

REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The relationship between “us” and “them” in the postcolonial terms used by Achebe and Forster

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*And so everywhere they went they turned it into England;
and everybody they met they turned English. But no place
could ever really be England, and nobody who did not
look exactly like them would ever be English.*

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*, 1988

*Language is our tool, and language is the tool of the politicians. We
are like two sides in a very hostile game. And I think the attempt
to deceive with words is countered by the efforts of the writer to go
behind the words, to show the meaning.*

Chinua Achebe, *Times Literary Supplement*¹

*Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to
be pleasant to each other. God is love.*

E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*²

¹ Simon Gikandi, *Nation Formation the Novel* in Id., *Reading Chinua Achebe Language & Ideology in Fiction*, *Studies in African Literature*, (London: James Currey, 1991), p.1.

² We use the edition of John Colmer of Edward Morgan Forster, *A passage to India*, London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) LTD, 1967, p. 45.

1. Introduction

This paper is going to talk about an important theme which has often been described by a lot of scholars and critics along the last century: Postcolonialism. Since the seventies we have had a set of studies and researches whose aim is based on the systematic analysis of the relationships among different cultures and contexts which have the common point of having been oppressed by a richer and stronger nation. The term “Postcolonialism” indicates that specific phase which follows the oppressive state³, the state in which the European power imposes its own values and customs in order to “help”, to alleviate the condition of the poorest countries. Speaking of this ethics, the concepts of colonialism and imperialism bob up, although, as Elleke Boehmer points out, there could be a certain difference in meaning, since:

[...] imperialism can be taken to refer to the authority assumed by a state over another territory – authority expressed in pageantry and symbolism, as well as in military power. It is a term associated in particular with the expansion of the European nation-state in the nineteenth century. Colonialism involves the consolidation of imperial power, and is manifested in the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands [...]⁴

Edward Said (1935-2003), the major exponent of the Postcolonial Studies, highlights the distorted vision that the

³Elio Di Piazza, *Studi (post-) coloniali* in Michele Cometa, *Dizionario degli Studi Culturali*, (Roma: Meltemi, 2004), p. 420.

⁴ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature – migrant metaphors*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 2.

Western world has towards the Eastern one, as a result of stereotypes and imperial cliché which represent the primary reason of a drastic pettiness; his important masterpiece, *Orientalism*, published in 1978, begins with imaginative narratives but then moves into a project of enquiry, discovery and knowledge-gathering⁵. The East is described in the form of a fictional creation, we are shown how literary and narrative works have a political consequence⁶; *Orientalism* depicts a « [...] way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience [...]»⁷, it launches an attack to the Western institutions in order to give a voice to the ones whose cultural values have been overpowered and to the ones who hope in a moral redemption together with a better future. Said himself defines his work as:

[...] a manner of regularized writing, vision and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient...The Orient is taught, researched, administered and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways [...]⁸

The critic declares that the Orient was always pictured by using dominating frameworks, and the West, in particular the English Crown, made a homologating foreign policy from which all the commands and transformations for the invaded countries came⁹. The colonial enterprise denotes a life resource for the old country,

⁵ Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonialism: a guide for the perplexed*, (London & New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 13.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage, 1994), p. 1.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

⁹ Elio Di Piazza, *Discorso colonialista e racconto d'avventura* in Id., *Narrazioni dell'impero-saggi su colonialismo e letteratura*, (Palermo: Flaccovio Editore, 1995), p. 147.

a sustenance apt to nourish people by giving them raw materials which lacked in their own countries.

Colonialism alludes to a series of discourses, not only about economy, but also science, policy, religion and literature where the gradual reduction of the *Otherness*¹⁰; the European *overreacher* man regards colonized peoples as lesser: less civilized as savage, wild as animal by adopting the conviction that the rest of the world can be written in his own terms¹¹. The Empire was a textual exercise, it was conceived in an array of writings, from the travel diary to the administrative records where the author's words trace an unfaithful portrait of the *Other*¹², they read the beyond, they talk about the exotic¹³. Countries were mapped using frameworks which harked back to home¹⁴. John MacKenzie's studies¹⁵ on imperial culture, in 1989, demonstrate how newspapers, books, and other popular forms seem to have operated according this Orientalist view which related the East-theme to an idyllic image of intense energy, terror and danger¹⁶. The racial supremacy played the key role in justifying that supremacy, together with the humanitarian impulse that Europe

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

¹¹ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature – migrant metaphors* cit., p. 79.

