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Edward Morgan Forster: Modernista nebo realista?

Edward Morgan Forster: Modernist or Realist?

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Autor:

Lenka Horádková

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Cílem práce je se detailně seznámit s Forsterovou jak literární tak teoretickou tvorbou a ty potom porovnat s teorií realismu. Metody použité v této práci: 1) studium odborné literatury
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Mgr. Zénó Vernyik, Ph.D.

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doc. RNDr. Miroslav Brzezina, CSc.
děkan

L.S.



PhDr. Marcela Malá, M.A., Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

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Anotace

Bakalářská práce s názvem *Edward Morgan Forster: Modernista nebo realista?* je analýzou Forstrova románu *Kam se bojí vkročit andělé* a konfrontuje jeho praktické narativní postupy v oblastech tematiky příběhu, postav a zápletky s jeho teoretickými postuláty, jež formuloval ve své knize *Aspekty románu*. Jako bývalý student King's College v Cambridgi byl ovlivněn modernismem a je také často spojován se skupinou Bloomsbury (k níž náležela i Virginie Woolfová). Cílem práce je dokázat, že jeho modernistická teorie byla ve skutečnosti vybudována v intencích britského kritického realismu (Nenadál 1987, 9-18). Na podporu tohoto předpokladu se práce dále bude zabývat analýzou toho, jak realismus pojímá René Wellek ve svém díle *Koncepty literární vědy*, zvláště v kapitole *Koncept realismu v literární vědě*. Analýzou Forsterovy tvorby skrze teorii realismu by práce měla ukázat, že Forstera by bylo vhodnější pojímat jako realistu než jako modernistu.

Klíčová slova: Edward Morgan Forster, *Aspekty románu*, *Kam se bojí vkročit andělé*, René Wellek, Bloomsbury, román, analýza, modernismus, realismus

Anotation

The Bachelor thesis *Edward Morgan Forster: Modernist or Realist?* is an analysis of E.M. Forster's novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and confronts his practical narrative approaches in the areas of story, people and plot with his theoretical postulates which are formulated in his book, *Aspects of the Novel*. As a former student of King's College in Cambridge, England, he was influenced by modernism and was often connected with the Bloomsbury group (among others with Virginia Woolf) as well. The aim of this thesis is to show that his theory in modernism was built on the background of British critical realism. (Nenadal 1987, 9-18) To support this assumption this thesis will also deal with analysis of René Wellek's realistic approach in his book *Concept of Criticism*, particularly in chapter *The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship*. Through analyzing Forster's writing by means of realism theory the thesis should show that, in fact, Forster should be recognized more as the realist than modernist.

Key words: Edward Morgan Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, René Wellek, Bloomsbury, novel, analysis, modernism, realism

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1 Introduction

1.1 A Brief Biography of E.M. Forster

Edward Morgan Forster was talented novelist, born 1 January, 1879 and died on 7 June 1970. He barely knew his father, Edward Morgan Forster, Sr., who was an architect. He was brought up by his mother, Alice ‘Lily’ Whichelo, and was also heavily influenced in his first early years by his great aunt, Marianne Thornton. When Thornton passed away, she bequeathed to him in a trust fund, £8,000, which was a tidy sum in those days. (Drabble 1998)

Forster received his education at Kings College, Cambridge and also spent time in Italy with his mother, and that experience, along with a visit to Greece, provided the background and development of many of his characters by which he portrayed British tourists who traveled abroad. He published his first story, *The Story of a Panic*, in 1904 which was followed in 1905 with *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. In 1907, *The Longest Journey* was published, and the following year, *A Room with a View* and *Howard’s End*. (Drabble 1998)

Forster first travelled to India in 1912 to 1913 and then again in 1921 to 1922 where he finished and published *A Passage to India* which was highly acclaimed. This would turn out to be his last novel and he spent a number of years afterwards involved in fighting against literary suppression and censorship. A number of short stories and literary pieces were published and he also worked on the libretto of the opera, *Billy Budd*, with music by Benjamin Britten. He spent his last year at King’s college and was also awarded the Order of Merit in 1969 by Queen Elizabeth II. (Drabble 1998)

