

# A Postcolonial Reading of George Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant* With Special Reference to Edward Said's Orientalism and Binary of the Self and the Other

Ahmad Ghaforian

Education and Training Organization, Mashad, Razavi Khorasan Province, Iran

Ahmad Gholi

English Department, Gonbad Kavous University, Golestan, Iran

**Abstract**—Edward Said in his groundbreaking work *Orientalism*, which later becomes a bible for Postcolonialists, elucidates how the Western scholars, writers, scientists, philologists, administrators among others take it for granted the binary distinction between the West and its Other. He underscores the special place of the Orient in the Western canon. The arbitrary and fabricated line between the Self (Occident) and the Other(Orient) in which the former is privileged and grasps the upper hand to define, reconstruct andre-present the latter, comes at the center of Postcolonialism. Orwell as a Western writer with firsthand experience -he was born in India and served as a cog in British imperial machine for five years-never managed to disconnect wholeheartedly with his deep imperial roots. One of Orwell's major concerns during his life was the issue of imperialism and colonialism which is reflected in many works such as *Burmese Days*, *Shooting an Elephant*, *Marrakech*, and *Hanging*. One characteristic which is shared among these works is the author's conflicting feelings within them about the Orient and Orientals from European's lens. In this study, the relationship between the representer or Westerners and the represented or Easterners is expounded in *Shooting an Elephant* according to Said's Orientalism.

**Index Terms**—Postcolonialism, Edward Said, Orientalism, Orwell, the Self and the Other, *Shooting an Elephant*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *Postcolonialism, Orientalism and the Self and the Other*

A stable and monolithic definition of Postcolonialism is almost impossible, because 'Postcolonialism' is a heterogeneous and diffuse field, embracing a wide range of practices and discursive formations and cultural strategies. This difficulty is partly due "to the inter-disciplinary nature of postcolonial studies" (Loomba, 1998, p.xii). Even the rubric, itself is ambivalent and contentious. Postcolonialism, as Wisker points out, is the "Recuperation of history from point of view of the ignored, silenced, Other... people whose lives have been erased, ignored and hidden from history" (2007, p.54). It aims at, as Fanon magnificently points out, "rescuing history from the colonizer's custody" (qtd.in Innes, 2007, p 8).

Postcolonialism deals with both Colonizers' literature to see how via literature in particular the novel genre, they have justified their colonial rule and also the colonized's literature to "write back" to dominant hegemony.

Postcolonialism attempts to refute colonial images and rewrite literature by decentralizing European values and culture in particular the binary of the self and the rest, i.e. 'other'. It is, in the words of Ashcroft, 'discourse of the colonized', but to write back to center. Western literary canon is replete with colonial images of the other. Master/slave dialectic which is asserted by Hegel signifies the superiority of the Occident. Every positive thing is attributed to the Westerners and every negative characteristic is attributed to the Easterners. It is not surprising that the Orient is 'not quite as human as us.

The contemporary postcolonial writings are produced by the people such as Achebe, Thoingo, Lamming, Soyinka and Rushdie who belong to the ex-colonized countries. They try to build on an edifice out of the ruins of colonialism and as Abrams (2005) says, reject "master-narrative of Western Imperialism" by "counter-narrative" (p. 245). They endeavor to "disestablish Eurocentric norms of literary and artistic values, and to expand the literary canon to include colonial and postcolonial writers" (Ibid).

Postcolonial Studies is revisionary in the sense that it undertakes to re-write history from the view of those hidden, suppressed, forgotten and 'other'. Wisker (2007) calls postcolonial literature as a 'reaction to, and a response against, the oppressions and constructions of colonization and imperialism (p. 172). It endeavors to shake off and undo binary oppositions which are constructed by Europeans. The colonizers drew an imaginary line border and divide universe into

two unequal halves: one is privileged, the other unprivileged. Postcolonial literature aims at erasing this line between them.

The study of relationships is at the very heart of Postcolonialism: Relations of reality and its representation, the colonizer and the colonized, centrality and marginality, Metropolitan and its colonial satellites and in sum the relation of the Self and the Other.