¹² «[...] it was necessary to give that diversity conceptual shape: known rhetorical figures were used to translate the inarticulate [...]. *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹³ One of the basic aspects of the colonial texts, especially during the Victorian Age, was the *making familiar*, the taming of the exotic. Elio Di Piazza, *Discorso colonialista e racconto d'avventura* in Id., *Narrazioni dell'impero-saggi su colonialismo e letteraturacit.*, p. 149

¹⁴ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature – migrant metaphors* cit., p. 17.

¹⁵ John MacKenzie, *Imperialism and popular culture* in Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonialism: a guide for the perplexed* cit., p. 18.

¹⁶ This sort of vision could be valid also for the regions of Southern Europe which were seen as lazy, incapable of acting, and full of risk due to their nature, for instance the presence itself of the Etna and Vesuvio.

tried to show in order to guarantee a prosperity among those far tribes. We can talk about the “civilizing mission” of colonialism based on the clear distinction of the natives, who would represent the pupils, and the developed Europeans, who would be the teacher¹⁷. Race has thought as a marker of distinction, a gap which leads to exploitation, it was the first analysis that several works and studies were used to doing. A great form of nationalism and an unbridled racist approach give the colonial practice to the light, which pervaded several literary works about the fall of those societies as preys of the European control. This drastic fall was chosen by Chinua Achebe for the title of one of his most famous works, called *Things fall apart*; this paper is intended to analyze what Achebe regards as a fundamental theme: the act of writing as an important occasion for African people to express their needs which were always concealed by the invaders. The writer gives an alternative picture of his Africa, whose tradition is at the point of falling, which was often a privileged destination for many conquerors in quest of precious materials. Everything is based on an European creation¹⁸, everything is planned on a racial difference which lead men to diversify in their physical aspects and in the *imagerie culturelle*¹⁹ offered by some scientific researches. Achebe’s project reflects a cultural deconstruction by means of the writing²⁰ in which the whole image of the primitive native is finally provided with respect and dignity²¹.

¹⁷Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonialism: a guide for the perplexed* cit., p. 38.

¹⁸Frantz Fanon, *Sociologia della rivoluzione algerina*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1963), pp. 76-81.

¹⁹Michele Cometa, *Dizionario degli Studi Culturali* cit., p. 225.

²⁰*Ibidem*, p. 165.

²¹At this point it would be useful to say what “imagology” is: it is a cultural tendency, developed in the fifties, according to which the image of a foreign nation produces anxiety and stereotypes in peoples’ mind. Franco Suitner, *La critica della letteratura e le sue tecniche*, (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2004), p. 62.

Another literary work where this theme and descriptions are held is *A passage to India* written by Forster. The author holds out a hope for a social interaction between the colonizers and the colonized, Europeans and Indians²², he posits if a pacific dialogue between the two counterparts would be possible²³. There is a constant cultural separation between these two worlds given that the presence of stereotypes apt to describe India as a textual and discursive construction²⁴. The definition of “civilization” gathers the distinction between “white” and “black” whose contacts start with the colonial enterprise, when the European navigators fill their diaries with the new concept of *Other*²⁵ as an inferior being. They attempt to give to the natives a cultural purification by means of that *Englishness* which could maintain their control and government in those remote territories²⁶.

[...] by comparing the various stages of civilization among races known to history, with the aid of archeological inference from the remains of pre-historic tribes, it seems possible to judge in a rough way of an early general condition of man, which from our point of view is to be regarded as a primitive condition, whatever yet earlier state may in reality have lain behind it. This hypothetical primitive condition corresponds in a considerable degree to that of modern savage tribes, who, in spite of their

²² Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature – migrant metaphors* cit., p.101.

²³ Miguel Mellino, *Post-orientalismo - Said e gli studi postcoloniali*, (Roma: Meltemi Editore, 2009), p. 168.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 170.

²⁵ Images of the Indian people are gathered in a set of volumes entitled *India Orientalis* (1599), published by Theodore de Bry.

