


Igor Grbić

Sveučilište Jurja Dobrile u Puli, Hrvatska

igor.grbic@unipu.hr

 0000-0003-0831-0882

The 'Temple' of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*: towards ultimate unity

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at a re-evaluation of the 'Temple', the final part of E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*. Unlike its first two parts – 'Mosque' and 'Caves' – it is still, more often than not, perceived as somewhat lacking, a failure in general literary terms and, more specifically, even superfluous in terms of the novel's composition. To read the novel in this way is to misunderstand it, to favour the external, the event, over the internal, the innermost experience. This paper thus contributes to redirecting the reading of the novel from the political, sociological, postcolonial – as is usually the case – towards the contemplative, even mystical. It is argued that only such an approach does justice to the full scope of the novel, which is a symphonic movement from a world of fragmented visions and agonizing multiplicity towards a vision of ultimate unity. Due to spatial limitations, only the Hindu framework of the 'Temple' is here taken into consideration, with the festival of Gokul Ashtami as its focal point.

Keywords: *A Passage to India*, E. M. Forster, 'Temple', temple, Marabar Caves, Gokul Ashtami, Krishna, reconciliation, unity.

1. INTRODUCTION

'Temple', the third and final part of E. M. Forster's masterpiece *A Passage to India* (1924), is conspicuously missing from both Santha Rama Rau's theatrical adaptation of the novel (1960) and David Lean's film version (1984). Claims about its superfluousness have dogged the novel ever since its appearance, with even as sensitive a reviewer as Edwin Muir, writing in the 8 October 1924 issue of the *New York Nation* of the 'Temple' episode as 'portraying, with an unconvincing irony, an aspect of Indian religious life' (qtd. in Gardner 1973: 280). Muir goes on to say that the novel should have ended with the uncertain condition arisen in the aftermath of the trial (at which the allegedly assaulted Adela Quested ultimately withdraws her initial statement and thus frees Dr Aziz Ahmed, charged for harassment) and dismisses the 'Temple' as 'the only feeble part of the novel'. However, without the 'Temple', the mysterious and shattering echo of the Marabar caves (where the supposed harassment took place) presents itself as the final message of the novel. Without the 'Temple', readers are encouraged to focus on Aziz as the main character and on his unfortunate denigration and court trial as the main themes. The deceptively short but tellingly titled third part not only stands on an equal footing with the preceding two, but, even more, partly resolves and concludes the past, while partly introducing and announcing what is truly meant to remain unspoken, even unspeakable. In his magnificently insightful book-length contribution to the art of Forster's fiction, George Thomson agrees with the general opinion that, true enough, Marabar is 'the most important archetypal symbol in the novel', but quickly adds the warning that 'it is balanced by and must be understood in relation to the „Temple”' (Thomson 1967: 217). The present article is another attempt at revindicating the concluding part of Forster's greatest achievement. Given the expected size of the paper, I am going to focus on the Hinduistic framework, so crucial for the 'Temple', while only touching on other moments contributing to the novel's symphonic coda.

2. A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Typically, for the pregnancy of *A Passage* – where every single sentence and every single word within every sentence seem to be saying so much more than granted by syntax and lexicography, allowing all the other sentences and their words into an echo of the novel itself – the very first sentence of the 'Temple' indicates that the final part is removed from the previous two

both in space and time: 'Some hundreds of miles westward of the Marabar Hills, and two years later in time, Professor Narayan Godbole stands in the presence of God' (257; I am always quoting from the Penguin edition given in the list at the end of the paper). A little later (267) we learn that not far from the new location is the town of Asirgarh, which subtly registers the ongoing presence of Mrs Moore, whose sinister vision of things Indian began precisely while travelling on her way to Chandrapore. What should be noted is also that, at the very opening line, the brahmanic Professor Godbole, Mrs Moore's close counterpart, 'stands in the presence of God', as against His apparent absence in the first two parts of the novel. 'God' figures in the next sentence, but His presence is provided with a dramatic twist – 'God is not born yet' – only to, after a short pause, qualify this statement by adding 'but He has also been born centuries ago, nor can He ever be born, because He is the Lord of the Universe, who transcends human processes.' At a single stroke, we are both introduced into new space and new time – since here begins the description of the clearly localized festival celebrating the birth of Krishna (named Gokul Ashtami in the novel and Forster's diaries, but commonly known as Krishnashtami) – and removed from any definite space and time – since Krishna is God become man, leading man back to his primordial divinity.¹ This transcendent quality is enhanced by the fact, to my knowledge unnoticed thus far, that the phrasing here is actually a loose paraphrase of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the greatest Krishnaite text:

