

East and West in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*

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Abstract. This paper sheds light on a significant statement spoken by Fielding to Adela Quested following the terrifying experience of the caves and after Aziz's acquittal in Forster's *A Passage to India*. The statement is analyzed in the light of its relation to vital issues discussed in the Orientalism debate inaugurated by Said's *Orientalism* and picked up by Bhabha, Young, Fanon, Majeed and others. The above debate relies on the existence of a dichotomy or a clearly defined demarcation between a powerful Europe and a defeated Asia. The Orient has always existed in the European imagination as a kind of negative projective fantasy that invites the West to extend its hegemony over it and rob it of its natural resources and hidden treasures. But Forster shows that such a conception is erroneous and in due time it is shattered and dismantled as such a romanticized image of an exotic Orient embedded in the Western mentality is based on fantasy. Equally, Forster directs a severe blow at colonization since the British Empire rests on sand. Colonialism is bound to fall down because it is based on fake and artificial categorizations. It deepens racial discrimination and sets up its own faulty criterion for differences between colonizer and colonized. The inevitable result is that an attempt to bridge gaps between East and West is an impossibility. Thus the pillars that colonial authority uses to strengthen its domination are ironically the same pillars that threaten its eventual collapse. While the colonizer thinks he can domesticate the Indian continent and subject it to his control, he finds himself in a hostile and inimical environment that refuses his intimacy and expels him as he gets too close to its inaccessible treasures and hidden mysteries. What is left for the colonizer at the end is a confession of utter defeat that he cannot extend thorough control over a muddled and equivocal orient. Thus he has to depart and turn his face toward a clear and harmonious West leaving behind his back a mysterious and enigmatic Orient that he can never clear himself from its muddle and confusion, and thus it remains beyond his comprehension.

Introduction

This paper sheds light on a significant statement spoken by Fielding to Adela Quested following the terrifying experience of the caves and after Aziz's acquittal in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. It analyzes the various implications of such a statement and relates it to crucial issues discussed in the Orientalism debate inaugurated

by Edward Said's *Orientalism*.⁽¹⁾ A careful reading of that statement helps us understand some of the problems that create barriers between two opposed worlds: East and West that Kipling asserts to be antithetical and adds that "ne'er the twain shall meet." But can Kipling be wrong and is it possible for these two different worlds to meet or merge or are they destined to remain apart? The paper therefore attempts to explore major topics affiliated with East / West confrontation studied in connection with the significant statement and analyzed in the light of Said's *Orientalism* which opened the doors for others like Bhabha,⁽²⁾ Spivak,⁽³⁾ Young,⁽⁴⁾ Turner,⁽⁵⁾ Eagleton⁽⁶⁾ and Majeed,⁽⁷⁾ to name only a few, to elaborate on vital matters related to the debate that heavily relies on the existence of a dichotomy or a clearly defined demarcation between East and West. Basing his argument on Levi-Strauss' structuralism and Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*,⁽⁸⁾ Said provides examples that go back to Greek tragedy and more precisely, to Aeschylus' *Persae*, to substantiate his thesis that a demarcation between Asia and Europe is an evidence of the mind's natural proclivity to set up a binary opposition between two contradictory worlds with opposed sets of values. Thus the Orient has always existed in the European imagination as the feared, hostile and dangerous 'Other' that must be controlled: "A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate, Asia is defeated and distant."⁽⁹⁾ As the analysis reveals, Forster is conscious of such a demarcation in his repeated references to the journey south to the 'muddle' of the Orient and the voyage north to the clarity of Europe as if major differences in climate, among other things, account for different patterns of behavior and opposite perceptions of various matters in two worlds.

The Need for Feelings

Perhaps it becomes essential at this point to embark on the important statement under scrutiny. Fielding reminds Adela of her exact words that reveal her intention

(1) Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). The paper relies heavily on Said's book, Bhabha's *Location of Culture* and Majeed's *Ungoverned Imaginings*. Page numbers are given when these three books are used. As far as other writers referred to in the Orientalism debate, their works are mentioned just to show familiarity but they have not actually been used in the discussion and hence page numbers are not provided in reference to their works.

(2) Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York : Routledge, 1994).
(3) Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Cultures*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: MacMillan, 1988), 271-313.
Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990).
Bryan Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978).
Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford & Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1996); also T. Eagleton, F. Jameson and E. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
(4) J. Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's "History of British India" and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
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(8) Said, *Orientalism*, 54-55.
(9) Ibid., 57.

behind “the *romantic* voyage across the Mediterranean and through the sands of Egypt to the harbour of Bombay.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Thus he says to her in chapter 29: “The first time I saw you, you were wanting to *see* India, not Indians, and it occurred to me: Ah, that won’t take us far. Indians know whether they are liked or not - they cannot be fooled here. Justice never satisfies them, and that is why the British Empire rests on sand.”⁽¹¹⁾ The above statement in fact is said when Fielding and Adela consider writing a letter of apology to the innocent Aziz: “Between them they concocted a letter, sincere, and full of moving phrases, but it was not moving as a letter.”⁽¹²⁾ It is interesting that Fielding’s statement echoes Aziz’s passionate speech to Fielding when the latter pays the doctor a visit in his squalid house. After he shows his dead wife’s photograph, Aziz informs Fielding of what Indians need: “no one can ever realize how much kindness we Indians need, we do not even realize it ourselves. But we know when it has been given.”⁽¹³⁾ Both Aziz and Fielding stress the significance of feelings of affection and sympathy that belong solely to the heart. Such feelings are certainly lacking in a character like Ronny, a fine product of the public school with “well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds and undeveloped hearts.”⁽¹⁴⁾ Warm relations between individuals with different cultures are felt and not unnaturally imposed or feigned. For Forster, “personal relationships” are the only means to overcome the emptiness of life: “Here is something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty.... Starting from them, I get a little order into the contemporary chaos. One must be fond of people and trust them if one is not to make a mess of life.”⁽¹⁵⁾ This is the way Forster, the liberal humanist, thinks barriers can be overcome. But the British in the novel, apart from Fielding, fail to connect and show sympathy or respect for Indians. Even among themselves, coldness of relations seems to be a constant feature. That coldness becomes the obstacle that makes it difficult and unconvincing for Adela to write the moving letter to Aziz. Out of remorse, Adela fervently wishes to undo the harm she has done and to re-pay India and Indians for the damage she has caused. But still the letter is unconvincing for the simple reason that Fielding gives since Adela has “no real affection for Aziz, or Indians generally,”⁽¹⁶⁾ in addition to the quote above. The quotation is important for a number of reasons.