²⁶ « [...] we happen to be the best people in the world, with the highest ideals of decency and justice and liberty and peace, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for humanity [...].» Cecil John Rhodes, *Political writings*, Capetown, 1895, pp. 78-9.

difference and distance, have in common certain elements of civilization, which seem remains of an early state of the human race at large [...]]²⁷

This is what nowadays the Postcolonial ethics criticizes by dismantling the absurdities that the European civilized man declared in the pastime. Writing a Postcolonial text means making a counter-discourse, a discourse in the name of what has been lost of those poor lands, which after the label of “colony” deserve their own moral revenge.

[...] Postcolonial counter-discursive strategies involve a mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dis/mantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified “local” [...]]²⁸.

2. The “fall” of Africa in Achebe

African literature gathers several literary works wherein authors show their need of a better life and their social emancipation²⁹. The Europeans’ arrival signs the beginning of a literacy rate among the colonized territories since XV century. People start to attend schools, to use the first techniques like the steamboat or the plow, and to put their own thoughts in black and white. They

²⁷ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 19.

²⁸ Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial literature and Counter-Discourse* in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 73.

²⁹ «[...] they have to know more than either tradition, you see. This is the problem of being at the crossroads. You have a bit of both, and you really have to know a lot more than either. So their situation is not very easy. But it's very exciting. Those who have the energy and the will to survive at the crossroads become really very exceptional people [...].» Bill Moyers, *Interview with Chinua Achebe*, in *A World of Ideas*, ed. Betty Sue Fowers (New York: Doubleway, 1989), p. 333.

give to the light novels and poems whose main feature is the prevalent use of the diglossia, based on the cultural sphere typical in the author's background³⁰.

Things fall apart, a novel written by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe in 1958, is a milestone in this studies. Taking the title from 1919 Yeats' poem *The second coming*, Achebe identifies this "fall" with his "ancient world", with his Igbo culture which is a prey of the spasmodic European impulse. This novel reflects an important step for the critical studies on the postcolonial condition in Nigeria, as Mudimbe argues³¹, it represents a mere narrative practice which makes Africa a poor instrument in the hands of the invaders. The style is simple, it pictures the way of living in Igbo world with its risk to be blackened by the Western repression, as Achebe, Reiss, Foucalt and Lévi-Strauss point out³². The title itself alludes to a sort of decline, to a co-existence of two different worlds in one land. Achebe tries to promote a new description of the history, a vision which was always concealed by the Western historiography. The author's main intention is a re-writing of the literature, a re-interpretation of his society under different and faithful forms³³; he preserves an

³⁰ We can talk about the *pidgin* variety, which represents a linguistic mixture made of English and other local languages spoken by the ones who came in contact with other different people due to colonization, migration or trade relationship. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pidgin> [accessed 6 February 2014]

³¹ « [...] African worlds have been established as realities for knowledge [...]». Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa: gnosis, philosophy, and the Other of knowledge*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988 and London: James Currey ,1990, p. xi.

³² Neil ten Kortenaar, *How the centre is made to hold in Things fall apart* in Michael Parker and Roger Starkey, *Postcolonial literatures Achebe, Ngugi, Desai, Walcott*, New casebooks, (New York: St. Martin's press, 1995), p. 34.

³³ Anthony Appiah, *Interview with Chinua Achebe* in John Ryle, *Times Literary Supplement*, February 26th, 1982.

original vision of the artistic mean, as it is possible to deduce from his 1978 discourse at the University of Ife: « [...] art is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle on existence through his imagination [...]»³⁴. He has the task of analyzing the colonial project in order to study its ideologies, pretensions, and basic theories³⁵, as the main guardian of the *Africaness*³⁶. He attempts to pull people for a national awareness³⁷, to supply them with a dignity³⁸ and respect³⁹ so as the action⁴⁰ could lead to a better future⁴¹.

³⁴ Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments: selected essays 1965-1987* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1988), p. 96.

³⁵ « [...] colonization was the most important event in our history from all kinds of angles...most of the problems we see in our politics derive from the moment when we lost our initiative to other people, to colonizers [...],» Anthony Appiah, *Interview with Chinua Achebe* cit.