ajo'pi sannavyayātmā bhūtānām īśvaro'pi san

prakṛtiṃ svām adhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmyātmamāyayā

(4.6)

Though unborn, of a changeless Self, though Lord of beings,
Yet I have made nature Mine and come to be by My own power.
(My translation)

This is the Krishna in whose presence Narayan Godbole stands while officiating at the yearly re-enactment of the God-man's birth. In fact, it is Krishna who is the true protagonist of the 'Temple'. Everything that happens in it, be it successful or abortive, in human terms, appears an offshoot of His divine play, affirmed, from its own perspective, or denied.

¹ Throughout this article I am using the popular anglicized transcription of better-known Sanskrit names, while adhering to internationally accepted transliterations in all other instances.

When Forster first introduces the protagonist's name, he tellingly spells it uppercase: SHRI KRISHNA (260).

Krishna was Forster's ingenious choice of divinity for the last act of the drama that is *A Passage*. The god's irresistible aura had long before transcended the boundaries of his home religion that Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, mentions Krishna's various names in a great number of his songs. The god's names were even on the lips of Mian Tansen, the court musician of Akbar, the greatest of the Muslim Moguls (for more see, e.g., Varma 2001, esp. 156ff). We know from Forster's diaries and letters that he himself was deeply moved by the comprehensiveness of Gokul Ashtami, which he, as personal secretary of the Maharaja of Dewas Senior, was allowed to witness on very intimate terms. Here, at the end of the novel, the all-inclusiveness of Krishna's festival, welcoming even the untouchables, stands in stark contrast with the 'bridge party' at the beginning, an event organized by the English masters – i.e., from below, not from above – to which none of the ordinary mortals was invited, an event doomed to fail before it actually did fail, but it is also opposed to the informal and benevolent, but equally all too human tea-party thrown shortly afterwards by Aziz's English friend Fielding. In its spiritual purity, the festival remains pure of any features that might qualify it as heathen. Towards its end, the faithful even dump Krishna's statue – 'God Himself' (282) – into the lake, since every holy image, after the *mana* imbued into it by solemn dedication has been exhausted, survives only as a thing on a par with any other thing, so that any continuation of worship can be seen as nothing but idolatry. The statue and all other ritual props are now mere 'scapegoats, husks, emblems of passage; a passage not easy, not now, not here, not to be apprehended except when it is unattainable: the God to be thrown was an emblem of that' (282-283).

The festival of Gokul Ashtami is the promise of God's eternal return. It celebrates the birth of fresh hope, since God incarnates Himself whenever the cosmic law is critically disturbed (as explicitly stated in the distich in the *Bhagavadgītā* following the one quoted above, which only further concentrates the deeply human, all-human substratum underlying what may superficially seem to be an individualized fiction pertaining only to the limits of the given novel). In the novel, it all begins with Godbole sufficiently exalted perhaps to observe that his beseeching song is in the process of being granted and that God will arrive. The salvation God is bringing is total and indiscriminately reveals everything in its eternal essence. Like

