

NARRATION IN E.M. FORSTER'S "A PASSAGE TO INDIA"

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Abstract. The present paper explores E.M. Forster's peculiar, yet elusive style in disclosing the racial and imperial thought embedded in the text and maintained by non-native people. Despite its ambivalent attitude towards the native, the novel's discourse of benevolence and the rhetoric of the 'mission civilisatrice' could not hide the discourse of colonial domination. To unmask this view, Forster adopts a particular narratorial technique. Such an adoption, therefore, is to be explained through the study of the 'speech act' as one of the main angles to deal with narration in *A Passage to India*. Likewise, this paper attempts to study the 'reporting act' which requires analysing speech and thought representation in the novel.

Keywords: narration, speech act, reporting act, colonialism, homodiegetic, heterodiegetic, ambivalence

INTRODUCTION

Though it is meant to be a possible attempt to bridge the gap, through love and friendship, between two different cultures, *A Passage to India* remains, as claimed by Virginia Woolf, a novel presenting "a vision of a particular kind and a message of an elusive nature" (Jay 1998, 15). Indeed, as advanced by postcolonial theories, namely Edward Said, in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, the novel is misleading for it endorses an ambivalent attitude (Said 1994, 245). In line with this, the present paper aims to disclose the racial and imperial thinking, eminently embedded in the text, and basically enhanced for further colonial domination. Such thinking is to be demonstrated through a study of the reporting act as one angle to tackle narration.

I. DIAGNOSING NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND DEFINITION

Since determining narration strategies is of paramount importance to discern the speaker's intended position and attitude, namely that of the narrator, an attempt to define this term is quite significant. As emphasised by Genette, narration is the "act and process of telling a story, and it is different from what is actually told (narrative)" (Wales 1989, 312). There is, in fact, a whole process of "communication" or "discourse" between author and reader, narrator and narratee. Yet, there are different "narratorial techniques", which result in "different kinds and levels of narration" (*Ibidem*, 312).

Pertinently enough, a story may be told by a "first-person/ homodiegetic narrator" who takes action in the story), or by an authorial/ heterodiegetic narrator" (who tells a story about other people) (Jhan 2001, 15). The latter is the type restored to in *A Passage*. He is referred to as "third person" or "omniscient narrator", and is supposed to know everything and slip into the thoughts of all characters. He is then identical to the "implied author" (Wales 1989, 328). As such, narration can be defined as follows:

An act of mediation of reality through the auspices of someone postulating as a narrator. Mediation at the discourse level is bound to be translated in the form of different degrees of intervention of the narrator into the speech, thought, perception and feeling of the persona at the story level. (Triki 2002, 193)

Following these lines, interference on the part of the narrator results in an "experiential narration". What is important here is to consider this involvement as a guiding sphere to divulge the narratorial attitude and judgment about characters.

One way to unmask the narrator's point of view and evaluation is to study the framing/ reporting strategy. This study, which is based on "speech and thought presentation", is one of the recent trends in narratology (Linguist List 2002, 3). As maintained by Triki in his article "How to Professionalise Literary Translation", speech and thought presentation depend on the "concept of Self". This Self

can be a “Deictic”, a “perceptual or ideological centre” or “any combination of these centres”. Therefore, the conception “point of view and narrative voice” (Triki 1998, 1).

Similarly, reporting involves a “confrontation of two selves: namely the reporting self and the reported self”. That’s to say, reporting, which highlights a confrontation between two selves, results in the involvement of the reporter. Intrinsically, reports are “inherently mediated by and subordinated to the will and illocutionary goals of the enframing discourse producer”. For this reason, it is worthwhile mentioning that “no reporting is innocent or value-free” (Linguist List 2002, 4). Reporting remains an important field of investigation and one of the basic clues to show the narrator’s point of view, judgment and emotions via the represented characters.

