SCHOLARS: Journal of Arts & Humanities

Print ISSN: 2773-7829; e-ISSN: 2773-7837 eJournal Site: www.cdetu.edu.np/ejournal/

• Peer-Reviewed, Open Access Journal

• Indexed in NepJOL; Star-Ranked in JPPS

• Permanently Archived in Portico



Central Department of English Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur, Nepal

URL: www.cdetu.edu.np

Review Article

Orwell's "A Hanging" and Kingston's "Girlhood Among **Ghosts**": Narratives of the Imperial World

Mani Bhadra Gautam, PhD 🕩



Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Nepal

Article History: Submitted 15 May 2022; Reviewed 16 July 2022; Revised 5 August 2022 Corresponding Author: Mani Bhadra Gautam, Email: gautammanibhadra@yahoo.com

Copyright 2022 © The Author(s). The publisher may reuse published articles with prior permission of the concerned author(s). The work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). www.cdetu.edu.np



DOI: https://doi.org/10.3126/sjah.v4i2.47428

Abstract

George Orwell's "A Hanging" unfolds sordid realities of the colonial enterprise in South Asia when humans remain subservient to imperial power politics whereas Maxine Hong Kingston's "Girlhood Among Ghosts" explores some of the issues existent in Asian-American society. These narratives employed in these essays express individual subjective speculations and collective experiences from historical perspectives as the narrators collect the events from their past life in societies different from their original locations. Considering the protagonists' experience of their past life, this paper exposes the protagonists' experiences and their sufferings in exile. In this paper, I argue that Orwell's and Kingston's narratives of hanging and throat-cut embody a realistic picture of the British imperial police against the native Hindu Brahmin and American hegemony respectively. Orwell's narrative anticipates anticipate the fall of the British Empire in South Asia that actually took place in 1947 whereas Kingston sheds light on Asian-Americans' predicament in decline from the world scene.

Keywords: Capital punishment, colonial-police, horror, immigrants, Dravidian

Introduction

George Orwell's "A Hanging" explores the author's memory and experience in the setting of the Burmese jungle during his tenure in the British Imperial Police. Published in *The Adelphi* in 1931, this essay unravels the British atrocity through a fictional representation of hanging of a Hindu prisoner of the Dravidian race in South India. During his tenure in the British Imperial Police from 1922 to 1927, he closely observes incidents of injustice and misconduct of the colonial ruler upon the colonized communities in South Asia, whereas Maxine Hong Kingston's "Girlhood Among Ghosts" taken from The Woman Warrior, Memories of Girlhood Among Ghosts 1976 unpacks the misery of Chinese-American immigrants. Such ill-treatments of the rulers alienate the natives of the colonies, and thus, place humans with different cultures and

SCHOLARS: Journal of Arts & Humanities Volume 4, No. 2, August 2022 [pp. 124-134] value systems for immigrants. In the context of Orwell's narrative, the nineteenth-century British imperial regime's imposition upon an indigenous Hindu Brahmin is about an exile of prisoner followed by execution, a scene indicative to the British withdrawal from South Asia in 1947 but Kingston's narrative is about the issues of social problems, exile, psychological torture and misery in cruelty to the Chinese-American immigrants that she experienced herself. Orwell's narrative of the British colonial authority in its sheer inhuman act persists itself to its decline since the regime contains a genesis of the imperial fall from the world map and Chinese-American immigrants' problems in exile and its impact creates horror among South Asians.

During the inter-war period (1918-1939), the British Empire in its declining phase brings horror in South Asia. It continues its misdemeanor with the people of different cultures for its benefits from its colonized territories for natural resources for the industries and market for the industrial products. Orwell's first person narrative blends fiction and non-fiction to increase the gravity of the atrocity in the hand of the ruling people in a distant region. Precisely, managing people of different cultures requires respect from the part of the ruling class. Otherwise, the regime declines because of forces: internal and external. In that sense, the end of the British regime in 1947 is rooted in several cases of atrocity, including the execution of the Dravidian Hindu prisoner in the Burmese jungle. Policeman embodies treatments in India and exhibits grave consequences of power relations between the ruler and the ruled, knower and known, and colonial and native. At that point, the jail superintendent along with his guards invokes resentment from the innocent natives who are subjects to the authority's inhuman acts.