Said wrote his legendary work *Orientalism*, which initiated postcolonial theory and criticism. *Orientalism* is a fundamental concept of Postcolonial Studies which was popularized by Said's work of the same name. *Orientalism* as a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident' (Said, 1978, p.1). It is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Ibid, 3). Via Orientalizing the Orient, many characteristic features are ascribed to the Orient: "a web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology" (p. 27). The Orient and Orientals, as Said spotlights it, becomes a "bin" and all clichés such as fulsome flattery, intrigue, cunning, lethargy, suspicion, lack of clarity and directness, lechery, beastliness and inferiority are damped in it and as Loomba (1998) mentions "laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitiveness, innocence and irrationality are attributed to them" [Orientals] (p. 107).

The role of Orientalism as a system of exclusion and a "structure of lies and myths" (Ibid.) was to make these hard-and-fast distinctions more visible and to promote the irreducibility between the West and the East.

Dogmatic and stereotyped views and long-held beliefs about the Orient and Orientals persist and allowed the Self to treat the Orient as an exotic place, eccentric entity, as their own province; and Orientals as "not quite as human as 'we' are" (Said, 1978. p. 108).

In *Orientalism*, Said gives three definitions for Orientalism, though they are interdependent: In its designation as an academic discipline it engages "anyone who teaches, writes about, or does researches on Orient...an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (Said, p.2). In this sense, historians, anthropologists, philologists, sociologists have approached the Orient "as a topic of learning, discovery and practice" (Ashcroft, 1995, p. 64). It investigates how administrators, artists and writers among other, have depicted the Orient in their accounts, paintings, travelogues, literary pieces, etc. It also records the long history of clash between the Occident and the Orient. As a style of thought, Orientalism is "based on ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient" and (most of the time) the Occident" (Said, 1978, p.2). Many novelists, poets, philosophers, among other, have considered the dichotomy of the Occident and Orient as self-evident and started their work by the presupposition that they are not quite like us.

As a corporate institution, it is for "dealing with the Orient, dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it... for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the orient" (p P3). By this definition Orientalism can be designated as a discourse which is described by Foucault. As Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (1999) states first and second definitions are the "textual creation" of the Orient while the third definition indicates how Orientalism has been deployed by Westerners to "execute domination" (p.69).

Edward Said rereads Jane Austin, Shakespeare, Rudyard Kipling, Emily Bronte, and Charles Dickens and numerous other writers in order to demonstrate the colonial images in their work and binary of the self and the other and how colonial images give logicity, credibility and legality to their supremacy, domination and authority and how through knowledge of the East, Orientalism becomes synonymous with European domination of the Orient (p. 197). The Orient is deemed as an object of the study, passive, silent and inferior that should be ruled by their white masters. This passive, fixed, deviant, enigmatic, monstrous, recalcitrant Other is a construction, artifact, and forged entity which is a backdrop to Orientalism.

Western conception and treatment of the other follow master-slave relationship in which Europeans are privileged and become racially and civilizationally superior and can define, construct, present and re- present the Orient. Leela Gandhi (1998) refers to Hegel's elaboration of master-slave relationship:

The master and slave are, initially, locked in a compulsive struggle – unto- death. This goes on until the weak-willed slave, preferring life to liberty, accepts his subjection to the victorious master. When these two antagonists finally face each other after battle, only the master is recognizable. The slave, on the other hand, is now a dependent thing whose existence is shaped by, and as, conquering other (pp.16-17).

In his famous essay *The Economy of Manichean Allegory*, Abdul JanMohamed (1995) explored elaborately the Self and the Other. He notes that the Other is presumed as the Self's shadow (p.24), and this "epistemic violence" constructs the "colonial subjects" as the Other.

The present essay is based on the Self and the Other as reflected by postcolonial critics and particularly by Said in which the Self is European, the Occident, the West, us, the dominant, white, superior, the ruler, the creator and the Other, nevertheless, is dominated, the colored, non-European, the Orient, them, the ruled, and passive fabricated.

#### B. *A Man of Contradictions: George Orwell's Duplicity*

Duplicity is a characteristic which is common among some Western writers who wrote about the Orient. The conflicting feelings, such as to sympathize with the natives, to pity for their wretchedness, to eulogize their periphery customs and lifestyle, while under other circumstances to hate them and treat them as less humane which must be ruled by their Western masters for the reason that they are racially, civilizationally, culturally, and genetically inferior, is unsettling.

Orwell who was born in India and served five years in Indian imperial Police, and experienced the feeling of being a Sahib, one who should behave as Pukka Sahib Code mandates him, even if her demands would be insulting, kicking, and torturing the natives, cannot be exempted. He came face to face to the realities of the master-slave relationship. He witnessed kicking, flogging, torturing, hanging of many natives by Anglo- Indians and he himself.