Seeing Versus Knowing

To begin with, it draws a contrast between a whimsical curiosity to view an exotic land, such as the Orient, that merely satisfies the eye on the one hand and an earnest

E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 26.

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⁽¹¹⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 253.

⁽¹²⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹³⁾ Ibid., 114.

E. M. Forster, “Notes on the English Character”, in *Abinger Harvest* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), 5.

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E. M. Forster, “What I Believe,” in *Two Cheers for Democracy* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951), 67-68.

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⁽¹⁶⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 46.

desire to familiarize the inspector with the inhabitants of the land on the other. In other words, the first view is no more than sightseeing as if the whole of India with its splendor and greatness is reduced to a mere object seen through the windows of a jewelry shop or in an exhibition that displays various caskets meticulously placed on Pope's Belinda's 'toilet.' The second aims at a closer contact that requires experience in order to understand people of different cultures and diverse ethnic backgrounds and in that case building relations with others is strongly related to sentiments and emotions that the first intention excludes because interest lies only in pleasing the sight and hence emotions seldom enter that region. For that reason, Adela's desire to be intimate will never materialize. There will always be an obstacle that keeps India out of touch and familiarity.

In the Bridge Party, that "becomes self-destructive" since "it does not break barriers (but)... creates a sense of isolation, frustration and failure,"⁽¹⁷⁾ Fielding extends an invitation and Adela looks forward to such exciting moments that will take place on Thursday. But with her anticipation of such thrilling occasions comes a sudden contemplation of the hills that seem lovely from a distance but "she couldn't touch them. In front, like a shutter, fell a vision of her married life."⁽¹⁸⁾ Dissatisfied with the present, Adela can only hope for a better future which ironically seems to be shrouded in mystery and disappointment. In other words, her desire that the future, be it the soon future of the coming Thursday or the far future of her settled married life with Ronny, may bring some exciting events is far-fetched. That lively and thrilling future is as distant from her as the hills are. Thus the aloofness of the hills is paralleled by the remoteness of a certain and a happy future. Just as she contemplates the hills from a remote distance, she can only wish for a better future that the present moment does not permit. If the situation continues as the British plan, she will be ostracized from the rest of the Indian community she wants to 'see.' She will only see "the Lesleys and the Callendars and the Turtons and the Burtons, and invite them and be invited by them, while the true India (slides) by unnoticed." What she will therefore miss is something that transcends "colour and movement," i.e., the force that lies behind them that "would escape her even more effectually than it did now." Hence "she would see India always as a *frieze* [a word on which the ninety names of God were engraved in the mosque⁽¹⁹⁾], never as a spirit."⁽²⁰⁾ The word *frieze* relates more to decoration or embellishment that pleases sight and confirms the beautiful architectural design observed in Oriental buildings and places of worship. That is what intrigues the European whose interest is confined to sightseeing and the collection of souvenirs while it remains beyond his concern to probe into issues of a much heavier weight and a more sublime nature. Thus

Vasant A. Shahane, *E. M. Forster: A Study in Double Vision* (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1975), 103

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⁽¹⁸⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 46.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Ibid., 20.

⁽²⁰⁾ Ibid., 47.

Adela's interest in a close exploration of Indian territory or architecture springs from the same source that stimulated the British to extend their domination over India.

An Imagined, Distant Other

In addition to the existence of the Orient in Adela's mind as a kind of a negative projective fantasy, a complex of fantasies about the distant Other whose image is projected by certain conceptions or representations that Said's *Orientalism* elaborates on and which in due time will prove erroneous and parochial, Adela's urge to see India is motivated by a curious and spontaneous desire that has its analogy in the British people's fascination and obsession with anything that came from the exotic and marvellous far or near East with its fantastic merchandise and attractive imported articles ranging from chinaware to walking sticks and diverse Oriental dresses that provoked interest and seemed to satisfy the public demand for anything that is different from the mundane and ordinary. As Wallace C. Brown elucidates, the Europeans' and particularly the English people's attraction to the Orient and its exotic merchandise that included all kinds of fantastic objects such as cushions, hangings, tapestries and Oriental glass, to mention only some, grew quite rapidly in the eighteenth century⁽²¹⁾ and reflected a deep interest in the public taste for the exhibition of such Oriental commodities in the English commercial market. Probably a reference to Belinda's 'toilet' reflects England's expansive maritime activity in the early eighteenth century, more precisely in 1712 when Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* appeared. The following lines compress the whole of the Oriental world yoking both India and Arabia with their enormous vastness and spaciousness into mere decorative vases filled with lavishly-embellished objects that quench the whimsical thirst of a vain and vulnerable heroine who cares for ostentatious glitter and pretentious, if not superficial, display of cosmetics that give her cheeks "a purer blush" and "calls forth all the wonders of her face,"⁽²²⁾ and which has its analogy in Adela's whimsical fantasy to see India and Indians as if they were vases on Belinda's 'toilet':

This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box,
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white.⁽²³⁾

In the dressing-table scene, we see Belinda's beauty as mere ornamentation governed by female pride and self-love. The spacious world that can enter the heroine's dressing room provokes a pleasing mercantile image and points to the luxurious life she

⁽²¹⁾ Wallace Cable Brown, "The Near East as Themes and Backgrounds in English Literature, 1775-1825," unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1934, 34-50.