The Narratives of Brutality

"A Hanging" is set in the jungle scene of Burma, where Orwell was serving as the British Imperial police from 1922 to 1927. During his tenure, he chronicles misconducts of the police superintendent, the head jailor and the hang man with the Hindu prisoner. In the meantime, the first person narrator projects the hangman's modest approach to execute the authority's directives to hang the Hindu Brahmin. On the one hand, the hangman demonstrates his loyalty to the authority and, on the other hand, he presents his helpless situation in which he has to accept the command like a machine. The head jailor follows the command of authority and the hangman finishes his job for which prisoner has to accept silently as Orwell writes, "One prisoner had been brought out of his cell. He was a Hindu, a puny wisp of a man, with a shaven head and vague liquid eyes" ("A Hanging" 1). He has no choice, but he recounts the concerted execution of a Hindu man imprisoned for his reaction against the imperial authority. Considering the British colonial authoritarian rule, Orwell himself gives details of hardship of the Burmese in Myanmar. His way of expression of the events with memories and experiences as a writer illustrates the incidents to expose the brutal use of power politics of ruling class.

Orwell writes from imperial perspectives and political problems in their colonies, but Kingston writes on the issues of exile, torture and misery of Chinese-American immigrants. Kingston tells the stories of throat-cut and retells the stories that she heard from her mother and friends. Kingston, born in Stockton, California in 1940 has an experience of Chinese immigrants in America. She was the first of six American-born children in a Chinese family whose oral storytelling traditions have been a major influence on her work, whereas she speaks about her dreams, desires and experiences. At that point, Kingston affirms that she would have been the knot-maker if she had lived in China. In "Girlhood Among Ghosts," she writes, "Maybe that's why my mother cut my

tongue. She pushed my tongue up and sliced the frenum. Or maybe she snipped it with a pair of nail scissors" (*Joys of Reading*, 46). She writes that her mother used to tell the stories and describes the painful events like scissoring. She presents her conversation with her mother in this way:

"Why did you do that to me, my Mother?"

"I told you."

"Tell me again."

move in any language. You'll be able to speak languages that are completely different from one another. You will be able to pronounce anything. Your frenum looked too tight to do those things, so I cut it." ((*Joys of Reading*, 46) Kingston's mother took throat-cutting as a means for learning things. She learnt English in school in the neighborhood, whereas she acquired the Cantonese in the family and her Chinese –American communities. At the early age of nine, she developed a love for writing verse, and she was always considered one of the brightest students in her classes. Her exceptional academic record led to eleven different scholarships to the University of California at Berkeley where she developed her passion to write. Mother takes America as a ghost country and writes, "Things are different in this ghost country" (46). For Kingston, ghosts refer spirits and demons that Chinese believe to be American strangers

"I cut it so that you would not be tongue-tied. Your tongue would be able to

Kingston's first book entitled *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* published in 1976 explores the issues of social problems and torture to the women who have had negative impact on life-women whose voices have never been heard. One of the most poignant stories "No Name Woman: My Aunt" deals with her aunt, who was left alone in China when her husband shifted for America where she gave birth to an illegitimate child. Having a child outside of wedlock was absolutely taboo and thus a threat to the community's stability, her whole village rose up against her, forcing her to kill not only herself but also her child. From then on, even mentioning her name was forbidden; for all intents and purposes, it was if she had never existed. By writing about her aunt, however, Kingston felt that she was able to rescue the unfortunate woman from oblivion and gave back her life but she failed to resist herself.

who exercise power rather than humanity. In this sense, the ghost is an ideological

illusion that tortures people and creates psychological problems.