Orwell like other expatriates experienced a double life: he was suffering for his role as a cog in British despotism which demands authority over subjects and on the other hand, he was chosen to continue his imperial roots; though the real intention of joining Imperial police is uncertain. Even his resignation from Police is not clear.

Ian Slater notes one should not blame a nineteen year boy for joining British Imperial police (p.24), however; for Orwell as a policeman there was no middle ground; he served 5 years in Burma and took steps according to British Raj codes. The following episodes in his life in Burma indicate that he never sympathized with the natives sincerely: Aung Maung Htin, a Burmese scholar, one time vice chancellor of Rangoon University and the only Burmese to write about Blair's career recounted an incident in November 1924 between the English policeman Eric Blair and a group of university students, including Aung. At a railway station, the students were fooling around with the result that one of them bumped into Blair, knocking him down some stairs. Furious, Blair raised his baton to strike the boy on the head but changed his mind and struck him on his back. (the similarity of this event and that of *Burmese Days* when Ellis blinds a boy with cane is very revealing and signifies how fact/fiction are in the same sphere in Orwell's works.

These events and other similar ones designate that despite the fact that Orwell was torn between his job in Burma and rejection of it, he continued his post for five years and moreover, he knew his position as British agent well, and believed in this motto that "A sahib has got to act like a sahib" (Orwell, 1936, p.3).

John Gross calls Orwell 'a son of British Raj', for the reason that his roots are connected to the East: his paternal grandfather was a priest in Australia and India, his maternal grandfather was a teak merchant in Burma and his father was a sub-deputy agent in the opium department of the Indian civil service.

His experience in Burma was his first failure to disconnect him from his roots. In spite of the fact that he resigned from his 'unsuitable profession', he was not succeeded in rejecting imperialism thoroughly. Orwell himself asserts: "I'm not able, and I do not want, completely to abandon the world-view that I acquired in childhood" (Orwell, 1946, p.4).

Orwell explicitly determines not to reject the milieu that shaped him, i.e. Edwardian Age that "saw one quarter of the world colored in the red of British Empire". Accordingly his rebellion against Empire was not full-heartedly enterprise, because, as Anthony Powell mentions, "like most people in rebellion, he was more than half in love with what he was rebelling against" (1934, p.2). Orwell identifies with the Shooter of the elephant, when he honestly states that "I was struck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible" (ibid.).

In *Lion and Unicorn*, he airs his hatred of imperialism but on the other hand, he defends British Empire against other foreign invaders such as Japan, Italy and he strongly holds that British Empire in India cannot and must not be substituted by other countries; if so, a real catastrophe happens both for British and Indian people. Any disintegration in part of British Empire results in bad economic conditions for the Britons and consequently many Indians starve to death. He calls Britons "hypocritical toward their empire", because the Empire is a money-maker enterprise which flourishes war-ridden economy of England, and the British yearns for the better economy" (Ibid). This paradox still remains unsolved for Orwell himself, because he himself a British citizen wishes for a better life while this better life is unattainable unless British Empire remains an Empire.

Malcolm Muggeridge, Orwell's conservative friend, thought he detected ambivalence toward rather than a total rejection of British imperialism. Muggeridge went on to compare Orwell to Rudyard Kipling, the two sharing the same inner conflict, with Kipling coming down on one side and Orwell on the other (qtd. in Quinn, 2009, p.12). [Orwell's outlook toward Kipling is attention-seizing: 'I worshipped Kipling at 13, loathed him at 17, enjoyed him at 20, despised him at 25, and now [1936] again rather admire him'].

Some critics assert that for mature Orwell these contradictions are unraveled but as mentioned before, later works such as *Lion and Unicorn* (1941) are evidence for this fact that Orwell remained rather ambivalent toward British Empire. This ambivalence is a common characteristic of colonial writers such as Kipling and Forster that Orwell's name should be added to the list.

Peter Stansky and William Abrahams highlight Orwell's five-year service in Indian Imperial Police and how young Orwell overplayed his role as "imperialism personified". This service gave him a "sardonic pleasure" and "transformed him into 'Kiplingesque Empire builder'. For him "these theories of no punishment and no beating are very well at public schools but they did not work with the Burmese" (1972, p.192). He handled "simultaneously to resent and sympathize with the oppressed – and even the oppressor" (201). For him the Burmese were like inanimate objects.

