

# ANTI-COLONIAL INTELLECTUALISM AND THE PRIVILEGE OF DISCOURSE: IDENTIFYING COLONIAL PROLIFERATIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL COMPLICITY IN GEORGE ORWELL'S *SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT* (1936)

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*Abstract: George Orwell's Shooting an Elephant (1936) introduces to the readers the colonial experiences of the author during his time in Burma. Thinking through the author's conflicting ideology and his contradictory identities, this paper argues that beneath the apparent dichotomy, Orwell maintains an underlying complicity in his sentiments of anti-colonialism. In his existential and moral suffering, the author tacitly reproduces the colonial subjects and reinforces the production of alterity, naturalizing the white man's burden. The paper explores the colonial assimilation of the colonizer and the colonized and how it survives in the intellectual recesses of an anti-imperialist. Referring to Althusser's conceptualization of the mechanism of ideology, we critically re-examine the molecular nature of the colonial and the ideological apparatus and how it discreetly constructs ideological complicity, which dialectically defends the colonial subjectivity and the loss of Self through a logic of colonial exclusion.*

## Introduction

From 1922 to 1927, George Orwell served as an officer in the Imperial Police in Burma. *Shooting an Elephant* (1936) is a confessional account of an incident he was a part of during his time in Burma. The essay is a discourse on the nature of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Orwell probes into an understanding of the colonizer's identity in relation to the colonized and their space. The essay elaborates that the colonizer is colonized by the sentiments with which the colonized defines the colonizer. Thus, the colonizer is bound to play out his assumed roles, where he is compelled to obey the colonized's expectations to maintain his identity. Orwell's essay is his personal life's professional reflection that implicitly points to the subtle mechanisms of racism and reverses racism and a symbiotic detestation between the Self and the Other. However, underneath the guise of an apparent aversion is an underlying complicity that exists to fulfill the demands of a dominant, cohesive, and self-regulating system of control that subjects both the oppressed and the oppressor.

In this paper, we try to understand the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer as a conduit that runs into the ruling apparatus and the intellectual's anti-colonial theorization of resistance and accountability as an attitude of condescension. This paper also explores the paradox in Orwell's professional,

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personal, and intellectual identities, which function as complicity while tacitly naturalizing the White Man's Burden despite the ideological conflict. For this, we have decided to look at Althusser's model of ideological dispositif, which will assist us in developing our perspectives.

### I. The Ideological Dispositif

While problematizing the mechanisms of ideology in the Marxist theory of the State and arguing about the subsequently misconstrued and accepted division of labor, Louis Althusser (2014, 242), in his *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* (2014), distinguishes repressive State apparatuses from his concept of the ideological State apparatuses. According to Althusser (2014, 244), the bodies of the State apparatus, whether repressive or ideological, are operationalized with coercive violence and ideology. Althusser (2014, 245-247) explains that while the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) functions predominantly by repression and secondarily by ideology and is centralized under class power, the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) that functions primarily by ideology is a disparate body and irrespective of their contradictory differences in their functioning, is unified under the ideology of the ruling class. Althusser's (2014, 247) idea of the State Apparatus, concerning the reproduction of relations of production and exploitation, "secures by repression" "the political conditions" for the operation of the Ideological State Apparatuses. Althusser (2014, 248) elaborates that the ISA secures the relations of production behind "a 'shield' provided by the Repressive State Apparatus" and an intermediating ruling ideology ensures the stability between them and in between the disparate body of the ISA. However, despite of the manifold contradictions, which could potentially exacerbate conditions to the extent where they would explode, the dynamic ISA manages to survive behind the protection provided by the RSA. We are left to encounter fundamental uncertainty.

It is all the more justified by the Marxist expression of ideology as an illusion. Althusser (2014, 253-256), drawing from Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology*, furthers this notion by claiming that ideology is devoid of any history. This non-historical reality of ideology essentially makes it trans-historical and eternal, a kind of Spinozist *omni-history* existing throughout history. Since ideologies "constitute an illusion" and "they do not correspond to reality" (Althusser, 2014, 256), they are allusive to the real conditions of existence. Althusser (2014, 256) lays this down in two theses. In the first thesis, he analyzes the imaginary transposition of the real conditions of existence and the individual subjects' need for this transposition to represent to themselves their real conditions of existence. One cause for that need would be the "falsified representation of the world" (Althusser, 2014, 257), which is purposefully imagined and weaponized by priests and despots who, by this imaginary distortion, dislocate the people from their real conditions "in order to enslave" (257) their minds. Aligned with the Feuerbachian idea, the second cause lies in the material alienation in the imaginary relations of the real conditions of existence of alienated individuals, which are alienating (see Althusser 2014, 257). As Althusser probes into the structure and functioning of ideological dispositif, the imaginary distortion, with its second-degree relation between relations, exposes an extensive ideological obfuscation.