a tide it also engulfs the missionaries Graysford and Sorley, leaving their hierarchical pedantry breathless: 'All sorrow was annihilated, not only for Indians, but for foreigners, birds, caves, railways, and the stars; all became joy, all laughter [...]' (260). This cannot possibly exclude the Marabar Caves, this sombre presence in the first and fatal agent in the second part: their ominous mask drops and they too are saved by the unmasking, unifying eye of the One. Comparing Fielding's tea-party to the final festivity, Frank Kermode (1966: 94) notes that, at the first, the guests 'are suffering from a deficiency of meaning, which cannot be cured until Love takes upon itself the form of Krishna and saves the world in the rain. The unity he makes is an image of art; for a moment at least all is one, apprehensible by love; nothing is excepted or extraordinary.'² Not only does the birth of heavenly glory nullify any earthly glory, but it also represents its death: the Rajah (Forster's spelling) dies. Periodical rebirth from above must also imply another periodical death from below. Echoing the earlier echo of *Esmoor Esmoor* (as the name of a divinized Mrs Moore becomes anagrammatized in the enthusiastic shouting of the crowd), by the end of the 'Temple' we hear the choir repeating *Radhakrishna Krishnaradha* (279). Krishna and Radha, His most beloved shepherdess, who in Godbole's initial song, at Fielding's (87), were separated, have now melted into a single name, as is normal in Indian devotional practice. But then, Godbole first sang as humans had proposed to her, not in terms divine, so it was only expected that, at the time, God 'refuse[d] to come'.

The reconciliation and unification of all opposites is here represented through hierogamy, the ultimate marriage of the ultimate male and ultimate female. Its stage is total: 'Gusts of wind mixed darkness and light, sheets of rain cut from the north, stopped, cut from the south', while the singers, amidst all that formidable mystery, were 'sounding every note but terror' (282). As also noticed by Chaman Sahní (1981: 314), the unification of everything and an end to human fear, means celebrating the Upanishadic absolute as *saccidānanda*, 'being, conscience and bliss', as utter transcendence of the horror emanating from (the idea of) the Marabar Caves. The festival is an answer to their echo, that 'calls out for renunciation rather than incorporation' (Spencer 1968: 286). The last explicit mention of the Caves – significantly, by an Aziz resisting unification – remains unheard because at that very moment '[d]rowning his last words, all the guns of

2 Kermode's *extraordinary* echoes the appearances of this adjective in the highly sophisticated verbal fabric of the novel itself, where the nuances of its meaning keep shifting and typically refer to the Marabar Caves.

the State went off' (279). The celebration of Krishna's birth terminates all distinctions, individualities, that are exposed to be merely as many forms of deviation from the single and self-same reality. The celebrants bear living witness to the truth:

When the villagers broke cordon for a glimpse of the silver image, a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused them all to resemble one another during the moment of its indwelling, and only when it was withdrawn did they revert to individual clods. (257-258)

We are again reminded of the Caves, which are also the self-same image of each other: the cave is not so much the opposite of the temple as its prefiguration, a fullness of vision appropriate only for those who are able to receive it even in such an unadorned, primeval form.

The 'Temple' is also a marvellous literary transposition of Forster's personal fascination with the fact that Krishna's devotee does not transcend the world by denying it and withdrawing from it, but, resorting to David Kinsley's beautiful phrasing (1977: 156), 'by learning to dance to the tune of [Krishna's] flute or with Kālī in her dance of creation'. His God is the master of the universe, but at the same time – or rather no-time – the universe itself. Krishna's mother can see this universe in her divine child's open mouth, just as, again at the same no-time, *A Passage* tells us that 'the God to be born was largely a silver image the size of a teaspoon' (257), a reminiscence of the Upanishadic thumb-sized God living in every man's chest. What especially attracted Forster is Krishna the trickster, His inherently ludic character, the all-inclusive spiritual understanding that

God can play practical jokes upon Himself, draw chairs away from beneath His own posteriors, set His own turbans on fire, and steal His own petticoats when He bathes. By sacrificing good taste, this worship achieved what Christianity has shirked: the inclusion of merriment. All spirit as well as all matter must participate in salvation, and if practical jokes are banned, the circle is incomplete. (261)

The Indian God's roaring laugh does not spare anything, because everything is simply a scene in His play – to be understood both as game and drama – that will never end, simply because it has never begun, a play that has only seemed to be all along. Nothing holds true and real in an absolute

sense and, consequently, anything, even the dearest concepts, can be called into question at any moment, simply because Hinduism will only accept everything, the inconceivable. The devotees in the novel 'did not one thing which the non-Hindu would feel dramatically correct; this approaching triumph of India was a muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form. Where was the God Himself, in whose honour the congregation had gathered? Indistinguishable in the jumble of His own altar [...]' (258). The narrator in the quoted excerpts certainly echoes Forster, allured by what he witnessed, during one of his stays in India, against his better aesthetic, classical, western judgement. 'There is no dignity, no taste, no form,' writes Forster in his diary about Gokul Ashtami (qtd. in Oliver 1960: 107).

