first chapter of the analysis deals with the issue of superiority and inferiority, which is the basic attribute of colonial relationships. Firstly, the arrogant nature of proclaimed superiority of ruling nation is demonstrated on colonisers' treating and perceiving natives. Further, the chapter focuses on oppressed population's opposing such arrogance. Finally, there are two subchapters included that are supposed to provide closer insight into the nature of relations of superiority and inferiority in colonial environment. The first subchapter is concerned with Britishness, since the awareness of being the British strengthens the sense of superiority in colonisers. The second one is devoted to the specific position of Eurasians. The second chapter of the practical part is concerned with the position of an individual in the colonial system. It analyses strictness of colonial regime and the nature of a British community and their impact on the colonisers. The last part of the chapter focuses on the issue of loneliness as a by-product of the colonial system.

Finally, the bachelor paper is concluded by the chapter summarizing the whole analysis and its findings.

2. Colonialism and George Orwell

2.1 Theoretical Aspects of Colonialism and Imperialism

Throughout history, save at the rarest of intervals, men have acted upon the assumption that expansion, conquest, and far-flung rule over others were the fruits and symbols of virility and grandeur. (Emerson, 1969, p. 16)

Colonialism, which involves, among other things, "expansion, conquest, and far-flung rule", is the phenomenon that has occupied the minds of scholars as well as men of literature since its first occurrence. And similarly to scholars and writers who have been gradually changing attitudes to colonialism, too, have varied, so there have appeared much more negative connotations associated with the term than the "virility and grandeur". "But," as Ronald J. Horvath points out, "knowing how people feel about colonialism does not tell us what it is." (1972, p. 45)

¹ Considering huge complexity of the issue, not all possible topics connected with colonialism and depicted in the analysed works are discussed.

Existing literature relating to colonialism provides a considerable amount of explanations of the term. However, Horvath argues that although colonialism is one of the “most influential processes in human history,” there is “no widely accepted theory of colonialism, nor does any substantial agreement exist upon what colonialism is.” (1972, p. 45) It does not mean that colonialism is an obscure term and each of the attempts to define it has completely failed, but rather that it is a fairly complicated task to define colonialism without unwelcome simplifying. Nevertheless, even Horvath himself admits the existence of a general agreement that “colonialism is a form of domination – the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups [...]” (1972, p. 46)

Margaret Kohn explains that “the difficulty of defining colonialism stems from the fact that the term is often used as a synonym for imperialism.” (2006) Dean Baldwin and Patrick J. Quinn hold the corresponding view and suggest that it is “especially since in both cases the territories controlled are called *empires*.” (2007a, p. 2) They therefore imply that these terms are in fact not interchangeable and should be distinguished from each other, but, as Kohn further acknowledges, “the distinction between the two, however, is not entirely consistent in the literature.” (2006) Nevertheless, Kohn herself tries to distinguish between colonialism and imperialism through the use of etymology:

The term colony comes from the Latin word *colonus*, meaning farmer. This root reminds us that the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the new arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin. Imperialism, on the other hand, comes from the Latin term *imperium*, meaning to command. Thus, the term imperialism draws attention to the way that one country exercises power over another, whether through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control. (2006)

Kohn indicates that both colonialism and imperialism involve the change of status of a country which is an object of the expansion. But as for the differentiation according to presence or absence of permanent settlement in a dominated territory, Ania Loomba argues that it does not have to be an essential distinguishing factor. She provides following point of view on the issue of colonialism and imperialism:

One useful way of distinguishing between them might be to [...] think of imperialism [...] as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control. Its result, or what happens in the colonies as a consequence of imperial domination is colonialism [...]. Thus the imperial

country is the 'metropole' from which power flows, and the colony [...] is the place which it penetrates and controls. Imperialism can function without formal colonies [...] but colonialism cannot. (1998, pp. 6-7)

Loomba's definition therefore suggests that colonialism and imperialism are closely related to each other.

The conquest of another country is usually motivated by the immense advantages that the domination brings to a colonizing country: "Natural resources, free labor, territory, strategic access to protect and extend existing colonies, and market opportunities were among some of the key reasons for colonization." (<http://www.bookrags.com/research/colonies-and-colonialism-gwcr/>) However, there has appeared another, seemingly much more agreeable, reason throughout the time, as Baldwin and Quinn demonstrate on the example of the British expansion:

In addition to its goal of conquering and exploiting other peoples, Britain added an attempt to "civilize" them, using education, Christian missionary work, technical and infrastructure improvements (like railroads, bridges, and telegraph systems), and even political and social reforms to do so. The idea, as Marlow and many others saw it, was to bring to conquered peoples the advantages of "progress." (2007a, p. 3)

From this point of view, the imperial expansion can be viewed as mutually beneficial, and therefore positive and effectual.

However, Rupert Emerson argues that "whatever its achievements throughout the ages as one of the chosen instruments for the diffusion of civilization, those on whom colonialism has been imposed detest it for its besetting sin of arrogance." (1969, p. 12) According to him, "the arrogance of colonialism takes many forms," (1969, p. 13) and he provides the following explanation of one of the possible points of view:

A more sophisticated version rests upon belief in some form of racial or cultural superiority which justifies colonial rule either on a permanent basis, since the 'natives' are congenitally incapable of overcoming their backwardness, or for as long a period – seen, perhaps, as lasting many generations or even centuries – as they are regarded by their colonial masters as being incompetent to manage their own affairs. At least in the more or less contemporary scene the presumption has been that such superiority carries with it the white man's burden of seeking to bring about the advancement of the colonial wards, but it may also serve merely to establish the legitimacy of continued colonial rule. Basic tenets of the colonialism of the last centuries were the sole sanctity of Christianity and the self-evident supremacy of the white man. (1969, p. 13)

It is then the idea that white men are superior and have the moral right to control people of different race that makes the nature of colonialism arrogant. Besides, it testifies that

the aspect of civilizing colonised countries is in fact only justification for the colonial dominion, which remains predominantly exploitative.

2.2 George Orwell – The Colonial Experience

According to Ania Loomba, “colonialism [...] locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history.” (1998, p. 2) It is then understandable that men of literature were trying to deal with such relationships. One of them was George Orwell, whose novel *Burmese Days* (1934) and essays “A Hanging” (1931) and “Shooting an Elephant” (1936) were written as a reaction to his personal experience with colonialism.

George Orwell, whose real name was Eric Arthur Blair², was born in 1903 in the British colony of India, concretely in the region of Bengal. But although born there Orwell did not really have the opportunity to get to know colonial life since his mother took him back to England soon after his birth. However, several years later the opportunity arose again and Orwell, after finishing his studies at Eton, decided to begin his career as an officer of the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. Such a decision was at least unusual for a young graduate of one of the most prestigious schools in England. But, as Michael Shelden explains, it was impossible for Orwell to attend Oxford or Cambridge. He had no chance of winning a scholarship due to his rather bad academic achievements and his parents were not willing to further support him – at least because of their financial situation. (1991, pp. 85-86) Moreover, being a part of the colonial machinery seemed to be quite acceptable and attractive alternative for uncertain young Orwell as his image of the East had been supposedly shaped by his family, which was closely involved in colonial affairs. As Emma Larkin observes, Orwell’s father, Richard Walmesley Blair, worked in the colonial administration of India as an opium-tax collector, whilst his mother, Ida Mabel Blair, came from a prominent family of teak traders and shipbuilders, and had grown up in Burma. (2009, p. vi) As Larkin further points out: “His background had groomed him to be the quintessential child of empire.”

² Blair’s pseudonym is used through the whole thesis, even for his personal life. Such arrangement is kept in spite of the fact that, as Michael Shelden acknowledges, persona of George Orwell was not created until 1932 and was used by Blair strictly for the purposes of his literary career. (1991, pp. 180-181) The reason for such simplification is the endeavour to maintain clarity. Moreover, the simplification is enabled and even required by the nature of the thesis which is not focused primarily on the author’s life.

And she also reminds that initially his behaviour corresponded to that: “The young Orwell enjoyed the decadence of the ruling class in Burma.” (2009, p. vi)

Nevertheless, Orwell’s attitude to the Empire gradually changed. The transformation was so significant that, according to John Atkins, Orwell finally left Burma in 1927, after five years of service, “bitterly disillusioned.” (1971, pp. 45, 77) And if the fact that “whatever the subject, Orwell was always tempted to look at it from both sides” (Shelden, 1991, p. 3) is taken into consideration, it appears to be inevitable that in Burma he perceived things quite different from those offered by official British propaganda:

As a policeman in Burma, Orwell saw the underbelly of the empire; not the triumphant bugles or bejewelled maharajas, but the drunken sahibs pickled by heat and alcohol in mildewed clubs, the scarred and screaming Burmese in their prison cells. (Larkin, 2009, p. vi)

Orwell’s experience definitely contributed to his understanding of the real essence of the British rule and consequently to his disillusionment. According to Atkins, Orwell discovered the hypocrisy of the system whose real aim was hidden behind the officially presented duty to bring the advancement to backward people, known as white man’s burden (1971, p. 69). Besides hypocrisy, there was another frustrating aspect of the British rule that Orwell recognised:

Orwell loathed brutality, especially the unnecessary brutality which has become an instrument of government, and he left the Burma Police partly because he could no longer stomach the duties he was expected to undertake. (Atkins, 1971, p. 29)

It was therefore the nature of the British rule that contributed to Orwell’s abandonment of such a promising career, which, as Shelden claims, meant a huge disappointment for Orwell’s father who, unlike his son, was “a loyal, efficient servant” and “stayed [in his service] until retirement.” (1991, pp. 11, 14)

However, those five years were not merely a failure; according to Larkin, Orwell’s staying in Burma meant “a key turning point in his life.” (2009, p. vi) This could be understood from two points of view. Firstly, as already indicated, it was important in term of a formation of Orwell’s opinions, for “it was during those years that he was transformed from a snobbish public-school boy to a writer of social conscience who sought out the underdogs of society.” (Larkin, 2009, p. vi) Secondly, his Burmese experience could be considered “a key turning point” for his literary career

as well. As Sheldon suggests, it was in Burma where Orwell realized that his desire for writing books is stronger than his conviction that becoming a writer is an unrealistic and completely unreachable task (1991, pp. 107, 122).

Even though Burma played an important role in the creation of George Orwell the author, his only novel that takes place in Burma was not the first book he published. According to Sheldon, Orwell's first full-length piece of work was *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1991, pp. 180-181), the book based on Orwell's experience from London and Paris, where he spent some time after his return from Burma, and dealing mainly with the issue of poverty. Soon afterwards, Orwell decided to go back to his imperial experience and the result was *Burmese Days*. The novel takes place in Upper Burma and depicts few months in lives of John Flory, the British timber merchant, and several other Englishmen and natives living there in the period of the British supremacy. *Burmese Days* definitely reflects Orwell's disillusionment with the British rule and Larkin even describes it as "a portrait of the dark side of the Raj, chronicling sordid and shameful episodes of empire life." (2009, p. ix) Sheldon shares Larkin's view and further provides insight into the nature of the book's criticism of imperialism.

