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Life in the Colonies as Portrayed by Kipling,
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Introduction

Colonial narratives are more than most other literary texts a mirror of the socio-historic background of the era and deliver important clues to the predominant ideologies and value systems of that time. As the general attitudes adjust to the course of history, their representation in fictional literary accounts changes with them. Consequently, the examination of a development within a literary genre of a distinct historic period necessitates basic information of political and social events that provide the setting of the texts to investigate.

It is essential to know about the presuppositions that helped the British kingdom to rise to a worldwide empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to understand the emergence of the genre of colonial literature in this age. Factors like the growing industrialization in Europe and the temptations of the supposed wealth of foreign lands led to Britain's unrivalled expansion into all directions. Especially the occupation of the East not only provided the Empire with incredible material riches, but also introduced new concepts with an oriental background to the citizens of the mother country.

Above all authors who experienced Asia themselves, repeatedly used exotic settings and themes of colonial interest to suggest an idea of life in the foreign territories of the British Empire. Their accounts on imperialism and the colonial endeavour are a valuable source of information about the developments in colonialism. Writers like Rudyard Kipling, who practically invented the colonial genre, represented and documented the rise and the heyday of British imperialism in India. Over a period of some decades, his picture of English life in the East dominated public opinions on the Orient. Only with new accounts by authors like William Somerset Maugham, the general views on colonial issues were refined and the emphasis shifted

to the area of Malaya and China. Reporting of a relatively stable colonial society, his main interest focused on intra-racial relations rather than interracial problems.

The beginning decline of the British Empire in the first half of the twentieth century provides the background of a critical discussion of imperial matters. Writers like George Orwell provided the interested reader with a disillusioned picture of interracial encounters in Asia, which relentlessly reveal the weaknesses of a degenerated colonial system.

All these stages of imperial history are examined in texts about life in the Eastern colonies. The way the English main protagonists perceive and experience colonialism in Asia gives information about the historic background of the texts. As focalizers of the narratives they serve as mouthpieces of their creators, their points of view indicate the general attitude of the age.

1. Historical Background

1.1. The British Empire at the Turn from the 19th to the 20th Century

Nineteenth century Europe was still deeply influenced by the age of enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of the previous centuries encouraged pioneering scientific advances, leading to an abundance of technological inventions. Creations like, for instance, the steam engine and the Power Loom¹ opened up completely new perspectives and furthered Europe's development towards industrialization. As one of the main protagonists in the industrial revolution, Britain had gained the status of an economic world power early in the century. Local scientific progress on the one hand and new means in naval technology, like for example the octant, on the other hand, encouraged Britain's expansion into an empire in more than one way. Not only did the advancing industrialization increase the demand for raw material in the quickly growing cities of the British Isles, but also did the new nautical achievements facilitate long journeys to satisfy this need for processible goods. Moreover, these factors also favoured the export of British goods to a relatively new colonial market. Having lost the American territories only quite recently², Britain concentrated its colonial endeavours on Asia and later also Africa.³ As a consequence, the British Empire became the largest

¹ The Power Loom was the first mechanical loom (cf. Strickland) and improved one of the most important sectors of British economy, the textile industry, enormously.

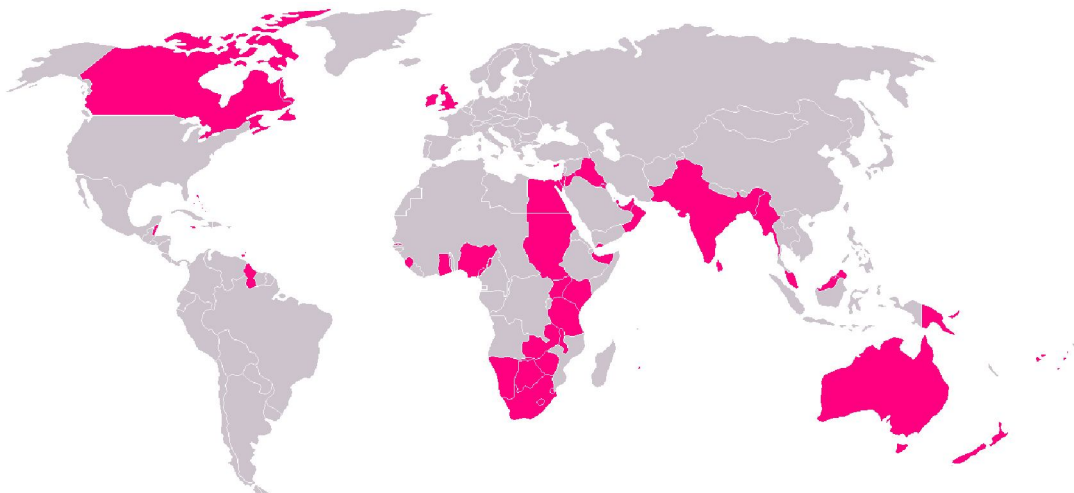
² All of the thirteen American colonies gained independence from Britain in 1776. Only the territories in Canada remained related to the motherland. (Cf. Chamberlain, p. 22.)

³ Cf. Chamberlain, p. 5.

empire in the history of the world, in which the sun literally never set.⁴ Nevertheless, other states like France and the Netherlands increasingly competed Britain's supremacy in Asia, and towards the end of the nineteenth century, in more and more colonies the request for independence grew persistently. This demand was met after Britain, having fought through two expensive world wars, could no longer sustain its empire. But the newly gained independence was a relative one for most of the former colonies, as the majority of them entered the Commonwealth of Nations and thus are still closely related to the United Kingdom.⁵

1.2. Brief Survey of the Colonial History of India, Hong Kong, and Burma

At its height, Britain held on to the largest empire the world has ever seen. Around 1920, its territories were to be found on every continent.



The British Empire (marked in pink) in 1921
Source: Learn History VLE

Within this huge empire, India, Hong Kong and Burma played an important economic role. India's and Burma's resources as well as

⁴ Cf. Kitchen, p. 48.

⁵ Only fourteen colonies did not choose independence and remain British possession as now called British Overseas Territories. (See Foreign & Commonwealth Office.)

Hong Kong's position as a strategically favourably situated trading port were decisive in Britain's imperial history.

1.2.1. *India*

With the foundation of the East India Company (EIC) in 1600, Britain took its first step toward the conquest of the Indian subcontinent. Until the eighteenth century, the company continuously benefited from struggles between Indian states, which were used to increase British influence in the region. The EIC was guaranteed the monopoly of the lucrative trade with Indian products, above all based on spices, cotton, jute, tea and indigo. The raw material was exported to Britain, processed and exported back to the colonial market in form of manufactured goods. The colonies were forced to buy exclusively from the motherland.⁶ During the following two centuries, the East India Company managed to annex almost the whole subcontinent. Although India was still officially ruled by the Mughal emperors, the native potentates had been under control of the East India Company for many years.⁷

Only after the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, a rebellion of British trained native soldiers, so-called *sepoys*, revolting against a violation of their religious beliefs by their superiors,⁸ political responsibilities in India were to change. Although the sepoy uprising could be suppressed quickly,⁹ it nourished the fear of native aggression against the colonizers. Reports of sexual assault against white women had no

⁶ Cf. Marshall 1996, p. 25.

⁷ Cf. Robb, p. 116ff.

⁸ Besides other reasons that dwelled in the native minds, the main cause for the rebellion was that the native soldiers fighting for the British were supposed to bite open the cartridges before they could use them with a rifle introduced in the first half of the 1850s. When the rumour spread that they were greased with pork or beef fat – both substances forbidden for either Muslims or Hindus – they saw their belief under attack and revolted. (Cf. Spear, p. 139ff.)

⁹ Cf. Paxton, p. 5.

historical basis, yet they stimulated the British imagination.¹⁰ After the incident, the British Crown officially took over control of the subcontinent from the EIC in 1859.¹¹

As a consequence, also in native circles attitudes changed. Since Britain's dominance over the country was absolute, the only direction into which the Indians could develop was towards European standards. By and by, a new Indian middle class, a small group of western educated intellectuals evolved, whose demand for Indian self-government became audible. Plans to expand the natives' opportunities for promotion within the system were only half-heartedly realized due to protests on the British side. Yet the new native intelligentsia recognized that the only way to achieve their aim was to incessantly insist upon it. They organized politically as the Indian National Congress¹², which soon grew into a veritable opposition of British rule.¹³

First steps toward Indian self-government were postponed by the First World War, but in 1919 the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms¹⁴ suggested internal self-government, comparable to that of Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.¹⁵ Nevertheless, India demanded for the status of a dominion and the prospect of independence. But these plans were to be delayed by the Second World War. When Japan entered the war, India gained strategic importance. With Japan gaining territory in Asia, the presence of its British adversary in India was perceived as highly dangerous for the

¹⁰ Cf. Sharpe, p. 3.

¹¹ Cf. Robb, p. 153.

¹² The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 and bred important political figures like Gandhi, Nehru and Bose. (See Spear, p. 169-180.)

¹³ Cf. Spear, p. 158ff.

¹⁴ The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were initiated to create 'enlarged territorial constituencies, and transfer[...] limited provincial responsibilities to Indian ministers'. (Robb, p. 154.)

¹⁵ Cf. Spear, p. 183ff.

subcontinent and its inhabitants. At the end of the Second World War not only demands for Britain to 'Quit India'¹⁶ grew loud, but also Inner-Indian disputes on how to achieve this aim escalated. Indian independence in 1947 was followed by the partition between Hindu dominated India and mostly Muslim Pakistan in the following year.¹⁷

1.2.2. Hong Kong

In the colonial history of Hong Kong, it is inevitable to digress into the chronicle of Sino-British relations. The East India Company had already established trade connections with China in the eighteenth century, but commerce was unbalanced. While Britain imported huge quantities of tea, china and silk, China was self-sufficient and showed little interest in British manufactured goods.¹⁸ Until 1833, the EIC held the monopoly in trade between the British Empire and Asia, but the pressure from merchants based in China and manufacturers in Britain to open markets for free trade led to a change of situation as these independent traders seriously challenged the company.¹⁹

As Britain still bought from, but hardly ever sold its products to the Chinese, the mercantile imbalance made British traders import the only good that found a ready market in China, which was opium exported from India. The consumption of the drug was prohibited by Chinese law, still trade in the substance flourished and led to disputes between the two countries, which built up to the first Opium War in 1840. This war was fought between unequal adversaries. British military power was superior to China's and thus the war soon ended in 1841, with China's defeat. At the Convention of Chuenpi, Britain was granted the

¹⁶ 'Quit India' was the popular independence slogan created by Gandhi. (Cf. Spear, p. 219f.)

¹⁷ Cf. Spear, p. 201-243.

¹⁸ Cf. Porter 1991, p. 55.

¹⁹ Cf. Flowerdew, p. 3ff.

reestablishment of merchants in Guangzhou²⁰ and the seizure of Hong Kong. For some in Britain, like for instance Lord Palmerston, Foreign Secretary at that time, the strategic importance of the island was not obvious. However, those knowing the region better instantly recognized its unique position within the Asian market. The island's advantages included little autochthonous population within a small territory, its shores were easy to protect by the British navy, and offering 'one of the few natural deep-water safe harbours along the whole of the Chinese coast' (Flowerdew, p. 10), the spot could perfectly serve as an operation basis under British law.²¹

Yet, in spite of the peace treaty signed by China and Britain, relations were not harmonious. Soon minor disputes escalated into the Second Opium War, ending in 1858 in the same way the first did, with a mutually signed peace agreement. After a short peaceful period, China was accused of neglecting the terms of the concord. The British – this time supported by the French – marched on Beijing, where the original peace agreement was ratified. As a result, opium was legalized, foreigners were allowed to travel into China, and more land in the Hong Kong area was annexed by Britain. The so-called New Territories were acquired by a 99 year lease in 1898, at the end of which the whole area was returned to China.²²

²⁰ The port of Guangzhou (or Canton), north of Hong Kong, originally held more or less a monopoly in Chinese trade. Up to the nineteenth century, when British merchants were permitted restricted entry into the Chinese market via Guangzhou, British ships were not allowed to enter. (See Flowerdew, p. 3f.)

²¹ Cf. Flowerdew, p. 5-10.

²² Cf. Flowerdew, p. 10ff. In fact, when Hong Kong was liberated from Japanese occupation after the Second World War, Britain's claims to the island could have easily been declined. However, the new communist regime of China decided to use the British presence in Hong Kong as a basis for foreign trade up to the day the lease of the New Territories expired and only then reclaim all of the British possessions in the area at once. (Cf. Flowerdew, p. 22.)

1.2.3. *Burma*

The British conquest of Burma is strongly connected with that of its Indian neighbour. For the East India Company, Asia beyond the already conquered territory was a market open to exploitation. Rich resources of teak as well as the supposed need for British woven goods in the higher and therefore colder areas, drew Britain's attention to Burma. Furthermore, the country's strategically important position in the coastal area on the way to China made the region attractive for the EIC. When the Burmese attempted to invade the north of India in the early nineteenth century, Britain seized the unique opportunity to conquer Burma.²³

Yet Britain had to fight through three Anglo-Burmese Wars to seize the whole of Burma. In a first step, territory at the coast, including Rangoon, was won after the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826.²⁴ Next, Lower Burma was annexed in 1852, after the Burmese were defeated again. When French ventures in Indo-China endangered Britain's position in the region, further steps were necessary. For security reasons, Upper Burma was annexed in a third step in 1886 to strengthen Britain's position against nations like France and Russia rivalling for influence in Asia. As the whole of Burma was dominated by Britain, the country was integrated into India as its easternmost province.²⁵

Only in 1935, when the Government Act of India prepared India's way towards independence, Burma profited from India's fight for autonomy, as it was freed from the unappreciated ties to its neighbour. Yet, Burma still belonged to Britain. The Second World War brought a short interruption of British rule, when Japan occupied the country, but

²³ Cf. Spear, p. 129ff.

²⁴ Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Asian History*, vol. 1, p. 68.

²⁵ Cf. Spear, p. 131ff.

the change was a temporary one²⁶. After the war Burma fell into British possession again. Nevertheless, the political climate had changed during the Second World War and the demand for independence could no longer be ignored. Following the example of India, Burma gained independence one year after its neighbour, in 1948.²⁷

2. Aspects of Colonization

2.1. Definition

The phenomenon of colonization is as old as civilization. Already in ancient times, peoples like the Romans, the Mongols, or the Inca expanded their territory in this way.²⁸ Yet the question arises what exactly is colonization? According to Slemon, it means 'the establishment of settler colonies in foreign lands' and is inseparably connected with colonialism, which he describes as 'the direct rule of a nation or people by another nation or people' (Slemon in King, p. 180). Loomba is more explicit in her definition of colonialism and thus the act of colonization as 'the conquest and control of other people's land and goods' (Loomba, p. 2). These explanations provide much information about the process of colonization and what it involves.

First, it becomes clear that there are always two groups of people included: those who colonize and those who are colonized.²⁹ What distinguishes these two parties is, according to New, their 'access to power' (New in King, p. 102). The indigenous population of the

²⁶ Cf. Spear, p. 208–219.

²⁷ Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Asian History*, vol. 1, p. 204.

²⁸ Cf. Loomba, p. 2f.

²⁹ In some definitions, the two groups of intruding power and native inhabitants are divided into subcategories. Some of these are examined in chapter 2.3.2.

colonized land is subjected by the intruders and thus is the group without any access, while the others have full access.³⁰

A second detail arising from Loomba's description is that in addition to the enlargement of territory in general, economic concerns are a decisive factor in colonization. The interest in someone else's possessions and especially the available resources, can thus be determined as a basic cause for colonizing activities. According to this, colonization involves 'the exploitation of one group in the sole interest of another' (Pagden in Prakash, p. 130).