1.2 Bloomsbury Group

The Bloomsbury group was an informal group of writers and artists of the early twentieth century who met regularly in Bloomsbury district of London, and most of them have connection either to King's or Trinity College in Cambridge. Among their circle except E.M. Forster belonged also Lytton Strachey, Vanessa Bell, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Desmond MacCarthy, Roger Fry and others. They all shared revolutionary views on visual art, political philosophy, literature, economics and over all on English lifestyle of Edwardian society. "Bloomsbury defined itself in opposition to the piety, patriotism and sexual propriety of their Victorian forebears (many members of the group were agnostic, pacifist, or homosexual)" (Poplawski 2003, 25). In literary field it is worth to mention Virginia Woolf's essay "Modern Novels" (1919) where she approached "the contemporary writer's struggle to evade the stylistic convention of the nineteenth-century 'realist' novel in order to capture heightened, quasi-symbolist, states of consciousness" (25).

1.3 The Statement of the Thesis

Shown the above, the aim of the thesis is to prove that even though Edward M. Forster is considered as modernist thanks to the era he lived in and also his involvement in the Bloomsbury group, his theoretical and narrative approach, although modernistic in some aspects, is built on the background of the British critical realism.

In the first part the reader is acquainted with Forster's theoretical views in aspects of the story, people and the plot as they are explained in his book *Aspects of the Novel*. Forster's theory is mainly focused on the reader and he does not give any strong opinions. He rather suggests or gives advice. However he does show many

examples of works of both realistic and modernistic writers, who he either praises or criticizes. He surprisingly criticizes more the modernists attempts to distinguish themselves from realism and as one progresses in getting to know his theory it becomes more obvious that realism greatly influenced Forster's thinking.

The second part analyzes one of the Forster's first novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* in order to show how Forster applies his theory in his creative work. It is shown that Forster is very consistent. There is not much irregularity between his theoretical view and putting it into practice. Ultimately, Forster stayed true to his theory and used the story line to support his novel. However what stands out most in this novel is the characters, their relationships and interactions used to build a truly amazing plot.

To support the assumption which came out of the study of Forster's theoretical postulates and subsequently from his narrative work, the third part deals with concept of realism as it was introduced by scholar of Czech origin, René Wellek. Aspects of his concept such as objectivity, type, impersonality and historicism are introduced and compared to the Forster's theory in order to point out how these theories are actually close to each other. Applying Wellek's concept of realism, Forster can be easily put alongside Tolstoy or Jane Austen.

On these three parts this Bachelor thesis will attempt to demonstrate that, in fact, Forster should be recognized more as the realist than modernist.

2 Aspects of the Novel

Aspects of the Novel is book release of Forster's lectures presented at Trinity College in Cambridge in 1927. Two years after his last novel *A Passage to India* was published. This book concentrates on the theory of novel writing as the title prompts and is written in informal language the same as if Forster would talk to his reader through the book. (Forster 1971, 28)

2.1 The Story

Right at the beginning of Forster's first lecture, he asks the fundamental question: "What does a novel do?" (Forster 2005, 40). Even though he is not pleased with the answer, he has to admit that a novel tells a story. He stresses several times that he would prefer a novel to be all about "melody, or perception of truth," (40) and appeals to his students not to be satisfied just with a good story.

Yet, even if reluctantly, Forster defines what he means by the term "story". In his opinion, it is "the naked worm of time" (42), "a narrative of events arranged in time sequence" (44). As one can see, in Forster's model, time plays a significant part in the story. Unlike in our life when we many times just forget about a ticking clock, in the story the time must be always somehow present, otherwise the novel itself becomes illegible. In his lecture, he mentions several story tellers: Scheherazade and Sir Walter Scott as the ones who can smartly keep their readers/listeners in tension, and those who tried to liberate their stories from squeeze of that "worm of time," like Emily Brontë or Marcel Proust. "Marcel Proust, still more ingenious, kept altering the hands, so that his hero was at the same period entertaining a mistress to supper and playing ball with his nurse in the park" (43). Which one can imagine can be quite confusing when not only the place changes but also the character changes from

grown-up man to a boy. Forster does not believe that is the path for an author to follow and to stress that out he mentions one less known author who went too far in freeing the story from time frame. "As soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot express anything at all" (52-53). It cannot simply end by withdrawing the time itself, the whole language needs to be changed which leads to "the abolition of the order of the letters or sounds in the words" (53) and the whole thing becomes unintelligible.