Alex Zwerdling (1974) refers to Orwell's autobiographical sketches and concludes that "he had not always been on the side of the victim" (p.134). By joining Indian imperial police, he accepted the legitimacy of imperialism.

Valerie Meyers (1991) *Burmese Days* and *Shooting an Elephant* accentuates this theme that "in order to rule the barbarians, you have to become one" (p.58).

Critics Graham Holderness et al (1998) draw attention to Orwell's "ambivalent situation" and his participation in master-slave relationship. This ambivalence emanates from Orwell as a Western "representer" who is torn between an "anti-imperial invective while remaining on the other hand within the boundaries of his colonial master position" (p.4).

Ian Slater (1985) touches on the issue of conformity and how "the stereotype imperialist" rationalizes oppression of the natives by a "firm conviction that he is superior in all respects" (P.30).

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. *A Plot Summary and Commentary on Shooting an Elephant*

As a sub-divisional police officer in Burma, the narrator is hated and insulted by the Burmese. Though they do not have the guts to raise a riot, Orwell is an easy target for them. The Narrator is torn between his hatred of empire, her dirty work, and hatred of natives, those "evil-spirited little beasts" (Orwell, 1936, p.1). He is in a dilemma; with one part of his mind, he considers British Empire as an evil thing, destined to rule forever, with another part, he thinks that "the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts" (p.36).

He goes further and maintains that this dualism is common among Anglo-Indians. All these thoughts, even the idea of chucking his job, passes through his mind and he does not speak out against it, because he considers the Raj as an "unbreakable tyranny" (p.1). As the narrator himself confesses, an incident occurs which gives him insight into the nature of imperialism.

A tame elephant has gone amok, damaging property and killing a man. The narrator is summoned to the scene by local police station. He takes his rifle and advances to the quarter. The Burmese population, having no weapons and helpless, are waiting for him. He begins to question the natives about where the elephant had gone, but their answers deviate, the narrator comments that this is "the case in the East" (p.2). The more you ask, the more you confuse.

At length, he arrives at the area, where the elephant's fury is subsided and now calmly eating grass. At this instant the elephant is no longer a danger to anyone. Behind the narrator, a huge crowd of natives gathered, eager to see what will happen next. The narrator admits that he had "no intention of shooting elephant" (ibid.). Moreover, he was a working elephant, a piece of property. More than two thousands yellow faces have blocked the road and expected him to behave as a Sahib, and to kill the elephant. At this point, the narrator decides to kill him.

The narrator is a puppet, both in the hands of British Empire and two thousand people who press him to do what he does not want. He understands "the hollowness, the futility of the white man's domination in the East" (p. 3). He becomes conventionalized figure of a sahib and sacrifices his own freedom. He is no longer himself, but he is totally trapped in the Raj that demands him to impress the natives, to act like a sahib and to appear resolute not like a fool and not to be laughed at. He pulls the trigger and fires five times, but it takes the elephant half an hour to die. The crowd rushes and stripes the body "almost to the bones".

In the aftermath, a Europeans opinion is divided, as whether it was necessary to shoot him. The younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie.

However, the narrator was glad for the death of coolie, because it provided a pretext for shooting the elephant. Orwell was the only person who knew that he killed the elephant to avoiding being labeled as a fool.

### B. *An Overview*

#### 1. **Fact or Fiction**

Stephen L. Keck (2005) maintains that the critics consider *Burmese Days* and *Shooting an Elephant* as the chief sources of Orwell's life (p.33). Orwell's biographers and critics were interested in the merge of fact and fiction in these two works.

Some critics cast doubts on the factual basis of the essay, however others emphasize that incident is based on a real event in Orwell's life. For them, Orwell is personified in the Shooter.

George Stuart, an engineer when Orwell was in Burma, saw Orwell rifle in hand in the search of the rogue elephant and killed him. He was punished and transferred to remote outpost (Quinn, 2009, p.307).

A number of critics, however, state that it is irrelevant to know if the essay is based on Orwell's real life or not. As Orwell himself expresses, one cannot assess a novelist except to know about 'his early development' and background information (Orwell, 1946, p.2). Orwell spent five years in Burma and doubtlessly all his works which are set in Burma based on his experiences as an Imperial Police Officer. Moreover, Orwell postulates that "n all novels about the East the scenery is the real subject-matter" (Orwell, 1958, p.141).