The most successful aspect of the novel is its portrayal of the damaging effects of imperialism on both the rulers and the ruled. Other writers have made sharper attacks on the evils of the system, but few have been able to match Orwell's ability to show how those evils poison every aspect of daily life. (1991, p. 196)

However, as for the publication of the novel, according to Sheldon, *Burmese Days* was firstly published not in the UK but in the USA in 1934 due to "the book's potential for attracting lawsuits." (1991, pp. 200, 218)

There were no difficulties of that kind with publishing Orwell's essays connected with his Burmese experience since, in the case of "Shooting an Elephant" for example, "there was no much reason to fear lawsuits [...] from faceless crowd of Burmese [...]." (Sheldon, 1991, p. 210) The essay "Shooting an Elephant" takes place in Lower Burma and deals with the situation of a coloniser who is tasked with handling an escaped elephant. As Sheldon claims, it was published two years after *Burmese Days*, in magazine *New Writing* (1991, p. 268). Kenneth Keskinen summarises the essence of "Shooting an Elephant" as follows:

It gives us an insight into the nature of man in modern society, of man in groups, of the leader and the led, of authoritarianism and power, and, most important, of the

dilemma of the man who tries to be his free and true self in a system that asks him to be an automaton. (1966, p. 670)

Moreover, Keskinen's statement is in fact applicable not only to "Shooting an Elephant" but also to *Burmese Days* as well as to "A Hanging".

The essay "A Hanging" was the first work dealing with colonialism that Orwell wrote as confirmed by Sheldon's statement that "[it] was first published in the *Adelphi*, under Blair's own name, only four years after his return from Burma." (1991, p. 112) It depicts an execution of a native that is held in a Burmese prison from the point of view of a British man.

Besides the analysed novel and essays, there was supposed to be one more work dealing with Orwell's Burmese experience: "Only a few months before he died he was trying to write another book about Burma – a short novel called 'A Smoking-Room Story'." (Shelden, 1991, p. 122) Unfortunately then, it was George Orwell's early death in 1950 that precluded the creation of another forceful piece of work that would have provided an insight into the nature of imperial expansion.

3. Colonial Issues in George Orwell's Work

3.1 The Superiority and Inferiority

Proclaimed superiority of a ruling nation over subjects of its rule is an essential feature of colonialism. The following chapter of this paper is aimed at demonstrating that in the analysed works of George Orwell the portrayal of superiority and inferiority corresponds with the previously mentioned idea of Rupert Emerson that racial and cultural superiority of a colonising nation is a form of the arrogance of the colonial system (1969, pp. 12-13). Superiority of the British characters is demonstrated by the arrogant behaviour and attitudes of most of them towards the natives. Therefore, the arrogance of the British characters can be viewed as a transformation of the nature of colonial regime into its servants. Further, the chapter focuses on other aspects of the nature of the relations of superiority and inferiority between the colonisers and the colonised and aims to show that the analysed works depict them in accordance with Ania Loomba's idea that such relationships were "the most complex and traumatic [...] in human history." (1998, p. 2)

In *Burmese Days* there are numerous examples of the arrogant nature of the superiority. The arrogance of the British is apparent especially in the second chapter of the novel where a meeting of the British inhabitants of Kyauktada, the small town where the novel takes place, in the European Club is depicted for the first time. In the Club several men are present, including Tom Lackersteen, the forty years old manager of a timber company and the devoted alcoholic. He lives in the colony with his wife, the five years younger woman whose main endeavour is to keep her eye on the unreliable husband, who arrives in the Club later and immediately makes a following speech:

‘Oh dear, this heat, this heat! Mr Macgregor came and fetched me in his car. So kind of him. Tom, that wretch of a rickshaw-man is pretending to be ill again. Really, I think you ought to give him a good trashing and bring him to senses. It’s too terrible to have to walk about in this sun every day.’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 26)

Considering the fact that her house is only “the quarter-mile” (Orwell, 2009, p. 26) away from the Club, Mrs Lackersteen’s complaining seems to be needless. Both the way she speaks about a native man and the way she suggests he should be treated in are arrogant in itself. But her arrogance consists mainly in absolutely no realization of the fact that for a native man it is much more terrible than for her since he draws a rickshaw in the heat, and that he even might be really ill because of it.

Mrs Lackersteen’s complaint is followed by her reminiscing about a former situation in the colony:

‘[...] We seem to have no *authority* over the natives nowadays, with all these dreadful Reforms, and the insolence they learn from the newspapers. In some ways they are getting almost as bad as the lower classes at Home.’ [...] ‘And such a short time ago, even just before the War, they were so *nice* and respectful! The way they salaamed when you passed them on the road – it was really quite charming. I remember when we paid our butler only twelve rupees a month, and really that man loved us like a dog. And now they are demanding forty and fifty rupees, and I find that only way I can even *keep* a servant is to pay their wages several months in arrears.’ (Orwell, 2009, pp. 26-27)

Mrs Lackersteen’s monologue testifies that they live in the period of decay of the Empire³. The situation in the colonies has obviously changed and so has the indigenous population itself. But arrogance of the members of the superior nation has remained the same, as the excerpt indicates. In Mrs Lackersteen’s speech, there are two examples of the arrogant nature of her superior position. Firstly, it is the way she treats her native

³ The novel takes place in the period that corresponds to Orwell’s stay in Burma in 1920s and, according to Baldwin and Quinn, Burma gained independence in 1948. (2007c, p. 25)

servants in terms of a wage. Secondly, it is her former enjoying natives' salaaming⁴. Since natives are generally considered inferior creatures, she was presumably not fond of simple politeness of greetings but rather submissiveness, and hence arrogant. However, her deprecating the slight improvement in natives' human rights appears to be not on account of 'difficulties' that she has to undertake such as impolite behaviour and steep demands of natives, but in fact on account of what such 'outcomes' mean for her sense of being master. Therefore, what she actually misses about the colonial past are natives' manifestations of their inferior position, which strengthens her own sense of superiority.

Mrs Lackersteen's view is shared by Mr Macgregor, another British inhabitant of the colony, the generally good-natured man who holds the offices of Deputy Commissioner and secretary of the Club in Kyauktada:

'The old type of servant is disappearing,' agreed Mr Macgregor. 'In my young days, when one's butler was disrespectful, one sent him along to the jail with a chit saying "Please give the bearer fifteen lashes." Ah well, *eheu fugaces!* Those days are gone for ever, I am afraid.' (Orwell, 2009, p. 27)

Similarly to Mrs Lackersteen, he feels nostalgia for the days when (at least minimal) emancipation of natives hardly existed. His story about a native who is sent to jail having no suspicion at all that he orders a beating of himself throws light on the nature of the colonisers' superiority. The fact that the members of the ruling nation treat the natives in such a humiliating way, and that they even consider it pleasurable to do so and have absolutely no qualms, reflects how deep arrogance of their sense of being superior is.

Later, the Europeans discuss what would be a solution to such decay of the Empire. Mrs Lackersteen's opinion is following:

'Our *burra* sahib at Mandalay always said,' put in Mrs Lackersteen, 'that in the end we shall simply *leave* India. Young men will not come out here any longer to work all their lives for insults and ingratitude. We shall just *go*. When the natives come to us begging us to stay, we shall say, "No, you have had your chance, you wouldn't take it. Very well, we shall leave you to govern yourselves." And then, what a lesson that will teach them.' (Orwell, 2009, p.30)

According to her, the British presence in the East is really helpful and necessary. But what is more perplexing is the way she expresses her opinion that if the British left

⁴ According to Cambridge Dictionary Online to salaam means "to greet someone by bending low from the waist with the front of the right hand against the top of the face." (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/salaam>)

India it would not be relief but disaster for the natives. The certainty of her claiming that is almost disarming and shows her arrogance at its purest form. However, Mrs Lackersteen has obviously adopted the idea of white man's burden, which, as discussed in the theoretical part of the paper, is used to justify colonial rule. Therefore, her opinions can mean blindness, or rather unconscious eagerness to justify her own arrogant behaviour.

Nevertheless, Ellis, the choleric local manager of another timber company, takes a different view on the issue of decay of the Empire, but definitely equally arrogant:

'I don't agree, I simply don't agree,' Ellis said. 'We could put things right in a month if we chose. It only needs a pennyworth of pluck. Look at Amritsar. Look how they caved in after that. Dyer knew the stuff to give them. Poor old Dyer! That was a dirty job. Those cowards in England have got something to answer for.'
(Orwell, 2009, p. 30)

In Ellis's opinion, the solution therefore would be violence. He speaks about the Amritsar incident that, according to Baldwin and Quinn, took place in 1919 in India (2007e, p. 517). As Baldwin and Quinn explain, what happened at Amritsar was the unreasonable massacre where Dyer, a British officer, ordered to attack an innocent and peaceful group of the natives, and where thousands of native people were injured and hundreds died (2007e, p. 517). The fact that Ellis approves Dyer's act and that he even suggests that it is the only possible way of treating the natives shows that he is completely convinced of the British total supremacy. Moreover, it is obvious that Ellis perceives the natives not only as inferior but almost as though they were not human beings, since their deaths mean nothing to him.

During the Europeans' spending time in the Club, there is another example of their arrogant behaviour towards the natives. Even though they meet in the morning, the weather is already very hot and they want to refresh themselves and read newspapers that have just arrived from Great Britain. And it is the unbearable heat that leads to the following conversation between Ellis and a native butler:

The invisible *chokra* 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 today, 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. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 23)

The position of the natives in the world of the Raj is demonstrated by the very first sentence of the excerpt. The fact that the native servant is described as “invisible” signifies, firstly, that the British have placed him outside the Club so as not to be disturbed by his presence, and, secondly, that he is generally perceived as if he were invisible. However, in both cases the native servant is treated in an arrogant manner.

The butler that Ellis talks to experiences arrogance of members of the ruling nation as well. He is severely told off by Ellis for speaking English correctly. The manager’s rebuke is obviously absurd and seems to be pointless, since the servant did not do anything wrong and was hardly able to intentionally pretend poor knowledge of English. Moreover, the butler has to speak English because he lives in the country that is oppressed by the British. As Dean Baldwin and Patrick J. Quinn claim:

Under colonial rule, facility with English became essential to get ahead or lead a successful life, and hence many colonized people were forced (or chose) to learn English for the same reasons one needed Latin under the Romans. (2007b, p. 15)

Therefore, the native man is forced by the British to learn their language, but, at the same time, the British themselves disapprove of his knowledge of their language. The absurdity of the situation is then even highlighted. However, the importance of the situation rests upon the fact that Ellis’s anger stems not from the butler’s speaking English itself, but from a high level of his utterance. According to Loomba “one of the most striking contradictions about colonialism is that it both needs to ‘civilise’ its ‘others’, and to fix them into perpetual ‘otherness’.” (1998, p. 173) In accordance with her statement the native butler can be viewed as the “other” who has been “civilised” by being taught to speak English. The fact that the native servant is able to speak English on the same level as those whose language he speaks and who are considered superior to him reduces both distance between them and his “otherness”. Therefore, it is the reduced difference between the natives and himself (and therefore undermined sense of his own superiority) that makes Ellis so angry. Ellis’s arrogance then rests not only upon the way he treats his native servant, but, more importantly, upon his conviction that the natives should be civilised only ‘to some degree’.