As Forster in his theory is mainly focused on the reader, aware of his critical eye, the story must answer the hunger of the reader to know what will happen next. If there is no real story or motivation, then readers will drop the book and move on. The only way a novel can fail its reader is when the reader is no longer interested in what follows.

The last thing he touches on is the connection of the story to the voice. In order for a story to fulfill all of its potential, it needs to be read out loud. Reader ought to hear the story. Only this way can the reader be transformed to a listener. This way he can reach his inner roots going back to the time when stories were told around the tribal fire. (52)

2.2 People

As the focus of the writer shifts from the story to the character, it is no longer relevant what happened, but to whom it happened. The reader's curiosity is not needed anymore; instead his imagination is called to service in order to really "see" the words in a book as people who he/she can link to.

Although characters are creations of the author's imagination, there are many other factors which contribute to the final image of the character. Even though the

main contribution indeed comes from the author himself, characters also get modified by themselves in order to be in harmony with other aspects of the novel, such as the plot, the moral, or other characters. One can imagine it as an evolution process. At the beginning is the intention of the author who such and such character will be and become through the story, but as he starts built up the story and add other characters, the intentional character has to change through the experiences and interactions with others and the story. All this together brings life to the character. (Forster 2005, 55)

The first aspect mentioned above is the origin of the character. In Foster's view, the origin is always the author. He believes that "Since the novelist is himself a human being, there is an affinity between him and his subject-matter" (54). All of the author's assumptions about the world, other people and himself are projected into his characters. Even though they are usually developed artificially for the use of the story, these assumptions are present every time he picks up his pen and can entirely transform his work. (55)

What Forster explains later, and what is so crucial for understanding the character in the novel, is to realize the difference between real people in life and people in a novel. The reason why novels are appealing to a much larger amount of people than any other work of art¹ lays in something no other art can do – revealing the inner life of people. In real life, one can never truly understand what is happening in other people's minds, nor in one's own. In a novel, however, one can enter people's psyches and know their inner thoughts. The author does not need to even reveal all of his characters' thoughts. It is enough if he makes you believe that he "knows everything about it" (69). That is how they are becoming real for us.

1 This was true in Forster times – nowadays film holds the leadership

Another difference is in how people in books live their lives. The main contrast Forster sees is in birth, death, eating, sleeping and love. As he points out, one hardly ever first meets one's heroes at their birth. Even if one does, the novelist usually does not go into great depth about their description and, in addition, one mostly sees them again later in their lives. Just as one does not know much about the birth, one usually also does not know much about their death, either. Forster sees here a connection with one's life. In both cases, both the fictional and the real one, at birth and at death one is dumb – at first one cannot speak yet, and at the end one cannot speak any more. Yet, novelists often use the death of the hero as one of the possible endings of novels. This, however, Forster himself finds improper, as well as ending with marriage: he talks of the “idiotic use of marriage as a finale” (50).

In terms of eating and sleeping, it is interesting that while real people spend a large amount of their lives with those activities, they are usually rather boring for people in books. Therefore, one reads about people sleeping or eating very rarely. They even hardly ever go to sleep or are hungry. For people in books, eating is mainly a social occasion and they sleep only if they are about to have a dream related to the novel's story. (61-62)

Love, on the other hand, is a different matter. Novels are full of love. Forster explains the reason for it as follows: “when the novelist ceases to design his characters and begins to create them, ‘love’ in any or all its aspects becomes important in his mind, and without intending to do so he makes his characters unduly sensitive to it – unduly in the sense that they would not trouble so much in life” (62). Basically, real people are so troubled with love in their own lives that it is only fair to let them find the real love at least in books.