However, another detail from the extrafictional world eventually arises from a message inside this fictional world pregnant with potential philosophical and metaphysical reverberations. The uppercase writing GOD SI LOVE, seen by Forster in an Indian railway station (Forster 1979: 327, n. to p. 258), also appears in the novel, but its first appearance is immediately followed by the question 'Is this the final message of India?' (258). Here, the 'unfortunate slip' in the verb reminds the reader of another great inversion/echo/message of India: *Esmiss Esmoor*. Are these 'slips' yet further confirmations of India as an enormous muddle, or an additional, final denial of man's naive belief that God is *man's conception* of love?³ Furthermore, the inverted slogan is prefigured as early as the fifth chapter, in the very first part of the novel, when it is precisely Mrs Moore saying to her son Ronny 'God ... is ... love' (64), with all the uncertainty suggested by the dots. The ultimate message of India becomes identical to the ultimate message of the deified old English lady. As noted by K. W. Gransden, 'God is love, God si love, mosque, cave, temple, romantic, appalling, or divine, it all amounts to the same' because through all of them it is the heart and spirit that speak, not the mind (Gransden 1962: 104). This again means that, ultimately, there is no such thing as choosing between mosque, cave and temple – the first, second and third part of the novel's triptych – no seemingly unsurmountable opposition. It means that India is not a space delineated by the *either-or* formula, but by *both-and*. It means that when it comes to the final message, the deep sense of the oneness of all the differences, the tongue can do nothing but slip. Just as Mrs Moore is substituted by *Esmiss Esmoor*, so *God si love* refutes,

3 The use of *muddle* is deliberate here, echoing its dozen appearances in the novel, where it typically expresses the way ultimate reality appears when manifesting itself outside the preconceptions tailored by a mind used to its own criteria of spiritual tidiness.

paradoxically *rectifies* the merely linguistically correct statement *God is love*, even as it, through its superficial inversion, perpetuates a trickster sneer at itself. It is also legitimate to join Edwin Thumboo in his remark that it does not matter in which order the sounds of the verb appear as long as we know that it is all about substance, not form: to insist on the form *is* is almost heretical because by doing so we value the latter over the former. The festival muddle exists only in the eye of the beholder, not in an absolute sense: 'Impressions of abandonment and poor religious taste are created by applying the criteria of a creed alien to Hinduism and an aesthetic resting on other assumptions, as for example Mediterranean norms' (Thumboo 1981: 51). Forster's letters from Dewas are marked by increasing reconciliation, not mere resignation. It seems he himself not only learnt to accept the local 'muddle' and disorder as part of the very identity of the place, but also came to realize that efficiency and order are no indispensable conditions of human life (see also Lewis 1979: 90).

The very Hindu temple seems to concentrate all the forces that task the mental frame of a non-Hindu in stone, as well as their underlying common source. In his article 'The Temple', written in 1919, when he returned to writing *A Passage*, Forster brilliantly compresses his own and the typical non-Hindu reaction with a maturing and deeper vision:

[T]he general deportment of the Temple is odious. It is unaccommodating, it rejects every human grace [...] Yet no one can forget it. It remains in the mind when fairer types have faded, and sometimes seems to be the only type that has any significance. When we tire of being pleased and of being improved, and of the other gymnastics of the West, and care, or think we care, for Truth alone; then the Indian Temple exerts its power, and beckons down absurd or detestable vistas to an exit unknown to the Parthenon. (Qtd. in Sahni 1981: 15-16)