A closer look at the vocabulary used in the introductory definitions, focusing on 'conquest', 'control', and 'rule', reveals further important characteristics of colonization. Therefore, this phenomenon is, first of all, closely connected with a certain amount of brutality on the side of those who engage in the activity of colonizing foreign grounds. The element of conquest, thus makes colonization 'a brutalizing activity' (Pagden in Prakash, p. 130). Once the desired territory has been conquered, the dominating people controls the dominated group, their land and goods. The 'attitudes and preconceptions about value, authority, and social priority' in the colony 'in practice reflect the norms of the controlling culture' (New in King, p. 102). This component of control unavoidably includes 'dependency, whether passively accepted or actively enforced' (New in King, p. 102) on the colonized by the colonizers.

This relationship of dependence is additionally reflected in the expressions used to refer to colonizing country and colony. As New observes, the metaphoric use of the terms 'mother and daughter countries' prescribes a "family hierarchy" in this relation. The 'Mother Country', i.e. 'the centre of Empire', thus strongly connotes the idea of 'Home', whereas the expression 'daughter country', employed to refer

³⁰ Cf. New in King, p. 102.

to the colony, suggests absolute dependency. Against the background of the 'domestic convention [that] regarded daughters as possessions, whose filial duty would take precedence over any 'unladylike' desire for independence' (New in King, p. 114.), this observation gains further importance.

2.2. The Colonial Spirit

British colonization was conducted under the guise of a civilizing mission. What dominated the colonizers' attitudes towards the colonies was the idea that the uncultured peoples were in need of civilization. Convinced of their own superiority, the British saw themselves as saviours, who acted for the good of the colonized. Values, mores, and culture were thus transferred from Britain to the acquired territories.³¹

However, even within the British community, the superiority of their own culture was questioned. In the first half of the nineteenth century, two rivalling groups of scholars debated heatedly over linguistic matters in the education of the Indian population. One part of experts, the anglicists³², were convinced that research and teaching should exclusively concentrate on English both as object of study and as medium to transmit it. In their opinion, all colonial subjects of the British Empire should be instructed not in their own mother tongues, but in that of the colonizers.³³

The orientalist³⁴, on the other hand, acknowledged the worth of Indian cultures and languages, and argued for the use of indigenous idioms in education. Despite advice from the orientalist not to ignore

³¹ Cf. Marshall 1996, p. 29f.

³² The most prominent anglicist involved in the debate was definitely the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, whose decisive speech "Minute on Education" was one of the crucial factors in the anglicist-orientalist question. (Cf. Porter in Marshall 1996, p. 188.)

³³ Cf. Porter in Marshall 1996, p. 188.

³⁴ One of the most influential orientalist was Professor Max Müller, a philologist and interpreter of oriental languages at Oxford. (Cf. Porter in Marshall 1996, p. 195.)

or neglect native cultural heritage and knowledge, the anglicists won the argument, paving the way for the formation of 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect' (Macaulay, paragraph 31). As a result, the education of indigenous peoples not only followed British directives as regards teaching standards, but also in respect of the language used in class. Apart from the question whether colonial education was conveyed in English or, for instance, Arabic, though, the role of the British Empire in 'formal and informal education was unparalleled' (Porter in Marshall 1996, p. 194). It is beyond doubt that the spread of literacy and knowledge in the Asian colonies increased during British rule.³⁵

2.3. Colonial Society

With the increasing success of the British Empire in Asia, more and more citizens from the motherland moved to the new territories. Yet, in contrast to colonies of settlement like Canada or Australia, India, Hong Kong, and Burma did not attract emigrants in a narrow sense. Most of those heading towards Asia initially planned their residence to be merely a temporary one.³⁶ Even if the majority of citizens from the British Isles living in India, Hong Kong, or Burma were in a sense only long term visitors to the East, their appearance made colonial Asia the scene of multi-cultural encounters.

2.3.1. Colonial Towns

The coexistence of British citizens and indigenous population gave the cities in the East a dual nature. According to regulations from the authorities, 'white' and 'native' inhabitants did not live side by side, but

³⁵ Cf. Porter in Marshall 1996, p. 194.

³⁶ Cf. Martin and Kline in Marshall 1996, p. 254.

in separate parts of the towns, which were often divided by stretches of land.³⁷ In general, the British

remained aloof, deliberately cultivating a social and physical distance from their subjects. [...] The environment was ignored and its people kept at arms length as much as possible. (Eldridge, p. 168.)

In India, for instance, the residential districts of the 'white town' usually were arranged around an area of commerce and dominated by spacious homes and vast gardens. The only natives to enter those areas were personnel of the whites. Native districts, on the other hand, were composed of overpopulated, narrow alleys, where Indian houses neighboured on bazaars and shops. Instead of impressive parks, the dwellings only occasionally offered small backyards.³⁸

Also social life in Hong Kong during the earlier colonial era was marked by a geographic separation of the ethnic groups. British citizens lived in the upper central regions of Hong Kong, mainly Victoria Peak, from where the Chinese were practically excluded.³⁹

2.3.2. Inhabitants of the Colonies

What brought together colonizers and colonized was a "civilizing mission", on which all colonial endeavours were officially based. Yet, the degree to which this pretext influenced and directed the ruling people differed from one individual to the next. The British going to the colonies were not a homogeneous group. According to their attitude towards and position in the conquest of the East, New distinguishes different types of immigrants. The term 'colonizers' is used to refer to the group that claims to rule over foreign grounds and the local inhabitants, as a whole.⁴⁰

³⁷ Cf. Metcalf in Marshall 1996, p. 225.

³⁸ Cf. Metcalf in Marshall 1996, p. 225-230 and 245-250.

³⁹ Cf. Flowerdew, p. 18f.

⁴⁰ Cf. New in King, p. 105.

Settlers, who came to a foreign land to live there and build up a society with its own customs and traditions, thus, New defined as 'colonists'.⁴¹ As the Asian territories were not conceived as settler colonies like Canada or Australia, this group did not influence the East as much as it shaped society in, for instance, America.

Europeans whose residence in the nascent community was only temporary, on the other hand, New calls 'colonials'. Usually, they worked in official positions abroad, as administrators or civil servants, for a restricted period. Since they already arrived with the intention of leaving as soon and as rich as possible, they did not even try to integrate into existing social systems.⁴² At the end of their appointment, members of this most influential group in Asian colonization returned home for good.

Although first, colonization was an almost exclusively male business, also a small number of British women arrived in the colonies. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, their number increased, but still the male British community outnumbered them by far. In consideration of the fact that the major part of British society abroad were unmarried men, female visitors to the foreign territories were often accused of only having one intention, which is to search for a suitable husband. However, as Marshall claims, most women did not belong to the so-called 'fishing fleet', but already married in Britain and then followed their husbands to the colonies.⁴³

As occupational possibilities in Asia were few at the beginning of female immigration, the stereotypical role designed for married women in the colonies cut them off from the outside world. They were not allowed to work outside their homes, and since their children were sent to the mother country as soon as possible to be educated, they

⁴¹ Cf. New in King, p. 105.

⁴² Cf. New in King, p. 105.

⁴³ Cf. Marshall 1996, p. 247.

had hardly any useful occupation. Thus, the only possibility for British women to spend their time productively was 'charitable and philanthropic work' (Marshall, p. 247), or homework as nurses or teachers.⁴⁴ Yet, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the emergence of the New Woman in Britain led to an increasing emigration of unmarried women of the middle class to overseas territories, in search of self-realization. A life in the colonies opened up the opportunity to have a professional career that was closed to them in the mother country.⁴⁵

The last group living in the colonies to be distinguished is the indigenous population. The 'colonized' are, according to New, those suffering from suppression by the colonizers.⁴⁶ Interestingly, the native inhabitants are not further divided into subgroups by New. Whether they supported or opposed the colonizing power seems to be irrelevant as regards the supposed homogeneity of this group. In fact, this lack of subdivisions can be explained with the help of New's statement that colonizers and colonized are opposing groups in respect to their access to power.⁴⁷ Since all of the natives, those who favour the presence of the colonizers as well as those who reject it, cannot access any positions providing them with political influence, all of them are alike in their role as counterparts of the ruling people.

2.3.3. Colonial Encounters

Life in the eastern colonies was not to be understood as cohabitation, but rather as separation of the races. Not only did the infrastructural conditions part the groups, but also did hardly any of them wish for excessive contact with the others.

⁴⁴ Cf. Marshall 1996, p. 247.

⁴⁵ Cf. Paxton, p. 128.

⁴⁶ Cf. New in King, p. 105.

⁴⁷ Cf. New in King, p. 102. See also chapter 2.

Although in Hong Kong, as everywhere else in Britain's Asian possessions, both British and natives preferred to go distinct ways as much as possible, on a professional level, life without any contact was impossible there. As Chinese customs and language were hard to acquire, British businessmen needed bilingual native compradors – intermediaries between European and Chinese firms, who were employed to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps.⁴⁸

On the private level, however, zones of contact were rare. Dissociation from the natives was supported by the establishment of British clubs. These allowed the colonizers to cultivate the contact to other members of the British community on a relatively informal level. As natives were not allowed to enter the clubs (with the exception of personnel), the members could indulge in familiar customs as practiced "at home" there without interference. Hence, the club became central to the lives of the British overseas.⁴⁹

Although, as Loomba observes, neither social nor sexual interaction between the races was promoted by British colonialism many residents were not too rigid in their interpretation of this order.⁵⁰ In reality, sexual relations between unmarried British men and native women unofficially erased racial borders. Especially before white women arrived in the colonies in larger numbers, interracial relationships were relatively common. In India, many officials even had families with indigenous women. Yet, exceptional relationships of heartfelt devotion were outnumbered by those being insincere. In most cases, the native

⁴⁸ Cf. Flowerdew, p. 18f. The special services of these compradors made them irreplaceable and many of them soon could afford to establish their own companies, which helped to form a new middle class of natives.

⁴⁹ Cf. Melcalf in Marshall 1996, p. 249. Only towards the end of British rule in Asia the allowance of native members to the British clubs was heatedly debated. This question also provided the background for Orwell's *Burmese Days*. (Cf. Davison, p. 16.)

⁵⁰ Cf. Loomba, p. 111.

women were exploited and children were not officially recognized.⁵¹ When the man returned to Britain, he left his Indian family for good.⁵²

Customs in Hong Kong were similar. Unmarried business men from Britain frequently maintained sexual contact with native women. Still, their relations were seldom deep-seated. At best the women were private concubines, in most cases they were simply prostitutes.⁵³

3. Colonial Literature

3.1. Definition

The expansion of the British Empire towards foreign, exotic regions of the world heralded a completely new world order that soon was to influence the arts. Reports from the colonies quickly entered narratives, yet, definitions of what is to be understood as colonial literature diverge.

First literary accounts of experiences in the newly acquired territories of the British Empire were few and concentrated on descriptions of the native population with the main interest in their appearance and clothing.⁵⁴ Only after around 1800, the colonies were introduced as a recurring element in writing. Imperial possessions were still no more than an unimportant aspect in literature, yet they were frequently referred to as distant, exotic lands of enrichment. What changed the intensity of the use of colonial themes in the texts

⁵¹ Although hybrids, being 'racially intermediate' (Hogan, p. 5), were predestined to take over the role of mediators between the races, there is hardly any evidence supporting this theory. In fact, 'despite a parliamentary campaign from 1828 to 1834 the Eurasians of British India were denied the status of British subjects and debarred from voting and living in Britain' (Bayly in Daunton and Halpern, p. 20). Nevertheless, although themselves not accepted by the British, Eurasians attached great importance to keeping distance to Indians. (Cf. Bayly in Daunton and Halpern, p. 20.)

⁵² Cf. Marshall 1996, 248.

⁵³ Cf. Flowerdew, p. 18f.

⁵⁴ Cf. Childs 1999, p. 3-7.

was the Mutiny of 1857. A radical shift towards the representation of 'exotic barbarity' (Childs 1999, p. 15) propagated the picture of the native as a menace to (especially the female members of) British society in the colonies.⁵⁵ The colonial surrounding no longer was a minor feature in literature, but became the predominant setting of an emerging genre.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as Childs observes, the 'imperial other' occurs in two types of narrative literature, for which he uses Said's terms 'manifest' and 'latent Orientalism'. The latter, consisting of fantasy novels, treats the opposition of self and other on an abstract level and thus moves away from the colonial theme in the narrower sense, while texts of the first category use the setting of the colonies as the exclusive scene.⁵⁶

As regards the beginning of colonial literature as an independent category within the narrative field, Meyers determines time and above all place of birth of this genre more specifically. He is convinced that the 'colonial genre [was] virtually invented and introduced into English literature by Kipling in the 1880s' (Meyers, p vii). Thus, above all in its first phases, India is one of the main sources of colonial literature.

The most fundamental characteristic of colonial narrative works is, as New asserts, that the texts are produced 'in dependent societies' (New in King, p. 102). Narratives which were produced in regions that had the status of a colony at the time of their production, thus, are colonial literature. This criterion also sets a clearly defined temporal limit to this genre. With the colonies' independence also colonial literature declines.⁵⁷

The end of the colonial era not only constituted a radical political change, but led to a modification of mind sets as well. Scientific

⁵⁵ Cf. Childs 1999, p. 11–15.

⁵⁶ Cf. Childs 1999, p. 15.

⁵⁷ Cf. Meyers, p. vii.

approaches to reappraise events of the preceding period are usually subsumed under the heading of 'post-colonialism'. The problem with this term is that it cannot only be understood in a literary sense, but also incorporates other fields like philosophy, psychology, or politics and thus evades a universally applicable, clear definition. In the discussion of literature produced in the imperial era, though, it should be sufficient to know about the temporal succession of colonial era and independence.⁵⁸ As Kipling's short stories, as well as Maugham's and Orwell's novels were produced before the independence of the relevant colonies was even under discussion, these texts leave no doubt about the genre they belong to.⁵⁹

3.2. Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell as Representatives of Colonial Literature

Since the colonial genre is inseparably connected to the period of British rule in the respective colonies, the biographic background of authors of this type of literature must be considered as decisive in attributing their texts to a genre. Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell, were all born during the heyday of the British Empire and experienced colonial Britain as Englishmen at a time when the presence of the colonizing power in Asia was not yet openly questioned.

Rudyard Kipling's role in the development of colonial literature is indisputable. He was not only born in India⁶⁰, but also returned there

⁵⁸ In his essay "Post-colonial critical Theories", Slemon also refers to colonial literature as 'new' or 'Commonwealth literature', drawing a clear line between the genres at the point of political independence and entrance into the Commonwealth. (Cf. Slemon in King, p. 178.)

⁵⁹ Only *Burmese Days*, first published in 1934, was written in a period when first signs of a possible independence from Britain could be detected. But since the outcome of this development was not to be predicted, neither by Orwell, nor by any of his contemporaries, the relevance of the text for post-colonial studies is disputable.

⁶⁰ Kipling was born in 1865 in Bombay, where his father taught architectural sculpture. (Cf. Mallett 2003, p. 7.)

after his education in England. Working as a journalist for the *Civil and Military Gazette* in the Punjab, he experienced colonial India as a professional writer and observer, yet his point-of-view always was that of an Englishman, writing for an English audience.⁶¹ The country of his early childhood inspired Kipling more than anything else. Even after he had left India, his stories revolved around memories of the subcontinent, although he had only spent a relatively short period of time there.⁶² The impressions of colonial India Kipling delivered in his texts might be disputed as regards their authenticity, but still they are more detailed and colourful than any other accounts of Anglo-Indian life of the nineteenth century.⁶³ His protagonists are almost always officials participating in the imperial mission and thus aiding the construction of the Empire.

Whether William Somerset Maugham belonged to the group of “colonial authors” is probably more disputable. Unlike Kipling and Orwell, he was not born in the colony he wrote about, but only experienced it as a traveller.⁶⁴ Compared to the other authors, Maugham’s literary creations are most diverse, ranging from drama to novel or even journalism. In his works, the theme of colonialism was only one among numerous topics. What dominated his texts much more was the examination of freedom.⁶⁵ The freedom he so deliberately yearned for himself, was inseparably connected with travelling, which brought him to every corner of the earth. One of the places he visited was China, where he ‘discovered a culture and civilization in which his own sensitive and philosophical nature was very much at home’ (Calder, p. 162). Although his main interest was in the characters he

⁶¹ Cf. Mallett 2003, p. 1f and 17–24.