Forster concludes his differentiation of “Homo Sapiens and Homo Fictus” in this way:

Homo Fictus is more elusive than his cousin. He is created in the minds of hundreds of different novelists, [...] Still, one can say little about him. He is generally born off, he is capable of dying on, he wants little food or sleep, he is tirelessly occupied with human relationships. And – most important – we can know more about him than we can know about any of our fellow creatures, because his creator and narrator are one. (63)

In order to become fully real, characters do not need to jump out of the book and become one’s best friend or be able to survive in the real world, quite the contrary: they need to be in harmony with their own world – with the novel. To be in harmony with the novel, however, simply means one thing: to be convincing, believable. (69)

Forster devotes two lectures to the subject of people in books. In the second one he divides character into “flat” and “round”, and explains their natures and use in the novel. Then at the end of the second lecture he also touches on the topic of the point of view in the novel.

Those characters are “flat” which “in their purest form, [...] are constructed round a single idea or quality; when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round” (73). They can be described with one sentence and cannot arouse in the reader any other feeling than amusement or pity. This type of character, in Foster’s opinion, was very popular with Dickens. Although nearly all of his characters were flat, Dickens crafted his novels so brilliantly that readers could easily forgive him, and he is considered as one of the greatest novelists of the 19th century.

“Round” characters, on the other hand, are those complex, complicated people who can develop their character and who are able to be unpredictable. “The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. If it never surprises, it is flat. If it does not convince, it is flat pretending to be round” (81). In modern times, authors mainly attempt to create “round” characters. They despise flat characters as simplifications and Norman Douglas, in his letter to D. H. Lawrence, calls such simplification “the novelist’s touch” (75). Basically the novelist chooses the character traits for the purposes of his book to create ideal picture of his character, leaving out everything which does not fit the purposes. It might seem a bit drastic but in Forster’s opinion, both types (round and simplified flat) have their place in the novel, because “the outcome of their collisions parallels life more accurately than Mr Douglas implies” (75-76).

The last question the second lecture raises, is “the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story” (81). After the last two lectures one should not be surprised that Forster does not give a strong opinion on this subject matter. For him, this subject is not even as important as “a proper mixture of characters” (82). But what is important (and that is typical for Forster), is for the reader to believe – to see the novel as real as possible. Forster himself calls it “bouncing the reader.” It is not essential if the novelist is only descriptive (telling the story from outside), or omniscient (telling the story from inside), or if he chose one of his characters as a narrator. Actually, for Forster the most appealing is a mixture of those possibilities, as “it has a parallel in our perception of life. We are stupider at some times than others” (83). What authors, in his opinion, should not ever do is give a reader his naked opinions on his characters. They construct their characters to evoke those opinions in a reader. Although, revealing one’s intentions directly could seem as an

easy or safe solution, it steals the magic from the novel. People do not want to be told what they are supposed to think even if at the end they may nevertheless think exactly what an author intended.

2.3 The Plot

In Forster's fourth lecture he introduces his students to the plot and what he considers as essential elements of a good one. Although plot could be often confused with story, since they are both narratives of events, the main difference, in Foster's theory, lays within the way these events are connected. While in the story events are simply connected by time, in the plot it is a causality which links them together. The difference is more plainly shown by "the king died and then the queen died" (Forster 2005, 87) which is the story. But to say that "the king died and then the queen died of grief," (87) makes this the plot. Plot is a higher aspect than story, because it is complicated and it requires intelligence and memory (not only from the writer himself but mainly from the novel's reader).

Traditional narratology distinguish story and plot a bit differently. Saymoure Chatman in his book *Story and Discourse* states that story is "what" (as in Forster), but unlike Forster he also includes characters and places not only events. Plot on the other hand is "how" (not "why" in Forster theory) the story is communicated through words or gestures (in the case of plays and films). Russian formalists, using "fabula" (for story) and "sjuzet" (for plot), also added to the plot the aspect of how the events of story are connected – whether the events go chronologically, or might go backwards, or start in the middle. French structuralists see the story as structure of events, characters, places and time. However not only do they have the

manifestations of the story they add the point of view to the plot as well.² (Chatman 1928, 19-22)

A good novel is usually highly organized and contains many cross-correspondences and hints which all have to come together at the end of the novel. Forster calls such an end mystery. One can also find it as surprise or detective element in other theoretical works. “The ideal spectator cannot expect to view them [cross-correspondences] properly until he is sitting up on a hill at the end” (88). Everything mentioned by the novelist must have its place in a novel. Some parts might seem misleading at the time, but if a novel is a good one, and the reader has the intelligence and memory required, it will all make sense once the mystery is revealed. The beauty of cross-correspondences and hints is in the realization of the reader that what made such a good mystery was always there from the beginning in those little touches which seemed unimportant.

