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Thematic Analysis In The Writings Of E.M.Foster

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ABSTRACT

The formal conservatism of E.M. Forster's literature places it squarely within the canon of English novels of manners. Using sarcasm, humor, and symbolism, he delves into the English middle class's lack of emotional and sensual depth. The novel A Passage to India (1924) examines the challenges of human connection via its portrayal of the interactions between a group of British colonists and local Indians. Forster argues that the English personality lacks depth and complexity because of its glacial pace.

KEYWORDS E. M. Forster, A Passage to India, Novel.

INTRODUCTION

Forster was born to the Anglo-Irish Alice Clara "Lily" (née Whichelo) and the Welsh architect Edward Morgan Llewellyn Forster at 6 Melcombe Place, Dorset Square, London NW1, a building that no longer remains. He was christened Edward Morgan Forster while being legally recorded as Henry Morgan Forster. Before Forster became two years old, on 30 October 1880, his father passed away from tuberculosis. He and his mom settled at Rooks Nest, Hertfordshire, in 1883 and stayed there until 1893. His fictional Howards End home was inspired by this one. Its literary and historical ties earn it a spot on the prestigious Grade I list. Forster looked back on his boyhood at Rooks Nest with nothing but fondness. Forster comes from a long line of social reformers in the Church of England who were part of the Clapham Sect. When his great-aunt Marianne Thornton (daughter of abolitionist Henry Thornton) passed away on November 5, 1887, she left Forster £8,000 (equivalent to £946,428 in 2021).This allowed him to support himself and pursue his dream of becoming a writer. Although he is said to have been unhappy during his time as a day boy at Tonbridge School in Kent (where the school theater is now named after him), he attended the school anyway.

One of Forster's most popular works, A Passage to India (1924), focuses on the interactions between Asia and Europe during the last years of the British Raj in India. Through the narrative of Adela Quested, an Englishwoman, and Dr. Aziz, an Indian, and the issue of what did or did not happen between them in the Marabar Caves, Forster links human relationships with the politics of colonialism. In the introduction to the Everyman's Library edition of Twilight in Delhi, Forster praises

Ahmed Ali and his novel. Both Frank Hauser's 1960 stage adaptation and David Lean's 1984 film adaptation of A Passage to India were based on the novel.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nidhi Singh Chauhan (2021) The setting of Indian life under British administration is described in Forster's masterwork, "A Passage to India." The novel's depiction of discrimination and cultural clashes between East and West are notable. The writer receives both acclaim and criticism; the former for an excellent character analysis of Indians and the latter for anti-British prejudice. Forster is inspired by English culture and society, yet he shows the tension between the British and the Indians' temperaments and traditions by depicting the complex oriental response to British rule in India with both compassion and condemnation.

Dr. Mohammad Hadi Jahandideh (2021) Forster and Orwell's writings both address the value of combining realism with idealism in the service of defending humanism. Wishing for a utopian state is the mark of idealists, but these authors suggest a better future might be achieved via mutual respect and understanding. The purpose of this analysis is to compare and contrast how these two authors handle realism and idealism in their fiction. Culture will be the primary emphasis of the descriptive-analytic approach used in this study. This research is vital because it equips its readers with the knowledge they need to create a way of life that works for them in the postmodern era. Although they were fully aware of the state of the world, both Forster and Orwell managed to paint a bright picture of the future.

R. Renuga Devi (2017) Through discussion of E. M. Forster's and George Orwell's books, this essay examines the contributions that literary analysis may make to cultural analysis and theory-building. It argues that cultural studies might be reshaped by recognizing its limitations and that many of the tasks initially set by Raymond Williams, Pierre Bourdieu, Alan Sinfield, and Pierre Macherey remain unmet. Through a socially-grounded close reading, I want to liberate Forster's and Orwell's books from the liberal-humanist conspectus within which they were written and have been widely read ever since. I am interested in both the tales these books tell and the stories they omit to tell (what I call reading "against the grain") in order to better understand what Pierre Macherey has termed the work's "ideology" at the time of creation. In order to recreate the unique genesis of these writers, my research focuses on three themes: Englishness, imperialism, and liberalism. Englishness is characterized by three distinct but interconnected features: its openness to and acceptance of cultural and social 'Others,' its ties to liberalism (through 'a capacious liberalism,') and its foundation in capitalism. In addition to being central to Forster's and Orwell's literary/political vision, the construction of "Otherness," which manifests itself in a long chain of binary

oppositions (such as public/private; masculine/feminine; rational/emotional; elite/mass), has been replicated in the various identity-based post-modernist critiques of liberal-humanism. By incorporating Alain Badiou's concept of 'event' and 'ethics of truth' into my reading, I supplant this dominance. My goal is not to assign a name to these writers' political views, but rather to tease out a collection of features and relations that contributed to the formation of the 'criteria of plausibility' (Sinfield, 1992) that continues to characterize today's relatively wide and deeply ingrained liberal-democratic consensus.