It was already mentioned that when Ellis in *Burmese Days* speaks about the slaughter of the natives he does so with such easiness as if the dead people were not only inferior but almost non-human beings. The situation where the colonised are portrayed as objects rather than human beings (or rather as being treated as objects) reappears in the analysed pieces of work several times.

Firstly, the example is to be found in *Burmese Days* during another meeting of the British in the Club, several days after the arrival of a new European, the self-confident cavalry official Verrall. The young man is eagerly awaited by both women and men living in the colony but remains reserved towards the other inhabitants. He consequently becomes unpopular among the others (except for the female inhabitants) and one day he gets into an argument with Ellis:

‘Here, you - what’s your name – Verrall!’

‘What?’

‘Have you been kicking our butler?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then what the hell do you mean by it?’

‘Beggan gave me his lip. I sent him for a whisky and soda, and he brought it warm. I told him to put ice in it, and he wouldn’t – talked some bloody rot about saving the last piece of ice. So I kicked his bottom. Serve him right.’

Ellis turned quite grey. He was furious. The butler was a piece of Club property and not to be kicked by strangers. But what most angered Ellis was the thought that Verrall quite possibly suspected him of being sorry for the butler – in fact, of disapproving of kicking as such. (Orwell, 2009, pp. 215-216)

Initially, it seems that Ellis really protests against the beating of the butler. However, it is immediately explained that the real meaning of the situation is different. It is clear from the text that Ellis considers physical punishments (even for trivial things) of natives to be the usual way of treating them, as well as Verrall does. Even though such an opinion is contemptible, the description of Ellis’s reaction to the official’s beating reveals the essence of Europeans’ attitude towards natives even more. Ellis furiously objects to the maltreatment of the servant not because of the beating itself but because it is “a piece of Club property” that is treated badly. In other words, the native servant is approached in the same manner as for example a sofa or a billiard table would be. On the whole, the depicted perceiving and treating members of the inferior nation as objects highlights the humiliation which the natives have to undertake.

Another portrayal of the tragic position of the indigenous population in the world of the Raj appears towards the end of *Burmese Days*. After the incident in which Ellis

blinds a native boy, the native inhabitants of Kyauktada decide to revenge the misdeed and surround the Club so that Ellis can be punished. The situation turns into a riot. Although the natives are in fact unable to really threaten the European community (much as they are enormously superior in number), the British are frightened and the situation becomes serious. Finally, it is John Flory, the main character of the novel, that, quite paradoxically, contributes the most to the end of the riot. The paradox lies in something that Michael Sheldon considers to be the sort of man that Orwell was interested in – “the outcast, the failure, the unhappy dreamer” (1991, p. 98) – because John Flory is exactly that kind of person. However, the day after the rebellion Flory meets Dr Veraswami, his native friend, and they talk about the previous evening and consequences of the incident:

‘The only fly in the ointment is that I told the police to fire over the crowd’s heads instead of straight at them. It seems that’s against all the Government regulations. Ellis was a little vexed about it. “Why didn’t you plug some of the b—s when you had the chance?” he said. I pointed out that it would have meant hitting the police who were in the middle of the crowd; but as he said, they were only niggers anyway. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 268)

The monologue demonstrates the attitude of the English towards native inhabitants in a tragicomic way. Flory is generally considered to be hero and his heroism appears to be even emphasized by the fact that he managed to solve the situation without an unnecessary death toll. But, paradoxically, Flory is in fact criticised for being responsible for not killing anyone, since the eventual victims would be participants of a riot. This indicates that the endeavour of the imperial regime to maintain order (and its power at the same time) is really strong and definitely more important than lives of indigenous population. Moreover, the ironic description of Ellis’s absurd reaction confirms that a life of a native man generally means almost nothing in this world.

“Shooting an Elephant” provides an insight into the nature of colonisers’ perceiving the indigenous population as well. The narrator of the story shoots an elephant which killed a native man. At the end of the story the reaction to his act is described: “The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie.” (Orwell, 1950b, p. 10) The fact that colonisers consider elephant’s life more important than a life of a man is perplexing. Such belief testifies

that members of the inferior nation are in fact not perceived as human beings by Europeans but rather in the same manner as animals or objects.

“A Hanging” contains the motif of perceiving natives as nonhumans as well, though it is presented from a different point of view. The essay takes place in a Burmese prison and depicts an execution of a native man. The narrator of the story is among men who escort the convict to the gallows. The group of men is marching towards the brick structure and suddenly something happens – the native prisoner steps aside to avoid a puddle on the path. This seemingly trivial incident fills the narrator with consternation:

It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we are alive. [...] His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned – reasoned even about puddles. (Orwell, 1950a, pp. 13-14)

The situation can be understood as a moment of the narrator’s realization that the imperial regime kills human beings. His attitude to natives in general is unknown, but it is implied that until that moment executions have been just duty for him and the convicts have not been connected with any human aspect. But when the prisoner avoids the puddle he exhibits the instinct that is shared by all people and the narrator’s view on him changes. Therefore, there is depicted the moment of a coloniser’s understanding of the fact that people he considers inferior are basically the same as he is.

When the convict is hanged the execution squad leaves and then, when they are in the central yard of the prison, one of the man begins to talk:

‘Do you know, sir, our friend (he meant the dead man) when he heard his appeal had been dismissed, he pissed on the floor of his cell. From fright. Kindly take one of my cigarettes, sir. Do you not admire my new silver case, sir? From the boxwallah, two rupees eight annas. Classy European style.’
Several people laughed – at what, nobody seemed certain. (Orwell, 1950a, p. 16)

The disrespectful way in which the man talks about the executed prisoner and the reaction of the others can simply reflect their disrespect and lack of interest in the native man. However, it can be viewed also from different point of view. After while another ‘funny story’ is said and the reaction escalates: “I found that I was laughing quite loudly. Everyone was laughing.” (Orwell, 1950a, p. 17) If the narrator’s previous realization of value of the native man’s life is taken into consideration, the disrespectful reaction to humiliating of natives can be considered a form of defence. When the

narrator realizes that natives are human beings, the same as he is, the execution then becomes unbearable. He therefore reacts in the way that makes the situation less serious and therefore helps him to stand the fact that he participated in killing the human.

Even though the sense of inferiority created in the native people makes them easy to be controlled by the British and prohibits them from opposing maltreatment, it does not force them to fully respect their oppressors, as the narrator of “Shooting an Elephant” suggests in the opening paragraph of the essay: “No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress.” (Orwell, 1950b, p.1) The frequentness of spiting the Europeans by the natives is acknowledged by his another example:

As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. (Orwell, 1950b, p. 1)

Rudeness of the Burmese is highlighted by the fact that even a European police officer – a person who is, in general, supposed to naturally command respect – is presented as the most common object of their disrespect. The similar paradox is present in the third example given by the narrator: “The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.” (Orwell, 1950b, p.1) The ironic comment about the Buddhist priests is out of accord with the general image of Buddhist priests as representatives of serenity and wisdom. As Manning Nash explains, a Buddhist monk “is not a director of the spiritual life of the laity, nor is he the embodiment or representative of the sacred,” (1963, p. 288) but he “shows others what they might become if their character and temperament were suitable.” (1963, p. 289) Therefore, the fact that even men whose mission in life is to set an example to others tend to express hatred towards colonisers testifies seriousness of such emotions.

However, it would be inaccurate to consider rudeness of the natives to be an evidence of their terrible personalities. On the contrary, considering the fact that the indigenous population is unable to revolt against its oppressors (as acknowledged by the narrator himself in previously quoted passage), their behaviour then appears to be the only way to express the disapproval of the British supremacy and its arrogance – a kind

of revolt penetrated into everyday life. Therefore, displayed hatred towards the white inhabitants of the colony could be viewed as an inevitable outcome of colonial rule.

Rudeness of the Burmese, if viewed from the colonisers' perspective, also provides a new point of view on the Europeans' negative attitude towards them. The narrator of "Shooting an Elephant" describes the effect of native provocations on him as follows:

All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down [...] upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. (Orwell, 1950b, p. 2)

What the behaviour of the natives causes are the narrator's contradictory feelings. Even though he is on their side, the natives bait him and make his life more difficult. It is then understandable that their behaviour seems "perplexing and upsetting" (Orwell, 1950b, p. 1) to him. His confession therefore suggests that being in opposition to the colonial regime is not a simple matter at all because, paradoxically, the Burmese themselves complicate it. The narrator further acknowledges that such feelings are not unusual in the colony: "Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty." (Orwell, 1950b, p. 2) Therefore, on the whole, according to him it is not provocations of the natives themselves that are to blame for the negative feelings of the colonisers, but the imperial system.

Nevertheless, the condition of the contradictory feelings of the narrator is his antipathy to the colonial regime and its arrogance. The attitude of a coloniser who sympathises with the system towards natives' spiting is therefore inevitably different. Ellis, the character of *Burmese Days*, one day meets a group of five young native boys:

Ellis saw them coming, a row of yellow, malicious faces – epicene faces, horribly smooth and young, grinning at him with deliberate insolence. It was in their minds to bait him, as a white man. [...] They grinned full in Ellis's face as they passed him. They were trying openly to provoke him, and they knew that the law was on their side. Ellis felt his breast swell. The look of their faces, jeering at him like a row of yellow images, was maddening. (Orwell, 2009, p. 252)

Paradoxically, the boys in fact do not do anything special and their provocations are rather only Ellis's imagination. His imagining such things can be considered either a simple product of his racism, or paranoia caused by his probably constant undergoing native provocations. However, this time Ellis's reaction to the situation is apparently

vigorous. This is caused firstly by the circumstances, respectively by Maxwell's death (for which natives are responsible), and secondly by his secret desire to hurt native people. His lust is similar to that of the narrator of "Shooting an Elephant" but definitely much more bestial, as demonstrated by his fantasising about revenge on the Burmese:

Lovely, sanguinary images moved through his mind. Shrieking mounds of natives, soldiers slaughtering them. Shoot them, ride them down, horses' hooves trample their guts out, whips cut their faces in slices! (Orwell, 2009, p. 251)

But the difference between the narrator of "Shooting an Elephant" and Ellis is not only bestiality of their thoughts, but also the fact that Ellis finally realizes his desire – he is so furious that he loses control over himself and hits one of the boys across his eyes with a cane. Not only is Ellis not punished for this act, which is later a cause of the rebellion of the Burmese, but he actually accuses the boys (who only defended themselves) for assaulting him for no reason, and even believes that he is right. Therefore, both the narrator of "Shooting an Elephant" and Ellis demonstrate that rudeness of the natives unavoidably supports the colonisers' hatred and, in case of Ellis, brutality towards the natives. But in "Shooting an Elephant" feelings of hatred caused by rudeness are unwelcomed, while in *Burmese Days* rudeness serves Ellis as justification for his own arrogant and unkind feelings and behaviour, and therefore is useful to him.

