LINGUISTIC STYLISTIC 'PATHS' IN *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

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Forster's views as a secular humanist are at the heart of his work, which often depicts the pursuit of personal connections in spite of the restrictions of contemporary society. His humanist attitude is expressed in the non-fictional essay *What I Believe*.

Forster's two best-known works, *A Passage to India* and *Howars End*, explore the irreconcilability of class differences. Although considered by some to have less serious literary weight, *A Room with a View* also shows how questions of propriety and class can make connection difficult. The novel is his most widely read and accessible work, remaining popular long after its original publication. His posthumous novel *Maurice* explores the possibility of class reconciliation as one facet of a homosexual relationship.

Sexuality is another key theme in Forster's works, and it has been argued that a general shift from heterosexual love to homosexual love can be detected over the course of his writing career. The foreword to *Maurice* describes his struggle with his own homosexuality, while similar issues are explored in several volumes of homosexually charged short stories. Forster's explicitly homosexual writings, the novel *Maurice* and the short-story collection *The Life to Come*, were published shortly after his death.

Forster never considered himself merely as a commercial writer, but claimed a larger reputation as a moralist and social commentator. In his novels, as in his many essays and broadcasts, he gently chipped away at conservative institutions and religious beliefs, propounding instead the value of freedom, individual commitment and above all personal honesty.

E. M. Forster was troubled by the racial oppression and deep cultural misunderstandings that divided the Indian people and the British colonists, or, as they are called in *A Passage to India,* Anglo-Indians. The prevailing attitude among the British in India was that the colonists were assuming the "white man's burden" – novelist Rudyard Kipling's phrase – of governing the country, because the Indians could not handle the responsibility themselves. Forster, a homosexual living in a society and era largely unsympathetic to his lifestyle, had long experienced prejudice and misunderstanding firsthand. It is no surprise, then, that Forster felt sympathetic toward the Indian side of the colonial argument. Indeed, Forster became a lifelong advocate for tolerance and understanding among people of different social classes, races, and backgrounds.

Forster's style is marked by his sympathy for his characters, his ability to see more than one side of an argument or story, and his fondness for simple, symbolic tales that neatly encapsulate large-scale problems and conditions. These tendencies are all evident in *A Passage to India*, which was immediately acclaimed as Forster's masterpiece upon its publication. It is a traditional social and political novel, unconcerned with the technical innovation of some of Forster's modernist contemporaries such as Gertrude Stein or T.S. Eliot. *A Passage to India* is concerned, however, with representing the chaos of modern human experience through patterns of imagery and form. In this regard, Forster's novel is

similar to modernist works of the same time period, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925).

With a view to analyzing E. M. Forster's role as a precursor of the stream-of-consciousness linguistic techniques at text level, we embark upon a parallel task, namely that of proving that the pleating of stylistic functions in literary discourse creates a complex network of linguistic devices, no matter the perspective at the core of the analysis.

Text 1. "A servant announced dinner. They ignored him. The elder men had reached their eternal politics; Aziz drifted into the garden. The trees smelt sweet – green-blossomed champak – and scraps of Persian poetry came into his head. Dinner, dinner, dinner…but when he returned to the house for it Mahmoud Ali had drifted away in his turn, to speak to his sais. 'Come and see my wife a little then,' said Hamidullah, and they spent twenty minutes behind the purdah." (Forster, 1991:6)

When compared to and contrasted against what the stream-of-consciousness means at a linguistic level with authors such as Woolf or Joyce, one cannot help noticing that, though a precursor of the trend, Forster is much more indebted to linguistic and literary traditions.

The vocabulary of the excerpt considered is formal, with no noticeable intrusions of the informal. Nevertheless, it does not require the reader to be familiar with any type of specialized or 'pretentious' language, as, despite being formal, the language of the text does not result in an encoding of the message being conveyed.

The action seems to be double-layered in that it is half 'people-focused', half 'surrounding object-focused', as part of the nouns in the text are marked [+HUMAN], e.g. *servant, men, sais, wife*, whereas the rest are marked [+INANIMATE], e.g. *dinner, garden, trees, head, house*. The dominance of concrete nouns is obvious, as the nouns referring to concepts and other abstractions are very scarce, thus anchoring the text in a specific 'there' and 'then', e.g. *politics, scraps, poetry*. The constant and clear use of character names helps avoid ambiguity of reference in communication within the novel, e.g. *Aziz, Mahmoud Ali, Hamidullah*.