It can be argued that the disparate body of the ISA and its heterogeneous inductions rising from the contradictions include both the consensus and the dissensus. The appearance of any contradictions or inversions within the ISA is monitored and moderated not only by the intermediating ruling class ideology (Althusser, 2014, 248) but also by intermediation between the active ruling class ideology and the resistance of the exploited class, which tacitly contributes to the cumulative reproduction of the political conditions for the ISA. Underneath the apparent superficiality of the contradictions underlies complicity that contributes to the function of cohesion.

The ideological proliferation inherent in the ISA is a multi-mirror apparatus of ideology that articulates a normalization of social subjectivity, brought under the cohesive unity of social formation, which recruits and translates (*interpellates*) concrete individuals into concrete subjects. Since ideology is omni-historical and eternal, the subjectivization of individuals becomes central to the double constitutive functioning of ideology. According to Althusser (2014, 263-266), individuals are pathologically always-already subjects. The fact of this subjectivity and the willful submission of the individual underneath a complicit ideological cohesiveness, irrespective of its apparent contradictions, has been naturalized to the extent where we fail to recognize it. Ideology intensely fetishizes, objectifies, and commodifies the subject in relations corresponding to the relations of reproduction of the conditions of production, which are “commodity relations in the field of the capitalist economy” (Resch, 1992, 213). Regarding this objectification of the subject, a natural reaction, which Althusser (2014, 262-263) identifies as *obviousness*, is imposed upon the subjects’ consciousness that accepts it as evident and true. This imposition drags the subject into a forged normality consolidated by the subjects’ molar acceptance and mutual recognition of each other and the Absolute Subject, along with its *obviousnesses*, that compels the subject to ideological *recognition* and *misrecognition*. The Absolute Subject tacitly codifies individuals into (free) subjects who submit “freely” to the commandments of the Absolute, allowing them to ‘freely’ contemplate their image and ‘freely’ recognize themselves in the Absolute (which ‘freely’ accepts their submission) with the guarantee of atonement, that is, salvation with terms and conditions of obedience and servitude without any unmonitored disagreements, which if otherwise, initiates a detachment of the repressive apparatus for coercive interventions.

In their apparent freedom, the (good) subjects are so engineered that they ‘work by themselves’, which is, by ideology (Althusser, 2014, 269). They recognize their status quo, which constitutes a semblance to the Absolute Subject, and, in turn, become automatons, working under codifications. With their free subjectivity, the interpellated subjects freely submit themselves and willingly enter this automation, considering them natural, true, and obvious. Avoiding detectability (Poulantzas, 1975, 207), this viral imposition slides into our foreign and domestic gestures, gradually proliferating so that we “constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition” knowing that we are free to do so, which guarantees us a notion of falsified or misrecognized individuality (Althusser, 2014, 263). The ideological dispositif, thus, institutes a mechanization of the subjects’ consciousness with a misrepresented guarantee which mandates a necessary *misrecognition* of the real conditions of existence, introducing them to a self-regulating system with its sedimentary rituals of social reproduction.

## II. Colonial Complicity in Anti-colonial Intellectualism

With its one-sided aim against colonialism, anti-colonial thought needs to be revised in its ideological critique against colonialism. The non-conformism in anti-colonial ideology, which came as a realization against the colonial hegemony, constitutes causal interpretations of history, culture, and identity that are inherently complicated and contradictory. Sanjay Krishnan (2009, 265) states that as anti-colonial thought pretends to expose the colonizer's claim as false and misrepresented, it "tacitly reproduces the culture and values" of colonialism. The anti-colonial ideological quest for a righteous Platonian ontology does not overcome the epistemological limitations of the discourse. The resistance in anti-colonial thought lacks the necessary tools to dissipate the colonial framework, as it works within what Weber (1930, 181) calls "the iron cage" of instrumental reason, that is, of the Eurocentric paradigm. With its organic experience of oppression, the resistance perpetrates against as well as participates in these mechanisms of free-floating ideological control (see Deleuze) where the colonizer and the colonized mutually recognize each other, their positions in the apparatus of the State and in relation to the Absolute Subject, which is the paradigm of Eurocentric discourse. Hence, the intellectual's claim that anti-colonial discourse is an "epistemology of the colonized" (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, 300), "anchored in the Indigenous (intellectual) sense of collective and common colonial consciousness" (300), pretends to constitute a theoretical discourse of the oppressed. It is understood that "colonial encounter is transhistorical rather than historical" (Simmons and Dei, 2012, 77), but the pretense of a 'theory' and that too of indigenous consciousness based on (frequently translated and practically un-lived) indigenous experiences, is the intellectual's (i.e., the "dominant body," according to Kempf, [2009, 20]) redressing of an unfair situation that could be established trans-historically. In other words, it justifies ignoring the underlying complicity in the iron cage of philosophical reason – a philosophy with fragile epistemological limitations (Szeman, 2017, 88).

