

Republic of Iraq

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

College of Education for Human sciences

University of Babylon

Department of English



## Colonial Aspects in Orwell's *Burmese Days*

A Paper Submitted to the Department of English, College of Human Sciences,  
University of Babylon, as a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of B.A. in English Language and Literature

Submitted By

Zahraa Haider Mohammed Ridha

Supervised By

Asst. Lec. Israa. H. Mohammed

2023/2024

Dedication

To my family

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to God and my supervisor Asst. Lec. Israa. H. Mohammed for her help, notes, advice, patience and suggestions that helped to complete the work.

## Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1.1 Biography of the Author.....	1
1.2 Works of the Author.....	2
CHAPTER TWO.....	4
2.1 Colonial Literature.....	4
CHAPTER THREE.....	13
3.1 Representation of the Other.....	13
CHAPTER FOUR.....	19
4.1 Colonial Aspects in Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i> .....	19
CONCLUSION .....	22
REFERENCES .....	23

## Abstract

George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days* serves as a powerful exploration of the colonial experience in Burma during the British imperial era. The paper begins by providing historical context for the novel, situating it within the broader framework of British imperialism in Southeast Asia during the early 20th century. It explores the political, economic, and cultural factors that shaped the colonial landscape in Burma, setting the stage for Orwell's exploration of colonial themes in the novel. The paper also delves into the portrayal of colonial institutions and social structures in *Burmese Days*, with a focus on the Club as a microcosm of British privilege and exclusivity. By examining the Club's role in perpetuating racial segregation and cultural imperialism, the paper highlights the ways in which colonial ideologies were institutionalized and normalized within colonial society.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 Biography of the Author

George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair on June 25, 1903, in Motihari, India, was a renowned British writer and journalist known for his critical examination of social and political issues. Orwell's early life was marked by a sense of displacement and a deep-seated desire for social justice, themes that would come to define his literary works. Orwell's childhood was shaped by the colonial context of British India, where his father worked as a civil servant. This experience of growing up in a society marked by inequality and exploitation left a lasting impression on Orwell and influenced his later writings on imperialism and social injustice. After his father's retirement, Orwell was sent to England to receive a formal education, attending prestigious schools such as St. Cyprian's School in Eastbourne and Eton College.( Orwell, G. 2013).

His privileged upbringing, Orwell's experiences at these elite institutions only served to deepen his sense of alienation and disillusionment with the social hierarchy. After completing his education, Orwell decided to forego a university education and instead joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma in 1922. This decision was motivated by a desire to understand the realities of colonialism firsthand, but Orwell soon became disenchanted with the oppressive nature of British rule in Burma and resigned from his position in 1927.

Orwell's time in Burma had a profound impact on his political beliefs and worldview, leading him to develop a strong anti-imperialist stance that would inform much of his later writing. Upon returning to England, Orwell embarked on a career as a writer and journalist, adopting the pen name "George Orwell" to protect his family's reputation. In the years that followed, Orwell worked as a teacher, bookshop assistant, and freelance writer, all while honing his craft and developing his distinctive voice as a social critic.(Davison, P. 1996).

## 1.2 Works of the Author

Orwell's first major work, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, published in 1933, drew on his experiences living among the destitute and marginalized members of society. The book offered a stark portrayal of poverty and inequality in Europe and established Orwell as a writer unafraid to confront uncomfortable truths about society. This commitment to social realism and political honesty would become a hallmark of Orwell's writing throughout his career.(Meyers, 2010).

George Orwell, one of the most influential and revered writers of the 20th century, left an indelible mark on the literary landscape with his incisive critiques of social and political injustices. Born Eric Arthur Blair in 1903, Orwell adopted his now-famous pen name to shield his family's reputation as he embarked on a career that would come to define him as a champion of truth and integrity. Orwell's body of work spans a wide range of genres, including novels, essays, journalism, and memoirs, all of which reflect his unwavering commitment to exposing the hypocrisies and inequalities of society. From his early works such as *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) to his later masterpieces like *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), Orwell's writing is characterized by its clarity, honesty, and moral courage.(Hollis, 2017).