⁽²²⁾ Abrams, M. H *et al.*, eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), Canto I, 142-43, p. 2159.

⁽²³⁾ Abrams *et al.*, *The Norton Anthology*, lines 133-36.

is leading. By subtle insinuations, Belinda's precious collection of gems, perfumes and ivory pours out on the dressing-table the very fine products that imperialism seeks to gather out of the depth of the African jungle, the deserts of Arabia (oil would replace perfumes now) and the Indian continent. These are the corollary of eighteenth century economic and commercial expansions. The valuable collection on the dressing-table appeals to a contemporary audience's imperial imagination by evoking the romantic image of an England made rich and magnificent by maritime activity. Such objects testify to the tremendous expansion of England's trade and the frantic search for exotic commodities in remote lands. What Pope suggests here is that Belinda has become like her gems, perfumes and ivory; she is transformed into a symbol of abundance and economic wealth. Pope seems to draw the contrast between an outward expansion in trade and economy on the one hand, and the limited perceptions of social conventions that regard a belle like Belinda as a mere object for display on the other. Belinda is playing the role expected of her by the norms of eighteenth century society; otherwise, she would be regarded as a social nonconformist. Thus what Pope eventually satirizes is a society in which the role of a woman is similar to her role in an Oriental society and where she is confined to that function of display, ostentatious show that leads inevitably to ensnarement.

Interestingly enough, the word 'unlocks' of line 142 normally associated with exhibitions and shows for display, is used by Forster in conjunction with Adela's belief and desire that Aziz "would unlock his country for her,"⁽²⁴⁾ as if India, with all its treasures, is contained within a vase or a casket that bears a striking resemblance to Belinda's, and as if Adela feels that it is her right to empty out the contents of such a receptacle just to satisfy a childish caprice or a persistent whim. The word 'unlocks' takes us to a magical and distant world, similar to a well-fortified citadel located on a lofty mountain and which has thick iron gates with pointed spikes to intimidate intruders or trespassers. But one would expect such gates to open up once the secret code is mentioned to let the visitor into a magic land with diverse fantastic objects and unheard of items that Pope in the lines above associates with a rich and a fantastic Orient. Forster reflects his awareness of such an image of an opulent Orient. Quite interestingly, Aziz is convinced after the trial that Fielding's wish that he drops off the compensation charges and frees Adela from such a heavy financial burden stems out of his secret plan to smuggle Indian wealth in a manner similar to what European travellers have previously done in the past. Aziz is therefore adamant in his unwavering conviction that he has "been tricked about (his) rupees (as he) allowed them to escape overseas, like much of the wealth of India."⁽²⁵⁾ The wealth that Aziz is convinced has been exported through illegal means is the same sort of wealth that Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* refers to. Pope's lines are a clear evidence that he was aware of the ongoing commercial activities that enriched the British treasury and ensured a continuous and stable flow of

⁽²⁴⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 69.

⁽²⁵⁾ Ibid., 274.

valuable items that boosted the economy and led to the burgeoning of trade and the consolidation of commercial and economic ties with the Orient. Pope provides a detailed account of the Oriental treasures lying in front of Belinda including the precious ivory that Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is so greedy for till it eventually causes his ruin and which is here used as an ornament to produce combs. In addition to the spotted combs made of tortoise shells, there are the white made of pure ivory. Such information is intended to satisfy the current demand for such strange objects and express the public's view on the marvellous Other. In fact, such a conception may be based on imagination and exaggeration. To illustrate this point, Javed Majeed's *Ungoverned Imaginings* sheds light on James Mill's *The History of British India* only to show how erroneous that conception is. Thus Mill directs his criticism on the fiction of India's unfathomable economic riches which run into opposition with what Pope conceives above. Consequently, the image that associates India with wonders and riches is dismantled and directed a strident blow. Mill has harsh words for "European travellers in India and East India Company officials" whom he condemns "for exaggerating India's wealth."⁽²⁶⁾ The myth that associated India with abundance and an overflow of wealth was directly responsible for an arduous search of such Oriental hidden treasures and opulence which in turn had a bearing on the impoverishment of Indians and the exhaustion of natural resources.

However, there is the apparent irony in Pope's lines on the exotic Other that render Oriental treasures almost powerless and defenceless in front of imperialistic expansions and colonial activities as if Arabia and India are so overwhelmingly and tightly dominated that Britain sees it as its prerogative to seize or confiscate their goods without the slightest qualm. In addition, the splendid treasures carefully arranged on the dressing table reduce the Orient in size. Here Belinda stands in full confidence and complete control, if not 'hegemony' in front of a miniature Orient whose unfathomable treasures and diverse sources of wealth that are directly responsible for the rapid development of foreign economy are no longer treasures in concrete or monetary terms but treasures that reflect women's obsession for accessories, beauty-aids, trinkets and possibly not genuine jewelery. Thus the Orient is transformed here on Belinda's dressing table into a playground for British imperialism. It is contemptuously reduced into a mere theatricality where it resembles the "files of pins....puffs, powders, patches"⁽²⁷⁾ diligently manipulated and carefully under control by the 'busy Sylphs' who beautify Belinda. Thus what starts as a mere interest in the exotic Orient with all its splendor and attractiveness ends as a colony annexed for both economic and political reasons. But Mill in *The History* contradicts such a view. He demonstrates that because of the exaggerated imaginative and fantasized vision that India held in a collective European mind, India, contrary to expectations, is of no economic benefit to Britain.⁽²⁸⁾

⁽²⁶⁾ Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 155.