Kingston's narratives include stories of social problems, torture and loneliness against isolation among the immigrant communities. She argues that the Chinese girls are silent natured and they enjoy among Chinese and Negro immigrants but the Japanese are noisy and tough. She writes, "I liked the Negro students (Black Ghosts) best because they laughed the loudest and talked to me as if I were a daring talker too. . . Japanese kids were noisy and tough" (47). Chinese, Japanese and African immigrants are named, categorized and made the works differently even in the homes and schools on the basis of dress codes and behavioral trends. About their voices and versions, she writes, "... the whole class went to the auditorium except the Chinese girls. The teacher lovely and Hawaiian, should have understood about us, but instead left us behind in the classroom. Our voices were too soft or nonexistent, and our parents never signed the permission slips anyway. They never signed anything unnecessary" (48). They take extra classes to improve their languages; they take the lessons from different languages but they cannot achieve great success with excellences as the students do in the mother tongue. Narratives in "Girlhood Among Ghosts" make coverage to the stories of Asian-American immigrant's children who suffer doubly in the name of culture in the one hand and American civilization on the other hand. Kingston raises the issues of human suffering

and isolation as Orwell does but Orwell brings the issues of geographical, religious and political problems in addition to her narratives.

In "Girlhood Among the Ghosts," narratives are about the problems of the Chinese-American immigrants whereas parents, especially the mother, accepts the daughter's throat-cut in the name of linguistic correctness, fluency and the sound improvement, but in "A Hanging" the narrator exposes the war events that he experienced in Burma. The narratives include the events that Burma was not only in threat but also in an attack of imperialists. The soldiers experience the horrific situation and the prisoners spend the time monotonously walking here and there in the jungle. His own experience as a police staff is horrific while facing the activities of British colonial administrator's attacks over the natives in South Asia and his responses are doubtful like the remarks of a frustrated man. Kingston is loyal about acceptance of British activities like a throat-cut of child in the name of linguistic correctness and better pronunciation. In this regard, Edward Said postulates his theoretical frame of Orientals to examine the American hegemony and the colonial subversion of the indigenous and immigrant communities in Asian countries like Africa:

Going back to the days of European Empires, Orientalism is a body of western knowledge used to stereotype and subjugate those people who resided in what used to be called the 'Orient' (the Middle East and Far East). The Orient was perceived to be both inferior yet paradoxically also a severe threat to the political and religious stability of the west; the European response was to use considerable resources in studying and consolidating their knowledge of this other. Such Orientalist knowledge can be thought of as a mirror that the West holds up to see its own prejudices. Western ascendancy was shaken by the energy and political crisis of the 1970s, especially the Islamic revolution in Iran. ("Islam as News" 186)

In Said's line of argument, the oriental culture exposes the west's political constructs and Asian immigrant's academic practices in America. The western thinkers and historians develop the concept of the non-west as the oriental who work in their convenience. Relegating the people and the culture of Asia and Africa to non-western entities, the western scholars and critics undermine the natives as helpless without sound education and refined world view.

In relation to the Islam news of Oriental values, the Indian administrators are conveying the information about Occidental belief of the western supremacy in the Burmese jungle that undermines the oriental land of certain norms and values. About the scope of Orientals and "Orientalism," Said explains orientalism as a political construct:

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism has that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by

Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a 'free subject of thought or action . . . Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, and then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction. When it became common practice during the nineteenth century for Britain to retire its administrators from India and elsewhere. . . (*Orientalism* 3)

Orientalism in this sense is working as a social transformation tool that helps to judge the eastern and western values that is learnt, earned and valued to link the eastern cultural values with the western supremacy. However, western people are always rude to the eastern individuals and they undermine the eastern honesty and passion in politics and regime structure.