In his fiction, Orwell skillfully weaves together allegory and satire to illuminate the dark undercurrents of power and control that lurk beneath the surface of seemingly benign societies. *Animal Farm*, a fable about a group of farm animals who revolt against their human oppressors only to find themselves subjugated by their own leaders, serves as a powerful indictment of totalitarianism and the corruption of revolutionary ideals. Similarly, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a dystopian novel set in a future world ruled by a tyrannical regime that controls every aspect of its citizens' lives, remains a chilling warning against the dangers of

unchecked state power and surveillance. Orwell's non-fiction works, including essays such as *Shooting an Elephant* (1936) and *Politics and the English Language* (1946) are equally renowned for their lucid prose and penetrating insights into the complexities of human nature and society. In these essays, Orwell tackles a wide range of topics, from imperialism and nationalism to language and propaganda, always with an eye toward revealing the underlying truths that shape our understanding of the world.(Fussell, 1985).



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 Colonial Literature

Colonial literature refers to a genre of writing that explores the impact of colonialism on individuals, societies, and cultures. It often delves into themes such as power dynamics, exploitation, resistance, identity, and cultural clashes. Colonial literature can be both fiction and non-fiction and is typically set in regions that were colonized by European powers during the 19th and 20th centuries. Writers of colonialism literature often provide a critical examination of the legacy of colonial rule, shedding light on the injustices, inequalities, and trauma inflicted on colonized peoples. Through their works, these authors aim to challenge dominant narratives, highlight the complexities of colonial encounters, and give voice to marginalized perspectives.(Aravamudan, 1999).

Orwell delves into the theme of exploitation in *Burmese Days*, exposing the economic exploitation that underpins British colonial rule in Burma. The British administrators and merchants in Kyauktada are portrayed as ruthless exploiters who enrich themselves at the expense of the local population. Orwell critiques the exploitative nature of colonialism through vivid descriptions of land grabs, forced labor, and economic disparities that perpetuate social injustice in Burma. The economic inequalities and injustices perpetuated by colonialism. “The colonizer's prosperity thrives on the backs of the colonized, a parasitic relationship masked by the veneer of civilization.” ( Moosavinia, 2011).Orwell challenges the romanticized notions of empire prevalent in his time. Orwell also explores the theme of cultural clashes in *Burmese Days*, highlighting the tensions and misunderstandings that arise between the British colonizers and the native Burmese. The cultural divide between the two groups is starkly illustrated through their differing customs, traditions, and values. Orwell portrays the British expatriates as arrogant and dismissive of Burmese culture, while the Burmese are depicted as resentful and distrustful of their colonial

overlords. Through nuanced characterizations and interactions, Orwell captures the complexities of cultural exchange and conflict in a colonial setting.(Rai, 1983).

The emergence of colonial literature can be traced back to the period of European expansion and exploration in the 15th century, when European powers began to establish colonies in various parts of the world. The first appearance of colonial literature can be seen in the accounts of explorers, missionaries, and traders who documented their encounters with indigenous peoples and cultures. These early writings often portrayed colonized societies as exotic, primitive, and in need of civilizing by European colonizers. One of the most famous examples of this genre is Christopher Columbus's journal, where he described his encounters with the indigenous peoples of the Americas. "No European cares anything about proofs. When a white man kills a black man, that's murder. When a black man kills a white man, that's justifiable homicide." (Zan, 2010). this quotation highlights the racial double standards prevalent during colonial times. It reflects the biased justice system where crimes committed by Europeans against non-Europeans were often overlooked or justified, while the reverse scenario resulted in severe consequences.

As colonialism expanded and intensified in the following centuries, a more critical and nuanced form of colonial literature began to emerge. Writers such as Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, and Chinua Achebe started to explore the complex dynamics of colonial relationships, shedding light on the injustices, conflicts, and power struggles inherent in colonial rule. These authors challenged prevailing narratives of colonial superiority and highlighted the voices and perspectives of colonized peoples. The first appearance of colonial literature marked the beginning of a rich and diverse literary tradition that

continues to shape our understanding of the legacy of colonialism today.(Al-Saidi, 2014).

The colonialism, spanning several centuries, represents a pivotal chapter in human history characterized by the expansion of European powers across the globe. Beginning in the 15th century with the voyages of exploration and conquest led by figures such as Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama, colonialism marked a profound shift in global power dynamics. European nations sought to establish colonies in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania, driven by a desire for economic gain, political dominance, and cultural influence.

The colonialism was underpinned by a complex web of motivations, including the quest for resources, the spread of Christianity, and the belief in the superiority of Western civilization. However, this expansion came at a significant cost to indigenous peoples and cultures, who faced displacement, exploitation, and violence at the hands of colonial powers. The legacy of colonialism continues to reverberate in contemporary society, shaping issues of identity, power, and inequality around the world.(Macedo, 2000).