In the greatest book ever written on the art of Forster's fiction (Stone 1969), Wilfred Stone rightly argues that the conception of the Hindu temple unlocks the true meaning of the Marabar Caves as well, and even of the entire novel. Out of the dark mystery of the cave, equal in meaning and significance as the holiest chamber (*garbhagrha*, literally 'womb-house'), at the very centre of the temple, one steps back into the outside world, represented by the exterior mountain in both instances (Stone 1969: 141). Again, the crucial difference is that in the instance of the cave one moves back and forth at a calling from below, the result

of human whim, while in the instance of the temple the calling comes from above, a matter of recognizing God's presence. A Hindu temple is commonly seen as yet another incarnation of the world mountain, 'on whose exterior', as understood by Forster himself, 'is displayed life in all its forms' (qtd. in Sahni 1981: 140). Forster shared this feeling. Years after the publication of *A Passage*, he wrote that reading Stella Kramrisch's ground-breaking contribution to our understanding of the Hindu temple had triggered a 'delighted shock of recognition' and that only then his eyes had opened to the full meaning of his own novel (qtd. in Stone 1969: 301).

The observations above now qualify us to approach the climax of the festival: the ceremony of drowning Krishna's village Gokul with all of its symbolical clay dolls (282- 283). After another earthly manifestation, after His cyclical breakthrough into consciousness, God – or rather the human idea of Him – returns into the great unconscious – or rather the preconscious, from man's viewpoint, or rather the true conscious, from where God sees – to draw energy from those cosmic primordial waters for His new coming. In the manuscript version of the novel (known as Manuscript A), the episode in which items are thrown into the water contains a question and an answer subsequently deleted, likely as the author felt they were too explicit. The question is 'Why this sacrifice at the heart of creation?' the answer is thus posed by the reader, not the author: 'To ask this question is to be sensible, but none who asks it will make passage to India' (qtd. in Levine 1971: 171-172). When the last of the triune reincarnations of a naked and well-built Indian appearing in all three parts delivered the tray with the miniature Gokul to the water – the water itself prefigured all, by the tank and the man gathering water-chestnuts in the first part, and by a modest pool in front of the caves in the second – and everything returned to the great primordial unity, the evil 'King Kansa [Krishna's persecutor] confounded with the father and mother of the Lord' (283).

At the very same moment, on the same lake, two boats collide, building on the preceding scene as its counterpoint, with the theme of failed communication and aborted unity. This, however, must remain outside the scope of the present paper. What is relevant for our immediate purpose is the 'immense peal of thunder' entering to finish the scene preceding the one in which the collision takes place. The monsoon thunder is an echo of the one in the famous *Bṛhadāranyaka* Upanishad (5.2.3) described as

the divine voice (Hume 1921: 150),⁴ while, unlike the waters below, that swallow the capsized boats into further miscomprehension, the rain from above 'settled in steadily to its job of wetting everybody and everything through, and soon spoiled the cloth of gold on the palanquin and the costly disc-shaped banners'. More than one critic has recognized here a variation on the motif of baptism, rebirth, a rebirth of the spirit (in the language of the New Testament this is the pneumatic rather than merely somatic, bodily, birth). As the last remains of the festival, these expensive, yet still all too earthly items from the preceding quote must also go before the festival and the entire thirty-sixth chapter can finally reach its conclusion.

Part Three of *A Passage to India* is the novel's last word on the passage to India that leads to the India within India, as well as on those variants that do not. To draw the line along East and West would be an oversimplification, although the implicit narrator's sympathies are with the former rather than the latter, and with Hinduism rather than Christianity or Islam (the latter is embodied, in the novel, in Aziz and his circle). As against the unifying experience of the festival, and even Godbole's ecstatic song at the beginning of the last part, there is the same brahman's 'forcing of the stone' episode, the most successful literary illustration of the implicit narrator's spirituality within the novel, to which we will now direct our attention.