As an Oriental, Kingston in "Girlhood Among Ghosts" brings the terrifying images of sick and dying babies, ghosts, and monsters which led her to divide her world into that of a normal American girl and that of the nightmarish ghost world of her mother's China as Abrams Dennis states:

As for Brave Orchid, her life (as well as her daughter's) in America is haunted by a new kind of ghost, just as frightening as the "real" ghosts in China. "Taxi Ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts, Meter Reader Ghosts, Tree Trimming Ghosts, Five-and-Dime Ghosts." But just as Brave Orchid, with bravery and courage, conquered both the Chinese ghosts and the American "ghosts," Kingston herself would have to learn to be brave and courageous. ("Girlhood Among Ghosts"67)

Dennis states Kingston as a representative of Asian-American victim looking for relief of the immigrant women who are physically, socially and psychologically tortured.

In the words of William Carlos Williams, "she blends the real with the unreal and the fictitious, and the mythic" (*In the American Grain* 41). Deborah L. Madsen, in her study of Kingston, states that her style is "convoluted," and it is consciously strived to achieve the ghost images by breaking the systematic patterns of life as the life itself is a collection of ups and down. She brings the myth and mystery together in her narratives that represent the lives of Asian-American immigrants there. She highlights that the ghosts are those who threaten Chinese traditions by drawing people away from Chinese culture or by subverting them and the narratives in Orwell's essay has coverage of colonial perspectives. Asian Hindus are suffering of the imperial police brutality over the prisoner and Chinese-American are struggling for their identity and education.

Political, Cultural and Psychological Frames

The essay "A Hanging" is shaped in imperial political frame whereas the narratives in "Girlhood Among Ghosts" include the issues of socio-cultural activities and suffering of the immigrants. Narratives in "Girlhood Among Ghosts" make a flaw of the throat-cut memory and painful experiences in learning activities of the Chinese-American girl and "A Hanging" questions on identity of the imperial soldiers, jail superintendent, jailors and hangman who are indoctrinated with imperial ideologies. Major incidents in "A Hanging" set in the Burmese jungle are imperialist activities that grouped and created the images of small cells where "prisoner's living conditions are being treated inhumanly" (1). In Orwell's account, the cells where the prisoners are kept are very small like cages for parrots or the congested bars for keeping the animals and in Kingston's "Girlhood Among Ghosts" schools are guided vaguely where the immigrant children cannot learn the language easily that brings immigrant's problems exposed as human suffering and ill-practice of the society.

Said brings it as a practice of Christian belief and writes, "... defeated and distant and hence not a constant worry" ("Islam as News" 188). In a smaller fashion, Orwell describes the cell in this way: "It was a brick erection like three sides of a shed with planking on top and above that two beams and a cross bar with a rope dangling" (1). Through this description of the prison cell, the narratives in "A Hanging" make coverage of colonial Jailor's activities and condition of Hindu prisoners. Narratives in "A Hanging" come with the references to make the readers aware of the execution place that lacks enough room to live. He describes that the people in Burma are really living in a tough condition in a desperate situation. The narratives in this essay contain fictionalized form recounting the actual events. The readers are loaded with historical information of a Hindu prisoner, a hangman and imperial polices politics about the prisoners and public treatment. The Burma jungle is flawed and maximally unpleasant under the control of British Imperialist soldiers where the innocent people are captured, arrested and imprisoned.