Mystery, in Foster’s model, forms the peak in a novel but it usually does not end it: “This is because the plot requires to be wound up; [...] He [the writer] has to round things off” (94). This is generally done through the death or marriage of the main character/s. Forster is against this kind of ending. He is ready to do anything in order to avoid his novel to be “feeble at the end” (93-94).

As Forster pointed out before and he mentions it at this point again, no matter what the author’s intentions with his characters and novel are, for various reasons the novel always lives its own life. For the writer to regain his dominance, he cannot slip from the known path: the death or marriage ending. The average reader likes things he knows, he is used to, and, after all, as Foster points out, a writer also needs to earn his living. Yet, he requests freedom for the writer to be able to end his novel when he

2 Forster also mentions point of view in his theory but he adds that to his lecture on People

feels like and even leave it open-ended. He questions (as a modern writer would do) his students: “Why [...] instead of standing above his work and controlling it, cannot the novelist throw himself into it and be carried along to some goal that he does not foresee?” (95). Yet, then, in a surprise turn, stays traditional with his answer shown on the work of André Gide: “Gide just simply went to far. The same way as Gertrude Stein went in destroying the time in a novel. It is like trying to lay an egg and being told you have produced a paraboloid – more curious than gratifying. And what results when you try to lay paraboloid, I cannot conceive – perhaps the death of the hen” (99) - the death of a novel.

2.4 Where Angels Fear to Tread Seen through Forster's Theory

2.4.1 The Story

If one really simplifies Forster's theory, the most important aspects of the story would be: story needs to provoke reader's curiosity in what happen next; (Forster 2005, 34) it has to be set in a particular time-frame; and, finally, have a suitable ending.

Where Angels Fear to Tread is a novel about the clash between two mentalities – English and Italian with emphasis on the contrast between English and Italian morals. „Edwardian upper middle classes [...] with double standards, hypocrisies and the mealy prejudices“ against „Italian lower-middle-class conversations, values, landscape, open sensuality and art“(Forster 2007, 9).

The story starts at the train station, where Lilia Herriton and Caroline Abbott are saying their goodbyes to their families just before heading out on their journey to Italy together. While traveling through Italy, Lilia falls in love with a young Italian, Gino, and gets engaged. As the news reaches England, Lilia's mother-in-law (Lilia is

a widow) sends her brother-in-law to Italy to break up the engagement. When Philip arrives to Italy, it is too late. Our couple is now married and the defeated Philip, along with Miss Abbott, returns back to England. Soon, the insurmountable differences between English and Italian cultures become a problem in the marriage and Lilia falls ill. She dies while giving a birth to her son.

Gino starts sending postcards, in the name of his baby, to his son's half-sister, Irma. The word about the Italian baby spreads through Sawston (the English village where everyone lives) and Caroline insists on a rescue party to get the baby away from Gino. Again Philip, now accompanied by his sister, Harriet, travels to Italy to save the reputation of his family and rescue the baby from the arms of his vicious father. Miss Abbott awaits them in Italy which takes everyone by surprise.

Several attempts to negotiate with Gino fail and just before they leave, Harriet shortly loses her mind and kidnaps the baby. In hurrying to the train station, their carriage has an accident and the baby dies. Injured Philip returns to Gino to tell him what happened and the upset father, Gino, tries to kill him. Miss Abbott breaks the fight up and brings peace between the two furious men. In the train back to England, just when Philip wants to reveal his newly discovered feelings towards Caroline Abbott, she admits that she is madly in love with Gino and, therefore, she will never go back to Italy.