When, amidst his singing ecstasy, a mental image of the deified Mrs Moore appears to the old brahman,

[h]is senses grew thinner, he remembered a wasp seen he forgot where, perhaps on a stone. He loved the wasp equally, he impelled it likewise, he was imitating God. And the stone where the wasp clung – could he ... no, he had been wrong to attempt the stone, logic and conscious effort had seduced [...] (259)

By the end of his vision, after he 'had once more developed the life of his spirit',

He had, with increasing vividness, again seen Mrs Moore, and round her faintly clinging forms of trouble. He was a Brahman, she Christian, but it made no difference, it made no difference whether she was a trick of his memory or a telepathic appeal. It was his duty, as it was his desire, to place

4 This is the same thunder Eliot releases at the end of *The Waste Land*.

himself in the position of the God and to love her, and to place himself in her position and to say to the God, 'Come, come, come, come.' This was all he could do. How inadequate! But each according to his own capacities, and he knew that his own were small. 'One old Englishwoman and one little, little wasp,' he thought, as he stepped out of the temple into the grey of a pouring wet morning. 'It does not seem much, still it is more than I am myself.' (262-63)

Godbole's spiritual accomplishment is here shown in a rather restrained tone. It seems it should be neither overrated nor underrated. It is very significant that the brahman's vision also does not go as far as encompassing the stone. Sahni understands it as a sign of Godbole's limitations, but also leaves the possibility that Godbole, as a Vaishnava, actually resists incorporating something that, shaped into what is known as *linga*, happens to be the simplest object of worship among the 'opposite' Shaivas (1981: 145).⁵ John Drew makes much of the fact that the text explicitly tells us Godbole was wrong in trying to include the stone – but, contra Drew, should we believe the narratorial voice, especially the kind heard in this particular novel? – since, beginning from his own neoplatonic frame of interpretation, in Plotinus, stone (of which the novel's caves, too, are made) 'is of all creation the least aspirant'. He adds that the brahman was also wrong to force the stone because 'the metaphysical Ultimate, which alone could absorb it, should not be attempted': union must not be attempted with a conscious effort or logic, but in a mystical state (Drew 1985: 98-99). The 'forcing of the stone' episode has attracted much critical attention. My conclusion is that Godbole's act of wilfully continuing a sequence that began as vision, eventually turned out to be just another expression of *hybris*. I see it as a moment of weakness, of being spontaneously attracted by an opportunity to expand a spiral through one's own active, very much individual participation, a spiral that, however, had already, in circles ever wider, been incorporating the surrounding phenomena into the divine whole. The synthetic power of love was substituted by the analytical force of reason. Amidst the conflict between heart and reason, a conflict permeating the entire novel, Godbole has for a moment situated himself on the latter's side – and the genius of the novel immediately warned him. I also wish to add here that through his song, Godbole enters the state known in the Indian tradition as *savikalpasamādhi*, the kind of contemplation in which there is still difference between subject and object, observer and observed.

5 Shiva also 'happens' to be God's aspect ruling the Marabar Caves, unlike the festival, which celebrates the birth of Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu.

A further, and last, step is *nirvikalpasamādhī*, in which even that disappears and what remains is the only thing that, behind the veil of the grand cosmic play, *līlā*, has truly *been* all along: the absolute.

3. THE METAPHYSICAL FRAMEWORK

Having contextualized his novel in the spiritual world of India, Hinduism, and Krishna as their multilayered incarnation, Forster delineated such a horizon of interpretation, hermeneutically speaking, that immediately motivates inclusion of Indian metaphysics and its confrontation with less adequate approaches to the mystery of existence. Revisiting the comparison between the last two parts of the novel, we can now say that the 'Temple' is its spiritual climax, while the 'Caves' are its material climax. The first concerns experience, the second concerns events. From the caves, the external manifestation of the absolute, we reach the temple, its concentrated, consecrated shrine. I can here only mention in passing that, though a Muslim, Aziz consciously remains aloof from Hinduism, there are hints in the 'Temple' – among them, of his growing closeness to Godbole (as opposed to his distancing himself from his earlier friend Fielding!) – suggesting that Hindu India has gradually been assimilating even him. Benita Parry (1998: 232-233) rightly highlights his own words pronounced mentally, while 'standing motionless in the rain': 'I am an Indian at last' (265).