Pioneers of colonial literature are those writers who have explored and critiqued the impact of colonialism on societies, cultures, and individuals. These authors have delved into the complexities of power dynamics, exploitation, and resistance that characterize the colonial experience. Through their works, they have shed light on the brutal realities of colonization, challenging dominant narratives and offering alternative perspectives. One of the earliest pioneers of colonial literature is Joseph Conrad, whose novel *Heart of Darkness* is a seminal work that delves into the horrors of European imperialism in Africa. Through the character of Marlow, Conrad explores the dehumanizing effects of colonialism on both the colonizers and the colonized, painting a stark picture of

the brutality and moral decay that often accompanies the quest for power and dominance.

Another important figure in colonial literature is Chinua Achebe, whose novel *Things Fall Apart* provides a powerful counter-narrative to the dominant Western perspectives on colonization. Achebe's novel challenges the stereotypes and myths perpetuated by colonial powers, offering a nuanced portrayal of pre-colonial African society and the devastating impact of European colonization on traditional cultures and ways of life.(Bayly, 2016).

Frantz Fanon is another influential voice in colonial literature, known for his groundbreaking work *The Wretched of the Earth*. Drawing on his experiences as a psychiatrist in Algeria during the Algerian War of Independence, Fanon explores the psychological effects of colonization on both the colonized and the colonizer. His analysis of violence, identity, and liberation has had a profound impact on postcolonial theory and activism, inspiring generations of scholars and activists to challenge systems of oppression.

Colonial literature is a rich and complex genre that explores the lasting impact of colonialism on societies, cultures, and individuals. Through a diverse range of works, writers have delved into the power dynamics, exploitation, and resistance that characterize the colonial experience, shedding light on the brutal realities of colonization and challenging dominant narratives. The themes of colonial literature are multifaceted and nuanced, reflecting the complexity of the colonial encounter and its far-reaching consequences.

One of the central themes of colonial literature is the exploration of power dynamics and hierarchies that define the colonial relationship. From the imposition of political control to the economic exploitation of resources, colonialism is fundamentally about the exercise of power over others. Writers such as Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* and Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall*

*Apart* delve into the ways in which colonial powers assert their dominance over colonized peoples, often through violence, coercion, and manipulation. These works reveal the unequal distribution of power in colonial societies and the ways in which this imbalance shapes social relations, identities, and experiences.( Olatunji, 2010).

Another theme in colonial literature is the dehumanization and othering of colonized peoples by colonial powers. Throughout history, colonizers have often portrayed indigenous populations as primitive, backward, or inferior, justifying their subjugation and exploitation. Writers like Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in Decolonising the Mind* examine the psychological effects of this dehumanization on both the colonized and the colonizer. They highlight how colonial ideologies perpetuate stereotypes, erode cultural identities, and distort perceptions of self and other. By exposing the dehumanizing effects of colonialism, these works challenge readers to confront their own biases and assumptions about different cultures and peoples.

Resistance and resilience are also prominent themes in colonial literature, as writers explore the ways in which colonized peoples have resisted and fought back against colonial oppression. From armed uprisings to cultural revivals, resistance movements have taken many forms throughout history, challenging the authority of colonial powers and asserting the rights and dignity of indigenous communities. Writers such as *Aime Cesaire* in *Discourse on Colonialism* and Jamaica Kincaid in *A Small Place* celebrate the courage and tenacity of those who have resisted colonization, highlighting their struggles for liberation, autonomy, and self-determination. These works inspire readers to reflect on the power of collective action and solidarity in the face of injustice and inequality.( Abrahams, 1978).

Identity and belonging are also central themes in colonial literature, as writers explore how colonialism has shaped individual and collective identities. The experience of colonization often involves a profound rupture in cultural continuity, as traditional practices, languages, and beliefs are eroded or suppressed by colonial authorities. Writers like Tsitsi Dangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* and Derek Walcott in *Omeros* examine the ways in which colonized peoples navigate questions of identity, belonging, and selfhood in a postcolonial world. These works illuminate the complexities of identity formation in contexts marked by displacement, hybridity, and cultural hybridity.

Memory and trauma are recurring themes in colonial literature, as writers grapple with the legacies of violence, exploitation, and dispossession that continue to haunt postcolonial societies. The scars of colonization run deep, leaving lasting wounds on individuals and communities that are often passed down through generations. Writers such as J.M. Coetzee in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* explore the ways in which memory and trauma shape personal and collective narratives of the past, present, and future. These works invite readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the dark history of colonialism and its enduring impact on contemporary society.(Loomba, 2002).