⁽²⁷⁾ Abrams et al., *The Norton Anthology*, 2159, lines 137-38.

⁽²⁸⁾ Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 158.

Mill goes on to attack severely Sir William Jones's "susceptible imagination" for "being impressed by the 'idea of Eastern wonders.'"⁽²⁹⁾ Thus at the heart of Mill's *History* lies a critique of Jones's conception of the Orient which is the product of "an undisciplined imagination."⁽³⁰⁾ The early interest in Oriental merchandise is soon transformed into colonial explorations of alien territories encouraged by the rapid increase of travellers who were initially deterred by Mughal despotism from a direct infiltration into the remote and distant Indian continent. Eventually, the British achieved political and commercial objectives in India and in 1803 when the Muslim dynasty was in decline, the British took over.

With the British in full command, Forster explores the nature of the relationship that they have with Indians. In addition to the exposure of Adela's faulty vision based on fantasy like Jones's image, the quotation that started the discussion establishes the fact that reciprocal relations and genuine feelings of affection for others particularly among ruler and ruled, colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed go beyond a mere counterfeit show of love. Feelings are related to that section that can not be bought or as Forster puts it "The tender core of the heart that is seldom used" and sarcastically, if the British employ it for only a little while, as when they feel the sudden rush of emotion and desire to care for Adela after the horrible experience at the cave, they do it "under the stimulus of remorse."⁽³¹⁾ In other words, the British are incapable of genuine affections. Aziz is aware of this fact as his face grows tender during the discussion revolving around the widow in Fielding's house with Adela and Mrs. Moore when "he knew at the bottom of his heart that they (i.e., his guests) could not help being so cold and odd and circulating like an ice stream through his land."⁽³²⁾ The coldness of the British is evidenced when the Collector's wife and Lesley drive "through the pelting heat to inquire" after Adela's health and when she is seen moments later in crocodile tears. Forster's irony is apparent in the following statement: "No one had ever seen the Collector's wife cry. Capable of tears—yes, but always reserving them for some adequate occasion, and now it had come."⁽³³⁾ Such a pretense of affection is a hypocrisy that will not do. When Adela disappoints the British and acquits Aziz, she is left alone as a punishment and she receives the cruellest and most inhuman treatment from the same lady who sheds fake tears. In the eyes of the British, she is a renegade who "had renounced her own people."⁽³⁴⁾ At the time of dire need for a secure physical and moral haven, Adela has no place to stay at for "Mrs. Turton said this morning (i.e., after the trial) that she could not see (her) again."⁽³⁵⁾ When Fielding proposes that she stays at the college, Hamidullah raises the issue of security and Adela finds herself somehow forced

(29) Ibid., 163.

(30) Ibid., 5.

(31) Forster, *Passage*, 177.

(32) Ibid., 70.

(33) Ibid., 177.

(34) Ibid., 225.

(35) Ibid., 238.

to try the Turtons again: “I believe my best plan is to return to the Turtons, and see if they will allow me to sleep, and if they turn me away, I must go to the Dak (bungalow).”⁽³⁶⁾ Had it not been for Fielding’s concern and kindness, Adela would have ended up in the street. It is this human gesture that causes Fielding to suffer a great deal as he shows sympathy and concern for the Indians as if he is acting on Aziz’s advice by pointing to the absence of kindness among the Turtons and their circle and its abundance in his warm heart.

Why Does an Empire Fall?

Furthermore, Fielding’s statement to Adela anticipates the fate of empires that comes as a natural consequence of their failure to establish normal relations with natives because colonialism is strongly founded on discrimination among races. It sows seeds of racial hatred between aliens and natives and it also builds artificial categories that widen the gap between natives themselves and among natives and colonizers. People are therefore expected to conform to certain classifications and behave according to prescriptions that they are coerced to follow when deep inside them they are rejected and thus Bhabha’s “discriminatory ‘identity effects’”⁽³⁷⁾ come from biased and artificial categorization in the colonial system. The racism that colonialism exercises is in fact based on European tribalism and more precisely on what is known in Germanic and Scandinavian languages as *Volk*. Thus colonialism carries within it a completely Western notion that creates a system of social stratification leading to discrimination. Racism is therefore embedded in the very notion of colonialism and the two can not be divorced from each other just as an infant can not in his early days be weaned from his mother’s breast. The colonial way of looking at human beings is therefore completely artificial. The “[Negroes] are represented by all authors as the vilest of human kind.”⁽³⁸⁾ Thus they resemble the human shape but inside they remain as beasts and consequently inhuman. Interestingly enough, the word ‘nigger’ is used as a derogatory term by Major Callendar when he refers to his ways of torturing the Nawab Bahadur’s poor relative, Nureddin, who must be rescued as the British “put pepper instead of antiseptic on the wounds.”⁽³⁹⁾ Similarly, Turton uses the same term during the trial when he talks about “the grandson of our so-called leading loyalist.” While he “tittered brutally” he goes on to describe Nureddin’s present appearance “his beauty’s gone, five upper teeth, two lower and a nostril.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ Ironically, such cruel acts and abusive terms confirm the inhumanity of the British as their treatment of human beings is degrading and utterly repulsive. To them, Indians and similar colored nations are at the bottom rung of the artificial scale. To Lesley, Indians are “swines always on the look out for a

⁽³⁶⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁷⁾ Bhabha, *Location*, 90.