Studying the reporting act implies analysing speech and thought presentation, which requires a portrayal of the various modes/ techniques of narration. Hence, the author may use Direct Discourse (DD), Free Direct Discourse (FDD), Indirect Discourse (ID), Free Indirect Discourse (FID) and Narratorial Report Of Speech Acts (NRSA). Undeniably, each mode has its specific characteristics and impact. Thus, in order to reveal the narratorial point of view, it is better to study mainly and separately the use of DD, FD, and NRSA in the novel.

II. THE USE OF DIRECT DISCOURSE IN *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

The use of DD means essentially that the narrator is objective because he quotes the character’s original speech with zero degree of intervention. However, this can be challenged when focusing on the “inquit” or “reporting locution”, which may have distinct forms and impacts. As maintained by Triki and Bahloul, “the inquit could pass on an implicit comment on the quality of what is said [...] and especially when it collocates with highly evaluative adverbs”. In other words, the use of adverbs, for example, remains a crucial

medium to get access to the narrator's attitude about characters, as illustrated by the following statement: "He said stiffly, 'I do not consider Mrs Moore my friend. I only met her accidentally in my mosque'" (Forster 1936, 56). The use of the adverb 'stiffly' shows the narrator's interference in what he reports: he is qualifying Dr Aziz's speech. Yet, since this adverb bears negative connotation (meaning that Aziz cannot breathe and control himself while speaking), we may infer that the narrator wants to "insinuate" a hostile attitude towards him. He sheds light on the lack of self-confidence in this character. The same attitude is further implied in the following statement: "'There'll be no muddle when you come to see me', said Aziz, never out of his depth" (*Ibidem*, 58). Here, the adverb 'never' together with the adjective 'out of his depth' mark the reporter's involvement. Both are used to reinforce a negative image of Dr Aziz, stressing his speaking without thinking. With higher harshness, this particular image is reproduced here too: "'poor criminal, give him another [...] to go to prison and be corrupted.' His face grew very tender – the tenderness of one incapable of administration and unable to grasp [...]" (*Ibidem*, 59). The depiction of the facial gesture and the way Dr Aziz reacts in this particular case is not innocent or value-free. The narrator wants to enhance the fact that Indians are sensitive because they cannot control their emotions. They are impulsive creatures who react without thinking and are unable to grasp serious matters.

Besides, narratorial attitude can be detected through the "semantic tenor" of the reporting locution or inquit (*i.e.* the focus is on the reporting verb itself). In this context, it is stated that "the inquit could contain a comment on the manner of saying" (Triki and Bahloul 2001, 11). In other words, clarifying the way the original speech is said remains a basic clue to divulge the reporter's views. We notice in the novel that whenever there is direct access to the native Indians' speeches, the reporting verb bears negative connotations. There is usually an excessive use of the verb 'cry' instead of the verb 'say' when reporting Dr Aziz's speeches, as in the following: "'Yes, all that is settled,' he cried" (Forster 1936, 63).

The same attitude is associated with the Nawab Bahadur, when saying, “Let me take you to the bungalow,’ cried the old man” (*Ibidem*, 75). In brief, the verb ‘cry’ highlights the narrator’s hostile attitude towards Indians.

In contrast, this negative attitude and stereotyping thinking diminish when reporting the Anglo-Indians or English speeches. For example, in “‘To drive them elsewhere’, said Hassen, after painful thought” (*Ibidem*, 87), Hassen is given the quality of speaking and not crying. Also, he is given the value of speaking, though with difficulty. Accordingly, we can say that the narrator wants to focus on the difference between Native-Indians and Anglo-Indians. The construction of the hierarchy continues while reporting English characters’ speeches. Actually, the inquit, used to bring the original speech of Miss Quested, Mrs Moore, Ronny or Fielding, reveals a friendly attitude towards them. For example, the adverb ‘thoughtfully’ in “‘I suppose so,’ said the girl thoughtfully” (*Ibidem*, 84) is used to comment implicitly on Miss Quested’s speech. Selecting the inquit consequently shows the reporter’s attitude towards English people. They are depicted as thoughtful, intelligent subjects. Likewise, this view is directed towards Fielding, while saying “‘I guess they do; I got in first’, said Fielding, smiling” (*Ibidem*, 98). ‘Smiling’ is used to emphasise the politeness and good manners of Fielding. It is done on purpose, particularly if we consider the content of this speech in the novel. Although ‘Hamidullah’ makes use of provocative language and harmful accusations while talking to Fielding, the latter reveals good manners and self-confidence. Thus, the English are represented as a moderate race.