The style of writing in colonial literature is as diverse and complex as the themes it explores. From the vivid imagery of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to the lyrical prose of Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, colonialism writers employ a wide range of stylistic techniques to convey the experiences, emotions, and complexities of the colonial encounter. The style of writing in colonialism literature is characterized by its attention to detail, its exploration of multiple perspectives, and its engagement with language as a tool of power and resistance.

One of the defining features of the style of writing in colonial literature is its vivid and evocative imagery. Writers often use rich descriptions and sensory details to create immersive worlds that transport readers to the landscapes, cultures, and histories of colonized peoples. In works like V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the lush descriptions of settings, characters, and events bring to life the sights, sounds, and textures of colonial societies, inviting readers to experience the world through the eyes of those who have been marginalized and silenced.

(Boehmer, 1998).

The use of multiple perspectives is another key aspect of the style of writing in colonial literature. Many writers employ narrative techniques such as shifting points of view, unreliable narrators, and fragmented storytelling to challenge dominant narratives and disrupt conventional ways of thinking about colonialism. In novels like J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, multiple voices and perspectives offer a more nuanced and complex understanding of the colonial experience, highlighting the diverse perspectives, voices, and histories that have been silenced or erased by colon. Language plays a crucial role in the style of writing in colonialism literature, serving as a powerful tool for both domination and resistance. Writers often play with language, incorporating local dialects, pidgin languages, and hybrid forms of speech to capture the linguistic diversity and complexity of colonial societies. In works like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, language is used as a means of reclaiming cultural identity, challenging colonial norms, and asserting the agency and autonomy of colonized peoples. By subverting linguistic conventions and experimenting with form and structure, writers in colonialism literature disrupt the hegemony of colonial discourse and offer alternative ways of thinking and speaking about the colonial experience .( Das, 2007).

One of the most familiar novels in colonial literature is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Published in 1899, this seminal work has become a touchstone for discussions of imperialism, racism, and the moral ambiguities of European colonization in Africa. Set in the Congo Free State, *Heart of Darkness* follows the journey of Charles Marlow, a steamboat captain tasked with traveling upriver to retrieve the enigmatic ivory trader Kurtz. Through Marlow's eyes, readers are confronted with the brutal realities of colonial exploitation, as well as the psychological depths of human depravity and moral decay. Conrad's evocative prose and haunting imagery capture the darkness at the heart of European colonialism, challenging readers to grapple with the legacy of violence and dehumanization that underpinned the imperial project.

(Clarke, 2017).

The classic novel in colonial literature Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Published in 1958, this groundbreaking work offers a counter-narrative to colonial depictions of Africa and its peoples, presenting a complex and nuanced portrayal of Igbo society in pre-colonial Nigeria. Through the story of Okonkwo, a proud warrior and leader, Achebe explores the impact of British colonization on traditional African values, customs, and social structures. As Okonkwo struggles to adapt to the changes brought by colonial rule, readers witness the clash between indigenous cultures and Western ideologies, as well as the devastating consequences of cultural displacement and loss. Achebe's powerful storytelling and vivid characterizations challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Africa, inviting readers to reconsider their assumptions about the continent and its diverse peoples.(Whittaker, 2007).

George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days* offers a penetrating and incisive examination of the colonial experience in British-ruled Burma, immersing readers in the tumultuous world of 1930s Kyauktada. Through the eyes of



protagonist John Flory, a disillusioned timber merchant grappling with the moral quagmire of colonial rule, Orwell paints a vivid portrait of the corrosive effects of imperialism on both the colonizers and the colonized. Set against the backdrop of a society rife with power struggles, racial tensions, and cultural clashes, the novel delves deep into the complexities of privilege, prejudice, and complicity that defined the colonial relationship between the British rulers and the indigenous Burmese population. Orwell's searing critique of colonialism in *Burmese Days* exposes the insidious nature of imperial domination and its profound impact on individual lives and collective consciousness. By exploring themes of exploitation, discrimination, and resistance within the context of British colonialism in Burma, Orwell challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the legacy of imperialism and its enduring repercussions on personal ethics, social dynamics, and political structures. With its unflinching portrayal of the moral ambiguities and ethical dilemmas inherent in colonial rule, *Burmese Days* stands as a timeless and compelling indictment of oppression, injustice, and the human cost of empire.( Afiah, 2022).