The ideological critique of anti-colonialism fails to overturn the powerful claim of the colonial apparatus. It uses the dominant language of the oppressors and, in turn, tacitly justifies the colonial prolegomena. Despite the colonial privilege, this perverse anti-colonial intellectualism assumes a politics of accountability based on an epistemology of the uprooted. Reciprocally, the intellectual as the dominant body, despite their anti-colonial theorization (which is, again, produced by ideology [Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2007, 206]), by inner logic, enjoys the colonial privilege – a privilege of being dominant in discourse; a discourse that objectifies the Other based on their victimization. In other words, a victimized object, arrested in this subjectivity, is simultaneously the stake and the site of ideology (and also of contestation, but not primarily so) and discourse. Regardless of the anti-colonial theorization, during decolonization, intellectualism establishes "a dialogue with the bourgeoisie" (Fanon, 1963, 44) of the colonial apparatus. Thus, the discourse of the colonizer and the colonized become two modalities of the same ideology despite their apparent epistemological conflict. They are conjoined by a complicit recognition of each

other and function complicity to fulfill the *modulating* (see Deleuze) demands of a cohesive controlling unity.

### III. Conflict and Complicity in Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant* (1936)

Although the essay's ambiguous autobiographical nature is much contested, in 1926, Orwell served in Moulmein as an Assistant Superintendent and gained first-hand experience of the colonial landscape. Later, as a writer, Orwell (1946, par. 10) would explain his time and experiences in Burma as a predicament from which he suffered. What he suffered from was the paradoxical nature of his identity shaped by conflicting ideologies.

*Shooting an Elephant* (1936) presents a landscape of colonial assimilation. The text begins with the Western author's justification of his victimization by the native mob. It provides a comprehensive index of colonial experiences of contempt between the colonizer and the colonized. It can be argued that an attitude of antagonism, which is a pathological "hatred," is a part of the Imperialist discourse by which the colonist seeks to reduce the native to half-animal and half-human (Sartre, 1963, 17). In other words, the colonist dehumanizes the native by classifying him in zoological terms (Fanon, 1963, 42). For the settler, the natives, devoid of any historical significance, were indistinguishable from the flora and fauna in the landscape of the Other. However, while some of these by-products of Imperialism, with an abstract contempt for the Europeans, become exalted martyrs, a section of natives ruled under the authority cultivates the ruler's attitude to exploit the other sections. Likewise, the natives are trapped within the cage of the colonial dispositif, where their aggression is kindled, yet remains deprived of any exit as it meets the repressive force of the colonist (Fanon, 1963, 54). The moment his aggression finds a way to explode, he falls into the exhibitionist's trap that exhibits him as an animal. While explaining the native's involvement in tribal warfare and feuds, Fanon (1963) argues:

All these patterns of conduct are those of the death reflex when faced with danger, a suicidal behaviour which proves to the settler (whose existence and domination is by them all the more justified) that these men are not reasonable human beings. In the same way the native manages to by-pass the settler. A belief in fatality removes all blame from the oppressor; the cause of misfortunes and of poverty is attributed to God: He is Fate. In this way the individual accepts the disintegration ordained by God, bows down before the settler and his lot, and by a kind of interior restabilization acquires a stony calm (54).

As the imperial apparatus molds and modulates the muscular tension of the native by displacing it and re-directing it to his own kind, this "interior restabilization" (Fanon, 1963, 54) is imposed upon them as something evident and true. The colonizer, on the one hand, undermines the native as a half-human due to their superstitious practices, while on the other hand, weaponizes their superstitions against them to exploit them. The domination of the colonist is justified significantly when the natives turn their aggression against their brother in the name of resettling scores and vendetta (Fanon, 1963, 54). The colonizer launches the military strategy of *divide et impera*, which means divide and conquer, and segregates the concentrations of the colonized mass, ultimately manipulating the

Other to a mutual recognition and misrecognition of their conditions of existence, which they internalize.