In the first three chapters, the reader's curiosity is engaged with how the author introduces the background on which the story is drawn. Forster is descriptive rather than gripping. He introduces most of his characters: Lilia Herriton, Caroline Abbott, Philip Herriton, Harriet Herriton, Mrs Herriton, Irma, Mrs Theobald, Gino and Perfetta, while slowly putting the Herritons in contrast to Gino, the British Sawston town to Italy's Monteriano, and on a greater scale, England to Italy. However, the

observant reader will notice a few remarks that foreshadow a twist in what comes across as a rather slow story. On the first page, Philip recommends Lilia to go ‘off track’ while on her journey, in order to get know Italy better.(3)

As the story progresses, Lilia really goes “off track” of expected English behaviour as well. In the same speech, Philip also appeals for Lilia to “love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land.” Lilia will certainly “love” Italians, especially Gino. Both of those references would probably invoke in a reader the image of an English girl being charmed by a free-thinking Italian and the Italian lifestyle. A typical love-story which could be entertaining but it would not encourage the readers’ curiosity in what happened next – Forster's main attribute in a good story.

Another remark gives this image a little turn: “which she will remember to her dying day”(8). At this point of the book, not knowing what comes next, this seems as a general expression that she will remember it forever. However, having read Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, one knows that “every action or word in a plot ought to count” (Forster 2005, 88), especially when he/she finds a similar expression later in the book. But for all that “she never took a solitary walk again, with one exception, till the day of her death”(Forster 2007, 36). A classical reader would expect the death at the end, mainly because Lilia, at the beginning, seems to be the main character. But the surprise comes at the end of chapter four. “As for Lilia, someone said to her, it is a beautiful boy! But she had died in giving birth to him”(50). This is an essential turning point in the story and as it is masterly put, without any explanation as the last sentence of that chapter, it leaves the reader more than puzzled, some of them might be shocked or confused.

One can find several twists in the story, some of them weaker, some of them stronger, in order to keep the reader's attention. One weaker one is already in chapter two. There, the general reader or classical reader still expects the typical love story, so it must be a surprise when Philip comes to Italy to rescue his sister-in-law, and then gets the news from Gino that they are, indeed, already married. In a classical novel the marriage would happen at the end (or never) in a romantic novel. Forster despises this "idiotic use of marriage as a finale" (Forster 2005, 50). What happens next? We have already discovered that, in chapter four, Lilia dies. The next wonder brings Miss Abbott when, in chapter six, she walks through the door of her room in Stella d'Italia (hotel in Monteriano) and stands in front of the newly-arrived rescuers, Philip and Harriet. She was the one who made Mrs Herriton take part in rescuing the baby because "She [Mrs. Herriton] could not bear to seem less charitable than others"(Forster 2007, 64). Then, the story takes an astonishing turn in chapter eight when Harriet kidnaps the baby. As if that were not enough to glue the reader to the chair for a little bit longer, the baby then dies in the carriage accident on their way to the train station. The readers, who were still waiting for things to turn out the traditional way, with a happy ending, now have lost all their hope.

There we can say the story line culminates. What happens next is a revelation of mystery of the plot drawn around the story line. In the last chapter, when Philip, Caroline and Harriet are in the train going back to England, Caroline admits openly her feelings to Gino but, in the same breath, she adds that she will go back to her old life and never go back to Italy again. The story starts and ends with the train.

Forster uses traditional chronological order of time in his novel. He does not start in the middle or end and goes backwards; neither does he jump within the story line. But he does show the time in its value. In some chapters, the time flies without

noticing every day or month and, in other areas, the hours or couple days are spread through whole chapter. The spreading of time over pages gradually increases as the novel progresses: first half of the book goes through about three years – from the day Lilia left from Charing Cross, past her marriage, her death, and the time before Philip, Caroline and Harriet travel to Italy to save the baby. The only exception is in chapter two, which happens in a single day, as Philip fails to prevent the marriage. In chapter six, Forster goes quickly through several days of travel from Tyrol (where Harriet was at the time) to Monteriano - in one page - and then only a single day fills rest of his pages.