⁶² Cf. Lycett, p. 83–179.

⁶³ Cf. Gilmour, p. 49.

⁶⁴ In fact, Maugham was born in the British Embassy in France in 1874, and thus, like Kipling and Orwell, although outside Britain still on British soil. (Cf. Calder, p. 1.)

⁶⁵ Cf. Calder, p. 29.

created, the places Maugham's colonial stories are set in still provide an unmistakeably colonial background. The fascination with Europeans living among Chinese dominates not only his sketches in *On a Chinese Screen*, but is also an interesting aspect in *The Painted Veil*. Maugham's perspective is always that of a professional writer and traveller with the observational skills of a former agent.⁶⁶

Like Kipling George Orwell was born in India and returned there for professional reasons.⁶⁷ But working in the Indian Imperial Police in the 1930s formed his deprecating attitude towards imperialism. Orwell's choice of Burma as the preferred destination of action was influenced by the fact that some of his relatives lived there. Yet, within the colonial service, the region was regarded as the most dangerous location with the highest crime rates. While in other parts of India, police officers were above all administrators doing office work, Orwell and his colleagues in Burma had to cope with brutal murder, grievous bodily harm, and rape.⁶⁸ Although the income in the Burmese service was comparatively high, Orwell decided to turn his dream of becoming a writer into reality when he was on a medical leave in England and resigned from the police.⁶⁹ Even though he renounced the financial security of a life in Burma, he took with him numerous personal experiences to use in his literary works. Not only did he re-evaluate this period of his life in his essays "A Hanging" and "Shooting an Elephant", but also are many elements from *Burmese Days* assumed to be based on factual incidents that happened during Orwell's service.⁷⁰ The perspective from which he examines the colonial situation is that

⁶⁶ Cf. Calder, p. 194f.

⁶⁷ At the time of Orwell's service, Burma was still administered as a part of India. Cf. Davison, p. xv and 15ff.

⁶⁸ Cf. Sheldon, p. 86ff.

⁶⁹ Cf. Sheldon, p. 121f.

⁷⁰ Cf. Davison, p. 15ff.

of an official working at an outpost of an empire that is already heading for its deconstruction.

4. Characters in Colonial Narratives by Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell

The portraits of life in the colonies delivered in the works of Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell are given from a distinctly British perspective and thus mirror the English background of the authors.⁷¹ Both Western and Eastern characters are represented as perceived through European eyes. The period the respective writer was involved in the colonial situation as well as the intensity of his involvement, though, are decisive factors as regards his portrayal of his literary characters, their encounters and their social environment.

Although in each of the colonial narratives by Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell, the roles of the characters are distributed in a similar way, there are clearly defined shadings in their evaluation. The main protagonists and focalizers of all the texts are of British nationality and participants in colonization. Yet, their respective position in the works of empire varies strikingly.

In Kipling's short stories, they all belong to the 'lower and middle rungs of the administrative scale' (Damrosch, p. xx) and are relatively actively involved in the imperial mission. What is of the highest interest is their status as colonizers and how their daily life is influenced by the mission they participate in. The way in which the author experienced the colonial society dominates the characters' attitudes expressed in his texts. His protagonists' past is not revealed, they live in solitariness⁷², out of reach of England. They roam the

⁷¹ See also chapter 3.2 for basic biographic backgrounds of Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell.

⁷² Cf. Bivona, p. 69.

colonies at the heyday of British rule over India, when the authority of the colonizers is still undisrupted. Their importance for the continuation of Western influence in the region is much too high to allow private concerns to affect their official duties. Hence, their confrontation with local temptations or difficult situations must end either in the characters' reformation and succeeding reintegration into the colonial structure or with their elimination from the system.

Maugham's main protagonists in *The Painted Veil*, in contrast, are in the first instance human beings with ordinary problems which do not directly emanate from the colonial situation.⁷³ Unlike Kipling's characters, they are not isolated from their past, but have a clearly defined biographic background that contributes to their present. Their membership to the group of foreigners dominating over the indigenous population is secondary and does not inevitably influence their existence in any other way than providing them with the general privileges of Europeans in Asia. Their participation in the colonial endeavour is not a mission, but primarily a job. As they are still linked to Britain, Hong Kong under British rule is merely one of the stations in their lives, and whatever problems they are confronted with on colonial grounds can be left behind when they return to the mother country.

In Orwell's *Burmese Days*, the protagonists are equipped with a completely different colonial background. The imperial endeavour has ceased to be motivated by a civilizing mission and officials and private persons are now equally urged by the wish to personally profit from the situation. The glory of the 'good old days of the Raj' is already fading⁷⁴ and the colonizers can only try to prevent the change that is about to come by insisting on their privileges as members of the ruling

⁷³ Cf. Holden, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Cf. Meyers 1975, p. 68.

race. Yet, this demand is not justified by moral superiority but is only based on the fear of losing the status quo. At a remote outpost of the empire, the British are linked to the mother country only by memories and not by the prospect of a future there.

The indigenous characters in general only occupy roles of minor importance in the majority of colonial texts. Their point of view is merely marginally examined or completely neglected. Although Kipling allows above all the female natives much space, they nevertheless are just a means to the end of exposing the British protagonist to the danger of going native. In Maugham's colonial writing, Eastern characters are nearly inexistent. This lack of 'fictional parity of esteem with the white ones' (Curtis 1974, p. 159) is often stated as one of Maugham's major shortcomings as an author of colonial fiction.⁷⁵ On the other hand, some critics regard Orwell's portrayals of natives as even more vivid than those of his European characters.⁷⁶ Some Asians in *Burmese Days* are granted important roles as best friend and worst enemy of the main protagonist, and thus even contribute significantly to the main plot.⁷⁷

4.1. The Colonial Microcosm

The colonial surrounding in which the characters of the narratives are embedded, is strictly divided into separate worlds. In all of the texts, the represented microcosm is explicitly the opposite of a utopian paradise of equality between the races. Instead, the native parts of the colonies are contrasted against the world of the British

⁷⁵ Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 159.

⁷⁶ Cf. Alldritt, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Most critics argue that despite his importance for Flory, Dr Veraswami is as much a flat character as the other natives in *Burmese Days*. Only U Po Kyin is said to really 'come to life' (Alldritt, p. 24). (Cf Meyers 1975, p. 67, Alldritt, p. 23f., Bousquet, p. 127.)

citizens, the border between the societies is to be respected by all inhabitants.

4.1.1. *The Club*

The British districts are dominated by the local Club, which is the centre and the emblem of the colonizing culture within the wilderness of the uncivilized country. It is here, where the Europeans can uphold Western values and live their 'corporate identity' (Bousquet, p. 11). This institution can be seen as a little piece of "home" imported from the mother country for the Anglo-Indian community and thus maintains its members' link to Britain. The Club is fenced off against the natural surrounding, providing protection from all dangers waiting outside, be it the local environment or its indigenous inhabitants.⁷⁸ With the exception of servants, natives are not allowed. Even the very thought of admitting indigenous members was 'enough to split the empire' (Eldridge, p. 173), as it does in *Burmese Days*.

Inside the enclosure, the Europeans are required to be loyal to the group and subdue their individuality in favour of the community's general 'attitudes and opinions' (Eldridge, p. 168). Private matters are not touched upon in the presence of the British Community. In Kipling's "Without Benefit of Clergy", Holden goes 'to the Club and pull[s himself] together' ("Without Benefit of Clergy", hereafter *Clergy*, p. 148.) as his private life, hidden from the other Englishmen, falls apart. Also the Fanes in *The Painted Veil* put on masks to hide their marital problems from the other club members. Orwell's Flory even acts completely contrary to his personal opinion when he openly agrees with the other members' racism, for instance in signing a petition against allowing of a native into the Club.

⁷⁸ Cf. Bousquet, p. 11f.

On the other hand, the Club is the surrounding where 'the British drop the mask of altruism and reveal their true attitudes' (Eldridge, p. 172). Contradictory though this may seem, these two aspects of social life are well compatible. Admitting to one's true convictions is accepted as long as these opinions are in accordance with the general beliefs of the group. Hence, it is not surprising that it is in the Club of Orwell's Kyauktada where Ellis repeatedly utters his diatribes of racism.

For entertainment, the members of the British Club participate in sports, games or cultural events, or simply gather over a hopefully iced drink and have a trivial conversation.⁷⁹ All conveniences of the Western life style are provided as far as possible. Only the outward appearance of the local Club can not completely bear comparison with its British models due to the geographical and climatic conditions of Asia. Bearing in mind the stereotypical picture of juicy, green meadows, accurately designed gardens and impressive clubhouses in England, the local representation of British sophistication can only disappoint.

In the Club of Kipling's "William the Conqueror", for instance, the

flowers in the Club gardens were dead and black on their stalks, the little lotus-pond was a circle of mud, and the tamarisk-trees were white with the dust of days. ("William the Conqueror", hereafter *William*, p. 168.)

The Club of Kyauktada may be the 'spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power, the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires pine in vain' (*Burmese Days*, hereafter *Burmese*, p. 14). Yet, this 'last fortress of white insularity' (Alldritt, p. 67) in *Burmese Days*, is even more discomfoting than the Clubs described by Kipling. The building housing the institution is an unspectacular wooden bungalow. It is described as a

⁷⁹ Cf. Eldridge, p. 168.

teak-walled place smelling of earth-oil, and consisting of only four rooms [...] The lounge was an unhomelike room, with coco-nut matting on the floor, and wicker chairs and tables which were littered with shiny illustrated papers (*Burmese*, p. 17).

At the optical representation of the Club, the façade of British superiority flakes off. Although the colonizers do their best to keep up appearances, the local conditions cannot be overcome completely.

4.1.2. *The British Quarters*

Outside the Club, the colonial town is separated into two different parts, in which racial separation is the most important guideline. Westerners and Easterners are to keep within their respective areas and not to intrude the territory of the others. In the British quarters, the colonizers do their best to make themselves comfortable, yet the living conditions in Asia are challenging.

In Kipling's short stories this impression is best conveyed in the description of the Martyns' house in "William the Conqueror". Going by European standards, the accommodation is rather spartan. As the narrator mentions, the bungalow consisting of only four rooms displays the poor financial situation of the siblings inhabiting it. Just the very building lacks all conveniences and reflects the inferiority of local architecture. The floor inside is uneven and '[n]ot a door [...] true on its hinges' (*William*, p. 170). The windows are small and situated so high above the ground that the little light that comes through them can have only little illuminating effect. Moreover, the local fauna has taken possession of the house. Numerous wasp-nests darken the atmosphere of the rooms and flies are hunted by lizards under the wooden ceiling. The furniture is anything but elegant. None of the chairs bought from various dead men's estates match. The floors are covered by 'the usual blue-and-white striped jail-made rugs' (*William*, p. 170) and the white colour is peeling off from the walls. The rooms

look 'as though everything had been unpacked the night before to be repacked next morning' (*William*, p. 170).

Living in China as portrayed by Maugham seems to be a little more comfortable. In the city of Hong Kong, the Fanes are accommodated in a two storey building in the Happy Valley, with a view across the aquamarine ocean and the local harbour. As in Kipling's text, the living conditions of the main characters reflect their social status. Kitty's more influential lover Charles Townsend resides on Victoria Peak, the noblest area of colonial Hong Kong, in British convenience. When Kitty is living with the Townsends as a guest, she notices the luxury of their home overlooking the sea. The cool and shaded rooms are spacious and furnished 'in a comfortable and homely style' (*The Painted Veil*, hereafter *Veil*, p. 28). Beautiful drawings on the walls and bunches of flowers pleasantly arranged in the room provide a friendly atmosphere. If not for the Chinese servants, inside the residence one could believe to be in England.

Only in the town of Mei-tan-fu, the British quarter is less opulent. When Kitty and Walter arrive in the cholera stricken region, they move into the bungalow of a deceased missionary. The house is small and the rooms are only half-heartedly equipped. The 'bare and empty parlour' (*Veil*, p. 186) does not provide any comfort. The second-rate books are stored in shabby shelves. In the kitchen, the atmosphere is dominated by rattan furniture, a mediocre table cloth and dusty curtains. A much too large table dominates the narrow dining-room and pictures of biblical scenes cover the walls. British splendour has given way to meagre simplicity. The bungalow does not only seem worlds apart from Hong Kong and the colonizers' community, but also appears to be completely cut off from the surrounding nature.

European living in Orwell's *Burmese Days* is only marginally mentioned. Yet, the best described example is Flory's house in

Kyauktada. Significantly, the bungalow is situated far away from the Club, but 'close to the edge of the jungle' (*Burmese*, p. 14). The protagonist's bedroom has no ceiling and the door is generally opened to the surrounding nature. It is scarcely furnished, containing only a bed, a chair, a table, a small mirror, and some shelves with mildewed books. Like in the Martyns' house, wildlife has intruded and successfully settled in with Flory.

4.1.3. *The Native Territory*

The contrast to Western living in the colonies is the representation of native territory. Clearly divided from the British quarters, these regions of the colonies have successfully eluded European values. By the colonizers, the native areas are regarded as the taboo regions of Asia, which Europeans should not dare to enter.

The Indian city as represented in Kipling's short stories is a chaotic nightmare for the meticulous English newcomer. Trejago in "Beyond the Pale" enters a world where 'each man's house is as guarded and as unknowable as the grave' ("Beyond the Pale", hereafter *Pale*, p. 219). On one of his excursions into native India he meets Bisesa in a 'dark Gully where the sun never came' (*Pale*, p. 213). It is a space that is shared by humans and beasts. The backyard is covered in disgusting, slimy substances and buffaloes' excrements. Significantly, the gully is a dead end surrounded by blank walls. Only one window, through which the protagonist enters the room of his lover, opens to this horrible place that is so different to the British quarters.

Also the native parts of Hong Kong in Maugham's novel are associated with disorder and perceived as discomforting by the female protagonist. The Chinese city is a filthy place, crowded by people staring at Kitty when she meets her lover in the shop of a curio dealer. The way to the only room where they are undisturbed leads through a poorly lit corridor with 'creaking stairs' (*Veil*, p. 41f). The small

chamber of their amorous tête-à-têtes is in disarray and the air is filled with clouds of smoke from the consumption of opium. The 'large wooden bed' (*Veil*, p. 6) dominates the place like a constant reminder of their adultery.

The local bazaar in *Burmese Days* is equally chaotic. It is an overpopulated place Flory has brought Elizabeth to, and the two perceive it quite differently. Where he sees native life in the most amazing colours and forms, the girl finds that the clothes of the natives are garish and only feels to be stared at by the indigenous population with their dark faces. As it appears to her, the Burmese men, women and children rubbing shoulders with her are as disgusting as the place as such. She breathes in with reluctance the mixture of foreign odours. The smell of sweating natives, spices and food filling the narrow alleys between the stalls makes her nearly sick. To escape the horror of this place, they enter the shop of a Chinese grocer, which has an auspiciously European looking front. But the inside provides more disagreeable surprises for Elizabeth. Among other disgusting details, a naked baby crawling between their feet unattended 'making water on the floor' (*Burmese*, p.135) again arouses her revulsion. Instead of being able to accept the hospitality shown to her, she only feels offended by the Chinese habits.⁸⁰

Although the colonial countryside as well is described as the complete opposite of the neatly trimmed gardens of the English, the open spaces of Asia are still perceived less unpleasant than the crowded cities.

Travelling from the Punjab to Madras, the protagonists of "William the Conqueror" notice that the land becomes strange to them. The country shows them a new, unknown face. It is the countenance of a 'flat, red India' (*William*, p. 179), with a changing vegetation. The heat

⁸⁰ Cf. Meyers 1975, p. 70.

has made the soil dry and the plants are withering. The famine that they have come to fight has control over the country.