On the whole, it is a kind of vicious circle, for the natives' provocations are caused by arrogance and brutality of the colonial regime that are fuelled by such provocations.

3.1.1 Britishness

Discussing the depiction of relations of superiority and inferiority further requires a closer look at the concept of the Britishness as it appears in the novel and the essays. As already suggested, the strong awareness of being the British constitutes the counterpart to the otherness of the natives and strengthens the sense of superiority in the members of a ruling nation. The crucial importance of being the British in the colonial environment is very apparently represented by the characters of the Eurasian inhabitants of Kyauktada⁵. Even though denial of the half-British origin of Samuel and Francis

⁵ The issue of Eurasians will be more closely discussed in the following subchapter.

would improve their terrible living conditions, it is the only thing they would never do because “their drop of white blood is the sole asset they’ve got.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 126)

In *Burmese Days* it is the European club (or in fact the British club considering the membership entirely of the British) that most significantly represents the Britishness and, at the same time, its importance. The European club, according to Emma Larkin, is “the physical and spiritual centerpiece of *Burmese Days*.” (2009, p. viii) As for the physical aspect, the importance of the European club is rather clear. The Club, described by Orwell as “a dumpy one-storey wooden building,” (2009, p. 14) is simply the place where the British spend most of their time, nearly every morning and evening in the concrete. The spiritual aspect, which illustrates the importance of the Club far more, could be explained from two different points of view – British and native.

As for the point of view of the British, firstly, the Club is not only the place of their habitual idling. As Larkin suggests: “According to Orwell, the real seat of British power lay, not in the commissioner’s mansion or the police station, but in this sad, dusty little building.” (2009, p. viii) It is due to the fact that “[...] the clubs were not only the meeting places of people of a particular race or of particular shared interests. They were also, inevitably, gathering points for the ruling elite [...]” (Woodcock, 1969, p. 188) As an example the fact that it is the Kyauktada Club that, in spite of an order given by the Government, holds the final decision about the election of a native can serve.

Secondly, if it is supposed that a dominant nation, which regards itself as superior to a dependent nation, tends to demonstrate its superiority so as to preserve and strengthen it, the Club can be therefore considered the device of such demonstration. Accordingly, by prohibiting natives from attending the Club the British express their exclusiveness. The exclusiveness is in this case even emphasized because “[...] it was the proud boast of Kyauktada Club that, almost alone of Clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an Oriental to membership.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 14)

Finally, Ranajit Guha calls a club “the Englishman’s home away from home under the raj.” (1997, p. 484) In other words, the Club can be seen as the place that brings the British closer to their homeland and helps them to cope with the strangeness they are surrounded with. One day, Flory wants to show Elizabeth, the young niece of Mrs Lackersteen, the pwe, which is “the Burmese open air drama.” (Nash, 1963, p. 292) But the girl is horrified and very upset about the experience with the performance, which in fact represents different culture, and it is the Club that later calms her:

But as for Elizabeth the civilised atmosphere of the Club, with the white faces all round her and the friendly look of the illustrated papers and the ‘Bonzo’ pictures, reassured her after that doubtful interlude at the *pwe*. (Orwell, 2009, p.113)

The decision that the British should admit a native as a member of the Club is therefore regarded as an attack upon the only territory where they do not feel estranged, and is consequently followed by the intense negative reaction. The negative attitude is most directly expressed by Ellis, for example by his statement “ ‘[...] I’ll die in the ditch before I’ll see a nigger in here’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 20) or by his calling the Club “ ‘[...] the only place where we [the British] can enjoy ourselves. [...]’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 21) Such feelings of most of the British are contrasted with Flory’s feelings about the Club. For example, his following criticism of the Empire is clearly based on the contempt of typical pieces of Club property: “What a civilisation founded on whisky, *Blackwood’s* and the ‘Bonzo’ pictures!” (Orwell, 2009, p. 31) Thus, ‘Bonzo’ pictures and British maga-zines in the Club paradoxically evoke and suppress estrangement at the same time. One way or another, the Club in this case represents Great Britain, the superior country, itself.

From the point of view of the Burmese, the Club is the place they want to reach, “the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 14) Such a desire for membership in the European Club is caused by prestige and power associated with it, since, as George Woodcock acknowledges, “the Club [...] dictated who should belong to accepted society [...].” (1969, p. 185) There are two native characters in *Burmese Days* whose aim is the membership in the Club – Dr Veraswami and U Po Kyin, the native magistrate of Kyauktada. Both of these characters explain the importance of the Club from a native point of view, even though their intentions in this matter are different.

U Po Kyin, who represents greedy and selfish approach to the membership, tries to explain his intentions about the Club to his wife by claiming: “ ‘[...] It is in my mind to do something noble, glorious! Something that is the very highest honour an Oriental can attain to. [...]’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 146) This statement is not an exaggeration at all considering the fact that natives, with their status of inferior creatures, are determined to be club servants rather than club members. But U Po Kyin is rather idealistic when imagining his and his wife’s future as the Club members:

Po Kyin, the naked gutter-boy of Mandalay, the thieving clerk and obscure official, would enter that sacred place, call Europeans ‘old chap’, drink whisky and soda and knock white balls to and fro on the green table! Ma Kin, the village woman, who had first seen the light through the chinks of a bamboo hut thatched with palm leaves, would sit on a high chair with her feet imprisoned in silk stockings and high-heeled shoes (yes, she would actually wear shoes in that place!) talking to English ladies in Hindustani about baby-linen! (Orwell, 2009, p. 148)

U Po Kyin’s vision is obviously contradictory to the British attitude to a presence of natives in the Club for several reasons. Firstly, it is necessary to take into consideration that Ellis loathes the idea of Veraswami “ ‘[...] chipping into our conversation and pawing everyone with his sweaty hands and breathing his filthy garlic breath in our faces. [...]’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 21) It is thus improbable for the British to let a native (U Po Kyin in this case) enjoy himself in their company with enthusiasm. Secondly, the idea of Ma Kin having a conversation with Englishwomen in Hindustani is absurd, for the British women are unlike to speak native language, as demonstrated by Mrs Lackersteen’s ignorant claim that “only missionary-women spoke Burmese; nice women found kitchen Urdu quite as much as they needed.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 121)

On the other hand, Dr Veraswami wants to be a member of the Club only to be protected against machinations of U Po Kyin. The membership would provide him such protection because in terms of status “ ‘[...] in the Club, practically he [an Indian] *iss* a European. [...]’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 46) In other words, being in the connection with the Club (or in fact with the Britishness it represents) provides credibility that is essential for a native official. Furthermore, the approach of Dr Veraswami to the membership in the Club seems to be much more acceptable from the British point of view than that of U Po Kyin, as illustrated by Veraswami’s following speech to Flory:

‘[...] It *iss* – I hope this *iss* clearly understood – that I have no intention of *using* the Club in any way. Membership *iss* all I desire. Even if I were elected, I should not, of course, ever presume to *come* to the Club.’ (Orwell, 2009, pp. 155-156)

Veraswami’s approach is very meek and subordinate, and therefore corresponding to his inferior position. Moreover, the excerpt clearly reflects the function of the Club as a symbol of Britishness, for it is the fact that the native doctor considers the Club to be the territory entirely of the British that prevents him from eventual attending it.

3.1.2 Eurasians

The clash of different races was an unquestionable part of a colonial experience. These problems were even more complicated because, in the case of Burma, the Burmese and the British were not the only inhabitants of the colony. G. E. Harvey for example mentions the presence of Indian and Chinese minorities (1946, pp. 14, 69). Furthermore, there was also one specific minority in colonies – Eurasians, i. e. people “of a mixed European and Asian origin” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eurasian>).

Even though the issue of these minorities is not the main focus of George Orwell’s work, it has significance in terms of the demonstration of the complexity of relationships between the colonisers and the colonised. The first reference to minorities can be found in *Burmese Days* during the description of inhabitants of Kyauktada:

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. (Orwell, 2009, p. 15)

The Eurasians, the only minority that is depicted more notably in Orwell’s work, are mentioned separately. This arrangement foreshadows their specific position in the world of the Raj. The representatives of Eurasians in *Burmese Days*, Mr Samuel and Mr Francis, are for the first time more closely discussed during one of Ellis’s ill-natured monologues in the Club:

‘[...] 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! [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 24)

Ellis suggests that Eurasians are different and do not belong in European community at all. Furthermore, his speech indicates that Francis and Samuel themselves do want to belong among white people. But it is obvious that they are considered inferior to the British as well as natives. Nevertheless, later in the story it is made clear that the situation of Eurasians is considerably different from the situation of the Burmese.

One day Elizabeth finds Flory in conversation with Francis and Samuel. She is confused by the two of them and intuitively decides to ignore them. When the couple finally leaves the Eurasians, Elizabeth wants to know who they are and what they are doing. Flory’s answer is following:

‘They exist somehow or other in the bazaar. I believe Francis acts as clerk to an Indian money-lender, and Samuel to some of the pleaders. But they’d probably starve now and then if it weren’t for the charity of the natives.’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 125)

The living conditions of Eurasians are obviously difficult. But this explanation of Flory’s also indicates that Eurasians are not only excluded from the European community, but they do not belong among natives either – they are only recipients of natives’ benefit. The dependency on natives’ help in fact makes Eurasians almost inferior to them, or at least makes their situation worse than that of natives. Natives are considered inferior to the British, but on the other hand they commonly work for them and they can even undertake higher functions, whereas the situation of Eurasians is different because they are totally despised by the British, as Flory further explains to Elizabeth:

‘[...] You see, Eurasians of that type – men who’ve been brought up in the bazaar and had no education – are done for from the start. The European won’t touch them with a stick, and they’re cut off from entering the lower-grade Government services. There’s nothing they can do except cadge, unless they chuck all pretension to being Europeans. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, pp. 125-126)

The Eurasians are in an apparently unsolvable situation. The abandonment of their half-British origin can improve their lives, but such an act is improbable because, as Flory claims, “ ‘[...] you can’t expect the poor devils to do that. Their drop of white blood is the sole asset they’ve got. [...]’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 126) Their partially British descent is so important because they live in the world where being the British means privileges and power. But since power and privileges are unattainable for them, it is rather a matter of pride and also of identity. It was already discussed in the previous subchapter that “for the white subject, the black other is everything that lies outside the self. For the black subject [...] the white other serves to define everything that is desirable, everything that the self desires.” (Loomba, 1998, p. 144) In other words, for colonised subjects their oppressors serve as something that helps them to identify themselves. In the Eurasian context this is complicated by the fact that Eurasians are neither black nor white. And since whiteness is desirable in this context, Eurasians opt to create the British “self”.