Narratives in "A Hanging" focus on the condition of a Hindu prisoner who is "puny wisp man, with a shaven head and vague liquid eyes" (1). Orwell writes against injustice treatment of imperial polices and their politics whereas the justice is socially, culturally and politically biased and the authority functions the acts-launches the hatred activities undermining the Burmese potentiality. The superintendent and jailors are working to please the British imperialists by forgetting even the minimum level of ethics. patterns of humanity and the human rights. The above quote advocates for the strength and weaknesses of a victim highlighting his condition as he is in his liquid eyes. The narratives expose the events that the Hindu man is weak and he is not able to fight strongly with the imperialists. It is Orwell's own eyewitness and experience as he chooses the security service in Burma after his education in Eton College. His curiosity for the social service and love in joining public service helps him to serve as an imperial police. He speaks against sexual frustration, social destruction and an impact of radical capitalism. He watches the situation of Burmese prisoners witnesses their condition and plans for radical changes in planned way against the hypocrisy. Myanmar, then known as Burma in "A Hanging" is indicated as an opium business place of colonial period. Establishing a chain like connection between economics and politics, Arjun Appadurai explicates the purpose of imperial mission in colonies:

Economic exchange creates value. Value is embodied in commodities that are exchanged. Focusing on the things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange, makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is politics, construed broadly. This argument, which is elaborated in the text of this chapter, justifies the conceit that commodities, like persons, have social lives. (9)

In the nineteenth-century Europe, newly industrialized countries launched their colonial mission for natural resources for their industries and markets for their industrial products. Burma and India could not be spared of these imperial missions. Their political interest behind their colonial raid over the indigenous communities was basically for their target to achieve the goal by meeting the point of economic necessity.

Orwell tends to expose inhumane and cruel activities of imperial politics that Burma faced in the 1930s which reflects the selfish behavior of human within human that is unnatural practice in this short life of human beings and Kingston's "Girlhood Among Ghosts," depicts the stories and events of Chinese-American immigrants' miseries. Both of them describe the vivid atmospheres that represent the mistreatment done to the prisoners and home prisoners that memory cannot be escaped from the victim's mind. Both political and family disharmony are output of tyrannical behavior of

the mother in Kingston's essay and political undermine and police brutality in Orwell's essay that create the images of inhuman humanity that devalues the human potentiality. The issues of migrant people raised by Kingston and Orwell are about politics and isolation of the people that they saw in the nineteenth-century. Though Orwell's essay describes an incident of hanging of a prisoner and Kingston's essay as a home prisoner both of them bring the fresh memory and experiences even toned in dramatic and ironic style.

The hanging event captures the event of Hindu prisoner's shaven head with tearful eyes as an identity marker. The confrontation between life and death seems vague as the prisoner is not bothered by the fear of death but he is blamed that he is urinating. Orwell captures the compact situation of life in a very limited time. He shows the jailors and other people who see the capital punishment are more scared than the prisoner who accepts the death penalty happily and the imperial activity of the prison superintendent and the jailor are questionable. The religious fanatics' exercising the power politics is the matters of concern in Orwell's essay. Gloomy atmosphere around the prison reflects the tragic end and crucial treatment of the jailors to the prisoners. He narrates the Francis, the head jailor's fearful body and savagery saying in this way, "a fat Dravidian in a white drill suit and gold spectacles waved his black hand. 'Yes sir, yes sir', he bubbled. 'All is satisfactorily prepared. The hangman is waiting. We shall proceed.' 'Well, quick march, then. The prisoners can't get their breakfast till this job's over" ("A Hanging" 1). Gloomy picture of Imperial treatment is portrayed with the description of this head jailor who is hurried to end the jailor's life to which they declared as a culprit and ordered to run fast for the breakfast as he says, "oh, kill him quickly, get it over, and stop that abominable noise!" (3). Paradoxical nature of Orwell's narratives in his essay is full of ironies for the issues of living and dying.