Likewise, Kitty and Walter's voyage to Mei-tan-fu brings them to a strange land. Leaving the familiar surrounding of British Hong Kong, the countryside appears endless, covered with 'interminable rice-fields' (*Veil*, p. 71). Yet the deceptive peacefulness of the atmosphere connotes decay. When they reach their destination the vast green meadows and hills are surrounded by a silent aura of death. Mei-tan-fu is overlooked by one of the typical Chinese archways, built as a reminder of some deceased respectable citizen. Through the vapour rising from the river Kitty can get a glimpse of the thick forest on the one side, the silhouette of the cholera stricken native town on the other. Even from a distance, the protagonist is unable to recognize any regularity, neither in the jungle, nor in the arrangement of the habitations. On a stroll through the surroundings, Kitty again is confronted with the destructive nature of the epidemic when she stumbles over the body of a deceased native. Soon though, the repeated scene of coffins being taken out of the settlement of Mei-tan-fu and brought to the cemetery becomes part of the countryside for her.

The way in which nature is experienced in Orwell's *Burmese Days* differs slightly from Kipling and Maugham's representation. As in the texts of the other authors, the local countryside is the manifest symbolization of native chaos and disorder, contrasting with the colonizers' superficially well ordered circumstances. Yet, the protagonists' attitudes towards the indigenous territory vary immensely.

The jungle is described as a very dense labyrinth, with lower bushes at its outer regions, that only have few leaves. Flory lives close to this forest and frequently enters it to escape the 'artificial

jungle' (Lee, p. 2) of the British town and the 'beasts' of the Club. For him, the 'natural jungle' (Lee, p. 2) is the place where he can clear his head, where he draws his energy from. Deeper inside the woods, the trees become greener and higher, and a pool of clear blue water makes it appear peaceful and almost idyllic. Elizabeth's attitude towards the native wildlife stands in contrast to Flory's positive associations. Different to him, she sees the jungle as a dangerous place, where one should only go to for a hunt. For her the flora loses importance compared to the wild animals that can be shot there. From this perspective, nature is merely something to overcome, to kill with man-made weapons.

Although the different parts of the colonial territory are anxiously kept separate, the borders between these areas are nevertheless often blurred. On the one hand, the British districts are inevitably intruded by the local flora and fauna. Nature thus is trying to take back what is hers. In a counter move, the colonizers do their best to civilize not only the indigenous population of the land, but also the habitat as such. The tendency to neglect foreign attitudes and customs and assume one's own way of life as superior to that of the others sustains the limits between the areas of the colonial microcosm and complicates a real meeting of the different cultures.

4.2. Interracial Relations

As the clear detachment of the opposing worlds of the colonial microcosm from each other suggests, the contact between the races inhabiting the respective areas is problematic. From the colonizers' perspective, as Loomba claims, the crossing of the racial divide bears the danger of 'going native' and losing not only one's heavily acquired

civilization, but also one's mind.⁸¹ Being seduced by a member of the foreign group is inevitably thought to lead to the deterioration of one's social, cultural and civilizing status, as Eldridge observes.⁸² If, nevertheless, contact between the races is established, it is kept secret from the rest of the world. Once discovered, the disregard of the racial border is a violation of the colonial rules and must thus be sanctioned.

Both natives and colonizers who are part of an interracial relationship risk punishment whenever their involvement with someone of the other group is discovered. Not keeping to one's own herd means the breaking of a social taboo, and whoever gives in to the temptation of the exotic has to face penance. Yet the consequences are not equally fatal for the members of the different groups. This becomes most obvious in Kipling's short stories. While the Europeans' injuries are relatively minor ones, the Indian partner suffers much worse. Both in "Beyond the Pale" and "Without Benefit of Clergy" this pattern applies. Trejago's life, on the one hand, can continue without any major changes after he has been hurt. 'There is nothing peculiar about him, except a slight stiffness' (*Pale*, p. 220) that he explains with a riding-strain.⁸³ Bisesa, on the other hand, is heavily mutilated by the loss of her hands.

In the story about Holden and his native wife Ameera, the punishment is even more disproportionate. The man only has to cope with an emotional wound that can easily be hidden from his fellow

⁸¹ Cf. Loomba, p. 136. According to Loomba, not only the alien people, but symbolically also the 'colonised land seduces European men into madness'.

⁸² Cf. Eldridge, p. 165.

⁸³ Although some critics argue that the mysterious injury Trejago suffers is to be equalled with a castration (see also chapter 4.3.1.3.), this does not mean that such a wound would exclude him from a normal life within his community. as does the loss of her hands for Bisesa.

colonizers. His wife, in contrast, is deprived of her life by the cholera for not keeping within the limits society has stipulated for her.

The British society in Maugham's Hong Kong is completely cut off from the natives. Merely indigenous servants have minimal contact to the colonizers. There is no room for amorous attraction. The only interracial relationship referred to in *The Painted Veil* is that of Waddington and his Manchu woman.⁸⁴ Although this theme is not excessively touched upon, it is clear that his relationship to a native woman is not welcomed by his co-colonizers. Still he can continue to live with her, even if this life has the character of an open secret rather than an official partnership. Different to Kipling's interracial relationships, this one seems to function at least on the most basic level of "man and wife", even if the society around the couple does not approve of it. The consequence for the couple is isolation from society. Above all the woman, who has no contact to her family or someone else from her community, has given up every connection to the life she led before she met Waddington. Her husband, on the other hand, has to endure social stagnation within the hierarchy of his group due to his private life.⁸⁵

In *Burmese Days* the treatment of interracial partnerships does not exclusively focus on sexuality, but also touches upon friendship. In Orwell's novel, sexual relations between the races are deprived of any heartfelt emotion.⁸⁶ Flory and Ma Hla May only use each other as a

⁸⁴ In general, Maugham's narratives concentrating on interracial relationships imply that 'sexual contact with women of the native population' leads to 'degeneration' (Curtis 1974, p 158) and 'disaster' (Curtis 1974, p 160). Many of these stories end tragically, also for the white men. (Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 158)

⁸⁵ This aspect of Waddington's life is also examined in chapter 4.3.1.3.

⁸⁶ Only the mentioning of the Eurasians Mr Samuel and Mr Francis hint at the fact that in *Burmese Days* an actual intermingling of the races has taken place. Although the hybrids are neither accepted by the British society nor by the Indian community, as Lee observes (p. 18), compared to Kipling's only Eurasian character Tota, these two are at least existing parts of the system, while the son of Holden and Ameera has to be hidden from the colonial world.

means to an end. For him, the Burmese mistress is the only way to be sexually satisfied. The girl, in contrast, sells her body to the Englishman to secure her lifestyle. The emotional component that is missing in Flory and Ma Hla May's liaison shifts to another relationship in which the protagonist is involved. It is the friendship with the Indian doctor Veraswami in which he shows feeling and sympathy. When Flory is with the doctor, he can not only have a conversation that is intellectually stimulating, but these are also the times when he can truly be himself and say what he really thinks. Yet, the affection Flory feels for Veraswami is a thorn in the other colonizers' flesh. For them, this friendship endangers the correctness of one of their members' attitude and thus the status of the group as such. While the secret liaison with a Burmese mistress is acceptable, as long as it is only indulged in behind closed doors,⁸⁷ any personal involvement with a native, any openly displayed sympathy for him or her, questions the social structure of the colony and thus the system as such and cannot be tolerated.⁸⁸

4.3. The Colonizers

As regards the representation of colonizers in colonial literature, the narratives almost exclusively concentrate on male characters. They are the ones carrying the weight of the mission that brought them to the foreign territory in the first instance, the female characters fill mainly supporting roles.

4.3.1. Imperial Heroes?

Inevitably in colonial literature, the protagonists are not only involved in the situation of an encounter between different cultures, but also participate in varying degrees in the imperial mission.

⁸⁷ Cf. Lee, p. 15.

⁸⁸ Cf. Schefold, p. 58.

Whether the male colonizers in the texts of Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell hold official positions within the governmental system or work as private merchants, they all take part in the exploitation of the colony. But their status as members of the ruling race not only provides them with privileges but also with responsibilities.

The heroes of Kipling's Indian short stories are 'the men of action, men of honour and strong character who devoted themselves to their work' (Eldridge, p. 132). They are employed at the basis of the colonial bureaucracy, in construction or as soldiers.⁸⁹ His main characters subject themselves to a mission that exists independently of them, as Schefold argues, which is the defence of the country from external adversaries as well as internal conflicts among the natives.⁹⁰

In the texts, there is little information about their co-colonizers, Kipling's protagonists are 'solitary administrator[s ...] essentially alone yet the center of a complex web of power and information systems' (Bivona, p. 69). As Eldridge claims, they

have a natural superiority: they are invariably strong, chaste, selfless, preserving and authoritative. They represent the imperial ideal and reflect the assumptions of the age. They are loyal to the group, unreflective, contemptuous of the intellectual, sanctify tradition, and cultivate the necessary hauteur of the governing race (Eldridge, p. 170).

In *A Choice of Kipling's Prose*, Maugham's description deprives Kipling's main characters of their imperial heroism when he argues that they merely are 'ordinary middle-class people, who came from modest homes in England'. They are 'sons and daughters of retired government servants and of parsons, doctors and lawyers' (Maugham 1952, p. ix) without any intellectual potential.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Cf. Damrosch p. xx.

⁹⁰ Cf. Schefold, p. 58.

⁹¹ Cf. Maugham, p. ix.

Hagiioannu even sees in some of Kipling's heroes 'Englishmen driven to distraction, crushed by the realisation of their work's ultimate meaninglessness' (Hagiioannu, p. 17). Although they seem to be indispensable idealists at first sight, they are in fact replaceable. Because the colonial community is a construct that does not require individuality, whoever ignores the social guidelines and goes astray risks exclusion from his group.

The characters of Maugham's texts with an oriental setting, as Holden argues, are not as much confronted with fundamental colonial issues as Kipling's. That they exist on a cultural frontier is less emphasised than in works by earlier colonial authors. His protagonists do not suffer crises of their English identity in trying to respond to a foreign civilization.⁹² Yet, as in Kipling's narratives, also in Maugham's 'the white administrator was the source of all authority and had the power to impose his will and moral code upon the natives' (Curtis 1974, p. 165). His emphasis is directed towards people of the law or missionaries, whom the author highly respected.⁹³

Orwell's colonial protagonists are portrayed from another angle than those in other texts of this genre written before *Burmese Days*. The assignment to build and maintain an empire and civilize the uncultured peoples that has been the most important task in, for instance, Kipling's narratives is treated ironically, as Meyers observes. The British Empire is illustrated on the point of dissolution and the priorities of the colonizers have shifted.⁹⁴ The imperial mission has transformed into a matter of sustaining the personal privileges of the characters. The question whether there is still a reason for the British

⁹² Cf. Holden, p. 2.

⁹³ Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 165.

⁹⁴ Cf. Meyers 1975, p. 68.

presence in Asia is openly discussed by the Westerners.⁹⁵ Yet their exchanges of views do not lead to a uniform answer. With the exception of Flory, none of Orwell's colonizers appears to stay in Burma because he or she wants to fulfil a humanitarian mission, but only out of habit.

4.3.1.1. *Men on a Mission*

The missionary character of imperial work in colonial literature is most clearly illustrated in the assignment of colonizers who are employed in regions that are stricken by crises. Fighting against famine and disease among the indigenous population, the Westerners neglect their own needs to fulfil their duty.

Scott

In the short story "William the Conqueror", the male protagonist Scott is confronted with a famine raging in the south of India.⁹⁶ As one of Kipling's restless administrators maintaining the British empire at its basis, he is sent from his station in the Punjab to Madras to organize the supply with food in the crisis region. There his commitment to the imperial mission verges on self-abandonment.

Scott is portrayed as a modest man who can endure even the most unfavourable conditions. Despite his clerical job, he has spent much of his life in the colony in the open air or in a simple tent as an accommodation, which has made him undemanding. Yet, in the critical situation in southern India he soon comes up against his limits. Not only does he lack the physical strength necessary in this assignment, but also is he helplessly overburdened as regards the coordination of the relief work, as Arondekar observes. Scott seems to be completely

⁹⁵ Interestingly, support of and belief in the system comes most vehemently from a native, Dr Veraswami in his conversations with Flory.

⁹⁶ The background of this story is a famine that struck Bombay, Madras, and Mysore between 1876 and 1878. (Cf. Hagioannu, p. 87.)

short of any ability to handle the organizational component of his job beyond a normal amount.⁹⁷ But as it emerges, other talents he has secure the fulfilment of the imperial task. The man turns out to have what is most urgently needed, which are 'mothering skills' (Arondekar, p. 62). Although the basic idea that in the end solves the problem of alimentering the starving babies of the famine region is accounted for by his native assistant, Scott nonetheless is the one translating it into action. On his orders, the colonizers collect some ownerless goats, whom they feed the grain the natives refuse to eat. Scott personally milks the animals to deliver the nutrition to the native children. The treatment of the little ones requires 'soft and "feminine" qualities' (Spivak 1999, p. 158) that only he seems to have. In the same way as an experienced mother would handle babies, 'Scott would solemnly lift them out one by one from their nest of gunny-bags under the cart-tilts' (*William*, p. 186).

The famine work not only gives Scott the opportunity to help the starving and thus participate actively in the imperial mission. His commitment is, in the end, rewarded with the love of a woman as well. Milking goats, the feminine man Scott and the masculine woman William discover their feelings for each other, as Spivak observes.⁹⁸ Both enter their relationship with reversed roles and only after the crisis is over, they return to the "naturally intended" role model in which he is the strong man and William belongs to the weaker sex.⁹⁹

Walter Fane

The character Walter Fane is the deceived husband of the female protagonist in *The Painted Veil*. As a governmental bacteriologist he is highly involved in the imperial mission on an official, yet not

⁹⁷ Cf. Arondekar, p. 62.

⁹⁸ Cf. Spivak 1999, p. 158.

⁹⁹ Cf. Arondekar, p. 67. The reversal of gender roles is more closely examined in the context of William in chapter 4.3.2.1.

administrative level. His major task is the humanitarian duty to provide medical support for the town of Mei-tan-fu. Yet, his private background shifts his priorities and makes his assignment a personal quest.

Although Walter's appearance is a combination of fine features with his slim stature and neatly trimmed dark hair, his wife is not at all attracted to him. The medical scientist is perceived as an 'unusually intelligent young man' (*Veil*, p. 20) by Kitty's father, but the young woman herself cannot appreciate his qualities. From her point of view, he is just an 'odd creature' (*Veil*, p. 22), who talks too little and behaves awkwardly. After having married, this taciturn man turns out to be quite passionate and highly considerate towards his wife, yet for her, who is used to superficial people, he remains mysterious and impossible to understand. Walter is described as secretive about his personal background, 'cold and self-possessed' (*Veil*, p. 27), which makes it difficult for the young woman to deal with him. Discovering his wife's affair with another man outrages him, as Curtis claims, but his shock does not lead to aggressive wrath.¹⁰⁰ Instead of confronting Kitty in an angry argument, he remains calm and cool towards her. He uses the opportunity to leave Hong Kong for the cholera stricken region of Mei-tan-fu and forces his wife to accompany him. In giving her the chance to divorce him if her lover agrees to marry her, Walter's revenge has a double effect. As he knows about Townsend's personality, his well considered plan to ruin his wife has the result he wished for. Not only is Kitty forced to come with him to the crisis region, where she is supposed to be infected by the disease and die, but also is the woman confronted with her lover's real character.

In Mei-tan-fu, Walter's ambivalent character becomes even more evident. Towards his wife he is colder and more intolerant than ever,

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 166.

but the face he shows the nuns of the local convent is the complete opposite to Kitty's impression of her husband. As the French missionaries perceive it, the bacteriologist is the most caring and sensitive man. Fulfilling his official duty, he fights inexhaustibly against the cholera in order to rescue as many of the local patients as possible.¹⁰¹ Like Scott, the task he is entrusted with brings him to his physical limits, but different to Kipling's hero, Walter's self-abandonment results in his death.

One possible interpretation of Walter's behaviour is that he is a man 'motivated by deep, loathsome, vindictive self-pity' (Curtis 1974, p. 168), who uses the epidemic in Mai-tan-fu as a welcome opportunity to teach his wife a lesson. Yet, the fact that he works without rest to find a cure against the cholera and that he handles the sick babies rather caringly also suggests the reading that the mission to help in the crisis region has priority over his personal motives.¹⁰² However, in the end, what remains of Walter's life is the fact that officially he has died during the fulfilment of his imperial mission and only his wife believes that he sacrificed his life for his love.