Although the author recognizes the tyranny of the despotic state apparatus and that it assimilates both the agents of the Empire and its victims, he finds himself in the iron cage of ideological conflict. This contempt for the Empire meets his Edwardian upbringing. Orwell finds himself in the liminal interstice of the Other, confronts his subjectivity, and realizes that it is “inextricable from the alterity of the colonized others” (Tyner, 2005, 264). When his profession calls upon him, the narrator ventures into the liminal space of the colonized, carrying the instrument of imperial entitlement – the rifle. The rifle becomes *larvatus prodeo*, the mask which is presented to him by the imperial apparatus with a misrepresented imaginary guarantee of transcendental enlightenment, in other words, an instrument of superiority that prevents the narrator from being shamefaced. The mask is made, pre-determinedly, and strategically reinforced as an instrument of recognition (simultaneously misrecognition) with the assumption of the recognition of supremacy it expects to receive from the Other. It is a deflector screen resistant to the gaze of the apartheid Other. It deflects the gaze of the yellow faces on the occasion of a possible failure which might lead to humiliating positions (in which case it detaches the repressive apparatus [see Althusser]) and a repressive machine that seduces the face. The mask augments and engineers the Self (and facilitates the performance of whiteness) according to the conditions of the mask-maker, which is the Empire. It reinforces the colonial prolegomena. It is the point of reference of the imperial subjectivity as it constitutes the Manichean relation between the colonizer and the colonized, which Fanon (1963, 41) spoke about, where their positions are not of their choosing and “each is dependent upon the other” (Tyner, 2005, 264). This mutual recognition of each other is based on producing an imaginary identity that compels the subject to transform, assuming that imposed identity.

From the beginning of the essay, the narrator suffers from the existential angst of being a Westerner in the East. Ideologically, the narrator is compartmentalized. The colonizer in him must act out the role that he has generated as the colonizer and becomes subservient to the gaze of the Other. However, he understands the despotism of the Empire. In the space of the colonized, the colonizer must maintain his white man’s identity – the imperialist’s performance. By profession, Orwell was an officer (who was conditioned and nourished under the imperial apparatus) in the Imperial Police, which makes him an agent of the repressive apparatus of the Empire. It can be argued that despite his paradoxes, the fact that Orwell is professionally competent is typical of the Westerner’s rationality of response – the “West is West” and it is through the Westerner’s eye; the Orient is put into perspective (Huxley, 1954, 215). Contrasted to his profession, Orwell’s artistic persona, through his introspection, evaluates the state for himself and recognizes his other identities – the compulsion of his professional self and the burden of being white. His interaction with the natives, regardless of whether he was willing or not, was synchronized and adjusted by force and repression. To maintain his identity, he must use the language of repression to receive obedience and deference due to his imperial superiority. Fanon (1963) explains:

In the colonies, it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression ... In the colonial countries, ... the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native (38).

Orwell understood imperialism and its discontents. However, the fact that the narrator felt squeamish and understood the oppressive conditions of the British Raj does not relieve the oppressed of their oppression. Confessional or not, it justifies the White Man's burden. It is the morally driven intellectual's attitude of condescension which he practices to clear his conscience, where the page becomes the confessional – the confession booth; the readers, the priests who read the penitent author's sacramental confession implicitly asking for absolution. Again, the author tacitly uses the catechism, that is, the white man's religious code for enlightenment, waiting to receive an acquittal that would clear him of his sins. It would purify, enlighten and transcend him, eventually preserving his white man's identity without the discontent and the everlasting compunction from which he suffers. The intellectual, artist, and author, with or without their knowledge, acts as the intermediary that ensures harmonious complicity in the apparent paradox of identities.

Orwell's multiple identities revolve around the imperialist identity, where the individual subject is transformed into a professional subject by the imperial apparatus, and the experiences encountered by the professional subject transform him consequentially into an artist-subject endowed with consciousness and an ideology of his own. The officer's eventual resignation and the author's ideological retrospection are not separated from the imperial apparatus and do not invert it. Instead, any inversion of this sort is only a pretense, as the autobiographical recognition of the imperial impositions provides the author with an ideological consciousness with which he dissects the colonial landscape but fails to attain any knowledge of the dehumanized space he recognizes. Instead, Orwell (1936, par. 1-2) justifies the pathological and dehumanizing obviousness in the natives – the “evil-spirited little beasts” with their “sneering” jaundiced appearance and their hooting and “hideous laughter,” for which they are presumed guilty. It is in the evangelization of this complexion and appearance of the savage Other that the colonist decorates his superiority. The imperialist, the professional, and the artist are imposed with the same obviousness as the natives. In this obviousness of their subjugation, they mutually recognize each other. The author's retrospection comes only as an effect. This evangelization of subjects is complicity carried in the text.