MEKARSARI, ELOK (2014) The literary arts are intimately connected to the human experience. In this context, "the thought" refers to the human mind's processes such as ideas, emotions, worldviews, and logic, while "literature" refers to the written representation of those processes. Novels are a kind of literature. Because it captures the state of the society at large, a book is chosen on the basis of its ideals as a metaphor for what people consider to be most essential in their daily lives. The book by E.M. Foster entitled "A Passage to India" is the focus of this analysis. The study's goals are twofold: to identify the societal values present in A Passage to India by E.M. Forster and to discuss how those values relate to the novel's central topic. Due to the absence of a treatment, as would be the case in experimental research, this study used a qualitative methodology. In order to examine the social values and the meaning of social values in E.M. Forster's A Passage to India, data were collected from the book and other relevant sources. This research confirmed that E.M. Forster's A Passage to India has moral, ethical, and societal values including those of humanity, friendship, and family. The novel's moral values were that of helping others and kindness toward others, and these values had the following implications: 1) Humanity values should be used as a fundamental value in making relation with other groups of people with different backgrounds and should be the basic value in behaving toward others; 2) Social relationship values were that when conflict occurred, people should seek for the solution in order for life to keep in harmony; 3) The novel's central message on the importance of family bonds is that they serve to socialize and educate children as well as to support, protect, and care for them.

Ashley Diedrich (2014) E.M. Forster, like many other writers, seems to be recounting the same tale over and over again, as can be seen by a careful reading of any of his works. It's a tale about how people want to connect with one another, despite the fact that they may have to make concessions in order to fit in with their peers. To achieve meaningful connection, the protagonists in his stories must overcome a variety of obstacles and come to terms with their individuality in light of societal expectations. In addition to delving into the concept of genuine connection in the face of competing forces, Forster is also interested in the impact of setting. Whether it's Italy in Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View, or bucolic England in The Longest Journey and Howards End, or the

"greenwood" in Maurice, or the most far-flung and exotic India in A Passage to India, setting plays a crucial role in creating a variety of opportunities for connection throughout the novels. In this dissertation, I argue that setting plays a crucial role in the characters in E. M. Forster's novels, as they seek to grow emotionally and socially.

E.M. FORSTER AND THE CHARACTER OF 'CHARACTER

Notes on the English Character, written by E.M. Forster and first published in the American magazine Atlantic Monthly in 1926, was reissued as the introductory article to his 1936 book Abinger Harvest. At the beginning of the article, he says, "I had better let the cat out of the bag at once" (a favorite Forsterian idiom), and "record my opinion that the character of the English is essentially middle-class." "the national figure of England is Mr. Bull with his top hat, his comfortable clothes, his substantial stomach, and his substantial balance at the bank," whereas in Russia the peasant and in Japan the samurai serve as more appropriate symbols. Forster goes on to say that the public-school system is "at the heart of the middle classes," arguing that it is a uniquely English institution: "How perfectly it expresses their character.... With its boarding-houses, its compulsory games, its system of prefects and fagging, its insistence on good form and on esprit de corps, it produces a type whose weight is out of all proportion to its numbers."

With "well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts," the Old Boys go forth into the wide and complicated world. Forster used his own experience with the departure of an Indian friend (identified as Syed Ross Masood, whom he had mentored beginning in 1907 and formed a deep and long friendship with) to highlight this last point. Forster said, "I could not see what there was to make a fuss about" when the buddy lamented the breakup.To which they said, "Do buck up," to which I replied, "Buck up." He wouldn't cheer up, so I abandoned him to his despair. When they eventually reconciled, an argument broke out in which the buddy accused Forster of rationing his feelings like potatoes. Forster retorted that this was better than'slopping them about like water in a bucket,' which was the original plan. Forster deduces that differences in respondents' replies may be attributed to factors specific to each country:

> I spoke as a member of a prudent middle-class nation, always anxious to meet my liabilities. But my friend spoke as an Oriental, and the Oriental has behind him a tradition, not of middle-class prudence, but of kingly munificence and splendour. He feels his resources are endless, just as John Bull feels his are finite.