4.3.1.2. Men Who Would Be Kings

In Kipling's 'best known allegory of empire' (Sullivan, p. 97) "The Man Who Would Be King", the main protagonists use the official mission to civilize the uncultured peoples for personal purposes as well. The idea is no longer to participate in a humanitarian assignment for an empire that is ruled by someone else at on other side of the globe. Instead, the "kings" give in to their personal craving for power and build their own private kingdom.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 167f.

¹⁰² In fact, Waddington is the only one who judges Walter differently. Contrary to the nuns' impression of the bacteriologist, the Deputy Commissioner confides to Kitty that he thinks that Walter 'isn't here because he cares a damn if a hundred thousand Chinese die of cholera' (*Veil*, p. 92).

Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan and Daniel Dravot are the main characters of this short story, whose “exploits” the former tells to a journalist-narrator¹⁰³ they have met on a journey through India. On this first encounter, the adventurers are described as rather imposing figures. Carnehan is ‘a big black-browed gentleman’ (“The Man Who Would Be King”, hereafter *King*, p. 194), his equally impressive partner Dravot has ‘a red beard’ (*King*, p. 193)¹⁰⁴ and his face is ‘great and shining’ (*King*, p. 195) when the narrator meets them.

They are wanderers and vagabonds who have lived in India for a long time and participated in the colonial endeavour as ‘[s]oldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof-reader, street-preacher, and correspondent of the *Backwoodsman*’ (*King*, p. 200). Dubious professional experiences like these, as they assume, enable them to build their own kingdom in Kafiristan, but as their ‘vision of Empire-building’, as Low argues, is only based on the loafers’ perspective, Carnehan and Dravot’s idea of colonialism is restricted to conquering territory by mere force.¹⁰⁵ Although they admit that leading a country must be hard work, in their understanding the imperial mission is reduced to fighting and handling weapons. The idea of a civilizing mission on which the British rule over India is based, is displaced by the mere desire to rule. Carnehan and Dravot not only lack ideological principles and innate qualities, but also the knowledge how to sustain a successful kingdom. As Meyers explains, their

kingly ambitions are purely materialistic. [...] They are desperate men who proclaim the “politics of loaferdome”, see economics only in terms of immediate results, and

¹⁰³ Many critics like, for instance Lycett, have argued that in fact Kipling’s narrator is at least partly autobiographic and the story of Carnehan and Dravot is based on a real encounter. (Cf. Lycett, p. 164.)

¹⁰⁴ The colour red, as Hagioannu argues, is recurrently linked with Dravot and associates his figure with ‘anger, sex, blood and war’ (Hagioannu, p. 42.)

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Low, p. 242f.

exclude all political, social and cultural considerations.
(Meyers 1973, p. 7.)

Yet they do not start their endeavour without first agreeing on the terms of their cooperation. Carnehan and Dravot have drafted an absurd contract that is intended to prevent any disputes between them, focusing on their roles in the conquest, the prohibition of alcohol, and sexual abstinence. Although their intention to stay sober and neglect any erotic temptations may have a point in the kind of mission they want to accomplish, any even more important details as regards the organization of their task are completely missing. This 'Contract', as they call it, clearly shows that both are only 'grown-up versions of Huck and Tom' (Meyers 1973, p. 11) who are helplessly overstrained with their mission.

Although they agree to be equal partners, Dravot holds the position of the leader and is the motor of their venture. He is not only the driving force, but also 'the overreacher and visionary' (Sullivan, p. 106) who runs into his doom without hesitation. Carnehan, on the other hand, is concerned about possible consequences and tries to prevent his partner from making mistakes. As Sullivan argues, he is 'the cautious worker and the voice of restraint and practicality' (Sullivan, p. 106), and thus the one weighing the risks Dravot takes. When he mourns for his partner, he admits that 'Dan [...] would never take advice, not though I begged of him' (*King*, p. 209). Even after Dravot has been killed, he remains the king with the 'gold crown close beside him' (*King*, p. 231), who, as Carnehan fantasizes on the way back to India, leads his colleague's way.

One of the things Dravot is explicitly warned against doing by his friend is to neglect their contract with respect to sexual relations. Daniel's wish to take a wife from among the natives is a refusal to obey their own rules as well as the confession that they are not gods, but only humans. His desire also, as Sullivan observes, violates 'an

unspoken code of imperial male bonding that surpasses the love of woman' (Sullivan, p. 106). As Carnehan predicted, Dravot's marriage arouses the natives' suspiciousness. Their subjects no longer believe in the divinity of their kings and Peachey and Daniel are eventually confronted with a problem they cannot solve, neither with military drill, nor with Masonic rituals. After a rebellion¹⁰⁶, only Carnehan escapes alive to tell their story to the narrator.

Meeting him again, the journalist has difficulties recognizing him as the gentleman from the train. Three years have passed since their first meeting and the dramatic events of the loafers' conquest of Kafiristan have left conspicuous marks not only on Carnehan's character, but most obviously also on his outward appearance. What enters the narrator's office is only the remains of a human being. This creature creeping into the room is 'bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear' (*King*, p. 208). His hand 'was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged red diamond-shaped scar' (*King*, p. 209). Carnehan no longer seems to be a man, but has dehumanized into a bizarrely mythological animal. The sufferings of cruel torture made him degenerate into a creature beyond humanity that now 'struggle[s] to make sense of [his] experiences' (Damrosch, p. xxii).

When his friend dies, also Carnehan ceased to exist. Yet, as Mallett observes, he survives long enough to recount their story.¹⁰⁷ Having lost his partner, a journalist¹⁰⁸ he scarcely knows is his only remaining link to a life he already lost in Kafiristan. By telling him the fantastic

¹⁰⁶ Drawing a historic parallel, they announce that 'This business is our Fifty-Seven' (*King*, p. 228). Contrary to the real Mutiny of 1857, the kings are not able to suppress the rebellion and take flight.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Mallett 1989, p. 103.

¹⁰⁸ The position of the narrator as an intermediary between the real world and the fantastic accounts of Carnehan is, as Hagioannu suggests, already foreshadowed in the fact that the first encounter between the journalist and the loafers takes place in the 'intermediate class' of an Indian train. (Cf. Hagioannu, p. 42.)

story of his and Dravot's 'seedy version of the British Raj'. (Sullivan, p. 100), he is able to assess his adventure and finish with his life.

Dravot is only presented as Carnehan perceived him and thus idealized. He is a visionary, who becomes megalomaniac and, according to Low, 'commits the fatal error of believing his own propaganda and desires a queen to rule by his side' (Low, p. 240). It needs a shot in the leg to awaken Dravot from his megalomania. Only then he realizes the hopelessness of their situation. Although his friend refuses to leave him alone, "the king" insists on dying in solitude 'with heroic dignity' (Mallett 1989, p. 103).¹⁰⁹ In the end, the "'kings" fail because they do not possess the moral authority requisite for enlightened imperial rule' (Meyers 1973, p. 1).

Although Havholm claims that Empire is not the main aspect of "The Man Who Would Be King"¹¹⁰, the story of Carnehan and Dravot still transmits a clear statement concerning imperialism. As Sullivan argues, the message directed at the British Empire is that the privilege of rule is attached to moral supremacy.¹¹¹ The breaking of rules and crossing of borders, as in the example of the short story, inevitably must lead to a loss of this 'divinely given right' (Sullivan, p. 100).

4.3.1.3. *Border Crossers*

Although in the colonial situation the borders between the different cultures are clearly defined and thus leave few zones of contact between the races, literary texts often present characters who ignore these social limitations. In many narratives, the general motif of cultural interrelation is discussed on the private level of sexual relationships between members of the opposing groups. In the most often represented variant of such connections, the man belongs to the

¹⁰⁹ Low agrees that 'By the end of the tale, Dravot has acquired the virtues of self-knowledge and dignity' (Low, p. 253).

¹¹⁰ Cf. Havholm 2008, p. 109.

¹¹¹ Cf. Sullivan, p. 100.

dominating party of colonizers, the woman, on the other hand, is of indigenous origin. In the characterization of Europeans, who are attracted to native women, generally their attitude towards the indigenous culture and the confrontation with a desire that is not tolerated by their co-colonizers is equalled with the potential danger of "going native".¹¹² The fear that a decent British citizen could ignore racial limitations and thus completely lose his own civilization is more prominent than their position in the imperial mission.

"Beyond the Pale" and "Without Benefit of Clergy" are closely related as both stories exclusively deal with the transgression of racial borders and its inescapable consequences. The protagonists of the stories, Trejago and Holden, consciously and deliberately ignore the social limits the colonial situation stipulates. Both characters are unable to successfully bridge the gap between the different cultures and must lead a double life. According to Victorian norms, their priorities are reversed. The waking hours of their days are dominated by office work and thus the active participation in the imperial mission. Nevertheless, their spare time is spent in a way that is unacceptable in colonial society. Yet, as Meyers observes, not only sexual attraction but 'even powerful love is insufficient to transcend racial differences and the lovers are doomed' because they violate 'the Sahib's code' (Meyers 1973, p. 1). They thus are unable to 'transcend their racial differences and successfully fuse both cultures' (Meyers 1973, p. 14). Trejago and Holden as

fallen colonizers are cultural reminders of nineteenth-century anxiety about the fluidity of sexual and racial Otherness, an anxiety that insulates itself by excluding that which is deviant, dirty and effeminate. (Sullivan, p. 83.)

¹¹² Cf. Loomba, p. 136.

Trejago

A returning interest in native life and the wish to escape the firm hold of the English society in India, get Trejago to explore native parts of the city. On one of his 'aimless wandering[s]' (*Pale*, p. 214) through forbidden territory he meets the young native widow Bisesa. As he 'wilfully stepped beyond the safe limits of decent everyday society' (*Pale*, p. 213) he deliberately exposes himself to the risk of "going native". What is astonishing is his knowledge as regards indigenous culture, language and customs. Not only does he know the song Bisesa recites, but also is he able to translate correctly the message of her object letter, as Mallett claims.¹¹³ Trejago already can fall back on an abundance of fundamental "native" information an average colonizer should not have. 'He knew too much in the first instance; and he saw too much in the second', the narrator of this story warns. That 'He took too deep an interest in native life' initiates his and Bisesa's tragedy. Yet, the introductory statement that 'he will never do so again' (*Pale*, p. 213) is only wishful thinking.¹¹⁴

Despite the fact that his relationship to Bisesa seems to be restricted to the sexual level, with her seducing him, his intentions appear to have become serious. When the girl ends their liaison, he repeatedly tries to meet his lover again to convince her of his faithfulness. But the problem between the couple is, as Mallett argues, that the 'doubleness' of Trejago's life is not shared by Bisesa. While he is able to interpret correctly what the girl thinks and means, she does not have this ability, which inevitably leads to misunderstandings and consequently to tragedy. Their affair ends violently with Bisesa being mutilated and Trejago, according to Mallett, being robbed of the

¹¹³ Cf. Mallett 1989, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ An often discussed aspect of Trejago's 'transgressive knowledge of the Other' (Morey, p. 22) is the fact that this knowledge is shared by the narrator of the story, putting him in an 'epistemologically dubious position' (Ibid.). It suggests either an equally transgressive narrator or even a native or Eurasian one.

sexuality, which led him to the forbidden native district.¹¹⁵ Although Low admits that the text suggests a connection between the protagonist's virility and his limping, she argues that the degree of Trejago's injury is not explicitly uncovered.¹¹⁶

Despite the damage that has been caused to the man, he tries to re-establish the contact to his lover. Nevertheless, although the man cannot find the house where his lover lives after their affair has ended, he 'pays his calls regularly' (*Pale*, p. 220). Yet, with the loss of his lover, as Mallett further claims, Trejago has lost his self. As the doubleness that characterized his life is taken from him, his identity is erased.¹¹⁷

Holden

"Without Benefit of Clergy" documents an interracial relationship at another, later stage. Holden is already married to his native wife Ameera, who expects his child. Although the man bought her from her cruel mother like a slave, the couple developed a deep love for each other. Like Trejago in "Beyond the Pale", Holden is forced to lead two distinct lives in different worlds. By day, he respects the social obligations of official Anglo-India, but his secret existence among his native family has already become more important to him. Since his work as a decent colonizer, as Meyers suggests, inevitably suffers from distraction, this personal preference endangers the imperial mission.¹¹⁸

Holden's second home out of reach of the colonizers' society is a place where he can indulge in family life. The opposition between his two existences, the paradise he experiences when he is with his family and the misery he suffers in the British society, as Meyers suggests, is

¹¹⁵ Cf. Mallett 1989, p. 11f.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Low, p. 132f.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Mallett 1989, p. 11f.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Meyers 1973, p. 17.

repeating itself. Holden regards his house in the city as his home and constantly associates it with happiness and positive emotions. His official life, on the other hand, is dominated by dismal obligations. The loneliness of the man's bachelor's bungalow and the strict limits of the British society suppress 'his emotions and hide all trace of his happiness' (Meyers 1973, p. 17). Only after the death of his son Holden's attitude towards his two lives begins to change. His work, which earlier was only an unpleasant duty, now 'repaid him by filling up his mind for nine or ten hours a day' (*Clergy*, p 159). When he finally loses his beloved wife as well, his 'worlds are reversed. The peaceful courtyard becomes a hell of self-questioning reproach and work a welcome distraction from grief and despair' (Meyers 1973, p. 17).¹¹⁹

In the end, with Ameera the home dies. Nature is intruding the earlier happily inhabited house and re-conquers the ground, washing away the past. Holden's ties to the indigenous part of India are cut forever. Yet, the end of his life "gone native" also brings with it the prospect of a new beginning within the boundaries of his own people. As every trace of his secret life has been erased, Holden can reintegrate into the colonizers' society.

Waddington

The only character in *The Painted Veil* who can be categorized as living on both sides of the racial divide is the Deputy Commissioner Waddington the Fanes meet after they have left Hong Kong. Although his role occupies only little space in the novel, he is not only, as Curtis argues, 'one of Maugham's most interesting creations' (Curtis 1974, p. 166), but also an important link between the European and the Asian world of Mei-tan-fu.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Meyers 1973, p. 17.

Waddington is a slim man of short stature, 'with a bald head and a small, bare [...] funny, boyish face' (*Veil*, p. 76f). He is a clever person who appreciates to have some good conversation. As 'his personality had developed in eccentric freedom' (*Veil*, p. 87), Waddington is a self-contained individual, whose openness is a delight to Kitty, but, among other character traits, only hard to be accepted above all by the French nuns. Another reason for critique from the convent is his immoderate consumption of alcohol, which is not only one of his few pleasures but, as he claims, 'keeps the cholera out' (*Veil*, p. 87) as well.

Having lived in China for two decades, he has not only learned the vernacular and gathered numerous experiences to relate, but also, as Kitty observes, assumed native attitudes towards Westerners. Thus, Waddington does not hold the colonial society of Hong Kong in high esteem. Yet, neither does he value the native officials in Mei-tan-fu. In some of his conversations with Kitty, it is revealed that he has the ability to instinctively see through people when he judges both Townsend and Walter correctly. He believes that the first is a braggart who profits from his wife's cleverness and Kitty's husband is a cold man who does not care at all for his native patients.

Relatively late after having met Waddington, Kitty learns about his living together with a Chinese woman. This affair not only arouses her curiosity, but also is interesting as regards his position in the works of empire. Regardless of the fact that his interracial relationship is criticized by his surrounding, he is not completely excluded from the society, but continues to work as an intermediary between the lower, native officials and the administrators of higher rank coming from Britain. While Waddington's private life does not advance any professional promotion, it seems to be nonetheless compatible with the fulfilment of the imperial duties of someone of his rank.