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 Representation of the Other

George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days* is a scathing critique of British colonialism in Burma during the early 20th century. Set in the fictional town of Kyauktada, the novel explores the lives of the British expatriates who wield power and influence over the local Burmese population. Through vivid descriptions and sharp characterizations, Orwell exposes the moral decay and hypocrisy that underlie the colonial enterprise. One of the central colonial aspects explored in *Burmese Days* is the theme of racism through some quotations such “They say the world is round, and yet I often think it's rather square, so many little boxes filled with wickedness.” (Rai, A. 1983). Orwell vividly depicts the racial hierarchy that exists in colonial society, with the British expatriates considering themselves superior to the native Burmese population. This racial prejudice is exemplified through the character of Flory, a British timber merchant who is sympathetic to the plight of the Burmese but ultimately succumbs to the pressures of conformity and racial superiority. Through Flory's internal struggles and conflicting loyalties, Orwell highlights the corrosive effects of racism on both the colonizers and the colonized.(Rai, 1983).

Orwell's critique of British imperialism in *Burmese Days* extends beyond individual characters to encompass broader themes of cultural hegemony and resistance as in this quotation “Imperialism is the tyranny of the powerful over the powerless, disguised as the benevolence of civilization.”. (Afiah, N, 2022) Critics like Frantz Fanon, in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth*, have explored the psychological effects of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized. Orwell's portrayal of Flory's internal conflict and eventual disillusionment with the colonial enterprise resonates with Fanon's notion of colonial alienation and the dehumanizing effects of oppression. Additionally,

scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have interrogated the representation of gender and sexuality in colonial narratives, shedding light on the intersectionality of power structures within imperialist systems. Orwell's treatment of the Burmese characters in the novel has sparked debates surrounding Orientalism and cultural authenticity. Critics like Said have examined the ways in which Orwell essentializes and exoticizes the Burmese population, reducing them to mere stereotypes or caricatures. However, other scholars, such as Aijaz Ahmad, have argued that Orwell's portrayal of Burmese resistance and agency complicates traditional colonial narratives, offering a nuanced depiction of indigenous resistance to imperialist hegemony.(Crane, 2011).

the socio-political context in which Orwell wrote the novel. Orwell's own experiences as a colonial police officer in Burma informed much of the narrative, prompting scholars to explore the autobiographical elements of the novel and their implications for understanding Orwell's ideological stance on imperialism. Moreover, the historical backdrop of British Burma, including the anti-colonial movements of the early 20th century, provides a rich framework for examining the novel's themes of power, resistance, and identity. Orwell's portrayal of colonial society continues to provoke thought and debate among academics and readers alike, highlighting the enduring relevance of colonial literature in understanding the complexities of the past and their implications for the present.(Shabanirad, 2015).

The driving force is the transformation of European societies from feudal to industrial societies. Colonization of Asia, the Middle East and Africa and imperial policy of searching for raw materials and opportunities and new markets. In Orwell's *Burmese Days* we analyze the relationship between the colonizer and Colonized in and the catastrophic impact of British colonialism on both. With George Orwell *Days of Burma*, my thesis is that the British

colonialists brought with them severe racism, arrogance and brutality to maintain control over the indigenous people of Burma. Racism and Representation Racism is a term is often used to describe the hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group or people towards another. actions resulted from this attitude. Racism in the Burmese Era by George Orwell In *Burma Days*, George Orwell addresses the question Superiority of white British colonizers over non-white indigenous colonized Burmese and Indians. British colonizers are described as extremely self-centered and racist in their actions Burmese, while the natives are negatively portrayed as serfs, farmers or, as Ellis calls them, *pigs*. or as Elizabeth calls her “the beast”. The population was about four thousand inhabitants, including several Hindu cents; several dozen Chinese and seven Europeans. Two Europeans were also nominated Francis and Samuel, sons of an American Baptist missionary and a Roman Catholic missionary Fittingly,. Orwell reflects on English life in Kyauktada. Even if they have work to do, spends most of his time partying at the disco to escape the scorching heat. outside of hunting and tennis. Your two main recurring complaints are the heat and ways to accept locals into the European club reserved for them. In *Burmese Days* we will see that the social class system is divided into the upper class, the British class. Colonialists, civil officials and traders as well as the lower class, which includes the colonized native spoor, oppressed and exploited.(Lieskounig, 2012).