However, the Eurasians’ being proud of their origin is in sharp contrast with the attitude of the British who do not appreciate it at all. This opposite of their attitudes is for example depicted when Christian inhabitants of Kyauktada wait for the church

service – the service which is going to turn out to be fatal for Flory – and the Eurasians are among them:

Flory was there already, and Mr Macgregor, grey topi and all, and Mr Francis and Mr Samuel, frisking about in freshly-laundered drill suits – for the six-weekly church service was the great social event of their lives. (Orwell, 2009, pp. 280-281)

It is explained that for the Eurasians the church service means much more than the possibility to express their religious belief. It is “the great social event of their lives” because it is the only occasion when they could spend some time among Europeans and feel like a part of their community, which, as already stated, is very important to them. But Ellis, representing the British, criticises that “ ‘[...] last time the padre was here they [Francis and Samuel] had the nerve to come up and sit on the front pews with the white men,’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 24) and he even suggests that “ ‘[...] someone ought to speak to the padre about that [...].’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 24) But the Eurasians are fixated on this event and enjoy it despite the contempt of the British – either they are not aware of the attitude of the British, or they simply ignore it and are satisfied with mere pretending of belonging to their community. Nevertheless, if the behaviour of the British towards the Eurasians is taken into the consideration, the pride of the Eurasians seems to be rather tragicomic, since they are proud of something that should connect them with the community, but that actually has the opposite effect.

The importance of the origin to Eurasians is demonstrated also by their constant manifestation of it. When Francis tries to converse with Flory and Elizabeth, he speaks about the trying heat and gives them some pieces of advice at once:

‘[...] Not too much you are suffering from prickly heat, I trust? Pounded tamarind applied to the afflicted spot is infallible. Myself I suffer torments each night. Very prevalent disease among we Europeans.’ [...] ‘[...] Also, sir–madam, may I advise to you, wearing only Terai hat is not judicious in April, sir. For the natives all well, their skulls are adamant. But for us sunstroke ever menaces. Very deadly is the sun upon European skull. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 124)

Firstly, Francis emphasizes his European roots by using pronouns that include him to the European community. Secondly, he stresses that he himself often suffers from prickly heat and is prone to sunstroke. Such assertions are very important in terms of his demonstration of the European origin, for it is solely Europeans who are said to have problems of that kind, as Francis himself suggests and Flory later explains to Elizabeth:

‘[...] Poor Francis, I never meet him but he begins telling me about his prickly heat. Natives, you see, are supposed not to suffer from prickly heat – bosh, of course, but people believe it. It’s the same with sunstroke. They wear those huge topis to remind you that they’ve got European skulls. A kind of coat-of-arms. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 126)

Flory’s indication that such a speech of Francis’s really is not rare and that he even uses nonverbal signals to manifest his origin therefore acknowledges almost a fixation of Eurasians on their partially British descent. Moreover, Flory suggests that alleged Europeans’ predispositions to these illnesses are only colonial superstitions and are definitely not based on truth. These superstitions are then other examples of colonial emphasizing of racial differences for preserving the distance between the races. It is then paradoxical that the Eurasians in *Burmese Days* use these colonial superstitions to reduce the distance between themselves and Europeans.

But the Eurasians are objects of colonial superstitions as well as the natives. When Elizabeth expresses her final judgement on Samuel and Francis, her arrogance and prejudices outweigh her being sorry for their situation:

‘They looked awfully degenerate types, didn’t they? So thin and weedy and cringing; and they haven’t got at all *honest* faces. I suppose these Eurasians *are* very degenerate? I’ve heard that half-castes always inherit what’s worst in both races. Is that true?’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 126)

Elizabeth mentions the superstition that people of mixed origin tend to inherit worst features of both races and that consequently they are genetically determined to be contemptible human beings. Such a superstition therefore implies the idea that the terrible situation of the Eurasians is unavoidable not because of the attitude of the Europeans and the natives, but because of their inherently degenerated character. But Flory’s answer provides a different and much less prejudiced point of view:

‘I don’t know that it’s true. Most Eurasians aren’t very good specimens, and it’s hard to see how they could be, with their upbringing. But our attitude towards them is rather beastly. We always talk of them as though they’d sprung up from the ground like mushrooms, with all their faults ready-made. But when all’s said and done, we’re responsible for their existence.’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 126)

Even though Flory admits that Eurasians are people of not really admirable features, he points out that it is unfair to deny that it is Europeans that are, at least partly, responsible for the terrible situation of these people, because they prohibit them from any improvement of their lives. He also reminds the important fact that Eurasians would not exist without Europeans, since they have got white fathers, as he implies to Elizabeth.

Considering this fact, the Eurasians appear as victims of harshness of white men. This is intensified by the fact that even their own fathers treated them harshly, as Francis suggests when he tells Flory about his childhood, and mentions bishop's visit during which he and his half-brother were dressed " ' [...] in *longyi* and sent among the Burmese children to preserve incognito [...].' " (Orwell, 2009, p. 123) However, such harshness and contempt of white men for Eurasians seem to be on account of what Eurasians mean for their sense of superiority. Similarly to the situation of a native speaking English correctly, Eurasians, too, reduce differences between the two races because they, as outcomes of mixture of the races, imply that the races may be not so different, and it undermines the sense of superiority of the British.

The hopelessness of Eurasian issue is highlighted during seemingly innocent description of the cemetery. The part of the cemetery is described during Maxwell's funeral as follows:

In a corner there were some graves of Eurasians, with wooden crosses. The creeping jasmine, with tiny orange-hearted flowers, had overgrown everything. Among the jasmine, large rat-holes led down into the graves. (Orwell, 2009, p. 249)

It is shown that Eurasians are excluded from the society even after their death. Their graves have the determined space separately from European graves, in certainly not prominent part of the cemetery. Moreover, the graves of Eurasians do not have gravestones but only crosses made from wood. This arrangement testifies their being Christians, but on the other hand reflects their unequal position. Finally, the graves are described as very uncared-for, almost god-forsaken – and therefore corresponding to the whole life of Eurasian people, of which graves are a silent reminder.

3.2 The Position of an Individual in the Colonial System

George Orwell is best-known for his criticism of totalitarian systems. This theme is most apparent in his pieces of work *Animal Farm* and *1984*, which are considered to be peak of his literary career. But the motif of a malign impact of the system on a human being appears in Orwell's early works as well. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the analysed works depict the position of individuals who are part the system called the British Empire, and what the impact of the system on colonisers is.

In the novel *Burmese Days* it is demonstrated that there exist unwritten rules that colonisers have to obey. For the first time, it is suggested during the conversation between John Flory and Dr Veraswami, his native friend, who hints that he is menaced by the native magistrate U Po Kyin. Flory wants to offer the doctor his help but finally he does not do it. One of the reasons he ponders over is following: “Besides, to keep out of ‘native’ quarrels is one of the Ten Precepts of the pukka sahib.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 45) According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, a sahib is the word “used especially among the native inhabitants of colonial India when addressing or speaking of a European of some social or official status” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sahib>) and pukka means “genuine” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pukka>). The term “pukka sahib” is therefore applied to a true coloniser, and “Ten Precepts” are the rules he follows. Another reference to the rules of pukka sahibs appears when Westfield recites five of them to Flory, as a sermon:

*Keeping up our prestige,
The firm hand (without the velvet glove),
We white men must hang together,
Give them an inch and they'll take an ell, and
Esprit de corps.* (Orwell, 2009, p. 198)

The mentioned “Precepts” shows that the rules are predominantly intended to strengthen the sense of superiority in colonisers and their loyalty to the system they serve.

Importance of the concept of a “pukka sahib” is acknowledged by Flory when he tells Dr Veraswami: “ ‘[...] You’ve got to be a pukka sahib or die, in this country. In fifteen years I’ve never talked honestly to anyone except you. My talks here are a safety valve [...].’ ” (Orwell, 2009, p. 42) Firstly, he points out that to behave according to rules of the imperial system is necessity for a coloniser; in fact there is no alternative. Secondly, it is obvious that Flory actually is not the “pukka sahib” and he has some objections to the system. What he further suggests is that he therefore has to keep his real opinions to himself and that it is not easy at all – the only way how to preserve his sanity is to share his thoughts with the native man.

The following paragraph of the novel shows that this aspect of colonial experience – impossibility to express opinions openly – is crucial:

It is a stifling, stultifying world in which to live. It is a world in which every word and every thought is censored. In England it is hard to even imagine such an atmosphere. Everyone is free in England; we sell our souls in public and buy them back in private, among our friends. But even friendship can hardly exist when

every white man is a cog in the wheels of despotism. Free speech is unthinkable. All other kinds of freedom are permitted. You are free to be a drunkard, an idler, a coward, a backbiter, a fornicator; but you are not free to think for yourself. Your opinion on every subject of any conceivable importance is dictated for you by the pukka sahibs' code. (Orwell, 2009, p. 69)

The passage describes Flory's vision of life in the colony from the point of view of a coloniser. The usage of word "despotism" in this context suggests that the British Empire is tyrannical not only towards its dependent people, but also towards members of the ruling nation. The tyranny rests in prohibition of expressing any opinions that are not in accordance with the regime or even against it; or in other words, in pressure that is put on colonisers to be totally loyal to the Empire. And the text manifests how strict the system is in this respect.

The following passage demonstrates what the impact of such strictness of the regime on colonisers is:

You hear your oriental friends called 'greasy little *babus*', and you admit, dutifully, that they *are* greasy little *babus*. You see louts fresh from school kicking grey-haired servants. The time comes when you burn with hatred of your own countrymen, when you long for a native rising to drown their Empire in blood. And in this there is nothing honourable, hardly even any sincerity. For, au fond, what do you care if the Indian Empire is a despotism, if Indians are bullied and exploited? You only care because the right of free speech is denied you. You are a creature of despotism, a pukka sahib, tied tighter than a monk or a savage by an unbreakable system of taboos. (Orwell, 2009, pp. 69-70)

It is suggested that colonisers are in the position that prohibits them from reacting honestly to anything they perceive as wrong, and this position obviously depresses them. But the essence of such depression is not the fact that they are unable to change or stop 'evils' of imperialism, but the fact that they are censored itself. The important thing is that such selfish and dishonourable attitude is an outcome of the system as well. According to Sheldon, "the system also has the endless ways of enslaving its masters." (1991, p. 115) Preventing colonisers from expressing their opinions freely can be considered one of such ways. Members of ruling nation feel that they are enslaved, and this worrying sense of being actually only element of the system without power to speak, act and even think according to themselves therefore causes that they are concerned entirely with their own situation.