Adjectives and adverbs are scarce, making it difficult for the reader to pinpoint time and space, as everything seems to be part of an ongoing passing of time, e.g. *elder, eternal*. The only intrusion of the visual, *green-blossomed*, and the olfactive, *sweet*, contributes to the atemporality of the action.

On the other hand, verbs help clarify some of the reference system of the text, in that there is a synesthetic blending of the audible, *announced, speak*, the visual, *see, Come, had drifted away, returned, came, drifted*, the mental, *had reached, ignored*, and the olfactive, *smelt*, against the background of the inevitable passing of time, *spent*.

When tackling the issue of the sentence structure, we discover that some of the traditional balance is still preserved in the alternation of short and average simple sentences, e.g. *A servant announced dinner, They ignored him, Dinner, dinner, dinner…but when he returned to the house for it Mahmoud Ali had drifted away in his turn, to speak to his sais*. Nonetheless, the rendering of the human thought is among the author's concerns, as elliptical sentences and repetitive patterns can already be found at text level: *Dinner, dinner, dinner…*

Disruptions of the traditional narrative discourse can already be registered, although they lack the violence and impact of Joyce's interruption of the logical thread of thought: *The trees smelt sweet – green-blossomed champak – and scraps of Persian poetry came into his head*. Such instances, however, announce the linguistic technique to be mastered by Woolf, Joyce and Falukner.

An important stylistic effect, impossible to neglect as impact on the reader, consists in permeating the text with nouns specific to the language of the land depicted, in our case, Hindi, e.g. *champak, sais, purdah*. The language employed, thus, transports the reader to a different space altogether. Unless a footnote or an endnote explains the meaning of such words, the reader must only rely on the context, so as to guess the approximate referent of the respective words and their lexical categories. As noticeable in Text 1, the words display the behaviour of nouns in English sentences. Such encoding is all the more difficult to deal with as Hindi is neither an easy language to learn, nor is it widely spoken world-wide.

Clear linguistic evidence of what the stream-of-consciousness accomplishes stylistically with Woolf and especially Joyce consists in graphological disruptions of discourse, e.g. *The trees smelt sweet <u>– green-blossomed champak –</u> and scraps of Persian poetry came into his head* (our underlining) and in repetitions that break the logical narrative thread that unfolds at the level of the text, e.g. *Dinner, dinner, dinner...*

Text 2. "'The worst thing in my whole career has happened,' he said. 'Miss Quested has been insulted in one of the Marabar caves.'
'Oh, no, oh no, no,' gasped the other, feeling sickish.
'She escaped – by God's grace.'
'Oh no, no, but not Aziz…not Aziz…'
He nodded.
'Absolutely impossible, grotesque.'
'I called you to preserve you from the odium that would attach to you if you were seen accompanying him to the Police Station,' said Turton, paying no attention to his protest, indeed scarcely hearing it.
He repeated 'Oh no' like a fool. He couldn't frame other words. He felt that a mass of madness had risen and tried to overwhelm them all; it had to be shoved back into its pit somehow, and he didn't know how to do it, because he did not understand madness: he had always gone about sensibly and quietly until a difficulty came right." (p. 146)

Still obeying the cannon set by tradition, the vocabulary corresponds to the social situation depicted in that formal English is exclusively employed. No lexical intrusion of the informal breaks the formality of the language making up the fragment.

The nouns in the text reveal a conversation of the mind, an exchange of systems of beliefs and personal values between two different characters. Therefore, most of the nouns are marked [+ABSTRACT], e.g. *thing, career, attention, protest, fool, words, mass, madness, difficulty, grace*, with few disruptions of the ones marked [+CONCRETE], e.g. *caves, Police Station, pit*.

Furthermore, the few adjectives in the text serve the stylistic function of qualifying the action that is of interest to the characters, namely Aziz's supposed assault on Miss Quested, e.g. *The worst, sickish, impossible, grotesque*.

The adverbs that the author resorted to only enhance the clash of the two mentalities and of the two cultures that correspond to them. Thus, the adverbs making up degrees of comparison, the superlative most often, accompany the qualifying adjectives with clear negative connotation, e.g. *absolutely, scarcely*, whereas the adverbs that carry a positive connotation are introduced by the time adverb *always*, e.g. *sensibly, quietly, right*.