⁽³⁸⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁹⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 228.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Ibid., 211.

grievance,”⁽⁴¹⁾ and to the vicious and malicious Turton, “they ought to crawl from here (the court-room) to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an Englishwoman’s in sight, they oughtn’t to be spoken to, they ought to be spat at, they ought to be ground into the dust, we’ve been far too kind with our Bridge Parties and the rest.”⁽⁴²⁾

Thus the English rulers are set apart from their subordinates. Mrs. Callendar sees “the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die.” She does not want any to get any near to her for Indians “give (her) the creeps.”⁽⁴³⁾ Even the nurse in the ‘Native State’ whose profession requires her to mix and become friendly sees her position as ‘the most unsuitable’ for “one’s only hope was to hold sternly aloof.”⁽⁴⁴⁾ The British are representatives of a Western civilization that takes upon itself the task of modernizing primitive societies and restoring order among them.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The segregation of the Indians and the feelings of detachment that the British have toward them are the natural consequence of the way the British view themselves and their respective roles in India. As McConkey suggests, what determines the nature of the relationship between the powerful master and the weak slave is that the British exist as ‘transgressors.’⁽⁴⁶⁾ But as Cavaliero remarks, the British behave all alike and consequently they lack individual differences. Hence they are treated more as a group rather than as individuals.⁽⁴⁷⁾ They expect their colleagues to ‘toe’ the line and conform to stereotyped conventions in the way Indians should be treated and looked at. For that reason, new comers who are inclined to formulate independent judgement are a threat or a source of disturbance to those who do not want to deviate from the norm or suffer ostracization. Ronny therefore sees the dangers that may result from Adela’s intimate relations with Aziz. Though he “can’t explain everything, (he doesn’t) want Adela to be worried, that’s the fact; she’ll begin wondering whether we treat the natives properly, and all that sort of nonsense.”⁽⁴⁸⁾ What Ronny regards as ‘nonsense’ is crucial to Fielding and ironically, its absence has a direct bearing on the fall of colonial authority that completely disregards the essential humanity of the people under its command. In other words, what Ronny seeks to protect by arms is demolished by the very quality that he requires to keep India under the British thumb. That ‘nonsense’ that Ronny flings away is what would have saved the British had they treated Indians properly and with a minimum amount of dignity.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Ibid., 210.

⁽⁴²⁾ Ibid., 211.

⁽⁴³⁾ Ibid., 28.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Ibid., 27.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ For the objectives of British rule, see Karl Marx, “The Future Results of the British Rule in India” in *On Colonialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), 82.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ James McConkey, *The Novels of E.M. Forster* (New Haven, Conn.: Archon Books, 1971), 25.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Glen Cavaliero, *A Reading of E.M. Forster* (London: MacMillan Press, 1979), 151.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 34.

Hence comes the exclusion of such backward people from a fair participation in the contemporary political arena. British imperialism, particularly in the nineteenth century, created destructive and dehumanizing images of the colonized in Africa and Asia and exercised all forms of power, on top of which comes the power of discourse to tighten imperial control and remold the world in a way where the history of the colonized including all those against whom discrimination is practiced is defined by outsiders or written from a Western perspective.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Thus Fanon shows how the black man has always existed on the margins or fringes of history because “the *punctum* (i.e., point in time) of man (is) the signifying, subjectifying category of Western culture.” In such circumstances, the colonized who is cruelly mistreated and ethnocentrically marginalized has a strong desire “to be a man among other men [similarly, Aziz desires India to be a nation among other nations]. (I want) to come lithe and young into the world that was ours and build it together.”⁽⁵⁰⁾ The quotation is a loud cry for reciprocal recognition that the white man denies the black. When Aziz asserts that India will be an independent nation, Fielding mocks the idea that India will take her seat and “rank with Guatemala and Belgium.”⁽⁵¹⁾ The above quotation in general, and the word ‘lithe’ in particular, a word often associated with jaguars for their agility and muscularity, tell us how much the black man’s desire to emerge to the surface to play a decisive or influential role in history has been thwarted. He cries for recognition in a world that is his and therefore he has every right to write his own history from his own independent perspective. But he is denied that right by the white man’s adamant refusal that he may join in the race. He is flung back and away to remain on the periphery and play a ‘liminal’ role. In fact, he is punished for a fault that is not his to begin with.

The black man’s ‘belatedness’ or late arrival on the arena of world history is a result of the white man’s victimization and therefore the black man can never be in a position to catch up with the white man for two obvious reasons: first, his ‘belatedness’ ; and second, his existence on the margin. This belatedness keeps the black man and other oppressed people always in the back with a rare chance for a breakthrough to emerge to the top. Their inability to come up to the surface confirms their conviction that they confront a social scale imposed by the colonizer and they have a difficulty trying to penetrate through it. As Bhabha observes, their attempt to get to the top where they are socially recognized is motivated by “an interdictory desire.”⁽⁵²⁾ In other words, it is a desire that frustrates and proves the bondage and the psychological imbalance of those who imitate the white man and attempt to pierce the artificial social classifications set up by the colonizer. Because of a feeling of inadequacy inside and his lack of freedom, he only desires to prove his freedom by mimicking the white master in a futile attempt to draw attention and get noticed in a social system that keeps him way down below the

For the importance of discourse as a form of power , see P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

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⁽⁵⁰⁾ Bhabha, *Location*, 237.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 317.