The repeated early admissions of the compulsion that the narrator carries out indicate the victimization of the narrator as he traverses the colonial space. However, Fanon (1986, 92) protests – the colonizer, along with his white man's identity, in the space of the colonized, “has never felt inferior in any respect.” In the eye of the colonizer, the otherization of the colonized is inherent, despite the efforts to evangelize them. Through the gaze of the Other, the colonizer envisions

his superiority, which he must preserve. Hence, the narrator's inferiority complex comes more from his realization of his colonial subjectivity and subjugation to the Empire, the meter of which is installed in the gaze of the colonized. For the narrator, the colonized was a gauge upon which he was to measure himself. While the narrator holds the rifle – the phallic absolute around which the colonizer and the colonized orbit (see Lacan), the gaze of the colonized acts as the trigger – the trigger of colonial discontent installed in the apparatus of colonial entitlement. It triggers the colonist's frustrated experiences in the colonial landscape and his realization of his subjectivity. Out of this reverse repression, which too is implanted in the gaze of the natives by the imperial apparatus, the colonizer counteracts via force to establish and preserve his supremacy and defend it against any humiliation (*schadenfreude*), against becoming the spectacle. The narrator's identification with the natives, as a part of the same spectacle, is humiliating. It is, for the colonist, an event of metaphysical trauma. The gaze of the natives scopes out his body and his uniform, and he stands "open for all to see" him in his state of vulnerability (Tyner, 2005, 265). Orwell (1936) writes:

To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing – no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at (par. 7).

The narrator feels displayed and dismembered when he faces the Burmese crowd (Tyner, 2005, 266). In order to preserve his white man's identity, he must participate in the ideological ritual that surrounds the shooting of the elephant; the elephant being "a kind of sacrificed totem animal: its life is the price by which British power is maintained" in the colony (Ebury, 2021, 204). As a sahib, he "has got to act like a sahib" (Orwell, 1936, par. 7). The white man in the narrator "acts in obedience to an authority complex, a leadership complex" (Fanon, 1986, 99). The conventionalization of this figure of sahib presents him with the expectations of heroism he must live up to in order to preserve his resolute and heroic masculine appearance in the East – the adventurous heroism of the decorated white man with a rifle in hand or upon his shoulder, Jim Corbett or Brigadier General William Mitchell-like, one foot upon the carcass (trophy) of his hunted quarry, which they called big game. By whatever means necessary, the white man has got to appear resolute. He must not lose control at any cost – his foot must not slip, and his trigger must never miss the bullseye.

The author Orwell tries to destabilize this symbiotic contestation through his expressions of ambivalence and ambiguity. However, ultimately, he tacitly justifies his subjectivity which is "augmented by the realization of relationality to the colonized" (Tyner, 2005, 266), to the dehumanized natives with whom resemblance in any respect is rendered unbearable. The color-conscious apartheid of the white man ("yellow faces," "black Dravidian coolie") and the fear of remaining unclothed by culture (the narrator feels naked without the rifle), like the naked children of the Burmans interpret them as creatures of defilement. Their grotesque appearance subverts their hallucinatory whiteness and, consequentially, their ideology and identity. Blackness, to the colonist, becomes a sinful genomic abnormality – a pathogenetic condition inherent in the chromosomes of the colonized. The narrator's sympathetic disposition towards



the Burmans compels him to identify himself with them and incidentally with their oppression and their blackness, them being the spectacle. His space of interaction with the natives is so intimate that it becomes intimidating. Nevertheless, even though he admits to being a cog in the “dirty work of Empire” (Orwell, 1936, par. 2), the narrator fails to recourse from his whiteness fetish conditioned by the Edwardian milieu within which he was brought up. Therefore, Orwell is bound to respond to the hailing of the milieu as a stimulus, a milieu that has conditioned him in a sort of classical Pavlovian way.

The notion of the spectacle becomes more prominent when the author describes the graphic violent death of the Dravidian coolie. Through the prostrate state of the described dead, the artist’s aesthetic delight (*epikhairekakía*) is extracted out of tragedy. The artist is a polymorphous perverse (see Freud) who finds and extracts a Lucretian pleasure, a sadistic delight of visualizing violence, which one is not a victim of. The prostrate state of the dead being described does not honor the dead. Probing into the symbolic qualifiers, it can be argued that the inherent imperialist within the narrator, consciously or unconsciously, compels him to recognize the sprawling arms of the dead as being “crucified” (Orwell 1936, par. 4). The implicit workings of the imperial apparatus within the narrator, as well as the author, drives him to hegemonize. It is the acculturation of the natives resulting from the colonial assimilation that imposes a cultural hegemony upon them, forcing them to identify and be identified under the indices of the colonial apparatus.