Road to Wigan Pier contains a flashback to Burma, five-year service in Indian Imperial Police, when young Orwell was committing double oppression by his vicious prejudice; and believing in the White men as up and the Burman as down. He recollects how at the moments of rage, he bullied, snubbed and hit the subordinates, the old peasants, servants and coolies. He was "conscious of an immense weight of guilt that he had got to expiate" (p.137).

The following extract from Road to Wigan Pier, as an example, demonstrate show *Hanging*, *Burmese Days* and *Shooting an Elephant*- all with Burma as their setting- are originated from his years in Burma:

The wretched prisoners squatting in the reeking cages of the lock-ups, the grey cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos, the women and children howling when their men

folk were led away under arrest—things like these are beyond bearing when you are in any way directly responsible for them. I watched a man hanged once; it seemed to me worse than a thousand murders (p.178).

The last sentence explicitly indicates that the narrator in *Hanging* is Orwell himself, who witnessed the capital punishment. The comparison between the following sentence from *Shooting an Elephant* with the abovementioned quotation casts light on the fact: “The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been bogged with bamboos--all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt” (Orwell, 1936, p.1). One could say that Orwell is personified in his works as it would be very difficult to distinguish the narrator from Orwell himself.

## 2. The Elephant

Elephant is an ancient symbol of India, signifying strength, power and purity. The elephant in the story first of all is not a wild one, but a tame and working one who went mad, broke the chain and ravaged the bazaar. Nevertheless, it is a valuable property like “a costly piece of machinery” (p.2). When the police officer asked about elephant’s behavior, all said that if he let him alone, he will do no harm. When he shot him, he imagined to it be ‘thousands of years old’. Death ritual lasts half an hour.

Critics’ reaction to the short story varies. Forster considers the “slow death of the elephant as an allegory of imperialism” (Meyers, 1975, p.24); the death of the elephant symbolizes the death of the empire. Edward Quinn (2009) maintains that the elephant represents “traditional Burmese culture” (p.307), an impediment to British Empire. The narrator is the agent of the British Empire and his institution demands him to destroy Burma both economically and culturally. The great beast’s dying ritual signifies the resistance of the settled country against outsiders. The shooter fires off five bullets into the beast but he cannot finish it off. The empire with the shooter represents is not omnipotent (Ibid).

Another way of interpreting the elephant is that of an intellectual, who broke the chain and escaped from his mahout, suggesting the outbreak of intellectual revolution. He, like Kafka’s *Hunger Artist* scarifies himself to wake up the common people to the seriousness of the situation. However, the people’s reaction to the Elephant’s riot is that of indifference and lack of sympathy to it. All of them, at the outset, do not care for him and at the end, regardless of early troubles, are onlookers not participants. The fact that the natives do not know where the giant beast has gone indicates that they do not care for it which itself displays alienation and ostracization of the intellectual, again like *Hunger Artist*.

The artist behind the bars of cage is dying and people come and go and enjoy the scene. Here the elephant is dying and a ‘collective curiosity’ gathered them in death rituals. The elephant cannot convert this collective curiosity to collective consciousness.

## 3. A Face-Saving Act

In this tiny incident, the narrator is in a quandary to succumb to collective pressures which expects a white man to “act like a sahib” (Orwell, 1936, p. 3) his own freedom and individuality. However, in the long run, it is the narrator-participant’s individuality which is paralyzed.

The shooter, as Quinn (2009) maintains, is “a prisoner of his image” (p.307), an image upon which the whole expertise of the white men in the East rely: “not to be laughed at” (Orwell, 1936, p.3).

In the beginning, the shooter did not intend to kill the beast, “I did not in the least want to shoot him” (ibid.), but when two thousands yellow faces behind pressed him forward, he suddenly decided to shoot. He cannot resist the eager immense crowd for killing the beast. He compares himself to “a puppet push to and fro by natives” (ibid.)

Refusing to kill the elephant will be interpreted by the natives as ‘a sign of weakness’ which will endanger the sahibs’ control over them (Quinn, p. 9).

The narrator’s act of face-saving is suppression of the individuality not because of the personal motives, but for the reason that he is the representative of the British Empire and any flaw in his individuality would undermine the system he serves.