The central irony is on the head jailor's order to the hangman to pull the rope quick and the army doctor's confirmation of the death by pulling his leg after the observation of superintendent remarking, "chalo! He shouted almost fiercely. There was a clanking noise, and then dead silence. The prisoner had vanished, and the rope was twisting on itself. I let go of the dog, and it galloped" ("A Hanging" 3). The superintendent's ridiculous remarks, head jailor's stony heart activities and fellow prisoner's silences are the signs of cruelty. The dog is conscious about the case, the dog barks, gallops and stands being sad but the jailors, superintendents and the Imperialists are happy enough as if they are successful in imprisoning, controlling, dominating, punishing and even murdering the powerless Asian. Here, Orwell mentions this situation in the following lines:

A dreadful thing had happened-a dog, come goddess knows whence, had appeared in the yard. It came bounding among us with a loud volley of barks, and leapt round us wagging its whole body, wild with glee at finding so many human beings together. It was a large wooly dog, half African, half pariah. For a moment it pranced round us, and then, before anyone could stop it, it had made a dash for the prisoner and, jumping up, tried to lick his face. Everyone stood aghast, too taken aback even to grab at the dog. 'Who let that bloody brute in here?' said the superintendent angrily. 'Catch it, someone!' A warder, detached from the escort, charged clumsily after the dog, but it danced and gamboled just out of his reach, taking everything as part of the game. A young Eurasian jailer picked up a handful of gravel and tried to stone the dog away, but it dodged the stones and came after us again. Its yaps echoed from the jail walls. The prisoner, in the grasp of the two warders, looked on incuriously, as though this was another formality of the hanging. It was several minutes before someone

managed to catch the dog. Then we put my handkerchief through its collar and moved off once more, with the dog still straining and whimpering. ("A Hanging" 2)

Orwell takes death penalty of that clean shaven Hindu prisoner as a dreadful thing not only to the common people but also the dog resisted crying in a loud voice. The dog shows abnormal activity in front of the jailors and the people gathered there. The jail superintendent shows anger there and threatens the man who let the dog free. The situation seems really dramatic and the activities there are really like performances. The consequences of the British Imperialists are oppressive. The imperialist's way of dominance to the Asian people, especially to the Hindu is a kind of inhumane humanity. The imperialists treat the Burmese people like a dog and devalue them like animal. These events have an adverse effect on the Hindus in Asia. The Hindus are the victim of them and some people feel isolated from their activities and the situation they face.

Thus, both Orwell's and Kingston's works respectively are narrative pictures captured to expose the European and American dominance to the Asians. The vivid pictures of the murder of a prisoner and throat-cut of a daughter bring the narratives of insecurities everywhere as the prisoner is hanged and the daughter is throat-cut. Generally, we believe that the homes and jails are the places where children and criminals are safe or treated legally but the throat-cut and hanging incidents reveal that all human rights are under reservation and the control of imperialists. Both the essays show these events respectively presenting American dominance and British imperialism.

Narratives and the Imperial World

"A Hanging" refers to the death of those soldiers who are just to arrive in the cells. A Hindu man resists the hanging with "a shaved head . . . Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!" (2). Chanting the name of Ram provides him patience to face death and fight against the imperialist's treatment over Asian. He takes pride in dying by fighting rather than accepting death surrendering to the capitalists and imperialists. The narrative is twisted; it says that the prisoner has urinated. The most miserable scene is that a dog is out of control with the superintendent's offensive order for hanging: "They brought the dog under control with great difficulty and moved on" (2). The prison cell symbolizes the hell like place and the superintendent symbolizes a heartless-cruel man who does not know what the social, cultural and ethical norms and values are? The superintendent only knows about police brutality and orders the jailor to call the hangman to complete the work fast. He also says that it is late for other people to have their breakfast who are on the jail. The dog stands as a great sensitive living being that sympathizes with living rights and opposes the brutality of capital punishment.

Orwell, in this essay, makes a clear conversation with his readers in the narrative through the description of capital punishment, informing the readers' step by step clues of the death cases, causes and consequences. The basic points of humanity and human characteristics are questioned by the author. The physical descriptions of the European and Indian jailors are ridiculous as he narrates their humorous attitudes and bodily figure of the European victimizer like a giant but with an empty mind about the concept of humanity he is isolated and frustrated. The superintendents, jailors and their friends are destroying their healthy mind with the bottles of whisky. The essay reminds us about the incidents that we face and experience in the different facets of life. Thus, the essay is really in a persuasive-narrative form combining the pain and pleasure of life with the reflections of imperialists and political activists' attempts.