Finally, it is interesting and useful to compare this aspect of *Burmese Days* with Orwell's later works dealing with totalitarian systems. For example *1984* focuses on the

society where the language called Newspeak is invented so that speech and even thoughts of members of the society can be controlled by the totalitarian system:

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc⁶, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak⁷ forgotten, a heretical thought – that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc – should be literally unthinkable [...]. (Orwell, 1992, p. 312)

This dystopian world is also “a world in which every word and every thought is censored,” (Orwell, 2009, p. 69) and, similarly to John Flory, the main character of *1984* Winston Smith struggles to escape and, to use Keskinen’s words, “to be his free and true self in a system that asks him to be an automaton.” (1966, p. 670) Therefore, it can be viewed as a demonstration of the fact that any system puts people involved into the position that makes them feel not in control of their own lives.

The essay “Shooting an Elephant” provides an insight into the position of an individual in the colonial system as well, but from different point of view. It deals with the situation of the police officer who is ordered to cope with a tame elephant which escaped and demolishes a bazaar. The police officer, the narrator of the story, is not sure what to do but decides to look over the situation and sets off to find the animal: “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*.” (Orwell, 1950b, pp. 2-3) It is obvious that from the very beginning, the narrator has no intention of hurting the elephant. However, as the story advances, the situation is gradually changing. While looking for the escaped animal, the narrator finds out that in the meantime the elephant killed a native man. It makes the police officer take the situation more seriously: “As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend’s house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle.” (Orwell, 1950b, p. 4) The emergence of the gun catches the attention of the natives who begin to follow the policeman. They are excited about the eventual killing and also want the elephant’s meat. But the appearance of the crowd evokes certain feelings in the narrator: “It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant – I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary – and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you.” (Orwell, 1950b, p. 5) It is made clear that despite having the

⁶ The philosophy supporting the social system; it is Newspeak word for ‘English socialism’ (Orwell, 1992, pp. 38, 205)

⁷ Standard English (Orwell, 1992, p. 46)

stronger gun, the policeman still does not intend to kill the elephant. But the element of the crowd brings the anxiety to the situation.

When the narrator finally finds the elephant, he reasons about the situation:

As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant – it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery – and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. [...] Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. (Orwell, 1950b, pp. 5-6)

The police officer is aware of all facts and knows that it would be wrong, both from practical and from ethical reasons, to shoot the elephant. But then he becomes conscious of the crowd behind him. The mass of people is really huge and the narrator suddenly changes his mind:

They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer 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 realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. (Orwell, 1950b, p. 6)

Finally, the narrator really shoots the elephant. And it is the crowd of natives that forces him to make such a decision even though there is no logical reason to do it. The following passage throws light on his act:

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 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, the conventional figure of a sahib. 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. [...] A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. (Orwell, 1950b, pp. 6-7)

The narrator finds himself in the situation that he is unable to affect. He shoots the elephant not out of choice but because it seems to him that losing face in front of the natives is not an option. As Guha suggests: “Trapped in the image of the sahib fabricated by sahibs themselves in order to impress the natives, he is now forced to live up to it by doing what natives expect a sahib to do.” (1997, p. 492) In other words, the police officer realizes that he has not his own free will but that everything he does is

determined by his position of the coloniser; he is influenced by something that Shelden calls “[...] the pressure placed upon all white men in the East to maintain the pretence of superiority.” (1991, p. 117). But even though the natives appear to be those who influence him, it is in fact not their will that determines what should happen. They act according to rules of the system as well as the police officer – they expect him to shoot the animal because they are influenced by the idea (created by colonisers themselves, as Guha’s statement suggests) that as a coloniser he should be the one powerful enough to deal with it. Therefore, it is in fact the colonial system that determines acts of its servants. And similarly to lack of free speech, the effect is that the coloniser feels trapped in the system that makes him only its element.

When analysing the depiction of position of an individual in the colonial system, it is further useful to focus on interrelations in the British community.

There are four thousand inhabitants in Kyauktada, the small town where the plot of *Burmese Days* takes place, of whom only seven are Europeans. Most of them have been living there in such a small community for many years, most of the time detached from any other Europeans, as John Flory suggests when he firstly meets Elizabeth, Mrs Lackersteen’s young niece who arrives in Kyauktada after her mother’s death:

‘[...] You can’t imagine the difference it makes to us to see a new face in these places. After months of our own miserable society, and an occasional official on his rounds and American globe-trotters skipping up the Irrawaddy with cameras. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 86)

His admitting that arrival of a new European is of great significance for them indicates that a life in the community is not easy at all, since it can be characterised as almost ‘claustrophobic’.

Nevertheless, the consequence of smallness of the community and of the fact that it is socially isolated from the native population is that the British inhabitants of Kyauktada spend a lot of time together, usually in the Club. But during his talk with Dr Veraswami, Flory suggests that the real nature of interrelations is rather twisted:

‘[...] It’s a tradition to booze together and swap meals and pretend to be friends, though we all hate each other like poison. Hanging together, we call it. It’s a political necessity. Of course drink is what keeps machine going. We should all go mad and kill one another in a week if it weren’t for that. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 37)

According to Flory, there is no friendship among the British inhabitants but in fact the reverse. But more importantly, it is suggested that such an arrangement is on account of political reasons. Therefore, it is the colonial system that determines how relations among its servants function.

Later, when one member of the community, Maxwell, is murdered, another aspect of the nature of interrelations in the community is revealed:

But in a purely personal way no one was much distressed. Maxwell had been almost a nonentity – just a ‘good fellow’ like any other of the ten thousand *ex colore* good fellows of Burma – and with no close friends. No one among the Europeans genuinely mourned for him. But that is not to say that they were not angry. On the contrary, for the moment they were almost mad with rage. For the unforgivable had happened – a *white man* had been killed. (Orwell, 2009, p. 247)

The passage demonstrates the reaction of the community to Maxwell’s death. Even though there is emotional concern, it is not related to Maxwell himself, but entirely to the fact that he was the coloniser. In other words, it confirms that togetherness of the members of the community stems only from their belonging to the ruling nation. And moreover, it indicates that an individual in the colonial environment matters as a part of the system and not as a human being. This is emphasized by the fact that Maxwell is described as “almost a nonentity.” The use of this word is particularly interesting since it can be understood as implication of the fact that Maxwell (and consequently any coloniser) does not exist by himself but gains his entity when enabling the imperial machinery to function.

The similar motif can be found at the end of the novel, where the following remark appears in the context of John Flory’s death: “[...] an Englishman who dies in Burma is so soon forgotten [...]” (Orwell, 2009, p. 295) Considering that there tend to be only few Englishmen living in communities, it seems startling that it is so easy to forget them. It therefore contributes to the notion of a coloniser being just a component of the system and when ‘destroyed’ becoming useless and soon replaced by another one.

The previous parts of the chapter demonstrated that colonisers are influenced by the sense of being only the element of the system and by hollowness of relationships in the community. This inevitably leads to feelings of loneliness and loneliness thus becomes inseparable part of lives of people involved in the colonial machinery. The following

part of the chapter will focus on the depiction of loneliness in *Burmese Days* and will demonstrate that loneliness is a kind of by-product of colonialism.

The fact that colonisers experience loneliness is acknowledged by Flory when he, several months after their first meeting, tells Elizabeth:

‘[...] Have you got some picture of the life we live here? The foreignness, the solitude, the melancholy! Foreign trees, foreign flowers, foreign landscapes, foreign faces. It’s all alien as a different planet. [...]’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 186)

By his confession Flory suggests that another aspect that contributes to loneliness of a life in the colony is foreignness of the country. He explains that the fact that the colonisers live, voluntarily though, in the country so different that it is almost “a different planet” constantly reminds them that they are actually foreigners; this consciousness leads to their feelings of loneliness, and this loneliness apparently haunts and depresses them.

The foreignness of the country, or in fact of the nature of the country, is in *Burmese Days* important element in terms of the portrayal of loneliness. The example can be found during Flory’s walk to the jungle with Flo, his dog. There is the extensive and rather peaceful description of Burmese scenery during this walk, but Flory suddenly catches sight of a green pigeon, which evokes him emotions and ideas that are not peaceful at all:

The pigeon rocked itself backwards and forwards on the bough, swelling out its breast feathers and laying its coralline beak upon them. A pang went through Flory. Alone, alone, the bitterness of being alone! So often like this, in lonely places in the forest, he would come upon something – bird, flower, tree – beautiful beyond all words, if there had been a soul with whom to share it. Beauty is meaningless until it is shared. If he had one person, just one, to halve his loneliness! (Orwell, 2009, 57)

What causes him such harrowing feelings is the realization of his loneliness. And it is the nature that compels him to realize it. Therefore, besides contributing to Flory’s loneliness, the nature is moreover a reminder of his state of being alone. From this point of view, the solution would be, as Flory suggests, a presence of a person who would be close to him – he would no longer be alone and he would have someone who would share both the beauty and frightening foreignness of the Burmese nature. Flory later expresses the same idea aloud when he tries to propose to Elizabeth and make her the person he has longed for:

‘[...] But do you see – and it’s this that I so 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, 2009, p. 186)

The monologue testifies that loneliness is part of a coloniser’s life. Nevertheless, Flory believes that his life is really going to finally change from “solitary hell” to “a paradise”. It is reflected on, among other things, his perceiving the nature around him. When he is with Elizabeth they both seem to enjoy the beauty of the nature despite its unpleasant foreignness. For example, even during their first meeting they are thrilled by uncommon flowers: “They began chattering with extraordinary eagerness about the flowers. The girl ‘adored’ flowers, she said. And Flory led her up the path, talking garrulously about one plant and another.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 84)

However, later Elizabeth dismisses Flory and tries to become intimate with Verall – and she finally succeeds in this ‘challenge’. Flory is so desperate that he decides to go back to camp where his job is. And in camp, several weeks after Flory’s departure, the important role of the nature in *Burmese Days* appears again:

He was standing at the jungle’s edge by the bank of a dried-up stream, where he had walked to tire himself, watching some tiny, nameless finches eating the seeds of the tall grasses. The cock were chrome-yellow, the hens like hen sparrows. Too tiny to bend the stalks, they came whirring towards them, seized them in mid-flight and bore them to the ground by their own weight. Flory watched the birds incuriously, and almost hated them because they could light no spark of interest in him. In his idleness he flung his *dah* at them, scaring them away. If she were here, if she were here! Everything – birds, trees, flowers, everything – was deadly and meaningless because she was not here. [...] He noticed a wild vanilla plant trailing over a bush, and bent down to sniff at its slender, fragrant pods. The scent brought him a feeling of staleness and deadly ennui. Alone, alone, in the sea of life enisled! The pain was so great that he struck his fist against a tree, jarring his arm and splitting two knuckles. He must go back to Kyauktada. (Orwell, 2009, p. 223)

Flory therefore decides to go back to Kyauktada and fight for Elizabeth, and it is the nature that contributes to such a decision. It reminds him and deepens his despair, but at the same time gives him strength not to give up. Furthermore, the change in Flory’s attitude to the nature is apparent. In the previous paragraph it was mentioned that with Elizabeth he realizes the beauty of the scenery. This passage illustrates that when Flory is alone and hopeless, he is bored by the nature and, at the same time, almost hates it. His emotions are so intense that he becomes really furious and hurts himself. It is then

paradoxical that it is the nature, or in fact its element – a tree, that contributes to his pain, this time physical.