³⁶ Reading some works about Colonialism, the author argues: « [...] I went to the first university that was built in Nigeria, and I took a course in English. We were taught the same kind of literature that British people were taught in their own university. But then I began to look at these books in a different light. When I had been younger, I had read these adventure books about the good white man, you know, wandering into the jungle or into danger, and the savages were after him. And I would instinctively be on the side of the white man. You see what fiction can do, it can put you on the wrong side if you are not developed enough. In the university I suddenly saw that these books had to be read in a different light. Reading heart of darkness, for instance, which was a very, very highly praised book and which is still highly praised, I realized that I was one of those savages jumping up and down on the beach. Once that kind of Enlightenment comes to you, you realize that someone has to write a different story. And since I was in any case inclined that way, why not me? [...]». Bill Moyers, *Interview with Chinua Achebe* cit, p. 343.

³⁷ « [...] to encourage the creation of an African identity». Anthony Appiah, *Interview with Chinua Achebe* cit.

³⁸ « [...] it is the storyteller, in fact, who makes us what we are, who creates history. The storyteller creates the memory that the survivors must have-

3. The values of a lost society

Achebe recalls Igbo culture in his works in the name of a rebirth after the obscure imperialistic period which has often tried to repress it as an empty and unchangeable entity, as Said points out⁴². He needs to discuss the problem⁴³, more than solve it, he needs to give a solution which could prevent another flourishing of it in the next future⁴⁴. Achebe conceives his writing as a project to reinvent Africa⁴⁵, his own pastime⁴⁶ as a moral redemption

otherwise their surviving would have no meaning [...].» Bill Moyers, *Interview with Chinua Achebe* cit., p.337.

³⁹Chinua Achebe, *The role of the writer in the new nation in African writers on African writing*, ed. G. D. Killam (London: Heinemann , 1973), p. 8.

⁴⁰« [...] the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence [...].» Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p. 233.

⁴¹« [...] we have to work with some hope that there is a new generation, a group of survivors who have learned something from the disaster. It is very important to carry the message of the disaster to the new dispensation. With luck, they will succeed [...].» Bill Moyers, *Interview with Chinua Achebe* cit., p. 339.

⁴² Edward W. Said, *Orientalismo*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2007), p. 224

⁴³Jacques Derrida argues that « [...] the sign is always the supplement of the thing itself [...]» in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 146.

⁴⁴« [...] experience is necessary for growth and survival. But experience is not simply what happened. A lot may happen to a piece of stone without making it wiser. Experience is what we are able and prepared to do with what happens to us [...].» Chinua Achebe in Simon Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe Language & Ideology in Fiction*cit., p. 11.

⁴⁵« [...] although in African history the colonial experience represents but a brief moment from the perspective of today, this moment is still charged and controversial, since to say the least, it signified a new historical form and the possibility of radically new types of discourses on African traditions and cultures [...].» Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa: gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*cit., p. 1.

⁴⁶« [...] I know that my first book, *Things fall apart*, was an act of atonement with my past, the ritual return and homage of a prodigal son [...]» Chinua

towards the colonial discourse which depicts his homeland as «[...]a field for the free play of European fantasy [...]»⁴⁷. The reader is introduced in that far land with its simplicity and its history that the white man used to bury. Everything is much evident in the main character Okonkwo's description:

[...] Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old man agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights. [...] He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had no patience with his father [...]]⁴⁸.

This picture of the hero with his context shows us a specific profile of a character who had been emptied of his history and his land (seen as *blank space*⁴⁹) by the European dream⁵⁰, the ruthless

Achebe, *Morning yet on Creation Day: essays* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 70.

⁴⁷ Dorothy Hammond, Alta Jablow, *The myth of Africa* (New York : The Library of Social Sciences, 1977), p. 13.

⁴⁸ We use the edition of Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart*, (London: Heinemann New Windmills, 1989), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁹ « [...] a landscape without figures, an Africa without Africans [...].» David Caroll, *Chinua Achebe* (New York: Twayne, 1970), p. 16.

⁵⁰ « [...] have no history before the coming of the Europeans [...].» Margery Perham in Elizabeth Isichei, *The Ibo people and the Europeans* (London: Faber, 1973), p. 18.

conquerors who followed their ancestors' word⁵¹. According to Jack Goody and Walter Ong⁵² these societies with an oral education run a risk of ignore their own past life and conceive the entire world as unchangeable. The reader can see these works as an author's response to the chronological problems, cultural identity, all linked in an imaginary and unspoiled village⁵³ called Umofia where Okonkwo's story is held⁵⁴.