⁽⁵²⁾ Bhabha, *Location*, 89.

surface. What Bhabha calls ‘the metonymy of presence’⁽⁵³⁾ is therefore based on wrong values and inappropriate signifiers. The colonizer measures with the wrong yardstick and the racial conflict deepens as the colored man strives in vain to get recognized as he eventually succeeds in breaking artificial barriers . Even if he manages somehow to soar to the top, he can not break the barriers inside the mind that he can not be accepted among whites because the differences between “being English and being Anglicized” go deeper than a knockdown of physical barriers to float to the top for “discriminatory identities [are] constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications.”⁽⁵⁴⁾ Such fine distinctions among different groups or races that colonial authority imposes are at times more felt than expressed. Even if uttered, they are uttered *inter dicta*, i.e., they come in between the spoken words or written lines at the “crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed.”⁽⁵⁵⁾ Since the categories set up by the colonizer are fake, then colonial authority is itself valueless. It exists only to impose its own system of classification that only reveals the repulsive side of its discrimination. The foremost and most obvious distinction in this arbitrary system of classification that colonialism imposes on any people under colonial power is that based on color. But as Forster explains, “‘white’ has no more to do with a color than ‘God save the King’ with a god, and that it is the height of impropriety to consider what it does connote.”⁽⁵⁶⁾ In other words, the actual color of the skin does not determine whether such a person is classified white or black. Classification in such a matter goes deeper than an outward color of countenance. It has to do with origin and descent more than an appearance. For that reason the British citizen who was addressed by Fielding as being ‘pinko-grey’ was “subtly scandalized; his sense of insecurity was awoken and he communicated it to the rest of the herd”⁽⁵⁷⁾ who consequently had to punish Fielding by ostracizing him. This example reveals the arbitrariness and artificiality of the very system utilized to create distinctions and discriminations among people, and due to this artificiality that relies on an erroneous criterion to judge humans, colonial authority rests on fragile grounds. Colonialism therefore has no choice but to defend its arbitrary exercise of authority through a resort to violence symbolized in guns and ammunition kept only to threaten any seditious or rebellious souls who are willing to die for freedom. But the colonizer’s authority represented by Ronny sees it as its duty to keep such threatening souls under constant check. Hence there is always the risk being directed at its own insubstantial foundations because it lacks the support of people and any government, no matter how strong it appears in tightening its control over people in a way that denies them the air of freedom, is doomed to face a catastrophe or an inevitable conflict as people can not suppress so much and as force can not be continued to hold people in bondage.

⁽⁵³⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Ibid., 90.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Ibid., 89.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 62.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Ibid.

In fact, what we witness during the course of the novel is a fulfillment of Fielding's words. The British Empire does crumble down like sceptre and crown. Its falling has its parallel in the shattering of the romanticized or fantasized perception of India in Adela's mind. In the court-room she surveys "all the *wreckage* of her silly attempt to *see* India"⁽⁵⁸⁾ and as her eyes observe all those gathered beneath and around her, she becomes aware of her limitations. Here she is confronted not with objects but with human beings who are so close to her in terms of distance but aloof and alien in psychological terms. Both colonialism and the fantasized conception of the distant Orient are deconstructed. We see their disintegration before our eyes like a fortress built of sand along the coast by innocent children. The reason for the fall of colonization is that it remains an outsider like a protruding object that can not stand a long exposure to rough weather and thus it is inevitable that it will crumble. The British Colonizer or any other fails to integrate and blend itself with the natural milieu and its inhabitants. Generally speaking, Europeans find themselves in a rather hostile environment that they can never conquer because its mystery is beyond their discovery or comprehension. There are those dark recesses in the African continent or India that exclude European intervention. Their secret entrances are bolted off against the alien intruder who must keep his distance because there is something in the land that opposes his intimacy and rejects his close proximity with either the natives or the hostile surroundings. The caves are among the natural and geographical forces whose evil impact is experienced by the British. The Indian earth has a prehistoric air, seeming alien and ominous to the intruder.

A Hostile Environment

Forster's description of the caves captures the spirit of hostility found in the Indian landscape. "The hole belched"⁽⁵⁹⁾ sums up the kind of relationship that India invites the newcomers to form in an attempt to adjust themselves to a strange place that they find themselves in. The word "belched" is a powerfully suggestive word that conveys the feeling that caves have a power and will of their own. As the word connotes, something is expected to gush forth, be expelled, thrown out and vomited. Like a volcano that sends out lava, the cave's eruption forces the intruder to retreat and run for his life. The caves therefore reject in distaste the people who visit them as there is only confusion, sickness, disorder and evil there. Perhaps a reference to Adela's thoughts while she was on the train that takes her with Mrs. Moore to the caves elucidates the point. Adela tries to get the apathetic Mrs. Moore interested in her plans and when that fails, Adela takes refuge in thoughts of her "manageable future, and the Anglo-Indian life she had decided to endure."⁽⁶⁰⁾ She ignores the message (boredom? futility?) of the train, whilst the "real India" she comes to see remains outside the periphery of her vision. India appears to be

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Ibid., 214.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Ibid., 145.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Ibid., 135.

incomprehensible, unapproachable and unconquerable: “India is the country, fields, fields, then hills, jungle, hills, and more fields. The branch line stops, the road is only practicable for cars to a point, the bullock-carts lumber down the side tracks, paths fray out into the cultivation, and disappear near a splash of red paint. How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile.”⁽⁶¹⁾ In other words, the Indian continent by virtue of its inexplicable environment poses a threat to the Colonizer who is doomed to fail in carrying out his mission. Once expatriates or newcomers do not fit themselves harmoniously with the original people or the newly-explored habitat, disaster is likely to happen and the whole history of Colonization is directed a severe blow that sends it wailing in the wilderness it attempts to penetrate, invade and domesticate.