During the 19th century, Britain acquired colonies in Asia. Burma was one of the British colonies in South Asia. Colonialism led to social, economic, and political challenges in Burma. Thus, scholars, politicians, and writers have analyzed the causes and impacts of the British colonization of Burma. George Orwell has attempted to discuss the British colonialism in Burma. The characters in the *Burmese Days* depict some features of colonialism in Burma.

Nonetheless, this essay argues that Orwell's novel does not provide a detailed account of colonialism because of the following reasons.

The novel focuses on British social and economic activities in Burma in the 1920s, but does not address the factors that led to colonialism in Burma. Orwell served as a police officer in Burma from 1922 to 1927. He wrote the novel based on personal observations, experiences and prejudices. Therefore, some discussions in the novel do not reflect colonialism in Burma. For this reason, some important information is omitted from the novel, such as the context of colonialism in Burma. The context of colonialism is important for understanding the motivations of British imperialism in Burma. The British colonization of Burma was a gradual process that took several years. Before the arrival of the British, Burma was on important trade routes between China and India. Burma's strategic location was therefore one of the factors that motivated the British to conquer it. Along with trade, agriculture was the dominant economic activity in Burma (Desai 67). Conflict between Burma and the colonialists erupts when the King of Burma decides to invade Arkana territory. Arkana was close to the British protectorate in India. The Anglo-Burmese War took place between 1824 and 1826. In this conflict the British defeated the Burmese. In 1852 another conflict broke out between the Burmese and the British. In this case, the British wanted to exploit the teak forests of Lower Burma, while the Burmese did not want foreigners to exploit their resources. The British won the second Anglo-Burmese conflict. In Burma, the British were determined to exploit natural resources such as rubber, oil, and teak (Charney 234). Therefore, commercial interests were the main reasons that led to the British colonization of Burma. British ambitions led to another Anglo-Burmese War in 1885. This war led to the British colonization of Burma. After colonization, the Kingdom of Burma became known as Burma. (Moya, 2001).

Direct rule was an important feature of colonialism in Burma. Unfortunately, the novel does not provide a clear analysis of Burma's colonial administrative structures. It offers only a vague description of the colonial administrative structures through the various characters in the novel. For example, only a few characters such as Macgregor and Lieutenant Verrall represent the presence of European colonial administrators in Burma. The English introduced various systems of political administration in their overseas territories. In Burma and the north, the British used a system of direct administration. In 1886, Burma was part of the British colonial possessions in Asia. The English destroyed the monarchy and introduced new administrative structures. In addition, they introduced formal education to civilize the locals. (Kalpaklı, 2015).

The main theme of *Burma Days* is that colonialism brings out the worst in everyone “Under the oppressive shadow of colonial rule, even the noblest hearts are tainted by the poison of prejudice, and the darkest impulses of humanity are unleashed.” .(SuperSummary, 2023) The characters are aware of their role in their imperialist world. For example, when Flory and Veraswami discuss the British Empire as the doctor's elderly patient, Flory sees colonialism as a despotic project that stole the colonies for the benefit of England, while Veraswami argues that the Empire benefited the natives both financially and financially . cultural. Opinions are also divided within the European Club on how to respond to the complaint that the British Empire is on the verge of collapse and needs to take a stronger hand, and use the law against colonial administrators. Ellis and Westfield argue that natives should be severely punished, while Mrs. B. Lackersteen argues that leaving the natives to fend for themselves is punishment enough. The personal corruption of colonialism and empire is evident in many characters. Flory's stay in Burma deepens his loneliness because he has no opportunity to meet people like him. His presence

there leads to corruption because his life is by definition hypocritical: even though he criticizes the empire, he does not want it to fall, because losing his place in the machine of colonialism would be financially ruinous.(SuperSummary, 2023)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1 Colonial Aspects in Orwell's *Burmese Days*

Colonialism in *Burmese Days* Set against the backdrop of British colonial Burma in the 1920s, *Burmese Days* lays bare the stark realities of colonial domination and its repercussions on individuals and society at large. At its core, the novel explores the corrosive effects of imperialism on human relationships, morality, and identity. Orwell deftly portrays the racial hierarchies and cultural clashes that permeated every facet of colonial life, from governance to social interactions. The character of John Flory serves as a compelling lens through which to examine the colonial experience. As a British timber merchant stationed in Burma, Flory embodies the contradictions and conflicts inherent in colonial identity. Despite his disdain for the overt racism and exploitation perpetuated by his fellow colonizers, Flory finds himself complicit in upholding the oppressive colonial system. His internal struggle reflects the moral ambiguity faced by many colonizers who grapple with their own complicity in perpetuating injustice.(Afiah, 2022).