This is the first of several analogies that Forster offers throughout the essay, and it relies heavily on Masood's aristocratic standing. It provides a taste of his more extensive fictional depictions of English reserve and of "the Indian national

character" (in essays, in his trip book The Hills of Devi (1953), and in A Passage to India (1924), dedicated to Masood).

Forster was asked to give a lecture "that dealt with the relations between east and west," thus he started "Notes on the English Character" as a presentation he gave to a class of Indian students at Cambridge in 1913. This was the beginning of the talk:

> Having little knowledge of politics and none of Economics or Science I had to neglect the great forces that are driving East and West together and mixing them up whether they wish it or no: and I am keeping to psychology only. I offer for your consideration a few remarks on the historical character of the English ... You will be coming across Englishmen all your lives and it is right that you should ask yourselves what manner of men they are, and I being by profession a novelist, have to ask myself the same question.

Unlike in the final form of the lecture, in the draft Forster insists that the English character is not 'cool' as a preface to discussing the variations in emotional reaction between his Indian friend and himself:

> Now that the English character is undemonstrative is true enough; the public schools throwing their shadow far into life are responsible for this. But a very warm emotion lurks behind, and though this sounds like a paradox – the Englishman often doesn't express that emotion because he values it so highly. He does not feel that it should be exposed to the light of common day [...] There's a reticence in him, a delicacy that's easily misunderstood. And there's also involved his keen sense of the appropriate. He likes emotion to be appropriate to the occasion.'

Additional examples of national character may be found in both the draft lecture and the published article. With a claim for his own "typicality," Forster expresses discomfort, the story of Forster and his Indian acquaintance is used to make a broader point about "the English character" and the misconceptions that its characteristic shyness causes. But it's the only one that hits close to home. Forster had just returned from India, where he had traveled extensively and spent time with Masood, who, despite his obvious deep affections for Forster, did not reciprocate them sexually at the time the address was given in the autumn of 1913. When will [his] love finally be whole? Is it he or his citizenship that puzzles you? In 1909, Forster mentioned Masood in his journal.

The core of Forster's argument is that the English character is not only "slow," but also "undeveloped, incomplete." He sees evidence of a deeper, more potent self in the works of Elizabethan dramatists and Romantic poets, writing, "Since literature

always depends upon national character, there must be in the English nature secret sources of fire to generate the fire we witness... Literature written in English has wings. It's a glimpse of the activity that occurs constantly below the water's surface; evidence that even the arid ocean can be home to beauty and feeling.17 He expresses optimism and faith in the future, saying, "In the next twenty years we shall see a great change, and that the national character will alter into something that is less unique but more lovable."

Forster's claim that the public-school system is directly responsible for the "undeveloped, incomplete" state of the English character joins those of George Orwell and Cyril Connolly, among others, who have written on the negative impacts of attending a preparatory or public school. Connolly writes about his prep school, which he called St. Wulfric's, in the autobiographical portion of Enemies of Promise, published in the late 1930s:

> The school was typical of England before the last war ... based on that stoicism which characterized the English governing class and which has since been underestimated. 'Character, character, character', was the message that emerged ... Muscle-bound with character the alumni of St. Wulfric's would pass on to the best public schools ... and then find their vocation in India, Burma, Nigeria, and the Sudan, administering with Roman justice those natives for whom the final profligate overflow of Wulfrician character was all the time predestined.

Here we have 'character' as several nineteenth-century authors envisioned it, such as Samuel Smiles, whose work Character (1876) hardly defines the term of 'character' except to link it with other comparable values: responsibility, self-restraint, independence, honesty, vigor, and integrity. Smiles described it as "the individual will acting energetically under the influence of religion, morality, and reason" and went on to say that "energy of will—self-originating force" is the essence of every great character. Collini, in a review of Victorian political thinking, highlights the importance of 'character' in a society 'which paradigmatically imagined the person... facing the challenge of preserving his will in the face of hardship. It is believed that the task is central to the colonial experience and the imperial project, as endorsed by Connolly's definition of the Wulfrician project.