### C. *The Self and the Other in Shooting an Elephant According to Said’s Orientalism*

In this short story, Orwell once more appears as a writer who reveals the imperialistic intention of England and condemns its activity and calling the British Empire an evil thing and the British colonizers as the oppressors. When he pushed to kill the elephant against his own will, he grasped “the hollowness, the futility of the white man’s dominion in the East” (Orwell, 1936, p.3). He sees the imperialism as a double curse, landing on both the oppressors and the oppressed (Quinn, 2009, 354). Here, as Stansky and Abrahams (1972) maintain, “victim is elephant, and Blair victimizer, who himself feels victimized by Burmans, all of them together the victims of imperialism (p. 201).

However, the narrator suffers from duplicity, torn between resentment and sympathy, but this position is highly questionable; he sympathizes with “the oppressed, the underdog, the victim and resents the oppressor, the top dog, the victimizer; but how might one simultaneously resent and sympathize with the oppressed – and even the oppressor” (Stansky & Abrahams, 201).

The narrator himself states:

With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest’s guts (Orwell, 1936, p.1).

He calls himself “all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors”, however, strangely enough, he calls the Buddhists as “the evil-spirited little beasts” (ibid.). He goes further and assumes these kinds of feelings as normal.

Another duplicity is revealed when he is glad about the coolie’s death. He describes the coolie’s death as follows and sympathizes with him:

He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit (p.2).

Nevertheless, at the end he is happy that the coolie is killed since his death was a good proof for the dangerousness of the elephant and gave him an excuse to free himself from punishment.

European reactions to coolie’s death display their sense of superiority and racism. They felt sorry for the elephant not for the coolie, “because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie” (p. 4).

Another tangible doubled perspective is traceable when the narrator prefers the British Empire to other empires. “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.”

This preference of British Empire to Japanese, Italian or Russian empires is reflected in other Orwell’s works which was earlier mentioned. The narrator’s depiction of the natives is not an appealing one; he uses the pejorative word coolie—though in Orwell’s times using this offensive term for the subjects was common—four times for referring to the Burmans. The narrator is guilty of essentialism and sweeping generalizations: “We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East” (p.2).

The phrase as usual indicates that this lack of clarity and straightforwardness is customary and innate in the Easterners. The adverb invariably reinforces this idea. This labeling is not restricted to this example. The stereotypes of “the Orientals as inveterate liars” (Said, 1978, p. 39) are confirmed when Orwell says that the information about the elephant’s place was a pack of lies. As a result, Easterners are not liable and reliable. One should behave them and listen to them with discretion.

### III. CONCLUSION

Edward Said’s Orientalism triggered Postcolonial Studies, and this renowned work is the foundation stone for Postcolonial studies and all subsequent works are indebted to it.

Orientalism is a new kind of studying colonialism. It states that the representation of the Orient in European literary canon has contributed to the creation of a binary opposition between Europe and its other. Although the geographical line between West and East is an imaginary and artificial one, the acceptance of this binarism considering the former as privileged and the latter as unprivileged is taken for granted by the Western scholars.

In addition, the concept of the Self as superior which constructs, maintains and dominates the Other is established and a set of clichés and stereotypes are attributed to the Orientals: the Self is superior, rational, civilized, active, participant, but the other is inferior, barbaric, uncivilized, passive, not-participant, childlike, superstitious, unable to rule.

Furthermore, the common characteristic which is shared by European writers is that they appear contradictory and paradoxical in their views from time to time, as a result, the survey and analysis of their works need subtle inquiry. For instance, the Nigerian novelist and the author of *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe considers Joseph Conrad as a racist, though many disagree with him.

As a police in Colonial Burma, Orwell was responsible for bullying, kicking, torturing and hanging prostrated Burmans and a double oppression on the Burmese.

Orwell suffers from duplicity in his works, a doubled perspective which is apparent from *Burmese Days* to *Shooting an Elephant* and *Lion and Unicorn*, etc. He simultaneously criticizes, resents and sympathizes with both the colonizers and the colonized.

In addition, as a western writer who writes about the Orient and Orientals, he did not manage to embrace a dispatched view, freed from binarism and stereotypes in dealing with them, *Shooting an Elephant* lies in this binarism. The depiction of the Orient and Orientals by sweeping generalization, labeling, essentialism and co modification are tangible in these works as explored in this essay.

In *Shooting an Elephant*, the narrator again takes a double position, condemning the imperialism as an evil thing and the Burmans as gutless, evil-spirited little beasts. British Empire is unbearable tyranny but he prefers it to other empires.