Besides desire for sharing the beauty of the exotic land, Flory has one more desire that could relieve his loneliness:

To talk, simply to talk! It sounds so little, and how much it is! When you have existed to the brink of middle age in bitter loneliness, among people to whom your true opinion on every subject on earth is blasphemy, the need to talk is the greatest of all needs. (Orwell, 2009, p. 120)

But it is not a conversation itself that he misses so much. Flory himself suggests that his need of talking arises from his different – anti-imperial – opinions. And since it was already discussed at the beginning of the chapter that he lives in the world where “free speech is unthinkable” (Orwell, 2009, p. 69), it is rather sharing of his real opinions that he longs for.

However, Flory’s need of conversation seems to be not so urgent considering the fact that he actually has a friend in whose company he expresses his real opinions – Dr Veraswami. It is solely in the doctor’s company that Flory speaks openly and criticises British dominion aloud and directly. This is testified by his first depicted visit in the doctor’s house, during which he confides:

‘[...] You’ve got to be a pukka sahib or die, in this country. In fifteen years I’ve never talked honestly to anyone except you. My talks here are a safety valve; a little Black Mass on the sly, if you understand me.’ (Orwell, 2009, p. 42)

But the relationship between Flory and the doctor paradoxically highlights Flory’s loneliness in the world he lives in. As mentioned above, Dr Veraswami is the only person to whom he can speak openly (until the arrival of Elizabeth as Flory is convinced). On the other hand, the doctor could never fully understand his friend’s words as the text suggests: “Even his talks with the doctor were a kind of talking to himself; for the doctor, good man, understood little of what was said to him.” (2009, p. 70) Doctor’s lack of understanding is caused not only by his good nature, but in fact by his native origin. Colonisers have taught him to trust their rule, and he does not understand another coloniser’s effort to disturb his trust. His adoration of the British⁸ (together with his inferior position and thus untrustworthiness in the eyes of white men)

⁸ This is confirmed by the following passage from the book: “Dr Veraswami had a passionate admiration for the English, which a thousand snubs from Englishmen had not shaken. He would maintain with positive eagerness that he, as an Indian, belonged to an inferior and degenerate race.” (Orwell, 2009, p.38)

also contributes to the loyalty to his British friend, so Flory does not have to be afraid of revelation of his anti-imperial ideas. In other words, ironically, doctor's native origin enables Flory to reveal himself, but at the same time it degrades the significance of such an exposure.

Moreover, a full-valued friendship between a coloniser and a colonised is in fact described as unacceptable: "With Indians there must be no loyalty, no real friendship. Affection, even love – yes. [...] But alliance, partisanship, never! Even to know the rights and wrongs of a 'native' quarrel is a loss of prestige." (Orwell, 2009, 80) Not only does this fact cause hardship for Flory's dealing with both the doctor and the British, but it also makes their friendship not satisfactory enough in terms of its ability to counterbalance Flory's loneliness. In other words, since their friendship is prohibited from being the "real friendship," (Orwell, 2009, p. 80) it can not provide solace that Flory needs. It is thus prejudices and restrictions of imperial society that participate in the feeling of loneliness of its individual.

However, the fact is that for Flory the friendship with the doctor provides just a slight relief to his feeling of being a lonely misfit. It therefore seems that he has no choice but to secretly dream of an escape from the loneliness of a life in the colony:

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 as he carried. Someone who would love Burma as he loved it and hate it as he hated it. Who would help him to live with nothing hidden, nothing unexpressed. Someone who understood him: a friend, that was what it came down to. A friend. Or a wife? (Orwell, 2009, pp. 72-73)

In his imagination it is a woman who could provide such an escape. It is therefore understandable that he is thrilled by the arrival of Elizabeth – the young, single and attractive British lady. As Sheldon observes: "When young Elizabeth Lackersteen comes into his [Flory's] life he is tempted to think that fate has sent her as the cure for his loneliness [...]." (1991, p. 195) Elizabeth is thus supposed to share both beauty and foreignness of Burma, and Flory's nonconformist ideas. Unfortunately, quite the reverse happens. The more Flory is trying to share his world with Elizabeth the more estranged she is. Actually, the relationship between them can be considered idyllic only under specific circumstances – if the subject matter of their conversation is very banal. During a first week after Elizabeth's arrival Flory tries really hard to impress Elizabeth and become more intimate with her. But "after ten days they seemed no nearer the

relationship he wanted.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 120) And it is suggested that it is their inability to talk about serious topics (or improper from Elizabeth’s point of view) that contributes to such a state of their relationship:

Yet with Elizabeth serious talk seemed impossible. It was as though there had been a spell upon them that made all their conversation lapse into banality; gramophone records, dogs, tennis racquets – all that desolating Club-chatter. She seemed not to want to talk of anything but that. He had only to touch upon a subject of any conceivable interest to hear the evasion, the ‘I shan’t play’ coming into her voice. (Orwell, 2009, p. 120)

Although Flory is disappointed by that, he still believes that “later, no doubt, she would understand him and give him the companionship he needed.” (Orwell, 2009, p. 120) Unfortunately, Elizabeth’s prejudiced opinions prohibit it. When she is later horrified by a bazaar, which Flory decides to show her, such a trivial chat even calms her:

‘It’s getting beastly hot, isn’t it?’

With the temperature at 90 degrees in the shade it was not a brilliant remark. To his surprise she seized on it with a kind of eagerness. She turned to face him, and she was smiling again.

‘Isn’t it simply *baking!*’

With that they were at peace. The silly, banal remark, bringing with it the reassuring atmosphere of Club-chatter, had soothed her like a charm. [...] They talked about dogs for the rest of the way home, almost without a pause. Dogs are an inexhaustible subject. Dogs, dogs! thought Flory as they climbed the hot hillside, with the mounting sun scorching their shoulders through their thin clothes, like the breath of a fire – were they never to talk of anything except dogs? (Orwell, 2009, p. 137)

Obviously, Flory’s disappointment gradually becomes frustration. His plan to share his world with Elizabeth does not work and he does not understand it, or, rather, refuses to understand.

Nevertheless, their relationship finally comes to an end when Flory’s affair with Ma Hla May, his native mistress, is publicly revealed. This leads to the tragic end of the novel – John Flory’s suicide. But it is not the loss of the beloved person that forces him to take his own life. As already demonstrated, Elizabeth represented the escape for Flory. She was supposed to share (and therefore reduce) the negative impact of the imperial life. In other words, while the colonial system, of which Flory was part, meant loneliness, incomprehension and hypocrisy, Elizabeth represented (to Flory) companionship, sympathy and the chance to speak freely. Therefore she should have brought a balance to his life. This is acknowledged by Flory’s inner monologue which precedes his suicide:

Was it not possible to endure it? He had endured it before. There were palliatives – books, his garden, drink, work, whoring, shooting, conversations with the doctor. No, it was not endurable any longer. Since Elizabeth’s coming the power to suffer and above all to hope, which he had thought dead in him, had sprung to new life. The half-comfortable lethargy in which he had lived was broken. And if he suffered now, there was far worse to come. (Orwell, 2009, pp. 291-292)

He declares that his life (in fact a typical life of any individual in the East) has been actually just vegetation. He has been trapped in the system and Elizabeth both reminded him about that and offered an escape (unconsciously though). The loss of her means the loss of power to further put up with his situation. On the whole, the death of John Flory then can be viewed as a metaphor for destruction of an individual by the colonial system.

4. Conclusion

The main aim of the thesis was to examine George Orwell’s early works that take place in the colonies of the British Empire, concretely the novel *Burmese Days* and the essays “Shooting an Elephant” and “A Hanging”, in terms of their portrayal of the nature of relationships between members of the ruling nation and the indigenous population, and depiction of the impact of the colonial system they are involved in on both groups.

The expansion of Great Britain and its domination over other countries, as the theoretical part of the paper suggested, are justified by an arrogant belief that the British (or in fact white men in general) have the moral right to control other nations and territories inhabited by them because white men are racially and culturally superior and have an obligation to civilize backward people. The analysed texts demonstrated that this aspect of colonialism determines the nature of relations between the colonisers and the colonised. Most of the British characters exhibit their superior position by very arrogant behaviour and attitudes towards the native population. The British abuse them, humiliate them and they even perceive and treat the natives as almost nonhumans whose lives are of no value at all. Generally, their arrogant behaviour can be seen as a product of colonialism because the British act according to the belief that was inculcated into them. Furthermore, by exhibiting their superiority they further strengthen it.

On the other hand, although the sense of inferiority is deeply rooted in the natives, it was demonstrated that not all of them actually respect their masters. On the contrary,

the Burmese realize they are maltreated and even though they do not rise up against the oppressors, they often exhibit their hatred and disapproval by provoking the colonisers. But their rudeness, caused by arrogance and cruelty of the colonial regime, leads to further intensification of such arrogance and cruelty, and thus a kind of vicious circle is created. Therefore, it was proved that relationships between the British and the Burmese are portrayed as very complicated, and that the position of the natives in colonies is terrible and very traumatic. Perplexity of colonial relations is moreover highlighted by the depiction of the specific position of Eurasians, who are despised by members of both the colonising and the colonised nation. Therefore, even if they are partially Europeans, they are totally excluded and their position is even worse than that of natives.

But being involved in the colonial system is traumatic not only for the oppressed people, but also for the members of the ruling nation, as demonstrated by the main character of *Burmese Days* John Flory and the narrator of "Shooting an Elephant". They live according to tight rules of the system which determine how they should speak, act and even think. They have to pretend partisanship and superiority, even if they do not believe in it. The consequence is that they feel only elements of the system and it torments them.

Further, it was demonstrated that the sense of being trapped in the colonial machinery, lack of free speech and even thought, and hypocrisy of their lives inevitably lead to loneliness of colonisers. Therefore, loneliness can be seen as a kind of by-product of colonialism.

How frustrating the impact of the colonial system on its servants is manifests the fact that John Flory is so depressed by his life that in the moment of losing chance to escape loneliness, hypocrisy and incomprehension of the system by marrying Elizabeth Lackersteen, he decides to escape the system by taking his own life.

To conclude, Orwell's early works provide the unique insight into the nature of the phenomenon of colonialism and its impact on human beings. The analysed works portray both the colonisers and the colonised as victims of the evil system which, to use Ania Loomba's words, "locked [them] into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history." (1998, p. 2)

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá ranou tvorbou britského spisovatele George Orwella, jenž ve 20. letech dvacátého století sloužil jako policejní důstojník v Barmě, tehdejší součásti Britského impéria. Budoucí světoznámý autor dystopických románů byl součástí koloniálního systému pět let a na základě této zkušenosti, krátce po jeho návratu zpět do vlasti, vzniklo několik literárních děl – konkrétně román *Barmské dny* a eseje „Poprava pověšením“ a „Střelení na slona“. Cílem této práce je provést detailní analýzu zmíněných děl a ukázat, jakým způsobem tyto texty zobrazují život v koloniích, především vzájemné vztahy mezi kolonizátory a původním obyvatelstvem, a také to, jaký je dopad koloniálního systému, jehož jsou součástí, na obě jmenované skupiny.