Orwell vividly depicts the dehumanizing effects of colonialism on the Burmese population, particularly through the character of Dr. Veraswami. As an educated Burmese doctor who aspires to assimilate into British society, Veraswami embodies the aspirations and frustrations of the colonized elite. However, his efforts are continually thwarted by the pervasive racism and prejudice of the colonial administration, highlighting the systemic barriers faced by indigenous peoples under imperial rule. The portrayal of the Club, a bastion of British privilege and exclusivity, further underscores the racial dynamics at play in colonial Burma. Through the Club's strict adherence to racial segregation and its disdain for any form of cultural integration, Orwell exposes the insidious nature of colonial ideology and its role in perpetuating social inequality. The Club serves as a microcosm of colonial society, where power and privilege are



consolidated in the hands of the ruling elite, while the indigenous population is marginalized and exploited. Cultural imperialism is another prominent theme in *Burmese Days*, as Orwell explores the ways in which colonialism seeks to erase indigenous cultures and traditions in favor of Western norms. The character of Flory's mistress, Ma Hla May, symbolizes the objectification and exoticization of Burmese women by colonial men. Ma Hla May's plight underscores the intersection of gender and colonialism, as she navigates the oppressive patriarchal structures imposed by both Burmese and British society.(Lieskounig, 2012).

Through the character of U Po Kyin, Orwell offers a scathing critique of colonial corruption and opportunism. As a corrupt Burmese magistrate who manipulates the colonial system to advance his own interests, U Po Kyin embodies the moral decay and depravity engendered by imperial rule. His ruthless pursuit of power and wealth exposes the moral bankruptcy at the heart of colonial governance, where exploitation and injustice are justified in the name of progress and civilization. (Lieskounig, 2012).

These quotations from *Burmese Days* provide insight into the various dimensions of colonialism depicted in the novel, from racial hierarchies and cultural imperialism to systemic oppression and moral decay. Through these analyses, we gain a deeper understanding of how Orwell's work illuminates the complexities and injustices inherent in imperial rule. Encapsulates the deeply entrenched sense of superiority and entitlement held by the British colonizers. It reflects the belief in the inherent superiority of British culture and the justification for colonial domination. The notion of being born British implies a privileged status that confers authority and dominance over the colonized peoples. This sense of entitlement serves as a justification for the exploitation and oppression perpetrated by the colonial administration.

"We must keep our places." (Biederstadt, 2017). spoken by Mr. Lackersteene, underscores the rigid social hierarchies and strict codes of conduct enforced within colonial society. It reflects the imperative of maintaining the status quo and preserving the privileges of the ruling elite. The notion of "keeping our places" suggests a fear of social upheaval and a desire to uphold the existing power structures at all costs. This mentality perpetuates the systemic inequality and injustice that define colonialism. The best way to destroy a people is to make them ridiculous. U Po Kyin's cynical observation speaks to the insidious tactics employed by colonial rulers to undermine the cultural identity and dignity of the colonized population. By portraying indigenous peoples as objects of ridicule and mockery, the colonial administration seeks to delegitimize their aspirations for self-determination and autonomy. This strategy of cultural imperialism serves to reinforce the dominance of the colonial power and suppress any resistance to its authority.(AZZAHRA, 2023).

"The very word 'white' had come to mean the acme of civilization." Flory's reflection on the symbolism of whiteness underscores the pervasive influence of racial ideology in colonial Burma. The association of whiteness with civilization and superiority reflects the deeply ingrained prejudices that justified colonial domination. By equating white skin with cultural and moral superiority, the colonial administration perpetuates a system of racial hierarchy that privileges the colonizers at the expense of the colonized. This quote highlights the arbitrary nature of racial categorization and its role in perpetuating social inequality under colonial rule.( Rai, 1983).