Consequently, through the reporting locution, valuable information can be gathered on the narrator’s attitudes about characters. However, in our study of DD, we can notice that here is the use of a wide variety of inquit which marks the narratorial ambivalence. For instance, the narrator sheds light on the emotional state of Dr Aziz, while saying, “‘I see. Anything further to complain of? He was good-tempered and affectionate” (*Ibidem*, 225). Here, “good-tempered” and “affectionate” maintain the narrator’s

involvement and ambivalent attitude. Dr Aziz now becomes, like Fielding or Miss Quested, a civilised and moderate person. Toward the end of the novel, there is a less hostile attitude toward Indians. In fact, as advanced by Collins, using various inquirers or tags remains part of the reporter's strategy:

In using a wide variety of tags, authors are trying to narrow the reader's range of interpretive possibilities in order to further their communicative goals. Such use of nuanced vocabulary, which is especially, though not exclusively, typical of modern literary languages, is a 'speaker-based strategy'. (6)

In other words, the text shows an ambivalent attitude towards the represented characters, which remains a misleading strategy on the part of the narrator.

III. THE USE OF FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE

Similar to Direct Discourse, the narratorial attitude and message can be revealed through scrutinising Free Indirect Discourse (FID). In this mode, the speech of the character and the words of the narrator are "blended with no reporting clause" (Wales 1989, 191). Its main features are often "the presence of third-person pronouns and past tense" (Leech 1981, 325). However, this blend of the narrator's voice and the character's "focalization" leads to the narrator's interference. "Focalization" means also "perspective" or "point of view". It refers to 'the angle of vision' through which the story is focused, but in a sense which includes not only the angle of the physical perception [...] but also cognitive orientation [...] and emotive orientation" (Wales 1989, 179). In this context, Leech asserts that: "the ability to give the flavour of the character's words but also to keep the narrator in an intervening position between character and reader makes FID an extremely useful vehicle for casting on what the character says" (Forster 1936, 327). In this perspective, Triki assumes that "authors inevitably leave their mark on the discourse they relate. Their presence of evolution crops up

in the story's past. Their modal belief or disbelief in what they relate is bound to affect the choice of tense, aspect and modality in the text" (*Foundation for a Course*, 122). Because the norm in FID is the use of the past tense, so any shift to the present will be taken as a guide to reveal the narratorial attitude. Indeed, the present tense can be used as an "indicator of the writer's modal belief in some elements of the story" (*Ibidem*, 125). In other words, any message or attitude on the part of the narrator is to be detected through the "temporal shift", namely from past tense (the story time) to the present tense (the discourse time). In fact, the following statement from *A Passage* may illustrate this idea:

That an elephant should depend from so long and so slender a string filled Aziz with content, and with humorous appreciation of the East, where the friends of friends are a reality, where everything gets done sometime, and sooner or later everyone gets his share of happiness. (*Ibidem*, 123)

What is noticeable in this statement is the temporal shift from past to present tense. This implies the "mediation of the speaking subject", which influences the choice of time. In this context, Triki and Bahloul assume that "the reporter has to locate the temporal deictic information with respect to a given deictic centre measured against his / her own underlying past event, where the past tense would be expected, the narrator shifts explicitly to the present as in "are" and "gets". This temporal displacement explains the reporter's belief and involvement in what he relates. Consequently, it creates a sensational and persuasive effect" (*Ibidem*, 18). That's to say, the speaking voice undertakes to take part in the spread of the civilising mission or Enlightenment project. His discourse (speaking about a 'share of happiness') coincides with the discourse of benevolence upon which the empire was founded.