The necropolitical spectacle of the dishonored dead is also evident in Orwell’s notable prose called *A Hanging* (1931), where the narrator’s “unusually precise and stereotyped” (Ebury, 2021, 204) gaze traverses the body of the native convict and the scene of the execution, describing it eugenically – “brown silent men,” “a fat Dravidian,” “black hand,” a hybrid dog – “half Airedale, half pariah” – and others (Orwell, 1931). The author extends his “eugenic thinking” (Ebury, 2021, 204) even in the textual dialogue of the head Jailer, Francis, which assumes comic relief in the middle of the execution. Orwell (1931, par. 22) uses the amusing character of the Dravidian jailer and makes a jester out of him even after the hanging, making a comedy out of the entire execution by retelling an anecdote of another execution. The stereotypically humorous encounter with the Dravidian jailer and the comic linguistic mimicry offset the seriousness of the ritualistic execution. Between the colonially diverted, sycophantic English-speaking native jailer, along with the six Indian wardens, who are actually colonized, and the colonist superintendent, the author shows complicity at work. The moment the Dravidian jailer says, “think of all the pain and trouble you are causing to us” (Orwell, 1931, par. 22), we realize at once that he imagines and identifies himself as one with the colonist and simultaneously, the implicit humor present in the fact that he, as a native himself, is unnecessarily troubled, like his colonist counterparts, and, amusedly so, by the reluctance of the victim (a Burman) to die. Orwell transforms the stereotypical character of the jailer into a jester; the entire execution concerning the anecdotal cartoonish execution, a jest – the colonizer and the colonized pulling the victim’s leg, the superintendent poking at the oscillating corpse of the convict.

What we find troublesome and pathetic is that Orwell uses a native and extracts the humor out of him against his folks, which, again, in a way, indicates the ritualistic nature of colonial brutality and the subsequent textual domination

and restructuring. The native jailer becomes the colonial solution to the colonial problem. He and the convict-hangman, as fulcrums of intermediation, relieve the white man of his burden. Post-execution, the superintendent feels relieved of his eight-minute burden and thanks God, while the others recognize their respite in the relief of their superintendent. The white man's burden is pronounced in the relief of the superintendent, and the subsequently implicated sighs of respite by the colonized affirms the white man's burden and the obviousness of it. The execution is followed by a casualness, where everyone engages in drinking amusements and recreations in "Western rituals of masculinity" (Ebury, 2021, 204), that effectuates an illusory rejection of death that has already occurred. For British readers, Orwell's text becomes a kind of theatrical courtly tragicomedy, implicitly written for their entertainment. By doing so, Orwell, as a Western author, achieves, from his readers, Western or not, a horrific solidarity of colonial naturalness – an obviousness of colonial vampirism – in his "eugenic necropolitical discourses" (Ebury, 2021, 204), similar to the necropolitical adventures of Jim Corbett, Kenneth Anderson, and others.

Here, we shall take a small quantity of privilege and digress a little to look at one Indian anglophile and comprador, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, who celebrated the grandeur of the colonial regime as a political responsibility. Chaudhuri's contempt for Indian culture and his empathizing with the Empire, introduces us into an ideological dichotomy. His romanticization of the English Empire and neo-imperialist philological expression could be located within the pages of his texts: *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951), *Passage to England* (1959), *Continent of Circe* (1965) and *Clive of India* (1975). His eugenic ethnographic mourning for reducing the Aryan culture into a catastrophic Indianness speaks about cultural and spiritual estrangements. However, it tacitly contributes to the de-indigenization and devaluating conditions set up by the apparatus of colonial ideology. The realization of English entelechy molds and modulates Chaudhuri's consciousness and his ideology in a way that he freely internalized them to the extent where he, like the colonist, becomes bothered by the abject (see Kristeva) stench arising from public defecation to the extent where he, like the Empire, seeks a governing body to restrain and control, not only the cultural aspect of the natives but also their somatic needs of sexuality and defecation (Almond, 2015, 115). Chaudhuri's pathological (object-cathexis [see Freud]) lamentation of the loss of the British Raj mourns "the loss of something which successfully de-animalized" Indians by keeping their desires under regulatory checks. Ian Almond (2015) notes:

Empire ... is seen here, quite literally, as that which stops a person from shitting where they like, when they like – a checker of the body, in Arnold's sense of civilization as a controller of flesh ... we should note how easily a contempt for one's own body coincides with a desire for foreign rule – as though the alienation of oneself from one's culture has to accompany the alienation of oneself from one's body. The two processes of self-othering work in tandem to replicate a crucial distance between colonized and colonizer, Babu and native, mind and body. (115)

Chaudhuri's conservationist ideals make a bourgeoisie comprador out of him whose ideological methods are allies with those of the imperialists. The native intellectual pursue illusory logic in order to complete his own identity. It is

founded in the colonial and ideological presupposition that the natives are half-bestial and incomplete in identity and hence, must strive and desire to achieve a completion (perfection) of their identity, which the Western paradigm provides, unattaining which the native intellectual suffers a kind of “racial melancholia” (Almond, 2015, 121). For the native intellectual, who is half-integrated into the apparatus of Western ideology, the West is the *objet petit a* (see Lacan). Hence, the half-bestial and half-Babu Self of the native intellectual Self otherizes itself, and bifurcates itself into two subjectivities in order to create a rift between the two variables (see Chaudhuri, 1968, 47) – the earthly and the transcendental, the mind and the body, where the body is always stigmatized. The half-Westernized native has been successfully assimilated into the intellectual and ideological domination, where “the power structure has not only won over its subject but has even managed to spiritualize itself” with a promise of protection and a guarantee of transcendence. The native Other is deprived of a historical and “individual agency”; the colonial Self imposes a “historiographical disempowerment of the individual” (Almond, 2015, 149) as it does not match with the models of the West. Hence, in the eyes of Chaudhuri, the East needs restructuring and a readjustment. However, this dichotomy of the Self, similar to that in Orwell, reconsolidates the colonial subjectivity as the colonial introjection reinforces the colonial rift of racial segregation and psychogeographical divide, pronouncing the idealistic Westernized Self, a Self with a historical value and projecting it upon the bestial nativity.

The molar representations and the overexposure to Western subjectivity enforce a colonial erasure of all the traces of native culture – a ritualistic erasure implemented by the apparatus of ideology in which the native-turned-intellectual participates willingly. The colonial frame of reference renders the origin of the natives invalid. Chaudhuri, like Orwell, historicizes the colonial past through a logic of the Self and its global disintegration. For him, post-independent India was a son without a patriarch, without an authoritarian guardian, all of which he recognized in the British Raj. Like the Dravidian jailer, Francis, but only an intellectually sophisticated version of him, Chaudhuri recognizes himself with the colonial absolute. As a proponent of colonialism, Chaudhuri explicitly legitimizes the colonial introjection of hallucinatory whiteness. Like Orwell, he suffers from a sense of repressed melancholy arising from the loss of Self, or the loss of the possibility to attain the perfection of the Self, which could release him from the native bestiality and the narrowness in the identity of the colonized.

It is important to note that Orwell writes about existential dichotomies between the Self and the Other, rising from the hollowness and “futility of the white man’s dominion in the East” (Orwell, 1931, par. 7). Later, in his essay *Why I Write* (1946), Orwell tells us about his existential and moral suffering during his time in the East. Despite his contempt for the imperial machine, Orwell “hardly shows any sign of anti-patriotism” (Alam, 2006, 58). The author writes:

I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited beasts who tried to make my job impossible (Orwell, 1936, par. 2).

The author's conflict of ideologies is made apparent by the fact that he juxtaposes his sentiments of contempt "alongside a eulogizing" of the colonial apparatus (Alam, 2006, 58). Orwell was, as Anthony Powell observed, "half in love" with that against which he was rebelling (Rodden, 2007, 3). The narrator, as well as the author, as the colonial subject, and their apparent contradictions hence, becomes misleading. The intellectual's existential suffering, the victimization of the Self, predominates the text. Beneath the superficial contradictions, it is the author who maintains tacit complicity as an agent of colonial intermediation, apparently conflicting but contributing to a kind of neo-imperialism. While the colonizer dominates the geopolitical space of the Other, the intellectual dominates the textual space – a Western rearrangement of the East (Said, 1979, 3). The author's patronizing attitude is, in fact, the intellectual's condescending *weltanschauung*, which is maintained throughout the essay, written from the narrator's point of view and about his existential misfortune. This "de-emphasizes the Burmese perspective and the detrimental effects" of the colonial apparatus experienced by the Burmese economy and culture, of the colonial expropriation that gave birth to the lumpenproletariat, "but stresses the ironic plight of the imperialist," the white man's burden (Alam, 2006, 58-59). The real frustration is not by the in-betweenness of the narrator's condition but rather by the author's realization of the fatal inevitability of recognition of being a colonist and the white man. Irrespective of the anti-colonial disposition, the narrator maintains a boundary of colonial construction of compartmentalization, and it is this "maintenance of the boundary" which is the "cause for considerable anxiety" (Hardt and Negri, 2001, 124). It can be argued that in this essay, the author presents no alternatives to abolish the colonial ideologies, yet produces alterity. The author writes an autobiographical essay with the motive of confession, where he is bound to indict the narrator and his inability to break free from the iron cage of colonial ideology. He accuses the Burmans and the narrator's victimization under the imperial machine. However, due to the contradictions becoming apparent and through the fissure created out of them, the author-in-retrospection slips out of notice.