The exquisitely refined and ambiguous participation of nature in the human world of *A Passage to India*, particularly in its last part, itself deserves mention. Here, as elsewhere, one should beware of simplifying such literary depths into their most obvious superficialities. Of course, the famous last paragraph expresses what it so evidently says: the horses, the earth, the birds, the carrion do not want a friendship between Fielding and Aziz and seem to oppose the very idea. But there is so much more. The novel ends with negations, after it has presented many more than in any of Forster's previous novels (see also Beer 1981: 10). Instead of taking the novel's ending at face value, Gillian Beer very rightly observes that the ending, and, more broadly, the entire novel, 'presages the end of empire, not simply the end of the Raj in India (though it does that), but also the end of that struggle for domination which is implicit in the struggle for language and meaning – the struggle to keep man at the centre of the universe' (Ibid.: 23).

This is why numerous postcolonial readings are so sadly off the mark, especially in their criticism of the novel's ending. This began with the father of postcolonial criticism: 'We are left at the end with a sense of the pathetic distance still separating „us” from an Orient destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its permanent estrangement from the West', which, for Said, is a 'disappointing conclusion' (Said 1977: 244). On the opposite, idealistic, pole, there is ill-founded criticism such as that of M. Sivaramkrishna: according to him, what is wrong with the novel is that it dramatizes, but does not end 'in the light of the one element which makes comprehension of India successful, the element which Kenneth Burke calls the element of *transcendence*.' The fault lies with Forster's liberal humanistic conception of literature and civilization, understood as a naive running away from the very existence of violence and evil, and he further claims that Foster solves this, which is precisely the heresy of secularization: approaching literature as a substitute for faith (Sivaramkrishna 1981: 149-153). This is a very superficial and vulgarized reading of a text that is markedly multilayered and does not, in its refinement, 'pose' and 'solve' problems in an obvious way. If anything, it is rather that *A Passage to India* subverts the general liberal humanistic stance and in it there is a great awareness that the key problems of human existence cannot be solved at the mere historical level, a level bereft of the transcendent. Even if this were not the case, criticism such as Sivaramkrishna's is simply built on the wrong foundations as it again expects literature to be some kind of *ancilla theologiae, philosophiae, ideologiae* and so on. It is worth repeating here that literature creates a world of *its own*, in which philosophical or religious problems may be or may be not posed or even 'solved' in the light of transcendence, but whatever the result, it can be decisive only for philosophy and religion respectively. In literature itself, the solution that is literarily the more convincing is the one more valuable. A novel is neither an essay nor a treatise – although it may pretend to be one – and, consequently, there is no reason why a novel of doubt, restraint and relativization should not, as a *novel*, turn out to be better and more mature than a novel of certainty, conviction and absolutes, if only its attitude(s) has or has been articulated in a better and more mature way, and this in a *literary* sense. The literary value of *A Passage* largely rests precisely on the fact that it discreetly and suggestively balances a number of attitudes that, were they found in philosophical form – and only there – would require splitting them into separate texts. The form of a *A Passage* is symphonic, as John Colmer quite nicely claimed. As if he were correcting Sivaramkrishna, he

writes: 'The possibility that only an echoing void lies at the heart of the universe and the vision of a harmony that transcends the limitations of human achievement are reconciled through the novel's symphonic form' (Colmer 1967: 13).

4. ENDING THE ENDLESS

Far from being redundant, or even a failure, the 'Temple' is what rounds off the symphony that is *A Passage to India*. The stones pressing against Aziz and Fielding as they ride their horses in the last paragraph, letting them pass only in single-file, is the novel's final way to say that, to start with, personality, in the widest possible sense, is above personal relations, and this theme haunted the first two parts. The reader may at this point remember that, soon after her unexplained Marabar experience, Adela Quested left India with the feeling that 'all these personal relations we try to live by are temporary' (239), and that, even earlier, Mrs Moore 'felt increasingly (in vision or nightmare?) that, though people are important, the relations between them are not' (135).