Yet, in this reported speech, it is quite significant to mention that there is a kind of ambiguity. It stems from our uncertainty whether the adjective "humorous" is part of the original speech or it is formulated by the narrator to depict Dr Aziz's appreciation of the East. Here, as advanced by Verdonk, we can say that "the use of

free indirect discourse initially contributes to narrative ambiguity" (*Ibidem*, 98). This ambiguity implies that there is a violation of the maxim of manner. Following the philosopher Grice, "the maxim of manner means we should avoid obscurity, ambiguity and prolixity, and be orderly" (Wales 1989, 286). As a result, this obscurity has an ironic impact. We can understand through this obscurity that the narrator is satirical. Even without revealing his true position, he establishes a "high posh" tone towards Dr Aziz as he mocks this latter's reaction in this particular case. Therefore, irony becomes a major narratorial strategy that characterises FID, which remains a powerful tool of manipulation.

The present tense, as a marker of the speaker's belief of what is being reported, shows this latter's stereotypical thinking about India. The following statement obviously highlights this pejorative thinking about India: "In her ignorance, she regarded him as India and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method is accurate, and that no one is India" (Forster 1936, 61). Indeed, the shift to the present tense at the end of the statement reveals a deliberate involvement and belief in what is reported; that is to say, it postulates that "no one is India". Here, India is said to be in a state of negativity, with no identity. Similarly, in what follows, the same attitude and image about India is reinforced: "Nothing in India is identifiable, the more asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else" (*Ibidem*, 72). Through this temporal shift, the narrator marks his interference, which alludes to the same point of view: "India is neither the place nor the time [...] for identity" (Said 1994, 242).

Essentially, interference on the part of the narrator can be traced not only through tense, but also through other clues such as exclamation and interrogative marks. To illustrate this point, consider the mediation of the speaking voice in the following passage:

At the moment when he was throwing in his lot with India, he realised the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them. They always do something

disappointing. Aziz had tried to run away from the police. Mohammed Latif had not checked the pilfering – and now Hammudallah! – Instead of ranging and denouncing, he temporised. Are Indians Cowards? No, but they are bad starters and occasionally Jib. (Forster 1936, 153-4)

The first noticeable remark in this passage is that the exclamation mark is kept, which indicates that the narrator is involved in what he reports. In other words, like Fielding, he is amazed at the Indians' behaviour. Second, the temporal displacement, as in "always do", serves the narrator's ends: to highlight the Indians' strange and stupid behaviours. Third, maintaining the interrogative marks cannot be innocent. In this respect, Leech and Short assert that "questions are used by novelists to make direct addresses to the reader, inviting judgements on the events they relate and the characters they describe, or giving us opinions on the world in general" (*Ibidem*, 267). Thus, representing the voice and thoughts of Fielding, the narrator cannot help but identify with the reported speech. He wants to imply and reinforce the same image about Indians. This attitude is maintained through the new shift to the "generic timeless present" (Leech 1981, 268) at the end of the passage: "[Indians] are bad starters and occasionally Jib" (*Ibidem*, 154). In the mind of the narrator, it is an absolute fact that Indians lack self-determination and intelligence.

Furthermore, the narratorial attitude towards the represented characters can be uncovered through examining the choice of the aspect. As advanced by Triki in his article "The Linguistics of Literary Pedagogy",

[a]spects realise linguistically the speaker's perception of how a particular event takes place. It provides the topic, the point of view chosen with respect to reality [...] the simple non-aspectualized forms indicate an objective point of view, whereas the spectralized forms indicate a subjective point of view on the part of the speaker. (Triki 1998, 58)

To illustrate this point, we need to consider the mediation of the narrator through the use of the perfect aspect: "There he sat [...] since they last met, she had elevated him into a principal of evil, but

now he seemed to be what he had always been – a slight acquaintance" (Forster 1936, 195). The use of the aspectualized form (past perfect) in "he had always been" highlights the reporter's belief in what he reports. Representing the thought of Adela, the narrator crops up, reinforcing the same attitude towards Dr Aziz. With the use of the adverb of high frequency 'always', the narrator marks his involvement. Dr Aziz represents, therefore, the image of the trivial Indian who lacks determination, power and attraction.