A Severe Blow Directed at Colonization

The statement spoken by Fielding to Adela therefore dismantles Colonization as it exposes its real intentions when Europeans claim to be torch-bearers and the enlighteners of inferior races. It is none of their concerns at all that natives get along well with Europeans or vice versa. Humanitarian issues are brushed aside to show the heinous crimes, the ferocity, viciousness and utter nonchalance of Europeans who come to feather their own nests and fill their pockets with Oriental or African treasures and leave a mess behind. As Mill in *The History* explains, India becomes part of the strategy for “fashioning a critique for British society itself.” Thus Mill’s self-reflexive work, like Said’s *Orientalism* that directs a blow at the Occident as a whole, “fashion(s) a critique of the ruling British ideology of the time.”⁽⁶²⁾ As Roger Joseph rightly observes, Said’s *Orientalism* is “a mirror” not “on the East but one on the West.”⁽⁶³⁾ Thus the question of bilateral relations and human rights are just the clever European mentality’s excuse to come and civilize the barbarians, keep order and impose peace on a land of sedition and continuous resurgent upheaval and turmoil.

Perhaps Ronny’s remark that reveals the real British intention behind colonizing India is appropriate here. In an outburst with his sympathetic mother, he retorts: “We’re out here to do justice and keep the peace.....I am out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force. I’m not a missionary or a Labour Member or a vague sentimental sympathetic literary man. I’m just a servant of the Government; it’s the profession you wanted me to choose myself, and that’s that. We’re not pleasant in India, and we don’t intend to be pleasant. We’ve something more important to do.”⁽⁶⁴⁾ For Ronny, the British “were necessary in India; there would certainly have been bloodshed without them.”⁽⁶⁵⁾ Even Fielding expresses the view that “England holds India for her

⁽⁶¹⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁶²⁾ Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, 128 and 198 respectively.

⁽⁶³⁾ Roger Joseph, “Review of *Orientalism*,” *American Anthropologist*, 82, No. 4 (1980), 948.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Forster, *Passage*, 49-50.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Ibid., 93.

good.”⁽⁶⁶⁾ But while the British are mainly concerned with the suppression of any rebellion against colonial authority, they are aware that such an authority has to be resisted and fought against for the “younger generations (particularly the educated) believe in a show of manly independence.”⁽⁶⁷⁾ Thus mutiny and opposition are inevitable, and the British are suffocating something that is bound to emerge in the years to come. Hence their authority is maintained by force and weapons and the natives must retaliate to shake off such an unnaturally-imposed power. Hamidullah can not act in the same manner as he was years back in Cambridge when he enjoyed a happy stay where “politics had not mattered in Mr. and Mrs. Bannister’s rectory.”⁽⁶⁸⁾ But back in India, he is involved in the socio-political struggle against colonial rule. He has no choice but to join the circle of the educated Indians, who in the eyes of the British officials like Major Callendar, are “weaving, however painfully, a new social fabric,”⁽⁶⁹⁾ that the British only hope they can prevent or thwart. But in spite of the risks involved in political participation where both “character and career” are ‘ruined’, “yet nothing can be achieved without them.” In India, there is always “wire-pulling and fear,”⁽⁷⁰⁾ a fear that any move or act can be reported by agents as a sign of a hidden attempt to rebel against the British. It is out of this fear, that suspicion, distrust and racial conflicts color relations even among Indians themselves. But in spite of differences among various groups of Indians, they are willing to get united in a ‘committee of notables’ to face the British, but ironically, their unity gets them nowhere as “nothing constructive had been achieved.”⁽⁷¹⁾ But one can not overlook the significance of the pressure exercised by the weak and colonized in the long run. As Bhabha observes: “Hegemony requires iteration and alterity to be effective, to be productive of politicized populations: the (non-homogenous) symbolic-social bloc needs to represent itself in a solidary collective will — a progressive government.”⁽⁷²⁾

Bhabha therefore believes that oppressed minorities must have a united front in order to force a government, as a symbol of authority, to listen to their grievances and come down to their requests. The force of change is bound to have a chance and it is only a matter of time when such requests must be granted. Once more colonial authority is directed a harsh blow because it is artificially contrived as it is based on racial discrimination and because it can never conquer the mysterious and incomprehensible India that defeats the European and sends him or her back with the palm-trees waving a mocking farewell as in the case of Mrs. Moore. Thus the secret treasures that Adela wants Aziz to unlock for her remain inaccessible to the European intellect, supposedly powerful but rendered weak in the novel. Such a weakness is evident in the everlasting

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Ibid., 108.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Ibid., 33.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Ibid., 103.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Ibid., 54.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Ibid., 103, 104.

⁽⁷¹⁾ Ibid., 103.

⁽⁷²⁾ Bhabha, *Location*, 29.

influence of the echo on the British as it begins “in some indescribable way to undermine [Mrs. Moore’s] hold on life.”⁽⁷³⁾ When she leaves, the trees wave a good-bye to her and seem to say “‘So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar caves as final?’ they laughed.”⁽⁷⁴⁾ Similarly, as Adela leaves for England, she turns her back to a country of muddle where “nothing ... is identifiable.”⁽⁷⁵⁾ In Egypt, the atmosphere changes: “The clean sands, heaped on each side of the canal, seemed to wipe off everything that was difficult and equivocal, and even Port Said looked pure and charming in the light of a rose-grey morning.”⁽⁷⁶⁾ Consequently, she heads for a bright and clear future in England leaving all confusion and ambiguity behind in the Orient. Finally Fielding leaves the country of echoes and at Alexandria, he enjoys the “bright blue sky, constant wind, clean low coast-line as against the intricacies of Bombay.” In India, nothing is put in its right place and in St. Mark’s, he sees the “harmony (that exists) between the works of man and the earth.” In Italy, he is in the heart of Europe and its “civilization that has escaped muddle.”⁽⁷⁷⁾ The Mediterranean becomes the dividing line between clarity and ambiguity, civilization and backwardness, beauty and absence of form and harmony in architecture. Thus when “men leave the exquisite lake,, they approach the monstrous and extraordinary; the southern exit leads to the strangest experience of all. Turning his back on it again, he took the train northward, and tender romantic fancies that he thought were dead for ever flowered when he saw the buttercups and daisies of June.”⁽⁷⁸⁾