For the final reaches of this grand theme, we have to go back to the Gokul Ashtami festival and its divine protagonist. When Krishna, always in love with cosmic pranks, collected the clothes of the shepherdesses bathing in the river, climbed a tree and then asked them to come and claim their clothes, they started towards Him, hiding their breasts with one arm, their private parts with the other, but Krishna then also asked them to raise their arms in reverence and returned their items only after they, symbols of the human soul, remained before their God naked and approached Him one by one (the classical version of this legend is in the *Bhāgavata-purāna*). Though in the end everything seems to oppose union, this is only because true union is in fact something transcending a merely human, social, political modification. To paraphrase W. Stone, the ultimate idea is that true love requires genuine reconciliation even with the non-living and irrational: one will not reach the India within India before one becomes able to perceive and understand its echoes (Stone 1969: 328). The festival of Krishna's birth, a festival of universal, all-encompassing love, is truly the one great beacon towards a realisation of wholeness in this novel. When the devotees throw the image of God into the water, thus taking Him back from Its manifestation to Its non-manifest 'form' anticipating any manifestation, what their God symbolizes in the process is 'a passage

not easy, not now, not here' (283). Is this not what, in the novel's last sentence, is almost literally repeated by the whole 'living' and 'non-living' world of India?

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SAŽETAK

„HRAM” U PUTU U INDIJU E. M. FORSTERA: PREMA POSVEMAŠNJEM JEDINSTVU

Daleko od toga da bi bio njegovim viškom, „Hram“, treći dio *Putu u Indiju* E. M. Forstera, njegova je simfonijska koda, koja raspetljava čvorove što su ih prva dva dijela ostavila zapetljanima, odnosno, u nekim drugim pogledima, naslućuje njihovo konačno raspetljavanje u sferi onkraj ikakva društveno-političkoga ovdje i sada. Već prve rečenice odvlače čitatelje od prethodnih dijelova, i vremenski i prostorno, te ih uvode u blagdan Gokul Aštami, koji slavi rođenje Bogočovjeka Krišne. Budući da je riječ o tipu božanstva poznatom kao *trickster*, Krišna predstavlja egzistenciju i oslobođenje od nje kroz igru. U opis blagdana Forster uvelike unosi osobno iskustvo što ga je s njim imao te nadilazi uobičajeno zapadni smisao za doličnost, red i logiku, čak i kad je riječ o religioznosti, uviđajući dublje načine da se božanstvo svjedoči i štuje. Umjesto pukoga potvrđivanja svijeta, kao i povlačenja iz njega i njegova nijekanja, postoji mogućnost budnoga, distanciranog sudjelovanja u kozmičkoj igri. Za „Hram“ je

ključna epizoda s brahmanom Godboleom koji u meditaciji „dotjeruje kamen“, a koja sažima kako duhovno postignuće tako i neuspjehe koje valja tek ispraviti. Stilističko i hermeneutičko čitanje zadnjega dijela romana baca svjetlo na niz paralelizama koji ga ucjeljuju s prva dva dijela, no ti su paralelizmi ovdje ostvareni tako da ta dva dijela bivaju i prevladana. Tako je blagdan, prigoda istinskoga sabiranja, u opreci i prema „partiji bridža“ i prema čajanci, koje su jedinstvu stremile odozdo, ne odozgo, baš kao što gospođa Moore, toliko važna u prva dva dijela, sad jest mrtva, ali preživljava kao duhovno bivstvo. Osobita se pozornost pridaje hinduističkome hramu, koji nadomješta dotadašnju prevlast Marabarskih spilja. „Hram“ se ne bavi ostvarivanjem posvemašnjega jedinstva, ali svakako sugerira jedan od pomirbenih putova prema njemu te takav predstavlja konačnu viziju romana, ne njegov suvišak ili, čak, neuspjeh.

Ključne riječi: *Put u Indiju*, E. M. Forster, „Hram“, hram, Marabarske spilje, Gokul Aštami, Krišna, pomirba, jedinstvo.