[...] Okonkwo's prosperity was visible in his household. He had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth. His own hut, or obi, stood immediately behind the only gate in the red walls. Each of his three wives had her own hut, which together formed a half moon behind the obi. The barn was built against one end of the red walls, and long stacks of yam stood out prosperously in it...Near the barn was a small house, the "medicine house" or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits [...]⁵⁵.

⁵¹ « [...]the things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original [...].» Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books Edition, (October 12, 1979), p. 21.

⁵² Jack Goody, *The domestication of the savage mind* (Cambridge 1977); and Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London 1982) in Michael Parker and Roger Starkey, *Postcolonial literatures Achebe, Ngugi, Desai, Walcott*, Indiana University Press, (Autumn 1966), p. 41.

⁵³ « [...] I am writing about my people in the past and in the present, and I have to create for them the world in which they live and move and have their being [...]» Kalu Ogbaa, *An interview with Chinua Achebe*, Research in African Literatures 12 (Spring 1981), p. 1.

⁵⁴ « [...] the fundamental codes of a culture [...] establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical order with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home [...].» Michel Foucault, *The order of things: an archeology of the human sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973), p.xx.

⁵⁵ Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart* cit., p.13.

Okonkwo is pictured as a hero whose materiality is reinforced by its social value and it is the base of the human relations: properties, *yams*, determine his position among other people. He appears as a *self-made man*, the typical representative of his society after the Europeans' departure, as James Olney argues⁵⁶.

4. The conception of time

Time in *Things fall apart* is based on the cyclic nature of the seasons, moons, weeks which deny the accuse moved to those territories of being static. These element together with the foreign presence ensure a contextualization of the work which appears to be held during the Victorian Age.

[...] if only you agree to cooperate with us. We have brought a peaceful administration to you and your people so that you may be happy. If any man ill-treats you we shall come to your rescue. But we will not allow you to ill-treat others. We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my country under a great queen. I have brought you here because you joined together to molest others, to burn people's houses and their place of worship. That must not happen in the dominion of our queen, the most powerful ruler in the world [...].⁵⁷

The frequent use of raw materials which come from the foreign trade⁵⁸, such as flour, corn, tobacco (since the XIX century⁵⁹),

⁵⁶ « [...] a man drawn by a dream and driven by fear, the latter providing much of the substance of the dream [...].» Harold Scheub, *When a man fails alone* in Isidore Okpewho, *Chinua Achebe's Things fall apart: a casebook*, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 109.

⁵⁷ Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart* cit., p. 171.

⁵⁸ Isichei, *The Ibo people and the Europeans* cit., p.8.

⁵⁹ Id., *Ibid.*, pp.75-6.

give us the idea that Achebe's novel is held at end of the 1800s, when Great Britain reigned over two-thirds of the world. The narration undergoes a diachronic turn when Europeans reach the coasts and the country will have a written form-history hence. Ricoeur⁶⁰ talks about three main instruments for writing history (which is often altered by the ones who hold the power⁶¹): calendar, generations, archives.

5. The relationship between colonizers and colonized

Postcolonial literature has always offered to its readers an exhaustive picture of a society labeled as "other", whose costumes have often aroused much curiosity. The content of these works concerns politics and represents an important historical evidence for the victims of the Empire. Postcolonial writer has to reread what the invader declared: this implies that he rewrites the same texts under another point of view by saving what has been misinterpreted, the social and cultural values that the European power tried to bury⁶². It is like a wall that has been erected

⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit III*, (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 153.

⁶¹ « [...] there can be only one point of view from which history can be written, and further, there is such a point of view. Obviously something of this sort is necessary if history is to avoid dogmatic assertions of what really happened or refusal to say what really happened. Whatever the one point of view may be through which history needs to be written if it is to escape subjectivity, it seems that it, too, is a historical resultant. Thus the one necessary point of view from which history is to be written is itself the outcome of history [...]. » John William Miller, *The philosophy of history*, Norton, (New York, 1982) p. 188.

⁶² « [...] when we examine the responses of colonized societies to the discourses that have inscribed them and regulated their global reality, we see that their dominant mode has been transformation. It is transformation that gives these societies control over their future. Transformation describes the ways in which colonized societies have taken dominant discourses, transformed them and used them in the service of their own self-empowerment. More fascinating, perhaps, post-colonial transformation describes the way in

between the two counterparts which defend respectively their own cultures against the “contamination”. Edward Morgan Forster bases his masterpiece *A passage to India* (1924) on this aspect. The novel launches a fundamental question: can Indians and European be friends?⁶³ The author holds out a hopeful message, although the circumstances prevent its realization:

[...]but the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, “No, not yet,” and the sky said, “No, not there”⁶⁴ [...].