Like Kipling's protagonists Trejago and Holden, Waddington lives in two distinct worlds. On the one hand, he is a British official in a foreign country with the mission to fight the cholera and as such is fully integrated into the European society in China. As soon as he arrives at home, on the other hand, he enters a life that he shares exclusively with someone who is socially tabooed by the group he belongs to. Yet, contrary to Kipling's characters, the border between his different existences is not completely impermeable. Despite the fact that Waddington is secretive about his private life with an indigenous partner, his relationship is an open secret. Unlike Trejago and Holden, he is not inevitably forced to decide against his private life in favour of his official one. Even if he unavoidably will remain static within the social hierarchy of his group, the society of Europeans in China has opened up enough to at least connive at Waddington's interracial relationship as long as it does not affect his performance in the imperial duties in a negative way.

4.3.1.4. The Imperial Anti-hero

Contrary to any of the characters described by Kipling and Maugham, Orwell's main protagonist in *Burmese Days* in many respects completely contradicts the cliché of an imperial hero. Flory not only repeatedly and willingly oversteps every racial border the colonial society stipulates, but also has doubts about the reasonability of the imperial mission.

As a timber merchant John Flory is not officially involved in the imperial mission, but only profits financially from the exploitation of the colony on a personal level. He is a thin man with black hair and an emaciated face, in which a 'hideous birthmark stretching in a ragged crescent down his left cheek, from the eye to the corner of the mouth' (*Burmese*, p. 13) is the most prominent feature. Although he constantly tries to hide his blemish, it has been the first thing on which he is

judged since his birth. This visual defect also mirrors the weaknesses of his character and, as Lee claims, is the 'physical manifestation of his alienation from society', suggesting 'his superiority to corrupt values and moral lassitude' (Lee, p. 3). Yet, even if Flory is the only character in the novel who clearly sees how negatively colonialism affects all who are involved, as Lee further observes,¹²⁰ as he cannot avoid being corrupted himself, for instance in signing a petition against the election of a native member to the Club although he does not agree to it,¹²¹ his superiority is only a theoretical one. Because his innermost thoughts and convictions are not put into practice, he is doomed to fail in every attempt to break out of his solitariness.¹²²

The protagonist really is an alien in the colonial society. Belonging to the British colonizers by nationality and birth, he nevertheless feels much more attracted to the Burmese community than to his own. In spite of his position as a member of the group subjecting the indigenous population, Flory admires the native culture the other Englishmen simply despise because they do not even try to understand it. His estimation of the Burmese civilization is most obvious in his attempts to enthuse Elisabeth for the indigenous habitat and local traditions. Whenever he tries to introduce her to his colonized friends and their customs, the girl is just offended by the barbarous natives and their lifestyle.¹²³ From the point of view of his fellow colonizers, he feels at home in the wrong world, which is not the surrounding of the Club, but the native areas of Kyauktada.

Flory prefers the natural environment of Burma to the artificial world of the British society. His home is on the border to the jungle

¹²⁰ Cf. Lee, p. 3.

¹²¹ Cf. Meyers 1975, p. 69.

¹²² Cf. Lee, p. 4.

¹²³ Cf. Meyers 1975, p. 70. See also chapter 4.1.3 for a discussion of their tour to the local bazaar.

and open to its wildlife as he is open to the Burmese culture.¹²⁴ His appreciation of local people and customs is best reflected in his only true friendship with the native doctor Veraswami. In their discussions about imperialism, the men always take opposing views. The native imperturbably believes in the rightness of British rule, Flory on the other hand is convinced that colonization has brought more harm than improvement for the natives.¹²⁵ The way the indigenous population is exploited in the imperial mission makes Flory embarrassed of his fellow colonizers, as Meyers argues, yet he is incapable of intervening in any way.¹²⁶ When his only friend's existence is threatened, the protagonist shies away from helping him. In consideration of the protagonist's constant inactivity, the interpretation suggests itself that a man who is too weak to fight for himself cannot come to the aid of some one else. Still, in a more complex explanation, Flory's non-intervention can be seen as motivated by a fear of finally losing his friend to the system. As a blind believer in values and morals, which Flory abhors, Veraswami would be at risk of being integrated into the colonizers' society as soon as he were admitted to the Club. If he became "one of them", the doctor would thus no longer be a person with whom the protagonist can share his true convictions.

This destructive trait in Flory's character is even more prominent in his relation to his dog Flo. The fact that the pet's name renders his own suggests that the man wants to live his innermost needs with the help of his animal. He is fond of it as much as he himself wants to be adored by others and the dog unconditionally loves him back despite the birthmark in Flory's face. All the more surprising is the fact that the protagonist kills his dog before shooting himself. The murder of

¹²⁴ A description of Flory's house and his relation to the jungle is given in chapter 4.1.3.

¹²⁵ Cf. Shelden, p. 120.

¹²⁶ Cf. Meyers 1975, p. 69f.

the animal, according to Lee, seems unreasonable,¹²⁷ but if Flo is understood to be a surrogate of Flory, the protagonist's action can be explained in two ways. As the man sees his dog as a part of himself, he must kill it in order not to leave anything of himself behind. Moreover, if the dog survived his owner, whom nobody in the colony cares for at all, the pet would be at risk not to be looked after by any one as soon as Flory is no longer there.

The most interesting fact about the character's suicide is his choice of the method. In deciding not to destroy his head and thus his detested birthmark, as Lee suggests, the protagonist makes a clear statement asserting his individuality.¹²⁸ Yet the shot into the heart also reflects Flory's mood after his public exposure and Elizabeth's succeeding repudiation. He has fallen in love with a girl who personifies the values of the Club and British ignorance towards the native culture in general. The possibility of marrying Elizabeth and thus giving up his unacceptable attitudes equals the chance of Flory's reintegration into the society which regards him as an outcast. The fact that after the scene in the church the girl abandons him means that the British community in its entirety rejects him once and for all as well. For both reasons, his heart is broken. As a consequence, Flory goes home and destroys what the empire has shattered. His head, the seat of his thoughts, and his birthmark, though, are what he leaves behind unbroken.

4.3.1.5. Imperial Impostors

In both *The Painted Veil* and *Burmese Days* the authors introduce a male character who in his imperial employment becomes engaged in an affair with the feminine main character and thus opposes the male protagonist. Between the figures of Maugham's Charles Townsend and

¹²⁷ Cf. Lee, p. 10.

¹²⁸ Cf. Lee, p. 17.

Orwell's Verrall, there are some parallels. Both hold an official position in the imperial mission and seduce the heroine more with their outer appearance than with their personal qualities.

Charles Townsend

Kitty's lover Charles Townsend participates in the works of empire in an official position, as the Assistant Colonial Secretary at Hong Kong. He is a married man of forty, yet has a fine athletic figure, blue eyes and dark hair, and is described as very appealing. Knowing about his attractiveness, though, he is rather vain. His sporting activities are only a means to keep his shape and much of his good looks depends on little rituals like manicures every week.

Townsend's real character is hidden behind an official face he shows to the world. As it turns out, underneath this façade he is a man who uses his charms to please others for his own ends and does not care for anybody else but himself. Soon after their affair is at risk of being discovered, Townsend shows that he has no scruples to misuse his position for private purposes, when he openly offers Kitty to threaten one of the native domestic servants in order to keep their liaison a secret. When his lover tells him about Walter's ultimatum he does not even think to help Kitty but uses the golden opportunity the colonial situation provides him with to get rid of her without any effort on his part. Although his denial to stand by her means that she is forced to leave Hong Kong with Walter and will probably die in the cholera stricken region of Mei-tan-fun, he seems not to commiserate with the woman.

Only when Kitty has already left the city, she learns that he has a 'reputation as a cheap philanderer' (Curtis 1974, p. 167). Her friend Waddington opens her eyes to Townsend's real character. Contrary to her lover's assessment of his own abilities and intellectual qualities, the Deputy Commissioner of Mei-tan-fu reveals that he thinks him as

helplessly dependent on his much cleverer wife, who handles most of his affairs. In fact, the effort behind his professional promotion is accounted for by his spouse.

Interestingly, despite everything she learnt about her lover, when Kitty returns to Hong Kong on her way home to England, Townsend is able to seduce her again. Once more he proves not to have any scruples when he sleeps with Kitty in his own house behind his wife's back. Although the female protagonist has promised herself not to give in to his advances, she is again dazzled by his charms. Townsend's bragging in the end remains successful and Kitty can only elude his charms by bringing the longest possible geographical distance between herself and her lover. Yet, while she seems to have learnt her lesson from their affair, his life is not altered by the incident. His actions did only affect Kitty, not himself and thus neither his character nor his attitudes are to change.

Verrall

Orwell's literary creation Verrall resembles Townsend in many ways. Being a member of the Military Police, he comes to the colony of Burma on an official mission. Yet, like the character in *The Painted Veil*, he is more interested in his private concerns than in professional issues. Unlike the way the former is portrayed, the illustration of Verrall is more explicitly exaggerated.

When the character is introduced into the novel he is riding on a horse as beautiful as himself, like a knight in shining armour. But he not only sits on the animal, he appears to be part of it in a mythological way.¹²⁹ Verrall owns all physical assets to advance in the superficial world of the British society of Kyauktada. He is young, has blue eyes, a boyish smile and a martial aura surrounding him. Yet his

¹²⁹ The narrator of *Burmese Days* observes that he moves with his horse as easily 'as a centaur' (*Bumese*, p. 192).

attractive appearance is contrasted with his utterly depraved character. Although he resides in the colony for professional reasons, his sole interests centre on 'clothes and horses' (*Burmese*, p. 209). The imperial mission and the obligations connected with it are successfully ignored by him. He leaves invitations to the Club unanswered and affronts the British community with his arrogance. When Verrall finally shows up, he impertinently takes liberties a newly arrived is usually not granted. His brutality towards one of the native servants of the Club is understood as the "demolition of British property". Despite his negative impression on the rest of the colonizers, Elizabeth and her aunt are enthusiastic about the new member of the British society, regarding him as the most promising potential husband for the girl.

Verrall is, as Schefold observes, everything Flory is not, as he talks little, is not interested in books or any other intellectual stimulus, and avoids social contact. He is thus the perfect partner for the equally shallow Elizabeth.¹³⁰ Like her, he is, as Bivona puts it, 'thoroughly empty-headed' (Bivona, p. 188) and successfully escapes the confrontation with a foreign culture in the colonial surrounding. In his ignorance Verrall not only assumes his assigned role within the system, but also fits perfectly into Elizabeth's ideal of a worthy partner.¹³¹

However, underneath his virtuous surface, Verrall is too egocentric to commit himself to the girl. When his debts catch up with him he leaves her dishonoured without looking back. While Elizabeth saw her conventional dreams of a financially secured life with a socially acceptable person fulfilled, for him, the time in Kyauktada is merely another episode of his meaningless colonial life. Instead of assuming

¹³⁰ Cf. Schefold, p. 138.

¹³¹ Cf. Schefold, p. 139.

his responsibilities in the imperial mission he remains trapped in a shallow existence that centres on private interests.

4.3.2. *White Women in Foreign Lands*

In Colonial narratives female Europeans are often presented only in minor roles, without much involvement in the colonial endeavour. Even if women are introduced as major characters in a story, they are still outnumbered by the male protagonists. They are usually not only granted less space within the text, but also described in less detail than their male counterparts.

In Kipling's short stories, as Arondekar observes, 'women are merely flattened out within the contours of the text' (Arondekar, p. 46). Those who are mentioned only play a minor role and do not interfere with the action. At best, they are instruments, only employed to illustrate the development of the male protagonists.¹³² The Western female characters portrayed in Kipling's texts are 'shallow, provincial and genteel' (Maugham, p. ix.), Maugham is convinced. He believes that 'They spent their time in idle flirtation and their chief amusement seems to have been to get some man away from another woman' (Maugham, p. ix.).

Yet the picture Maugham himself draws of European women in the colonies is only to some extent more coaxing. According to Holden, the majority of his heroines are either reduced to their sexuality, which they live out to abundance in the colonial surrounding, or the most basic fervour that moves their actions is of a religious nature. In *The Painted Veil* can be found two opposing 'forms of confession' (Holden, p. 88), which are sexually motivated in the case of Kitty Fane

¹³² Cf. Arondekar, p. 46.

and founded on Catholicism as regards the French nuns of the convent at Mei-tan-fu.¹³³

In Orwell's colonial writing British women are, as Stansky and Abrahams notice, mainly reduced to literary stereotypes and only marginally based on a fundamental observation of reality.¹³⁴ Like the male characters, the few females in *Burmese Days* are portrayed in an ironic way. They are exaggerated to caricature in their existence as superficial English wives trapped in a surrounding that is understood as beneath them. Any involvement in the civilizing mission is as much avoided as contact with the natives.

4.3.2.1. *Imperial Heroines*

Although the active participation of European women in the imperial mission is only seldom illustrated in colonial literature, there are some examples of unconditional devotion to humanitarian assignments by female Westerners. In the texts of Kipling and Maugham, the surrounding of crisis regions in which famine and disease dominate the daily routine seems to provide the perfect setting for active female intervention. Yet, the women lending a helping hand are explicitly devoid of femininity as they fulfil masculine tasks. The protagonist of "William the Conqueror" is portrayed as asexual as the celibate nuns in *The Painted Veil*.

William

In his short story "William the Conqueror", Kipling created one of his 'most complex female English characters' (Arondekar, p. 57) and also one of the few woman protagonists of colonial writing in general. It is young Miss Martyn, responding to the name of William, who travelled to India to live with her brother there. Her introduction in the text is rather secretive when, at the beginning of the narrative, she is

¹³³ Cf. Holden, p. 88f and 132.

¹³⁴ Cf. Stansky and Abrahams, p. 49.

referred to only as "Martyn's sister" for some pages.¹³⁵ The appearance of this girl is anything but appealing. She has a 'white face' (*William*, p 169) and is blemished by a 'big silvery scar about the size of a shilling' (*William*, p. 171) that centres on her forehead as a reminder of the inferior hygienic conditions in India. On many occasions she connotes boyishness rather than femininity. She looks 'more like a boy than ever' and takes on 'a gesture as true as a schoolboy's throwing a stone' (*William*, p. 173). Her suspect masculinity makes William not only an outstanding exception from the conventional gender role, but also, according to Arondekar, suggests her asexuality.¹³⁶

A lack of feminine qualities is also evident in the girl's behaviour. Since her arrival in India four years ago, she has consistently ignored what society expects from a young woman in the colony. Instead of marrying a respectable member of the British community she 'had refused some half-a-dozen subalterns, a civilian twenty years her senior, one Major, and a man in the Indian Medical Department' (*William*, p. 171). She has bravely survived both a cholera epidemic and typhoid fever, 'during which her head had been shaved' (*William*, p. 172). Unlike most other female characters in colonial literature, William has adjusted to the local conditions in India without hesitation and has even learnt to handle the vernacular 'with a fluency that was envied by her seniors' (*William*, p. 172)

William's interests do not include the typical amusements of other women of the Victorian age, but cover activities that are normally exclusively male domains. Since she has been living in India, the girl has 'enjoyed herself hugely' (*William*, p. 171) in situations every other

¹³⁵ In fact, William's real name is never revealed throughout the story.

¹³⁶ Cf. Arondekar, p. 47.

woman in the colony would have perceived as at least inappropriate or even too dangerous for any feminine being:

Twice she had been nearly drowned while fording a river on horseback; once she had been run away with on a camel; had witnessed a midnight attack of thieves on her brother's camp; had seen justice administered, with long sticks, in the open under trees (*William*, p 171f.)

It appears that this young woman has not only accepted India as her temporary residence, but settled there. This suggestion is supported by the fact that she has cut her ties to the mother country completely. Unlike the other British citizens in India, William has stopped to correspond with her family in England. Also the news from the other side of the globe have lost relevance for her.

William is, as Spivak argues, the outcome of Kipling's effort to follow a contemporary trend and bring into being a figure that is to be understood as a New Woman.¹³⁷ Yet the gender role this woman assumes is debatable. To 'treat William differently, [Kipling] makes her almost a man' (Spivak, p. 158). On the one hand, the girl takes liberties that preceding generations of females were not granted. She is interested in masculine activities and conversations and assumes a predominantly male role in the works of empire. William follows her brother and Scott to a crisis region to actively help fighting a famine instead of retiring to the safer hill areas of India like the other women. Only in neglecting her femininity, she can take part in the imperial mission.