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

—Finished And write it in with Mohammed's pencil: a journey to India. There is a single item for January 21, 1924, written by Forster in his diary. When Forster wrote the novel's final stages in 1922, his young companion was dying of TB (Doll), and a Muslim Egyptian, Mohammed el Adl, was his greatest inspiration.

Forster started on Passage about a decade before he met el Adl. The Indian man Forster had been in love with for six years, Syed Ross Masood, invited him to visit India. Forster came to terms with the fact that Masood did not share his sentiments during this journey, and the difficulties of maintaining friendships across ethnic and cultural divisions is a central issue in the book he started working on upon his return. Scholars of Forster's work generally agree that the novel's inception was his method of coming to terms with the fact that Masood did not feel the same way about Forster. But he quickly abandoned the unfinished Indian book to focus on Maurice (Doll), a fiction in which he fantasized about the gay triumph he had never experienced. World War I and Forster's romance with Mohammed el Adl both happened soon after Maurice was begun.

When Forster returned to work on A Passage to India in 1922, he had a wealth of fresh experiences from which to draw, including his second journey to India in 1921 and 1922. To complete the story, Forster drew on his time in India and the formative years he spent in Alexandria. Furthermore, Forster's ultimate representation of a prominent Indian character was influenced by the literature of the time (the books he was reading and evaluating). To quote Leonard Woolf's review of the book from June 1924: "Aziz is the only living Indian whom I have met in a book." (Doll).

When Forster first came in Alexandria in 1915, it was during World War I, and his impressions of the city and its people were poor. Not shortly after his arrival, on December 29, 1915, he sent a letter to Masood:

> ...I do not like Egypt much – or rather, I do not see it, for Alexandria is cosmopolitan. But what I have seen seems vastly inferior to India, for which I am always longing in the most persistent way, and where I still hope to die. It is only at sunset that Egypt surpasses India—at all other hours it is flat, unromantic, unmysterious, and godless—the soil is mud, the inhabitants are of mud moving, and exasperating in the extreme: I feel as instinctively not at home among them as I feel instinctively at home among Indians.

The image of mud moving and its association with Indians, which Forster uses in his 1915 letter to Masood to disparage Egyptians and which later appears in A Passage to India where he applies it to the Indian inhabitants of Chandrapore, actually predates Forster's stay in Egypt and appears in the 1913 manuscript drafts of A Passage to India. In reality, the image of "mud moving" is used very differently in the novel compared to the manuscripts; in the novel, it is neither derogatory nor merely descriptive; rather, it implies a cosmic continuity between the earth and the inhabitants on it, a literal figuring of the "for dust thou are, and unto dust shalt thou return" from Genesis or the "earth to earth,...dust to dust" from the Book of Common Prayer (Doll). Early on during his time in Egypt, Forster

used the idea of Egyptians as "mud moving" to describe their skin tone and to convey (without any empyrean connotations) that they are "dirty." (Doll):

> Natives, especially of the lower city class, are dirty in body and mind, incapable of fineness, and only out for what they can get. That is the theory to which, after some reluctance, I had fully subscribed, and like all theories it has broken down.

Because of his growing relationship with el Adl, Forster came to see Alexandria and Egypt in a new light. By the time he finished A Passage to India, he had already visited the country twice, but more importantly, he had known Mohammed el Adl, a figure who had emerged from the muck of the Nile to become an important part of his life, much as the Punkah Wallah in the novel's courtroom scene is a god among the people who are the moving mud of Chandrapore (Doll). While living in Alexandria, he published an article titled "Shakespeare and Egypt," in which he speculated that "perhaps this mud of Egypt was working in his mind, and but for Egypt would not have been in it.

CONCLUSION

While his most ambitious work, A Passage to India, was published in the same decade as Women in Love, Ulysses, and Mrs. Dalloway, it is decidedly more conventional than any of them. This is not to say that Forster did not make a significant contribution to the novel, but rather that he was not an innovator or experimentalist. He was neither ignorant of or indifferent to the work of his most historically important contemporaries, but he is often compared to the great novelists of the 19th century. One of Lawrence's first supporters, for example. Here we have 'character' as various nineteenth-century writers, such as Samuel Smiles, envisioned it. Smiles' Character (1876) rarely defines the notion of 'character,' except to associate it with other analogous virtues, such as responsibility, self-restraint, independence, honesty, vitality, and integrity.

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