The world, the traditions, the stereotypes underline regard illicit the union, as the final and discouraging “*No, not there*” shows us. Colonizer and colonized have not to have a communication, they share a deep social gap, a racial separation between “us” and “other”⁶⁵. India is incapable of starting any project without an

which dominated and colonized societies have transformed the very nature of the cultural power that has dominated them. This is nowhere more obvious than in literary and other representational arts, but it remains a strategic feature of all cultural practice. This is why cultural influence circulates, rather than moves in a straight line “downward” from the dominant to the dominated [...].».

Bill Ashcroft, *On Post-colonial Futures*, 1st edition, (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), p. 1 (introduction).

⁶³« [...] why can't we be friends now? [...] it's what I want. It's what you want [...]». Edward Morgan Forster, *A passage to India* cit., p. 336.

⁶⁴*Ibidem*, p. 336.

⁶⁵Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* cit., 2007, p. 241

European aid⁶⁶, it is a country which needs a humanitarian support⁶⁷.

6. The socio-cultural and ethnic gap

The relation between Indian and English people is the central feature of the novel. Forster maintains several contacts with India, and he details its traits by writing about two different and far societies in physical and ideological terms:

[...]the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. There are no bathing-steps on the river front, as the Ganges happens not to be holy here; indeed there is no river front, and bazaars shut out the wide and shifting panorama of the stream. The streets are mean, the temples ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest. [...] Inland, the prospect alters. There is an oval Maidan, and a long sallow hospital. Houses belonging to Furasians stand on the high ground by the railway station. Beyond the railway—which runs parallel to the river—the land sinks, then rises again rather steeply. On the second rise is laid out the little civil station,

⁶⁶ Stefania De Col, “*Those true soldiers of Christ who go forth to spread the Gospel of Peace in the dark places of the world*”: etica imperialista e morale evangelica nella letteratura vittoriana per l’infanzia in ambito anglo-indiano in Mario Faraone, *Scorci improvvisi di altri orizzonti - sguardi interculturali su letterature e civiltà di lingua inglese*, (Morrisville,USA: Lulu Enterprises, Inc., 2008), p. 49.

⁶⁷ At this point it is necessary to remark 1899 Kipling’s poem entitled “The White Man’s Burden” where the author gives stress to white man’s duty to civilize and educate other lands, by justifying his enterprise as “enlightened” colonialism.

and viewed hence Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place. It is a city of gardens. It is no city, but a forest sparsely scattered with huts. It is a tropical pleasance washed by a noble river⁶⁸[...].

There are two different limited areas on the same territory; the Indian bucolic tradition and the English zone where hospital, schools, railways sign the white man's track. They are two sides of the same coin ("Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place"⁶⁹), two bordering societies under the same sky, the Indian sky:

[...]the sky settles everything—not only climates and seasons but when the earth shall be beautiful. By herself she can do little—only feeble outbursts of flowers. But when the sky chooses, glory can rain into the Chandrapore bazaars or a benediction pass from horizon to horizon. The sky can do this because it is so strong and so enormous. Strength comes from the sun, infused in it daily; size from the prostrate earth⁷⁰ [...].

Despite the socio-cultural differences there is always a basic premise: we are all men and women, we are all citizen of this world, we are affected of the same needs. This remarks the liberal message that the author wants to transmit to his reader, even though it is not shared by everybody, as Aziz ("why talk about the English? Brrrr...! Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends? Let us shut them out and be jolly"⁷¹), one of the main character, points out:

⁶⁸Edward Morgan Forster, *A passage to India* cit., pp. 9-10.

⁶⁹*Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁷⁰*Ibidem*, p.11.

⁷¹*Ibidem*, p. 14.

[...]they were discussing as to whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman. Mahmoud Ali argued that it was not, Hamidullah disagreed, but with so many reservations that there was no friction between them [...] I only contend that it is possible in England," replied Hamidullah, who had been to that country long ago, before the big rush, and had received a cordial welcome at Cambridge. "It is impossible here. Aziz! The red-nosed boy has again insulted me in Court. I do not blame him. He was told that he ought to insult me. Until lately he was quite a nice boy, but the others have got hold of him.". "Yes, they have no chance here, that is my point. They come out intending to be gentlemen, and are told it will not do [...]⁷².