Orwell brings the myth and mystery of seeing, feeling, experiencing, hearing, understanding and memorizing the world keeping in the mind as a memory based snap-

shot. He describes the scene of Burmese jungle in front of the jail wall with the setting of rainy morning. He narrates the scene in this way:

It was in Burma, a sodden morning of the rains. A sickly light, like yellow tinfoil, was slanting over the high walls into the jail yard. We were waiting outside the condemned cells, a row of sheds fronted with double bars like small animal cages. Each cell measured about ten feet by ten and was quite bare within except for a plank bed and a pot for drinking water. In some of them brown silent men were squatting in the inner bars, with their blankets draped round them. These were the condemned men, due to be hanged within the next week or two. ("A Hanging" 1)

Narratives in above quoted part of the essay in Orwell's essay capture the vivid pictures of the prisoners and their condition that they are waiting for the death penalty inside narrow cell of the jail. It is raining outside that shows the gloomy picture of the morning whereas the prisoners are suffering remembering the cruelty of the Imperialists and bitter experiences of the innocent Asian people who cannot challenge the Imperialist's dominance in easy way as the Imperialists are strong in both the weapons and finance and so they have a strong security force.

Kingston narrates the stories and events of a Chinese girl in relation to the mother-daughter activities, their practices there and other children's condition there. She also raises the question that why the Chinese mother do not cut the son's tongues and if so what is the cause to not to cut their tongues. The girl explains this heart touching event and exposes her inquisition:

When I asked cousins and other Chinese children whether their mothers had cut their tongues loose, they said, "What?"

"Why didn't you cut my brothers' and sister' tongues?"

"They didn't need it."

"Why not? Were theirs longer than mine?"

"Why don't you quit blabbering and get to work"

If my mother was not lying she would have cut more, scraped away the rest of the frenum skin, because I have a terrible time talking. (*Joys of Reading* 46-47) Kingston focuses on the problem of Chinese-American immigrants. The immigrants are collecting their pain and suffering from their ancestor's time but she exposes the long-practiced exercise in "Girlhood Among Ghosts".

In "A Hanging," the prisoner is brought out of the cell to be hanged fast. The Hindu prisoner does not accept death penalty easily in front of six tall Indian warders guarding him with a threat. He challenges the capital punishment being ready to die with clean shaven head and thoughtful expression but the narrative is twisted by saying that the prisoner is urinating in fear of death. But Kingston's child character and her mother in "Girlhood Among Ghosts" partially accept the British dominance because they do not see the alternatives. In "A Hanging," the head jailor Francis saw the hangman marching against the magistrate for the punishment. Narrators in both the essays make persuasive narratives with memory and experiences against punishment of hanging and throatcutting.

The essay "A Hanging" discloses the naked portrayal of the British rule, which describes the death penalty that prisoners experience in Burma. British imperialism is taken as evil spirit's activity. The guilt or ill intention of oppressors is reflected in the essay. He exposes personal experience and memory he has collected in Burma as a police officer where he observes the serious events of crimes and the punishment as a criminal's hanging. Orwell also brings the issues of class consciousness of England's hierarchical society to expose the cases that took place by the misuse of power. He uses

irony to challenge the imperialist hegemony and lessons the society to revolt against all kinds of dominance, but Kingston, in her essay advocates the family activities and community sufferings among the immigrants. Orwell and Kingston deal with the subject of capital punishment and ill-social practices respectively in a structure to challenge the imperialist's views and stipulate a response from the readers as it is a subject that creates a great controversy.