In addition, the speaker's belief and identification in what is being reported can be detected as well at the modal level. Triki and Bahloul reckon that:

In terms of deontic modality [...] keeping the modal auxiliary 'must' intact in a past tense report may signal the reporter's commitment to the tenor of the deontic power of the reported discourse or it may simply show the salience of the reported obligation in the reporter's mind and his / her attempt to draw the reader's attention to it through the process of foregrounding (for a variety effects, including irony). (Triki 2001, 9)

Taking into account the "subjectivity markers", such as the modal auxiliary 'must', helps to infer the hidden message. For instance, the narrator's attitude seems embedded in the following statement: "His heart was too full to draw back. He must slip out in the darkness, and do this one act of homage to Mrs Moor's son" (Forster 1936, 279). Here, 'must' indicates the interference of the narrator; mainly, it has an ironic effect. The narrator wants to reveal the good heart and will to help that Dr Aziz possesses. This quality, however, becomes his major flaw. Through the presentation of Aziz's thoughts, the narrator mocks the Indians' eagerness to help, which hides their desire to be colonised.

Like Direct Discourse (DD), Free Indirect Discourse (FID) incorporates the narrator's involvement and his strategic plan to hint at the Indians' subordinate position. Yet, still, FID reveals the ambivalence of narration. This indeterminacy is always revealed through the temporal displacement, among other markers. For instance, "Civilisation stays about like a ghost [...] when the

whirring of action ceases, it becomes visible, and reveals a civilisation which the west can disturb but will never acquire” (*Ibidem*, 223). Here, the use of the present tense shows the reporter’s belief and engagement in what is reported. Mainly, the narrator seems to condemn colonialism, which destructs the civilisation and ethics of Indians. However, despite the ambivalent attitude and regardless of any ambiguity, FID remains a powerful tool and mode through which the author succeeds in insinuating his message.

IV. REPORTING OF SPEECH ACT

Similarly, Narratorial Report of Speech Act (NRSA) stands as an effective technique and a clue to unmask the intended attitude and message. According to Leech and Short, in using NRSA, “the narrator does not have to commit himself entirely to giving a sense of what was said, let alone the form of words in which they were uttered” (323). Indeed, this mode shows “the highest degree” or the “furthest extreme of narratorial intervention” (Triki, “How to Professionalise”, 8). As such, it stands as a heavy indicator of the end and goal of the reporter. Study NRSA leads narratologists to consider the “significance of sequencing”. In other words, they find it valuable to focus on “the degree of matching or mismatching between the original and the represented sequences” (Triki 2002, 196). That’s to say, they try to measure the extent to which the reporter is faithful to the original speech. When using NRSA, the reporter's speech becomes tightly under the guidance and ascendancy of the narrator.

In *A Passage*, this technique is used frequently and particularly when reporting Indian characters’ speeches. For instance, the narrator opts for an NRSA when reporting a speech delivered by Dr Panna Lal and Ram Chand: “Their voices rose. They attacked one another with obscure allusions and had a silly quarrel” (*Ibidem*, 94). We find in this statement the use of euphemism when saying “they had a silly quarrel”. This trope has a major function, which is to

improve upon the original. Accordingly, the reporter's account is meant to be better than the initial speech. In this regard, Leech and Short argue that "euphemism is a natural result of the politeness principle [...] used to avoid unpleasantness" (*qtd.* in Wales 1989, 158). However, the fact that the narrator avoids retelling the original speech means that he has a "haughty posh" (Forster 1936, 50), which widens the barrier between him and the represented characters. Accordingly, Indians are pushed into the periphery, holding a subordinate position, never in the centre. Similarly, in the following instance, the narrator chooses to stay aloof and detach himself from the Indians' discourses: "the Indians were bewildered. The line of thought was not alien to them, but the words were too definite and bleak" (*Ibidem*, 96). Here, he foregrounds their state of confusion, together with the lack of self-confidence and hopeless words they proclaim. In other words, the reporter wants to stress the fact that Indians are not yet ready to talk about politics.