Teoretická část práce se nejprve zaměřuje na kolonialismus a imperialismus obecně. Tyto pojmy označují jeden ze zásadních a častých jevů lidské historie – expanzi určité země a její nadvládu nad cizím územím a případně také nad národy obývajícími jej. Oba pojmy spolu velice úzce souvisí. Jak tvrdí Ania Loomba, zatímco imperialismus označuje ideologii, která vzniká v budoucí vládnoucí zemi a vede k nadvládě nad jinou zemí, kolonialismus může být chápán jako jeho důsledek, označení toho co v samotných koloniích, místech které kolonizující země ovládá, probíhá. (1998, s. 6-7) Přestože důvodem pro kolonizaci jsou především výhody ekonomického a politického rázu, které expanze přináší kolonizujícím státům, v průběhu času se objevilo arogantní přesvědčení, že tyto státy mají na nadvládu nárok z důvodu jejich rasové a kulturní nadřazenosti nad porobenými národy. Kolonialismus se poté stal způsobem, jak těmto zaostalým národům pomoci dosáhnout pokroku a celkově je civilizovat. Tento altruistický přístup ovšem z větší části sloužil pouze jako ospravedlnění systému, jehož hlavním cílem zůstalo využívání cizích zemí a národů pro vlastní prospěch.

Další kapitola teoretické části se zabývá vlastní zkušeností George Orwella s životem v kolonii. Jak již bylo zmíněno, Orwell sloužil Britskému impériu v pozici policejního důstojníka. Přestože ze začátku využíval všech výhod, které mu jeho postavení bílého muže v zemi „zaostalých“ domorodců nabízelo, brzy rozpoznal pravou podstatu systému, který mu tuto pozici zajišťoval, a jeho přístup se změnil. Orwell si uvědomil, že je součástí režimu, který vykořisťuje a utlačuje lidské bytosti jen kvůli vlastnímu obohacení, a navíc pokrytecky trvá na tom, že to je pro jejich vlastní dobro.

Toto pokrytectví ho natolik rozčarovalo, že se po pěti letech rozhodl nemít s Impériem nic společného a svou práci opustil. V té době už také věděl, že to, čím se touží doopravdy zabývat, je spisovatelství. Vzhledem k tomu, jak silné rozčarování mu jeho pobyt v kolonii přinesl, je pochopitelné, že se tato negativní zkušenost v jeho literární tvorbě odrazila. V následujícím desetiletí po návratu z Barmy Orwell napsal román *Barmské dny* a eseje „Poprava pověšením“ a „Střílení na slona“, které skýtají působivý kritický pohled na fenomén kolonialismu a jeho důsledky pro životy obyčejných lidských bytostí.

Hlavní část této práce, analýza Orwellových raných děl odehrávajících se v koloniálním prostředí, je rozdělena do dvou samostatných kapitol. První kapitola se zabývá vztahy nadřazenosti a podřazenosti mezi kolonizátory a kolonizovanými. Arogance samotného přesvědčení o rasové a kulturní nadřazenosti jednoho národa nad druhým je v analyzovaných dílech zřejmá i z přístupu Britů vůči domorodcům. Převážná většina evropských obyvatel Kyauktady, městečka ve kterém se odehrává děj románu *Barmské dny*, zachází s příslušníky rasy, kterou mají „civilizovat“, velice špatně a sebemenší zlepšení práv a životních podmínek Barmánců nesou s nelibostí. Jejich arogance spočívá především v tom, že podle nich domorodá populace ve skutečnosti žádná práva nemá. Důležitým aspektem prezíravého a ponižujícího chování bělochů vůči domorodcům je skutečnost, že Britové si tímto přístupem posilují pocit vlastní nadřazenosti. Úporná snaha udržet si zdání nadřazené rasy vede až k absurdnímu chování jejích členů. Toto je nejlépe vidět na situaci, kdy manažer dřevařské společnosti Ellis, jedna z postav *Barmských dnů*, velice hrubě vyčítá domorodému sluhovi jeho dobrou znalost anglického jazyka. Tato paradoxní výtka pramení z toho, že správné užívání jazyka vládnoucího národa domorodci přispívá ke zmenšení rozdílů mezi národy a tím podrývá nadřazenou pozici Britů.

Orwellova díla dále zachycují zarážející skutečnost, že domorodí obyvatelé jsou Brity vnímáni nejen jako příslušníci podřadné rasy, ale téměř jako neživé předměty. V *Barmských dnech* je zobrazena jednak situace, kdy je domorodec nazván součástí inventáře Evropského klubu (a také se s ním zachází jako s jakýmkoliv jiným kusem majetku), a jednak situace kdy je bělochovi vyčítáno, že nezabil žádného domorodce, když měl šanci, a to i přesto, že by to znamenalo možnost úmrtí domorodých policejních důstojníků. Druhý příklad ukazuje, že jelikož Barmánci nejsou považováni za plnohodnotné lidské bytosti, jejich život nemá v tomto světě vůbec žádnou hodnotu.

Podobný motiv se objevuje také ve „Střílení na slona“, kde je dokonce naznačeno, že život pracovního slona je důležitější než život příslušníka utlačovaného národa. V „Popravě pověšením“ se objevuje téma vnímání domorodců jako neživých předmětů také, avšak z jiného úhlu pohledu. Esej zachycuje moment uvědomění si kolonizátora, že domorodci jsou ve skutečnosti lidské bytosti stejně jako on sám, a pro kterého se tím pádem poprava domorodého vězně mění z pouhé rutinní povinnosti v něco nesnesitelného.

Pocit vlastní méněcennosti je v příslušnicích domorodé rasy natolik zakořeněný, že nejsou schopni se vládnoucímu národu postavit a trpce snášejí příkoří na nich páchaná. Nicméně, Orwellovy texty ukazují, že i přesto se domorodci často (pokud to okolnosti dovolí) k Britům chovají velmi neuctivě až hrubě a provokují je. Tyto provokace jsou na jednu stranu jediným způsobem, jak mohou Barmánci vyjádřit svůj nesouhlas s nadvládou Britů a jejich arogancí a špatným zacházením, ale na druhou stranu tuto aroganci i špatné zacházení ještě více posilují.

První kapitola praktické části obsahuje také dvě podkapitoly, které poskytují hlubší pohled na problematiku vztahů mezi kolonizátory a kolonizovanými. První z podkapitol se zabývá motivem britství a zaměřuje se především na roli Evropského klubu v *Barmských dnech*. Klub je nejen místem kde běloši tráví svůj volný čas ale také centrem moci v koloniích. Navíc, vzhledem k tomu že členy jsou pouze Britové, Evropský klub symbolizuje nadřazenost vládnoucí rasy. Z tohoto důvodu Britové velmi silně protestují proti příkazu přijmout za člena domorodce. Pro domorodé adepty je případné členství naopak velmi zásadní. Žijí ve světě, kde jsou za plnohodnotné lidské bytosti považováni pouze Britové (či běloši obecně). Klub pro ně ztělesňuje britství a členství v něm představuje jedinou možnost, jak se k němu přiblížit.

Závěrečná podkapitola se zabývá Euroasijci, minoritní skupinou lidí smíšeného původu, a na jejich specifickém postavení ukazuje komplikovanost koloniálních vztahů. Euroasijci jsou opovrhováni jak britskými tak barmskými postavami *Barmských dnů*. Jejich situace je velice žalostná a jediný způsob jak ji mohou zlepšit je zřeknout se svého částečně britského původu. Jejich spřízněnost s nadřazenou rasou, ač samotnými Brity ignorovaná, je ale pro Euroasijce z různých důvodů natolik důležitá, že to neudělají a radši žijí na dně společnosti. Jsou tedy mimo jiné příkladem arogantního a neférového přístupu kolonizátorů vůči jiným rasám. Přestože Britové s domorodci plodí děti, a jsou tedy odpovědní za existenci Euroasijců, o jejich další osud už se nestarají a

navíc jimi opovrhují, protože stírají, pro kolonizátory tolik důležité, rozdíly mezi oběma rasami.

Druhá a závěrečná kapitola praktické části rozebírá to, jakým způsobem je v dílech zobrazen dopad koloniálního systému na kolonizátory jako jednotlivce a jaké je jejich postavení v tomto systému. Život kolonizátorů je určován určitým kodexem správného sáhíba, nepsanými pravidly, která musí dodržovat. Smyslem těchto pravidel je převážně posílení pocitu nadřazenosti a také loajality příslušníků kolonizujícího národa k režimu. Jejich důsledkem je poté to, že Evropané žijící v kolonii jsou pod neustálým tlakem. Pro Johna Floryho, hlavního hrdinu *Barmských dnů*, tento tlak spočívá především v nemožnosti svobodného vyjadřování názorů (odporujících režimu a všeobecně uznávaným skutečností). Vypravěče „Střílení na slona“ na druhou stranu tlak zachovat si zdání nadřazené pozice donutí k činu, který on sám spáchat nechtěl. V obou případech hlavní hrdiny jejich situace frustruje, ale nejsou schopni ji změnit a cítí se pouze jako součástky systému bez schopnosti vlastního myšlení a rozhodování.

Důležitým aspektem je také zobrazení vzájemných vztahů mezi příslušníky britské komunity v kolonii. Přestože v *Barmských dnech* je britská komunita velice těsná a sestává pouze z několika obyvatel, kteří tráví většinu svého volného času spolu, ve skutečnosti jim na sobě navzájem nezáleží a téměř se nenávidí. Jejich soudržnost plyne pouze ze skutečnosti, že všichni patří k vládnoucí třídě koloniálního režimu, který tedy určuje i to, jakým způsobem mají fungovat vzájemné vztahy jeho služebníků.

Vědomí toho, že jsou chyceni v soukolí koloniálního systému, nemají nárok na svobodné myšlení ani jednání, a také neupřímnost vztahů mezi členy vládnoucího národa nevyhnutelně vede k pocitu osamělosti kolonizátorů, jak demonstruje postava Johna Floryho. K Floryho osamělosti navíc přispívá cizokrajnost země, ve které žije a také skutečnost, že jediná osoba, které si váží a ke které může být upřímný, je domorodý doktor, který jeho frustraci nerozumí a jehož původ brání plnohodnotnosti jejich přátelství. Floryho osamělost je tedy důsledkem negativního vlivu systému, jehož je součástí, určitým vedlejším produktem kolonialismu.

Nakolik frustrující je postavení bělochů v koloniálním systému dokládá skutečnost, že ve chvíli kdy John Flory ztratí naději (symbolizovanou mladou britskou dívkou Elizabeth) na únik z osamělosti, pokrytectví a neporozumění spojeného s tímto systémem, představa dalšího života v kolonii se pro něj stává natolik nesnesitelnou, že se rozhodne raději svůj život ukončit.

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