Conclusion

Orwell's "A Hanging" is about the imperial treatment over Asian and colonizing politics in South-East Asian countries. It presents Burma's experience as a part of war victim of the British Empire. On the other hand, Kingston's "Girlhood Among Ghosts" is about the Chinese-American immigrants and their suffering. Orwell enlists his own firsthand experiences and memories gathered while serving in the Indian Imperial police at the time of social inequalities induced by imperial politics. Kingston claims her own throat-cut to be a representative of immigrant victim. "A Hanging" is based on Orwell's detailed observations of the prisoner and the capital punishment that is concerned with banality as a social criticism.

Orwell uses imagery, symbolism, tone and word choice but he omits writing about the prisoner's crime as he does not like to highlight the victim's cases to secure the victims' rights, which shows sympathy to them, but Kingston explores the issues of her own throat-cut as social problem, horror, terror and torture. The European's and American's whisky party among the superintendent, jailor, hangman, school-teacher and other Europeans after the hanging of the prisoner and Kingston's throat-cut show inhumanity of the Europeans. Jailor's duty, prisoner's activities, superintendents' orders and mother's activeness in daughter's throat-cut are narrated clearly keeping the issues of cruel punishments in the mind. Therefore, this paper concludes that the narratives are about their personal experiences as the memories of their life and death and they are also the representatives of other victim's exile, isolation and human cruelties.

Works Cited

Abrams, Dennis. "A Girlhood Among Ghosts." *Asian Americans of Achievements: Maxine Hong Kingston.* Infobase Publishing, 2009, pp. 59-72.

Appadurai, Arjun. The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition. Verso, 2013.

 $First-Person\ Narratives\ of\ the\ American\ South.$

http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/fpn/fpn.htm. Accessed 19 Jan. 2019.

George Orwell: The First History. YouTube, uploaded by Arvind Gupta, 10 June 2019, www.youtube.com/watch? v=09rSCf 46pc. Accessed Jan. 2022.

George Orwell: The School Life. YouTube, uploaded by Robert Glover, 25 Nov. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch? v=kuXU3vzH98E. Accessed 22 Jan. 2022.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. "Girlhood Among Ghosts." *Joys of Reading*, compiled and edited by Shreedhar Lohani and Rameshwor Adhikari. M.K. Publishers, 1999, pp. 46-49.

Lane, Richard J., editor. *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Routledge, 2013. *My History is America's History*. http://www.myhistory.org/ Accessed 24 March 2022. *North American Slave Narratives*. http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/neh.html. Accessed 13 Feb. 2022.

Orwell, George. Down and Out in Paris and London. Oxford, 1933.

- - -. "A Hanging." https://www.ukessays.com, PDF, 1931. Accessed 1 Jan. 2021.

Pratt, Mary Louis. Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation. Routledge, 1992.

- Reading Through History. YouTube, uploaded by Arvind Gupta, 14 Feb. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch? v=09rSCf 46pc. Accessed 10 Jan. 2021.
- Said, Edward. "Islam as News." *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Richard J. Lane, Routledge, 2013, pp.186-94.
- ---. Orientalism. Vintage Books, 1979.
- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minnesota Press, 2021.
- Thesiger, Wilfred. Arabian Sands. Penguin, 2007.
- --. "The Trucial Coast." *Arabian Sands*. Introduction by Rory Stewart, Penguin, 2007, pp. 263-79.
- Troyka, Lynn Quitman, et al. *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*. Annotated Instructor's Edition, New Jersey, 1993.
- Woods, William F. "The History of Rhetoric: An Overview." *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*, edited by Lynn Quitman Troyka. New Jersey, 1993, AIE, pp. 8-17.

To cite this article [MLA style]:

Gautam, Mani Bhadra. "Orwell's 'A Hanging' and Kingston's 'Girlhood Among Ghosts': Narratives of the Imperial World." *SCHOLARS: Journal of Arts & Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 2, August 2022, pp. 124-134. *NepJOL*, doi:10.3126/sjah.v4i2.47428.