Besides, the dividing line between Europeans and non-Europeans is accentuated, the young Europeans are sad that a valuable elephant is killed because of a worthless coolie. Even the narrator is happy that the coolie is killed because his death gave him a mask to hide his real intention.

In *Shooting an Elephant*, the narrator calls himself “all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British” (Orwell, 1936, p.1) but after a short interval, this pointed against is now turned to “the evil-spirited little beast” (ibid.) that is the natives or/and Buddhists who make his job difficult.

The narrator sympathizes with the Burmans who are treated as animals but he should not forget that he is a sahib and “A sahib has got to act like a sahib” (p.3). He sees the ‘dirty work of empire’ from close quarter and knows that imperialism was an ‘evil thing’, but he does his job as a duteous policeman.

Consequently, Orwell’s short story(or essay) *Shooting an Elephant* has been explored and it is shown how the natives and non-natives are depicted in these works and to some extent stereotypes and fixed clichés about Asians are represented according to Said’s Orientalism. In other words, as Said (1978) himself alleged, Europeans, in a land which does not belong to them, assumed themselves as the Self, the “familiar” and “us”, having the right to rule the natives; and the Burmans or Asians as the Other, the strange, with lack of clarity, truthfulness, unreliability and them who should be ruled.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Abrams, M. (2005). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Boston, Thomson Wadsworth.
- [2] Ashcroft, Bill and Pal Ahlwalia. (1999). *Edward said: Paradox of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- [3] Ashcroft, Bill, et al. (ed) (1995). *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- [4] Gandhi, Leela. (1998). *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press.
- [5] Holderness, Graham, et al. (ed) (1998). *George Orwell: Contemporary Critical Essays*. London: Macmillan.
- [6] JanMohamed, Abdul. (1995). *The Economy of Manichean Allegory*. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ashcroft, Bill, et al (ed). New York: Routledge.
- [7] Innes, C.L. (2007) *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial literatures in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Keck, Stephen L. (2005). *Text and Context: Another Look at Burmese Days*. *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring, ISSN 1479-8484. National University of Singapore. Retrieved from <Retrieved on 26th Feb 2014.
- [9] Loomba, Ania. (1998). *Colonialism and Postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- [10] Meyers, Jeffery. (ed) (1975). *The Critical Heritage: George Orwell*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- [11] Meyers, Valerie. (1991). *George Orwell*. London: Macmillan Press.
- [12] George orwell. (1946). < HYPERLINK "<http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/jgarret/308/readings-4.pdf>" > Retrieved on 12th April 2015.
- [13] George Orwell. (1958). *Road to Wigan Pier*, New York, Harcourt, Bruce and Company.
- [14] George Orwell. (1936). *Shooting an Elephant* < HYPERLINK "<http://hilo.hawaii.edu/~tbelt/pols360-s08-reading-shootinganelephant.pdf>". > Retrieved on 12th April 2015.
- [15] Quinn, Edward. (2009). *Critical Companion to George Orwell: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Facts On File.
- [16] Said, Edward W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Penguin, 1978.
- [17] Slater, Ian. Orwel. (1985). *Orwell: The Road to Airstrip One*. Quebec: Norton and Company.
- [18] Stansky, Peter and William Abrahams. (1972). *The Unknown Orwell*. New York: Alfred A.Knopf.
- [19] Stewart, Anthony. (2003) *George Orwell, Doubleness and Value of Decency*. New York : Routledge, 2003.
- [20] Wisker, Gina. (2007). *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature*. New York: Palgrave.
- [21] Zwerdling, Alex. (1974). *Orwell and the Left*. London: Yale University Press.



**Ahmad Ghaforian** was born in Mashhad, north east of Iran in 1980 and got his B.A degree in English Literature from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in 2007 which is among the highest ranking universities in Iran and in 2010 has got M.A degree in English Literature from Lorestan University in Iran. He translated a book of Canadian Educator "Development of Literacy in Children" into Persian, and his main interest lies in Postcolonial Literature, Mysticism in Literature and Children's Literature. His scholarly essay includes "Edward Said' Orientalism and the Study of the Self and the Other in George Orwell' Burmese Days" which has been published by the journal of Studies in Literature and Language (Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011, pp. 103-113).



**Ahmad Gholi** was born in Kalaleh, Iran in 1984. He received his M.A. degree in English literature from Lorestan University, Iran in 2007. He is currently a lecturer in the Gonbad Kavous University, Golestan, Iran. His research interests include Persian Literature, Travel writing and English literature.