We extend the dichotomy of the Self to the author. The author, too, is a part of the same ideology he is complaining about, but very subtly so, as we have already stated that through his confessional essay, the author tries to clear himself of the indictment, which he, as the author recognizes in and accuses the narrator (presumably his former Self) of having committed. By doing so, he assumes the role of the Self for himself while otherizing the narrator and the Burmans. The author, thus, enters into the dialectics of a "doubly specular" Self, where he adopts the functioning of the *specular* Absolute Subject (Althusser, 2014, 268). He uses the narrator and ideological ambivalence as a means to his deliverance, a deliverance of the Self from the colonial ambiguity. Hence, the author's ideology "has no outside (for itself)," which makes it egocentric. However, simultaneously, "it is nothing but outside," that is, "the accusation of being in ideology only applies to others" (Althusser, 2014, 265). Through this, the narrator and the author are tied up in a complicit relationship, where the narrator, as a character-subject of the author, for it is the author who has brought the narrator into existence and "who perpetuates his existence" (Fanon, 1963, 36), similar to the settler-native relationship, serves the Self by otherizing itself and others, so that it can live up to its stance of escape and preservation. While for the narrator, it is the elephant that is at once the stake and the site of his ideological struggle; for the

author, the narrator becomes the site and the shield, using whose objective field of contradictions and intermediating which he attempts to arrive at closure. Together with the narrator's moral conflicts and ideological ambiguities by which he tries to destabilize the conflicts and the author's ideological recognition of the colonial landscape concerning his experience, Orwell, as the author, ensures an effective double denegation of the ideological character of the Self. Althusser (2014) tells us that:

... those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology; one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological' (264-265).

In the end, the narrator is only looking for "sufficient pretext" (Orwell 1936, par. 14) to justify killing the elephant. By laying bare his actual intent and through the confessional admission to his readers, the author seeks a sentimental closure to evade the moral dilemma of his colonial subjectivity. However, the narrator and the author fail to escape their subjugation to the imperial ideological apparatus. The Other remains denied, not only in the text but also in the intent and ideology of the narrator and the author. The Self and its existential dilemma predominate the textual topography as it seeks a way to justify the white man's burden. The "sufficient pretext" is where the narrator and author sigh. Regardless of all the contradictions and the author's anti-imperial sentiments, *Shooting an Elephant* (1936) justifies the burden of the Self by explicitly rejecting the Other. The dialectical struggle of the colonizer's Self pushes the Other into a logic of exclusion. The Other remains excluded from the European space, "not only in physical and territorial terms, and not only in terms of rights and privileges, but even in terms of thought and values" (Hardt and Negri, 2001, 124). In the dehumanizing space of the colonized, the author and his narrator-subject engage in an ideologically complicit discourse about the loss of Self and the discontents of imperialism about the white man's identity and his subjectivity by setting aside the arguments of colonial expropriation.

### Conclusion

Orwell's intimate dialectical struggle in the space of the colonized tacitly defines the vitality of the Self by reducing the other as an oppositional absolute. The author constructs the colonial subject as an absolute Other. Here, it is essential to look at Hardt and Negri's (2001) comment on the dialectics of colonialism:

What first appeared as a simple logic of exclusion, then, turns out to be a negative dialectic of recognition. The colonizer does produce the colonized as negation, but, through a dialectical twist, that negative colonized identity is negated in turn to found the positive colonizer Self (128).

Orwell historicizes the Burmese landscape's colonial past by imposing the Self's logic on the Burmese reality. In *Shooting an Elephant* (1936), the author conducts a textual annexation of the Burmese past and assimilates it into Western history – Burma, as an oriental, empirical object of European discourse, has been successfully Orientalized (Said, 1979, 5). By doing so, he legitimizes and

naturalizes the colonial production of alterity, which dictates the intrinsic telos of the Other.

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