7. An interracial friendship: is it possible?

Forster's alter ego in the novel is Fielding, a positive character who shows an unusual inclination to be friend with the "others", by alluding to the fact that if every invader was willing to do so, there would not be any quarrel between the two parts:

[...] this Mr. Fielding had been caught by India late. [...] To regard an Indian as if he were an Italian is not, for instance, a common error, nor perhaps a fatal one, and Fielding often attempted analogies between this peninsula and that other [...]. He had no racial feeling – not because he was superior to his brother civilians, but because he had matured in a different atmosphere, where the herd-instinct does not flourish. The remark that did him most harm at the club was a silly aside to the effect that the so-called white races are really pinko-grey. [...] He had discovered that it is possible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen,

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 12.

but that he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians[...]⁷³.

A good relation is quite possible, the choice is up to the man who should overcome his selfishness by enlarging his horizons. What the author tries to stress is the inner side of the man by adopting the current Modernist technique⁷⁴ and the polyphonic novel⁷⁵. The man who cannot understand the mysterious side of India, since as Disraeli points out, India is a muddle, it is incomprehensible, it is a mixture of West and East, of many beliefs⁷⁶.

[...] "A mystery is a muddle." "Oh, do you think so, Mr. Fielding?" "A mystery is only a high-sounding term for a muddle. No advantage in stirring it up, in either case. Aziz and I know well that India's a muddle." "India's— Oh, what an alarming idea!" "There'll be no muddle when you come to see me," said Aziz, rather out of his depth. "Mrs. Moore and every one—I invite you all—oh, please." [...]⁷⁷

The moment in which Forster expresses the mysterious veal of India is the scene of the cave. The cave⁷⁸ represents the

⁷³ *Ibidem*, pp. 64-6.

⁷⁴ Giovanni Cianci, *Il modernismo e il primo Novecento* in Paolo Bertinetti, *Storia della letteratura inglese II – dal Romanticismo all'età contemporanea*, (Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 2000), p. 164.

⁷⁵ By taking as example Dostoevskij, Bachtin argued that the novel was the polyphonic genre (dialogical) par excellence, since the action, full of points of view, languages and perspectives, is concentrated on the present, and it represents a sort of inspiration for the other genres. Franco Suitner, *La critica della letteratura e le sue tecniche* cit., p. 58.

⁷⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* cit., p. 50.

⁷⁷ Edward Morgan Forster, *A passage to India* cit. p. 73.

⁷⁸ « [...] Forster does not tell us what happened to Miss Quested in the cave, but as a consequence of whatever happened, Aziz is accused of sexually assaulting her. The subsequent trial, the ensuing breakdown of relations between Indians

uncontaminated side of India, untainted from the English presence. The reader is introduced into an obscure world, into the hidden meanders of a country which are not labeled with an appellative (one of Europeans' vice).

[...] the caves are readily described. A tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. This arrangement occurs again and again throughout the group of hills, and this is all, this is a Marabar Cave. Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty -four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all. He finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind, for the pattern never varies, and no carving, not even a bees'-nest or a bat distinguishes one from another [...]⁷⁹.

The cave is also the occasion in which the difference between the races comes out, an expedient which puts in evidence the stereotypes. Aziz guides Miss Quested into the cave but lately he will be accused of rape; have a dark-skinned man to be necessarily a criminal? Forster writes the physical aspect is not an element which can be taken for granted, it decides the destiny of a person who is not allowed to have a chance or comprehension, as Miss Quested's attitude shows ("She is among people who disbelieve in Indians"⁸⁰).

Forster qualifies the invaders as white and fanatical, two adjectives regarded as *the expression that all English faces were to wear at Chandrapore*, which homologate and reduce the

and English, Aziz's acquittal, and his resolute rejection of British rule occupy the remainder of the novel [...]», p. 596.

⁷⁹ Edward Morgan Forster, *A passage to India* cit., p. 130.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 178.

usurpers to a group so as Europeans used to do with their subjected. Furthermore the author marks the bad temper of the conquerors, full of selfishness and vanity which makes the most powerful people of the world arrogant, cynic and fool.

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