Actually, the narrator's involvement and scheme appear everywhere, even in his choice of the mode. A scrutiny of the text reveals that the author does not stick to only one mode of narration. He goes from one to another, which is called "slippage" (Leech 1981, 323). Adopting one mode of presentation in particular instances and with particular characters, then moving to another one, can be taken as part of the narratorial misleading strategy. Yet, what is noteworthy here is that FID is the dominant mode of narration in the text. Because this technique is ambiguous by nature, its overuse in the text is meant to manipulate readers. Essentially, the writer wants implicitly to insinuate judgments towards Indians without revealing his real position.

Ignorant of the tricky process of telling the story, many critics assert that *A Passage* is a faithful mimetic text that reflects the reality and truth of Indians. Consequently, the reporting act is said to be an objective and value-free attempt. However, as it has previously demonstrated through illustrations from the text, the reporter cannot be objective. We have come to the conclusion that either through DD, FID or NRSA, the narrator leaves part of himself.

Indeed, because the act of reporting does not only “draw a profile” of the people being reported but also a profile of the reporter, we are liable to say that we are in front of a biased narrator. His choices (including the selection of the inquit, modes, the “lexicogrammatical” choices, etc.) corroborate the text’s ideological complicity.

Though it is said to be liberalist, Forster’s novel falls into the tendency of bearing a racial and colonial thinking. Indeed, by means of reporting, the narrator established the borderlines between Indian and English subjects. Our observation of the reporting strategy, which is similar to the Derridean method of “close reading”, shows that a “set of binary oppositions can be found inscribed within the narrative. This thinking is based on binary opposition: rational versus irrational, moderate versus transgressive, polite versus rude, etc., where the first term is privileged” (Sarup 1998, 56). In this concern, we can say that *A Passage* belongs to the “popular fiction” which is influenced by “the racial model [that] had been laid down by Blumenback, de Gobineau and the anthropologists” (Street 1975, 98). In other words, in his insistence to inform us especially about the Indians’ quality and way of speaking and reacting, the narrator is much influenced by these latter’s ideas. A main claim set by these researchers says that “differences between races were not only external but also internal (mental and moral) (*Ibidem*, 97). That’s to say, racial difference is biologically and genetically inherited and not culturally constructed. The Indian is thought to be like the “Negro [...] inferior intellectually to the European and better off under his guidance” (*Ibidem*, 95). The Indian aggressiveness and lack of intelligence contrast with the English politeness and power. Pertinently enough, this coincides with Gobineau’s claim:

The white race originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength. By its union with other various hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong intelligence, or if intelligent, both weak and ugly. (*Ibidem*, 100)

De Gobineau's emphasis on the "incompatibility" between races due to a genetically inherited difference is referred to in the novel. As an intelligent selector and reporter, the narrator informs us about Mr Harris' self-division: "for a little he was vexed by opposite currents in his blood, they blended, and he belonged to no one but himself" (Forster 1936, 78). Mr Harrison, who is an Anglo-Indian, cannot belong to either Indians nor to the English. He is superior to the Indian race because he has English blood. Then, Forster's text incorporates and perpetuates the same racial thinking which stresses the "myth of racial purity" (Street 1975, 97). Even though some do not totally agree due to the ambivalent narration adopted in the novel, we can still account for this claim.