While the quotation establishes a dichotomy between two opposed worlds that never meet, it also points to the inexplicability and incomprehensibility of India. The three people: Mrs. Moore, Adela and Fielding leave with a sense of awareness that they have missed the real India. It is beyond their comprehension. They were culturally displaced. Thus they have nostalgic feelings to return to where they rightly belong. They yearn for a return to the clarity that their European experience “helped [them] toward.”⁽⁷⁹⁾

With Fielding’s return to England, beauty and romantic feelings are once more aroused. The above quote explains clearly that East and West are opposite to each other and therefore the element of contrariety is essential for a demarcation between such antithetical worlds. A full cycle has been completed where the colonizer eventually has to depart and leave for home. The journey back is an evidence of defeat. While the British come to India with the notion that they can extend full authority over a rich and exotic East, they return in utter disappointment because Indian wealth and secrets are not readily accessible and because they discover that their authority is fake. The very notion

⁽⁷³⁾ Forster, 147.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Ibid., 205.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Ibid., 84.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Ibid., 258.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ Ibid., 275.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Ibid., 275-76.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Ibid., 115.

imprinted on the European imagination regarding the wealth of India is built on fantasy and consequently that fantasy has to dispersed. In the course of the novel, Forster dismantles such an erroneous stereotyped conception. He deconstructs preconceived notions associated with a fantasized and distant Orient that exists in Adela's mind and also shatters the very insubstantial grounds on which the whole history of colonization rests. The British empire falls, as Fielding predicts, because its authority remains fake and artificial as it relies on the creation of false discriminations and categorizations that deepen racial conflicts and widen gaps and gulfs and consequently foil attempts to bridge the distance between two opposed worlds. The very question that begins the novel in Hamidullah's house "whether or no it is possible [for an Indian] to be friends with an Englishman"⁽⁸⁰⁾ is answered by Fielding's statement as the British are disinclined to make the slightest move to build intimate relations that reflect genuine understanding and deep concern for the plight of Indians. As the analysis reveals, the coldness of the British makes such an attempt almost an impossibility. Furthermore, what adds to their sense of alienation is that they find themselves in an inimical and hostile environment that they can never conquer because of its mystery and inaccessibility. It sends them back with the sense that they have lost their grip over a continent that can not be domesticated and it leaves them with feelings of a spiritual muddledom and confusion that requires time and perhaps a return to the clarity of Europe before such an ambiguity, intricacy and equivocalness can be wiped off.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ Ibid., 12.

الشرق والغرب في رواية فورستر الرحلة إلى الهند

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ملخص البحث. يسلط البحث الضوء على عبارة مهمة قالها فيلدينج لأدلا كوستد عقب تجربة الكهف المروعة وما تلاها من محاكمة عزيز والتي أفضت إلى براءته. ويحلل الباحث هذه المقوله في ضوء علاقتها بأمور مهمة بالحوار حول الاستشراق الذي بدأه إدوارد سعيد في كتابه الاستشراق وتوسيع فيه كتاب أمثال بهابها، يونج، فانون ومجد. ويقوم هذا الحوار على أساس الاستقطالية البنوية التي تضع حدودا فاصلة بين أوروبا القوية وأسيا المهزومة والبعيدة. وهذه النظرة الاستعلائية للغرب المستسلط هي الأساس الذي قام عليه الاستعمار الذي يرى أنه من حقه بسط نفوذه على الشرق المتقهقر لسلبه كل خبراته. ومن ثم تكونت الفكرة لدى الغرب بأن الهند قارة غنية تحمل كنوزا مدفونة في أعماقها وللغرب حرية المطلقة في سلب تلك الكنوز لتشري خزانته. ومن خلال التحليل للنص السابق يتبين أن فورستر يقد نقداً «تفكيكياً» تلك الفكرة الغربية عن الشرق الغريب والتي طبعت في مخيلة الرجل الغربي وقادت على أساس الوهم والخيال. كما أن فورستر يوجه صفعه للاستعمار لأن الأسس التي قام عليها هشة إذ أنه يضع بذور التفرقة العنصرية والغروقات الطبقية بين الرجل الأبيض وأبناء الشعوب المستعمرا ويرى الظلم المقيت والتحامل الواضح من خلال تلك الفروقات. وبالتالي فإن الأسس التي قام عليها الاستعمار بعيدا عن روح الإنصاف والعدل والتعامل الإنساني هي نفس تلك الأسس التي قوضت بنائه وهددت بسقوط جرائه لأن سلطة المستعمر سلطة زائفة مصطنعة تقوم على معايير خاطئة تصنف الشعوب وتقسمهم اعتمادا على أسس إنما تزيد الشحناء بين الشعوب وتجعل التقارب بين الشرق والغرب أشبه بالمستحيل. وبدلا من تعزيز سلطته وبسط نفوذه على القارة الهندية، يجد المستعمر نفسه في بيئة معادية لا يمكن له التعايش معها، وما عليه في النهاية إلا أن يعلن عن هزيمته وكأن تلك المحاولات لن ترويض القارة الهندية بطريقة تبين نفوق الغربي وقدره على اكتشاف الأسرار والكنوز المختبئه قد باءت بالفشل الذريع. ولا يبقى للمستعمر إلا أن يجر أنديال الخيبة والهزيمة موليا شطره نحو الغرب الأكثر صفاء ووضوحا تاركا خلفه الشرق الغامض وما عليه إلا أن يعترف بفشلها في فك رموزه وألغازه.

East and West

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