Along the same line, the abundance of verbs in the text supports the verbal exchange of beliefs and the clash of mentalities. Not only is their number great, but they also display a wide range of semantic classes, revealing the complexity of the cultural clash: *has happened, said, has been insulted, gasped, feeling, escaped, nodded, called, to preserve, would attach, were seen accompanying, paying, hearing, repeated, couldn't frame, felt,*

had risen, tried, to overwhelm, had to be shoved, didn't know, did not understand, had always gone, came. The tenses raise no problem, as they obey the sequence of tenses rules; in this respect, there is no confusion involved that may hinder the reader in retrieving the message, as it happens with Woolf, Joyce and Faulkner.

With regard to sentence structure, a clear division of systems of beliefs can be noted again. The long simple, compound or complex sentences belong exclusively to the accuser and to the omniscient author, e.g. *'The worst thing in my whole career has happened,' he said. 'Miss Quested has been insulted in one of the Marabar caves. 'She escaped – by God's grace.' 'I called you to preserve you from the odium that would attach to you if you were seen accompanying him to the Police Station,' said Turton, paying no attention to his protest, indeed scarcely hearing it. He repeated 'Oh no' like a fool. He couldn't frame other words. He felt that a mass of madness had risen and tried to overwhelm them all; it had to be shoved back into its pit somehow, and he didn't know how to do it, because he did not understand madness: he had always gone about sensibly and quietly until a difficulty came right*, whereas the elliptical ones, which break the rules of semantics and logic reveal the character defending Aziz's reputation, e.g. *'Oh, no, oh no, no,' 'Oh no, no, but not Aziz...not Aziz...' 'Absolutely impossible, grotesque.'*

All linguistic and literary trends and movements do not burst out onto the international stage at a certain moment in time. They are usually the result of the joint work, spanning over a long period of time, of precursors achieving the transition from what the past held towards what the future will unfold.

The same process can be noticed in the case of the stream-of-consciousness linguistic techniques. Thus, Woolf, Joyce, or Faulkner cannot be solely credited with the 'discovery' or the 'invention' of the linguistic and literary trend under scrutiny.

It took writers as E. M. Forster and Henry James to facilitate, to the best of their literary and linguistic 'craft,' the transition from the tradition, from the cannon to the freedom that language enjoys with the modernists.

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Rezumat

In încercarea de a analiza rolul lui E.M.Forster ca precursor al tehnicilor lingvistice ale «curentului de conştiinţă» la nivelul textului, ne propumen demonstrarea unui aspect paralel, adică dovedirea faptului că asamblarea funcţiilor stilistice în discursul literar creează o reţea complexă de mecanisme lingvistice, oricare ar fi perspectiva esenţei analizei. Curentele sau mişcările lingvistice sau literare nu apar brusc pe scena internaţională, la un moment anume. Ele sunt, de regulă, rezultatul operei comune care se dezvoltă de-a lungul unui mare interval, percursorii realizând tranziţia adevărurilor trecutului spre surprizele viitorului.

Résumé

En essayant d'analyser le rôle d'E. M. Forster comme un précurseur des techniques linguistiques de «stream-of-consciousness» au niveau du texte, nous essayons à démontrer un aspect parallèle, c'est-à-dire à démontrer que l'assemblage des fonctions stylistiques dans le discours littéraire crée un réseau complexe des mécanismes linguistiques, n'importe quelle soit la perspective au noyau de l'analyse. Les courants ou mouvements linguistiques ou littéraires n'apparaissent soudain sur la scène internationale, à un certain moment. Ils sont d'habitude le résultat des travaux communs, en se déployant dans un intervalle long de temps, des précurseurs achevant la transition des vérités du passé vers les surprises du futur.

Abstract

Our attempt at analyzing E.M. Forster's stylistic role and contribution as a forerunner of the stream of consciousness techniques at text level intends to demonstrate a parallel image, i.e., the demonstration of the fact that the assembling of stylistic functions in the literary discourse creates a complex network of linguistic mechanisms, irrespective of the perspective of analysis essence. Linguistic or literary currents or movements hardly appear all of a sudden on the international stage at a certain moment. They are, as a rule, the result of the joint work which develops during a very long time interval, the forerunners realizing the transition of truths of the past into surprises of the future.