In our observation of the different modes adopted in the novel, we come to the conclusion that the narrator holds ambivalent attitudes towards the represented characters. This ambivalence characterises the "strategy of dubiety" (Tarchouna 1998, 189) adopted in the novel. In other words, the reader remains uncertain about the real position of the speaker. However, if we compare *A Passage* to a scientific racial theory, we will come to the conclusion that there is rather a newfangled but one point of view. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator expresses a less harsh opinion towards Indians. This coincides with the claim that "the friendship between races is difficult, and only possible if a native shows the qualities of an English gentleman" (Street 1975, 55). The narrator's ambivalent attitude may have two interpretations. First, Forster's hope to bridge the gap and create a possible friendship between the two nations necessitates the transformation of the narratorial attitude and the characters themselves. Thus, it is reluctantly that this opinion does not change, as assumed by Street. "In Forster's novel, moments of communication are achieved by accident [...] and seldom last long" (*Ibidem*, 29). Second, his change incorporates itself a racial thinking. How? Well, after months of encounters with the English visitors (especially Miss Quested, Mrs Moore and Fielding), the Indians seem much influenced by them. For instance, Dr Aziz becomes more and more like Fielding by his cool and polite behaviour. This

change means that the English presence in India is effective and legitimate.

Hence, despite its complexity, indeterminacy and ambivalence, the novel remains one of the canonical narratives which carries its colonial complicity. Here, Tarchouna claims that “ambivalent narration is a means of creating and consolidating domination” (Tarchouna 1998, 186). The non-frequent narrator’s tendency to insinuate a friendly attitude towards Indians and a hostile one towards English cannot erase the colonial and imperial eye of the reporting voice. The ambivalent narration can be understood as a misleading strategy on the part of the narrator. Through the reporting act, Forster reproduces and maintains the racial and stereotypical thinking associated with the native Indian. This latter is portrayed as other who needs to be enlightened and educated by the English. In this regard, Edward Said succeeds in his *Orientalism* to unmask the workings of Western thought. He mainly asserts that the novel genre remains a powerful medium to maintain colonialism (Said 1994, 177). Likewise, he asserts in *Culture and Imperialism* that “the novel reinforces [...] advances perceptions and attitudes about England and the world [...] never in the novel is that world beyond seen except as subordinate and dominated” (*Ibidem*, 189). Forster’s *A Passage*, like Kipling’s *Kim* and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, holds the same discourse of power which is hidden underneath a ‘benevolence’. In other words, reproducing the same imperial stereotype, through the act of reporting, aims at legitimising the Christian and civilising mission. Because the other, *i.e.* Indian, is like a savage, so it is the responsibility of the self, *i.e.* English, to enlighten him. It is a Christian burden to let the other sink into barbarism. Actually, his very discourse is what constitutes and builds the long history of the Empire. In this respect, Tarchouna maintains that: “it is this structure of reference that nurtures the ideology of Empire” (Tarchouna 1998, 185).

What is undeniable in the novel is its legitimisation of the English everlasting presence in India. The British Empire should proceed with its colonial project because Indians are not yet ready ‘to rule

themselves by themselves'. Through the reporting strategy, the narrator succeeds in manipulating Indian characters so that they project their failure and weakness to carry on any liberating plan. The narrator's insistence on the lack of any mutual understanding between the different "creeds" in India is not innocent or value-free. It is meant to give a negative image of them. Not only that, but also it is meant to say that liberation and the Indians' undertaking for independence are mere myths. In this context, Said raises a fundamental question: "If present-day India is neither the peace nor the time [...] for identity, convergence, merger, then for what?" (Said 1994, 242). If this question bears within itself its own answer, it will be better to shed light anew on it. Always, a unique answer is possible to this question: India at that time was ready to be colonised. It is within the mind of the coloniser that this answer has been settled. Even English people cannot imagine the Empire being dissolved. They cannot suppose that the other is equal to the self, since this self cannot exist only in the centre when the other is in the periphery.

CONCLUSION

In light of what has been illustrated and assessed throughout this paper, one may conclude that a study of narration in *A Passage* is quite significant. Undeniably foregrounding under scrutiny, the reporting act remains a possible angle to deal with narration among many others. Following the narratorial strategy necessitates fathoming the different choices the narrator makes. This includes the choice of multiple modes of narration. Within each mode, we need to grasp the other alternatives, such as the selection of the inquit, the temporal shifts, aspect and modality, etc. These choices disclose the message the author wants to insinuate through the dominating voice of authorial narration. *A Passage* remains, despite the ambivalence of narration, a canonical text bearing its colonial and imperial complicity.

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