Yet, on the other hand, her participation in the men's activities is restricted. In conversations she is limited to the role of a passive listener who rolls cigarettes for her brother and Scott while they discuss important administrative matters.¹³⁸ Her commitment is only

¹³⁷ Cf. Spivak 1999, p. 157f.

¹³⁸ Cf. Arondekar, p. 67.

tolerated as long as no man is available to take over responsibility. Thus, her liberation from Victorian norms is not completed and only temporary. In the end, William assumes the gender role that society allots to her when she enters into a relationship with Scott and rediscovers her feminine, emotional side and gives up her old habits.¹³⁹

The Nuns of Mei-tan-fu

Unconditional participation in the civilizing mission by female characters is also presented in *The Painted Veil*. Yet, in Maugham's novel it is looked at from another angle. Unlike William, the nuns of the French catholic convent in Mei-tan-fu are not in China as private persons, but assume their humanitarian task as part of their effort to evangelize the native population. Like Kipling's heroine, they fulfil their duties as distinctly asexual beings. The major difference between William and the nuns, however, is that their asexuality is not linked to the disregard of contemporary gender roles, but to their celibacy imposed by their religious oath.

The missionaries attend to the convent situated not only in the heart of the city of Mei-tan-fu, but also in the centre of the cholera epidemic and thus amidst the danger of the disease. As Waddington tells Kitty, French attitudes towards evangelization differ profoundly from English customs. Unlike British helpers in the civilizing mission, the French nuns do not come to the colony with the intention ever to return home. They leave their own country for good and settle down in China, cutting both their ties to their land and their family. Regarding the colonial surrounding as their new home, they are personally much more involved than colonizers whose residence in the foreign territory is only temporary.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Cf. Arondekar, p. 67.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Holden, p. 88f.

Among the nuns, the Mother Superior is characterized in most detail. She is presented as highly spiritual, having followed the religious call that brought her to the convent in Mei-tan-fu in spite of personal doubts to leave her family. Even her very introduction is almost mystical. Before the woman enters the room, the door seems to magically open by itself. Inspecting her new acquaintance, Kitty is unable to guess the Mother Superior's age because of her youthful appearance. Yet, despite the fact that the nun has a flawless face, the 'dignity of her bearing, her assurance, and the emaciation of her strong and beautiful hands' (*Veil*, p. 99) reveal that she must be a middle aged woman. As Curtis observes, her superiority is not only due to her character and qualities like spirituality and modesty that are inherent to her, but is also founded on her aristocratic ancestry.¹⁴¹

The nuns are predominantly portrayed as superhumanly good creatures, yet in some instances it is revealed that behind their façade of graciousness there are still left some frail character traits. They have come to China as a small but close group that is only supported by newcomers if one of the team dies. Each bereavement is not only perceived as a tragedy for the mission, but is also felt to be a personal loss. The women take on work that they do not expect others to do, but for which fellow helpers like Walter Fane are endlessly admired if they nonetheless fulfil it. Whatever they do is supposed to be for the good of the natives. But in fact, the orphaned children in their care are only numbers. The nuns' help is connected to the term that those they save convert to Catholicism. Their humanitarian benefaction is thus inextricably linked with the personal motivation to extend the religious community the nuns belong to. The engagement in a civilizing mission under the guise of charity is merely partially more honourable than colonization. The native population is only respected if they profess

¹⁴¹ Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 167.

Christian faith. This ambiguity of their view also becomes clear in the nuns' side-swipes at Waddington's relationship with a woman from the foreign race. Although the missionaries act as if they accepted and unconditionally liked the natives, the Deputy Commissioner's connection to the Manchu woman is not fully tolerated. As it seems, they believe that this kind of interracial relation is bound to have a bad influence on a Westerner.

The nuns' attitude towards colonization in this respect can be compared to the general imperial point of view that the indigenous population is inferior and needs to be civilized, or in their case evangelized. Yet, the fact that their work focuses on helping those in need instead of being based on economic grounds makes them stand out from the bulk of the colonizers in a positive way. They participate benevolently in a mission that in the end even causes a major change in the initially most unreflective and indifferent protagonist of the novel.

4.3.2.2. The Belated Follower of the Missionary Call

Maugham's female protagonist arrives in Hong Kong completely uninvolved and uninterested in colonial matters. The imperial mission does not have any other influence on her life than providing her with the opportunity to escape an existence as a spinster in England at this point. Yet, in the course of the story, the foreign territory and her experiences there allow a personal development that would have been impossible in the mother country.

Kitty Fane is a superficial person coming from an English middle-class home. The young woman's attitudes and behaviour are mostly derived from her mother's treatment of the family. Mrs. Garstin has ambitiously brought up her daughter to become the wife of an influential man of high rank, manipulating, ignoring and suppressing the wishes of both Kitty and her sister, as well as their father. The mother

is portrayed as cold, calculating, and striving for social promotion with all means. She has always preferred the girl to her sister because she believed that Kitty was more attractive and thus had better chances to marry into money. Her mother has taught her to concentrate on appearance rather than personal qualities and thus the protagonist has become an appealing but egocentric person who is only interested in trivial things. According to her mother's opinion that the colonies are only a less-than-ideal solution to advance within the social hierarchy, Kitty sees her departure to Hong Kong merely as a welcome opportunity to avoid the social disgrace of attending her much younger sister's wedding with an aristocrat. Her acceptance of Walter Fane's proposal, thus is motivated merely by her trivial fear of losing face.

At the beginning of the story Kitty is described as shallow and vain. She is only interested in parties and small talk. Having refused several marriage proposals by suitable candidates, she panics at the thought of having to live as a spinster with her successfully married sister and becomes the wife of a man she does not love or even respect just to escape the fate she predicts for herself. But the connection with Walter Fane is inevitably doomed to failure, as he is an intelligent man who honestly loves her and she a superficial person who has blinded herself by outward appearances. As soon as the couple arrives in Hong Kong and hence is beyond the direct sphere of influence of Kitty's acquaintances in England, the woman ignores all social restrictions and begins an affair with another man. Her attraction to Charles Townsend is primarily based on his appearance. Yet, the fact that within the social structure of the colony, he also occupies a higher position than the Fanes suggests that the man's advances towards her are not only flattering for the woman's bored ego but also the possible fulfilment of her dreams of social advancement.

In spite of its superficiality, this liaison is the beginning of the protagonist's confrontation with the native world of China. With Charles Townsend Kitty not only breaks a social taboo but she also oversteps a racial border, as in order to meet her lover she enters the indigenous districts of Hong Kong for the first time.¹⁴² Furthermore, it is due to her husband's discovery of her adultery that the woman is forced to leave the city and its shallow society and hence is introduced to a different China, where her superficial values and her egocentrism are misplaced. The omnipresence of disease and death in Mei-tan-fu and the restless work of the officials against it lead to Kitty's sudden awareness of her insignificance and worthlessness, as Curtis argues.¹⁴³ Her awakening leads her through 'a purgatory [...] to an enlarged conception of herself, her husband, her lover, the whole meaning of life' (Curtis 1974, p. 167). The insight that her existence has been shallow and the constant contact with new acquaintances like Waddington and the nuns of the French convent in Mei-tan-fu change her general perspective. For the first time in her life, Kitty feels an urge to help for humanitarian reasons and not just because she wants to please.

However, the protagonist's involvement in the charitable work of the nuns is debatable. On the one hand, the woman appears to be altruistic in helping missionaries from another nation and with another religious background. She seems to sacrifice herself, but on the other hand, it remains unclear if her assignment is for the good of the native children or the nuns' sake. Kitty's attitude towards the Chinese orphans suggests that she only deals with them in order to occupy

¹⁴² Her perception of the curio shop is examined in chapter 4.1.3.

¹⁴³ Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 166f.

herself and be near the missionaries she admires so much.¹⁴⁴ When the nuns send her home after Walter's death, the woman does not want to leave the missionaries, but the fact that her departure will also end her work with the children is of minor importance for her.

Kitty's actions are motivated by the wish to find her place in life, which she thought she had encountered with the nuns of Mei-tan-fu. Feeling rejected by them, the woman falls back on old behaviour patterns. Despite the friendliness of Townsend's wife, Kitty sleeps with her former lover once again, but contrary to the first time, she now is aware that it was a mistake. Her experiences have really caused her attitudes to change, and when she decides to accompany her father to the Bahamas it seems plausible that she does not only want to be cared for, but also to put right her past mistakes. The colonial experience has thus at least altered her perspective and taught her respect for other people.

4.3.2.3. Descendants of the Fishing Fleet

One of the clichés connected with colonialism, which Orwell takes up in *Burmese Days* is that the sole reason for unmarried women to come to foreign territories is to look for a husband. Both Elizabeth Lackersteen, the new arrival in Kyauktada, and her aunt use the British colony as the setting to find a man to marry the girl and thus take over financial responsibility for her from her uncle. The English women portrayed in the novel are not involved and even less interested in colonial issues. Their attitude towards the imperial mission and the natives is based on superficial prejudices rather than fundamental knowledge of the circumstances.

¹⁴⁴ Even after the protagonist has had much contact to the native children she sees them as monsters rather than human beings and can only very slowly get used to their appearance.

Mrs. Lackersteen

Although the wife of Mr. Lackersteen occupies only a minor role in *Burmese Days*, this character is important as regards the portrayal of Western women in the colonial surrounding. She personifies the stereotypical English female who has stranded in a foreign country that does not interest her. She is an attractive woman in her thirties, who 'endure[s] all the horrors' (*Burmese*, p. 26) of Burma just to keep her husband under control. Right at the beginning of the story it becomes clear that this woman is unable to respond to the colonial situation in an adequate way. She snobbishly indulges in the luxury of using a rickshaw to reach the Club although it lies within walking distance from her house. Her opinion on the imperial mission corresponds to the general belief that the colonizers are a blessing for the uncultured. According to this, she honestly believes that the presence of the British colonizers is the best that has ever happened to the natives, whom she thinks to be both unworthy of and ungrateful for the effort the intruders make in Burma.

Mrs. Lackersteen is the constant reminder of what is to become of Elizabeth as soon as she is married. This 'scheming and snobbish wife' (Alldritt, p. 67) of the local manager of a timber firm is the only woman to serve as a role model for the girl. Elizabeth and her aunt can thus be regarded as present and future variant of one and the same type of character.

Elizabeth Lackersteen

Elizabeth is a tall and slender young woman in her early twenties with short blonde hair. Yet despite her modern appearance, she is not a self-determined girl in search of an adventure or a place to find her fulfilment, but, as Paxton argues, only the descendent of a New

Woman.¹⁴⁵ She knows how inconvenient life can be without sufficient financial background from the time she spent as a working girl in Paris. Living with a suffragette mother who was unable to sustain the family, she has decided rather to 'engage in polite prostitution' (Paxton, p. 263) and marry any man who might take her than ever again to earn her own living.

After her mother died, the orphaned girl sees in her coming to Burma, where her aunt and uncle live, the solution to her problems. The abundance of unmarried men in the colonial surrounding as well as the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Lackersteen have agreed to care for her as a start are the perfect circumstances to enter her personal mission 'to find an appropriate, upwardly mobile British husband' (Paxton, p. 263) within the colonial community and thus financially secure herself. However, reality does not come up to her expectations. Her aunt only unwillingly accommodates her, her uncle sexually harasses the girl, and the only man to marry is John Flory, with whom she is completely incompatible.

When Elizabeth arrives in Kyauktada, she has a preconceived picture of how life has to be in the colonies, which stems from the reading of romances with an Anglo-Indian setting, as Paxton observes.¹⁴⁶ Yet this idea she has of the outposts of the British empire refers exclusively to the English society there. The girl has no interest in the native areas and its inhabitants. Flory, on the other hand, appears to be fascinated by everything Burmese. While he wants to introduce her to the indigenous world of Kyauktada, she prefers the company of the other British citizens and is 'wholly committed to the values of the Club world' (Lee, p. 6) he despises. Every attempt by the man to interest her in the native population, the local customs, and the

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Paxton, p. 264.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Paxton, p. 264.

natural surrounding of the town ends with the exposure of Elizabeth's superficiality and incapability 'of the imaginative effort required to tolerate an alien civilisation' (Hammond, p. 96).¹⁴⁷ Although the woman's shallowness is obvious Flory cannot see how she really is because he is blind with love.¹⁴⁸

The two have completely contrary expectations from the other and from life. Flory wants the girl to be both 'friend and companion' (Goonetilleke 1988, p. 123) to rescue him from his solitude. According to Paxton, Elizabeth in turn is not as sentimental as he, though, and would only marry him for financial reasons.¹⁴⁹ The only occasion where the girl shows any affection for Flory is on their hunting trip. Yet her feelings for him are closely connected with her excitement about the hunt and thus of short duration. In the jungle she 'reveals her latent capacity for violence' (Lee, p. 7). While the protagonist only shoots at some pigeons to impress her, she is thrilled at the mere act of killing the animals.¹⁵⁰ Even in this situation the man does not sense their fundamental difference but holds on to the illusion of having found someone to share his life with.

However, Elizabeth's interest in Flory ends as soon as Verrall arrives on the scene. In him, the girl recognizes a potential partner who shares her passions better than the protagonist and quickly redirects her attention to the newcomer. Like her, Verrall is a young, and attractive but shallow snob who despises the indigenous inhabitants of the colony. As they both are similar in their character and their interests, a relationship between them would be successful,

¹⁴⁷ Elizabeth and Flory's excursions to the native districts are examined in chapter 4.1.3.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Goonetilleke 1988, p. 123.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Paxton, p. 263.

¹⁵⁰ As Lee observes, her excitement at the sight of the dead animals verges on sexual ecstasy. (Cf. Lee, p. 7.)

as Schefold argues.¹⁵¹ But while Elizabeth wants him to commit himself to her, Verrall sees their affair only as a flirtation and leaves her without even saying good-bye.

As before, Flory remains the young woman's only escape from both poverty and the sexual advances of her uncle. But the revelation of his past affair with a native woman destroys all sympathy that she has left for the protagonist. His breaking of a social and racial taboo in her perception is too disgusting to be forgiven. In her oath never to excuse Flory's misconduct Elizabeth reveals the order of her priorities. 'Anything – spinsterhood, drudgery, anything – sooner than the alternative. [...] Death sooner, far sooner' (*Burmese*, p. 290f) than marrying a man who has been contaminated by the intimate contact with an indigenous girl. As she refuses to approach anything or anyone native, she rejects Flory for his "going native". Her 'incompatibility with the natural world becomes final – and the cause of suffering and death' (Lee, p. 5), as Lee claims.¹⁵² She misses the chance to break out of a decaying system and instead marries a decent member of the British society to become a snobbish wife in the colony like her aunt in the end.

Elizabeth is, like Kitty Fane at the beginning of *The Painted Veil*, a superficial English girl being loved by a man who does not attract her and confronted with the new, foreign surrounding of the East. As she only sees the façade of people and is not interested to get to know what lies behind it, she is unable to relate to Flory, his ideas, and the colonial situation. Unlike Kitty she does not develop, but remains in her ignorance of everything beyond her comprehension.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Schefold, p. 138f.

¹⁵² Cf. Lee, p. 4f.

4.4. The Colonized

Although the indigenous population of the colonies is an important factor of life in the foreign territories, in most texts of the colonial genre, the portrayal of natives occupies only little space. Indigenous characters are mainly restricted to supporting roles and only of interest if their involvement with the Western protagonist is of relevance from the colonizers' perspective.

As the focus of the texts reveals the perspective of the authors as Englishmen, the way in which native characters are employed and examined is an indicator of the British point of view as well. In both Kipling and Maugham's texts, the few natives that are introduced are presented as relatively passive observers of imperial procedures. They are not important and above all not competent enough to be of interest. Only the female characters are more closely looked at as a threat to the protagonists' assignment.