## CONCLUSION

In George Orwell's *Burmese Days* the colonial experience in Burma is vividly depicted through a tapestry of characters, settings, and social dynamics. Through the lens of British imperialism in the 1920s, Orwell illuminates the multifaceted nature of colonialism and its profound impact on both the colonizers and the colonized. As we reflect on the themes and motifs explored throughout the novel, several key conclusions emerge regarding the colonial aspects portrayed in *Burmese Days*. *Burmese Days* elucidates the moral complexities and ethical dilemmas faced by both colonizers and the colonized in the context of imperial rule. Characters like Flory and U Po Kyin grapple with their own complicity in perpetuating colonial oppression, highlighting the corrosive effects of power and privilege on individual morality. Through their interactions and internal struggles, Orwell exposes the moral bankruptcy at the heart of colonial governance, wherein exploitation and corruption are justified in the name of progress and civilization. George Orwell's *Burmese Days* stands as a timeless exploration of the colonial experience in Burma, offering valuable insights into the complexities of power, privilege, and oppression that defined the era. Through its nuanced characters, evocative settings, and searing social commentary, the novel continues to resonate with readers, prompting us to confront the enduring legacy of colonialism and strive for a more just and equitable world.

## REFERENCES

- Abrahams, C. (1978). African Writing and Themes of Colonialism and Post-Independence Disillusionment.
- Afiah, N., Arafah, B., & Abbas, H. (2022). Burmese women portrait under the British imperialism in Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 13(1), 213-219.
- Afiah, N., Arafah, B., & Abbas, H. (2022). Burmese women portrait under the British imperialism in Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 13(1), 213-219.
- Afiah, N., Arafah, B., & Abbas, H. (2022). Burmese women portrait under the British imperialism in Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 13(1), 213-219.
- Al-Saidi, A. A. H. (2014). Post-colonialism Literature the Concept of self and the other in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*: An Analytical Approach. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 5(1), 95.
- Aravamudan, S. (1999). *Tropicopolitans: colonialism and agency, 1688-1804*. Duke University Press.
- Bayly, Susan. (2016) 2023. "Colonialism / postcolonialism". In *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, edited by Felix Stein. Facsimile of the first edition in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*.
- Boehmer, E. (Ed.). (1998). *Empire Writing: an anthology of colonial literature 1870-1918*. OUP Oxford.(4-6).
- Clarke, C. (2017). An analysis of Chinua Achebe's *An Image of Africa: racism in Conrad's heart of darkness*. Macat Library.(P8).
- Crane, R. (2011). Reading the club as colonial island in EM Forster's *passage to India* and George Orwell's *Burmese days*. *Island Studies Journal*, 6(2), 17-28.
- Das, B. K. (2007). *Critical essays on post-colonial literature*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist.
- Davison, P. (1996). *George Orwell: a literary life*. Springer.

- Fussell, P. (1985). George Orwell. *The Sewanee Review*, 93(2), 232-243.
- Hollis, C. (2017). *A study of George Orwell: The man and his works*. Skyhorse.
- Kalpaklı, F. (2015). Representation of the Other in George Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 174, 1214-1220.
- Kalpaklı, F. (2015). Representation of the Other in George Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 174, 1214-1220.
- Lieskounig, J. (2012). The Power of Distortion: George Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, 2012(117), 49-68.
- Lieskounig, J. (2012). The Power of Distortion: George Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, 2012(117), 49-68.
- Loomba, A. (2002). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. Routledge.(xii-xiv).
- Macedo, D. (2000). The colonialism of the English only movement. *Educational researcher*, 29(3), 15-24.
- Meyers, J. (2010). *Orwell: Life and Art*. University of Illinois Press.
- Moosavinia, S. R., Niazi, N., & Ghaforian, A. (2011). Edward Said's Orientalism and the Study of the Self and the Other in Orwell's *Burmese Days*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 2(1), 103.
- Moya, A. (2001). George Orwell's exploration of discourses of power in *Burmese days*. *The Road from George Orwell: his achievement and legacy*, 93-105.
- Olatunji, S. A. (2010). Thematic changes in postcolonial African literature: From colonialism to neocolonialism. *Sino–Us English Teaching*, 7(10), 125-134.
- Orwell, G. (2013). *George Orwell: a life in letters*. WW Norton & Company.vii
- Rai, A. (1983). Colonial Fictions: Orwell's' *Burmese Days*'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, PE47-PE52.

Rai, A. (1983). Colonial Fictions: Orwell's' Burmese Days'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, PE47-PE52.

Shabanirad, E., & Marandi, S. M. (2015). Edward Said's orientalism and the representation of oriental women in George Orwell's Burmese days. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 60, 22-33.

Shabanirad, E., & Marandi, S. M. (2015). Edward Said's orientalism and the representation of oriental women in George Orwell's Burmese days. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 60, 22-33.

Whittaker, D., & Msiska, M. H. (2007). Chinua Achebe's things fall apart: A Routledge study guide. Routledge.