Orwell's indigenous figures, on the other hand, are examined in more detail. As Hammond argues, the author's native characters are memorable, well-developed and convincing.¹⁵³ According to Goonetilleke, they even show Orwell's ability to put himself in the position of the aboriginal population.¹⁵⁴

4.4.1. Native Supporters of the Colonial System

In Kipling's short stories with a colonial setting, male natives are primarily introduced as passive followers of the imperial system. They are either nameless, incompetent participants in the work of the colonizers, employed at the most basic level as helpers in crisis regions (for instance in "William the Conqueror"), or they hold the position of servants and to a certain degree confidants of the

¹⁵³ Cf. Hammond, p. 95.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Goonetilleke 1988, p. 122.

protagonist. The latter are only related to the British via the main character, on a private level. Pir Khan, the warden of Holden's house in "Without Benefit of Clergy", and the native butler Ahmed Khan, for example, are the only outsiders who know about the protagonist's secret life. Because they help Holden to keep his marriage to Ameera undiscovered and thus secure the protagonist's participation in the imperial task, they indirectly support the colonial system as a whole.

The roles that are distributed to indigenous males in Maugham's *The Painted Veil* are similar. In Hong Kong the only Chinese who are mentioned are the servants who attend the Fanes' house and thus have the most intimate insight into the couple's private affairs, and the curio dealer in the indigenous quarters of the city. Likewise, the natives who are directly connected to the colonial officials in Mei-tan-fu can be compared to those in Kipling's narratives. Local executives like Colonel Yü who are supposed to manage the lowest level of the administration and the combat against the cholera crisis are heavily dependent on their British superiors to advise them. Although they occupy decisive positions in the colonial structure, they appear rather helpless and incompetent and can only follow the instructions of their supervisors.

Only in *Burmese Days* some native characters are granted more importance within the life of the main protagonist. Flory's butler Ko S'la, for instance, not only is a servant but also cares for his employer like an elder brother would do. Yet the most important relation the main character has is with Dr Veraswami, his intimate friend and confidant.

Dr Veraswami

The figure of the native doctor is an interesting creation of Orwell. Being an Indian in British ruled Burma, he is an alien to both groups, yet nearer the indigenous population. Flory's friend is a Western

educated man, who is highly influenced by European thinking and the values of the British intruders. It is striking in the conversations of Veraswami and the protagonist that their attitudes towards the imperial mission differ immensely. While Flory condemns his fellow colonizers and their treatment of the aboriginal population, the doctor is 'a loyal British subject who always defends imperialism' (Meyers 1975, p. 69). Veraswami is convinced of the superiority of the English race and the rightness of the imperial endeavour.¹⁵⁵

Flory's friend seems to have been brainwashed by his Western educators. Although he is an intelligent man, he blindly believes the 'empty promises of Imperialism [and] all the false hopes raised by countless works of propaganda' (Shelden, p. 120). Schefold understands Veraswami as a ridiculous idealist, who abides by values of which not even the colonizers are convinced any longer.¹⁵⁶ In spite, or perhaps just because of the way the natives are disrespected and exploited by the system, he adheres stubbornly to the opinion the colonizers have taught him. Notwithstanding his being one of the victims of the existing system, Veraswami benevolently and obsequiously accepts the propagated inferiority of the Eastern races and thus helps to uphold colonialism.

4.4.2. *The Native Villain*

The use of the figure of the native villain is restricted to Orwell's *Burmese Days*. In the short stories of Kipling, as Schefold notices, life in the colonies is portrayed as the harmonious cohabitation of colonizers and colonized. The Indians are presented as inferior to the British and in their submissive role are incapable of critique or even

¹⁵⁵ As Shelden observes, these conversations about the Empire 'provide Orwell with a way of dramatising some of the contradictions in the imperial system' (Shelden, p. 120).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Schefold, p. 215f.

rebellion.¹⁵⁷ The position of the indigenous population in the colonial territories of Hong Kong and Mei-tan-fu of Maugham's *The Painted Veil* is similarly unproblematic. The Chinese appear to accept their status within the colonial system and peacefully cooperate with their oppressors.

Only against the background of colonial Kyauktada in *Burmese Days*, the rise of an indigenous scoundrel is plausible. The land and its people have been exploited for a long time and even the dominating group questions the British presence in the colony. Furthermore, the official position of U Po Kyin provides him with both the opportunity and the knowledge to misuse the system for his own ends.

The Burmese magistrate is, according to many critics, the only character that really comes to life in the novel.¹⁵⁸ He is portrayed as a 'lavishly dressed, enormously fat' (Meyers 1975, p. 67) native without any morals who built his career on blackmail and treachery. His primary aim is to be the first Burmese to be admitted to the British Club. Although he occupies only a supporting role, U Po Kyin is the decisive factor in the course of the events of the novel. Due to his conspiracies the downfall of both Flory and his best friend Dr Veraswami is provoked.¹⁵⁹

Despite the fact that he belongs to the group of the colonized, the magistrate is the most influential character in the British outpost. Behind the scenes of official Kyauktada he is the one who manipulates and controls both colonizers and colonized. As he is able to predict exactly the reactions of the British to his actions he is the only person in the area who really holds any power. U Po Kyin's moves are

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Schefold, p. 237.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Alldritt, p. 24.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Meyers 1975, p. 67. Meyers sees in the corrupt way U Po Kyin's career progressed the most 'serious criticism of both the English rule that permits his success and his English superiors who so disastrously misjudge his character' (Meyers 1975, p. 67).

scheming but clever and hence his dream of becoming the first oriental member of the British Club is fulfilled. It is merely one of the ironies in *Burmese Days* that he dies before he can indulge in his triumph. In the end, thus, even U Po Kyin's knowledge of the weak spots of his enemies and his election to the Club do not change the colonial situation of the British outpost. While in Kyauktada life goes on as it used to since the British arrived, Flory, Veraswami, and the magistrate himself are some more nameless victims of imperialism.

4.4.3. *Native Women*

The representation of native females in colonial narratives is primarily restricted to their role as sexual and emotional seducer of British men in the Eastern territory. As members of the despised foreign population, the texts present them as a 'source of contamination' (Singh, p. 113) for decent colonizers, who distract their lovers from their duties within the imperial mission. Relationships between Englishmen and native women are regarded as shameful and as the cause of regrettable events.¹⁶⁰ As participants in interracial affairs they are 'given presence and voice' in Kipling's narratives only to be 'finally erased' (Sullivan, p. 11) as a punishment for their seduction of a man from the superior race. In the later texts, the native woman is perceived as less dangerous to the imperial mission, but nevertheless she is regarded as a source of irritation in the novels of both Maugham and Orwell.

4.4.3.1. *Native Wives And Lovers*

If interracial relationships are not only restricted to a sexual affair, but also involve emotions, the consequences of the lovers' misconduct are often dramatic. Above all in Kipling's narratives native women who

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Singh, p. 113. Although Singh refers exclusively to Kipling's texts, this statement also applies to the interracial liaisons in both *The Painted Veil* and *Burmese Days*.

are involved with a British man suffer severe punishment in the end. The short stories "Beyond the Pale" and "Without Benefit of Clergy" similarly introduce young, indigenous females who distract a colonizer's attention from his imperial task and thus are the major factor of disturbance in colonial matters.

Bisesa

Trejago's lover Bisesa is a girl who is imprisoned in her uncle's house within the maze of an Indian city. Although she is only fifteen years old, the young woman is already a widow. When the protagonist meets her, he falls in love with the child despite the difference in age. She is the personification and the eroticization of the childlike as a potential attraction for a mature man, as Sullivan observes.¹⁶¹ In her naïve desire for someone to love her, she ignores social restrictions and actively establishes contact to the protagonist. The girl hence makes him the victim of her seduction as well as her accomplice in the act of overstepping the racial border. But as the narrator of the story warns, the different races are not allowed to intermingle and consequently the forbidden desire of the couple must end in pain.

When Bisesa learns about her lover's association with a woman of his own race, she sends him away and confesses her affair to her custodian. The reaction to her revelation changes both her life and that of her lover. Yet the crucial point of the story is the punishment the couple has to face. Although they were both involved in the affair, the girl is sanctioned much harder with the amputation of both her hands while Trejago's injury only causes him to limp. As so often in Kipling's texts, the native woman is punished more severely than the equally involved colonizer. For the maintenance of the colonial system, it is the colonizer who is regarded as the decisive character whose assignment is indispensable and thus must not be endangered.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Sullivan, p. 95.

Ameera

Like Bisesa, the female protagonist of “Without Benefit of Clergy” is an exceedingly young native woman who has a relationship with an Englishman. Yet unlike the former, Ameera is not simply having an affair, but lives in cohabitation with Holden. The young woman was bought from her mother by her husband when she was only fourteen years old and now, two years later, the couple is expecting their first child.¹⁶² As in “Beyond the Pale”, their relationship dominates the man’s thoughts and has a negative impact on Holden’s colonial work. Both the wife and the child have no significance as individuals in the story but stand for the danger of an Englishman’s alienation from his community and the neglect of his imperial mission. The death of Ameera and their son is the logical conclusion that eliminates the source of irritation and grants the restoration of the colonial order.

The Manchu Woman

Although Waddington’s Manchu woman in *The Painted Veil* is only a nameless minor character, according to Curtis, she is one of the few plausible native figures of Maugham’s colonial texts.¹⁶³ She is a ‘ravishing creature’ (Curtis 1974, p. 167) who has fallen in love with a man from the colonizing race and accepts to live isolated from her community with the Englishman. As in Kipling’s texts, the native woman cannot be accepted as a member of the colonial society due to her otherness. Yet, unlike Bisesa and Ameera, the Manchu woman profits from her husband’s ability to keep his official life and his private existence apart. The only restriction caused by their marriage is that Waddington is excluded from promotion within the colonial

¹⁶² That a girl of this age should marry a man twice as old as she, is no doubt questionable, but nevertheless, as Havholm observes, not discussed in the texts. (Cf. Havholm 2008, p. 81.)

¹⁶³ Cf. Curtis 1974, p. 159.

hierarchy. Because their relationship does not affect his work in the imperial mission, the native wife can remain by his side.

4.4.3.2. *The Native Concubine*

In Orwell's colonial world of Kyauktada, the interracial relationship between Flory and Ma Hla May is not based on love but exclusively on sex. Both the protagonist and his mistress see their affair as a means to their personal end. The man keeps his concubine to satisfy his most basic, animal drives, while for her the connection with a Westerner is an economic necessity as it provides her with her only income.¹⁶⁴ The absence of any feeling towards the other is striking in their liaison and reflected by the unattractive appearance of both the protagonist and his mistress. Ma Hla May is described as an unfeminine creature who does not correspond to Western ideals of beauty and even is perceived as disgusting in her otherness. She regards Flory as her husband not out of affection towards him, but simply because being considered as his wife improves her prestige within the society of the natives.

Yet, despite her corruptness, Ma Hla May is like all other characters in *Burmese Days* only a victim of the depraved colonial system. The punishment for her crossing of a racial border is only an exaggeration of her transgression. After having sexually interfered with a colonizer she ends up as a prostitute in a brothel and thus remains trapped in her role as a slave of the exploitative system of imperialism.

¹⁶⁴ Paxton argues that Ma Hla May is literally a slave to Flory. (Cf. Paxton, p. 261.)

5. Conclusion

In the texts of the colonial genre, the position of the characters within the imperial power structure is reflected in their attitudes towards the foreign race and the colonial situation as a whole. Yet, their circumstances also give information about the status of the empire.

At the beginning of colonial writing the opposing groups of the dominating race and the indigenous population are represented as benevolently living side by side. Only if the strict separation of the races is ignored, the stability of the colonial society is at risk and the mission the colonizers have come to fulfil is endangered. The blind belief in the social hierarchy of the foreign territories dominates both colonizers and colonized and prevents any questioning of the system.

With the approaching destruction of the British Empire the colonial endeavor is demystified and the issues that occupy the characters are no longer exclusively connected with racial differences as such, but also touch the internal problems of the British colonial society. The protagonists' attitudes towards the imperial mission and the other race becomes more critical and allows more freedom within the strict regimentations of the colonial system.

The texts by Kipling, Maugham, and Orwell present English protagonists with a British point of view, within an exotic surrounding. For further research of colonial texts, the examination of different perspectives suggests itself. The position of a native focalizer, for instance, is completely excluded from this discussion. The representation of a native protagonist within the colonial situation as portrayed by an author with an English background could reveal new aspects of this genre. Also the discussion and comparison of colonial

texts by contemporary native writers could offer new insights into life in the East during the era of colonialism.

In the examination of colonial literature, also the role of women leaves a relatively broad field of investigation. Both the European and the native females' position in these narratives have not been explored exhaustively, as yet. And finally, also the significance of female writers of the imperial period, like for instance Aphra Behn, leaves much room for further research.

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Zusammenfassung

Kolonialliteratur ist mehr als andere Genres ein Spiegel der Geschichte und ihres Zeitgeistes. Vor dem Hintergrund der massiven Expansion des britischen Königreiches und seines Aufschwunges zum weltweiten Imperium entwickelte sich ab dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert ein eigenständiger Teilbereich der Literatur, an dessen Texten sich Entwicklungen des Imperialismus und der vorherrschenden Einstellung zur anderen Rasse und der zivilisatorischen Aufgabe, die es zu erfüllen galt, ablesen lassen.

Die von England ausgehende und sich nach und nach in ganz Europa durchsetzende Industrialisierung begünstigte den Erfolg des britischen Reiches. Vor allem im asiatischen Raum konnten die Kolonialherren ein umfassendes Netzwerk an Besitzungen aufbauen, dessen Erträge Großbritannien in seiner Position als Wirtschaftsgroßmacht festigten.

Mit der Blütezeit des Kolonialismus erlebten auch die davon handelnden Kurzgeschichten und Romane einen Aufschwung. Autoren wie Rudyard Kipling, der im Allgemeinen als Begründer der Kolonialliteratur angesehen wird, schöpften aus einem persönlichen Erfahrungsschatz kolonialer Erlebnisse und prägten mit ihrer Darstellung das im Mutterland vorherrschende Bild der asiatischen Besitzungen über Generationen. In seinen Texten wird vorwiegend die unangefochtene Vormachtstellung der Briten in Indien gefeiert und die unermüdliche Arbeit der aus England gekommenen Beamten gewürdigt. Der Kontakt zu den Einheimischen wird in Kiplings Erzählungen als Gefährdung der zivilisatorischen Mission thematisiert, die unbedingt vermieden werden sollte.

Erst Jahrzehnte später lenkten William Somerset Maughams Texte mit kolonialem Hintergrund die Aufmerksamkeit der Leserschaft auf die fernöstlichen Besitzungen in Malaysia und China. Aufgrund der relativen Gefestigkeit der kolonialen Verhältnisse konzentriert sich seine Arbeit

hauptsächlich auf Beziehungen innerhalb der britischen Gesellschaft anstatt des Kontaktes zur anderen Rasse.

Gegen Ende der Kolonialzeit wird auch die Kritik am Imperialismus lauter. Als einer der Hauptvertreter der kritischen Autoren stellt sich George Orwell, der wie auch Kipling zuvor, einen persönlichen Bezug zur Materie hat, vor allem in seinen Essays seiner Vergangenheit als Kolonialherr. In seinem einzigen Kolonialroman werden anhand der fiktiven Geschehnisse in einem kleinen Außenposten der indischen Provinz Burma die grundlegenden Probleme, die die Kolonialsituation mit sich bringt, thematisiert. Anders als die älteren Texte von Kipling und Maugham, stellt Orwells Roman eine bittere Abrechnung mit einem in nicht länger vertretbaren Strukturen erstarrten System dar.

Der jeweilige Standpunkt der Autoren wird anhand der Darstellung ihrer Protagonisten und deren Position im kolonialen Gefüge deutlich. Der Umgang der literarischen Charaktere mit der eigenen und der fremden Rasse in der kolonialen Situation zeigt eine Entwicklung, die Aufschwung, Blütezeit und Verfall des britischen Imperiums nachzeichnet.

Curriculum Vitae

- 1996 Matura und Aufnahme des Studiums Indogermanistik/Anglistik an der Universität Wien
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- 2003 Abschluss des Nebens Studiums Spanisch
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