In chapter seven, he is even more extreme when he describes in detail Caroline's extended visit in Gino's house. The rest of the day, and the last attempt to win the baby from Gino the next morning, the evening events of their departure, the horrid accident, and the baby's death, are all played out in letters during chapter eight. Chapter nine is far shorter he only focuses on the fight between Gino and Philip, and the peace mediated between them by Caroline. Time slows even further when he reproduces the real life few minutes' conversation between Miss Abbott and Philip in the train back to Sawston, all on the last pages of chapter ten.

To be able to create a time frame Forster uses several techniques, direct or indirect, how to express time: “during winter”, “Irma came from school” (8), “at Christmas-time” (58), “it was still the hour when only idiot were moving” (74).

From Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, one knows that he prefers open endings. Although his ending is open for possible continuing, it still rounds the events described in the book. His mystery revelation (Miss Abbott is in love with Gino, but chooses to never go back to Italy, preferring to live her old life instead) does not happen at the very end of the book, even though, it is very close - in the last chapter.

2.4.2 People

Forster gave two lectures on the matter of people in books and one can summarize his thoughts in several bullet points: connection between character and the author; need to convince (cannot be discussed – that is upon each individual reader); and the world of a novel – how birth, death, sleep, food, love are pictured; dividing into well-rounded and flat characters, and changing of different points of view.

According to Forster there is always connection between author and his/her characters. The author simply cannot escape himself while constructing his/her characters. One can find strong connection between Philip and Forster. Philip is young English man who admires Italy and although he despises of the old English order, he never really takes an action against it. Similarly Forster was twenty six when he published *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, and, though he is often considered as part of the Bloomsbury group, his work, and his later *Aspects of the Novel*, shows that his modern spirit was still somewhat locked in classical (realism) body.

In his theory, he somehow holds back and even criticizes some of the radical modern methods of Emily Brontë and Marcel Proust when they are trying to free their novels from traditional time frame. The other bond between Philip and Forster is in their love of Italy. There is one more thing those two have in common, although Forster most likely did not intend to show that (considering that he is brave enough to write about it only nearly ten years later and with single condition that it will be published after his death – *Maurice*) – homosexuality. One could dare to say that Philip's character is not only transformed by this connection but also lives his own life and if Forster would not be careful enough Philip could escape from the novel as did Sophie in Jostein Gaarder's philosophical novel *Sophie's World*. One can sense that Philip is different from the way he behaves from time to time: "Romance only

dies with life. [...] It was going from Philip now, and therefore he gave the cry of pain” (20) and “this grotesque memorial of the land he had loved moved him almost to tears” (66).

Also, no matter how hard Forster tries to show Philip's love to Caroline, the feelings to Gino in the background are ever so much more obvious and real. As we can see in several scenes full of affection: “They shook each other warmly by both hands. [...] So the two young men parted with a good deal of genuine affection” (113) or at the end of chapter nine as Gino and Philip drink milk together as the sign of their forgiveness and friendship (127).

Forster even admits he was sexually excited while writing the scene (Padel 2007, xvi) in chapter nine where Gino fights with Philip: “His other arm was pinioned against the wall, [...] The other hand, moist and strong, began to close round his throat” (Forster 2007, 124).

As one already knows, reality is formed differently in novels. The reader can see characters inner thoughts. Forster provides this information in a unique way by having the characters make their statements, but also noting at the same time what each is thinking while saying it. It shows the dichotomy between what is being said and how just the opposite is actually being thought, depending on the character. Time also flows unlike in a real life; some of the aspects of our life are not important for people in novel, and some of them can be even omitted.

First, look at birth. “When the baby arrives in any novel it usually has the air of having been posted. It is delivered ‘off’”(60). This time when Gino's son is born, the reader does not even know it has happened. The reader knows that Gino wants a son, but then Lilia falls ill, and then a son is born, and she dies. It is all very cut and dry.

Forster stays true to his theory and not only does he just briefly announce that the baby was born, but also joins in this announcement the news about Lilia's death. "As for Lilia, someone said to her, 'It is a beautiful boy!' But she had died in giving birth to him" (50). And all this is skillfully put at the end of the chapter with no given explanation.

There is one more death shown in the novel: the death of the baby in chapter eight. Although it is put at the end of the chapter again, the whole scene with the carriage accident is beautifully done. It is not only grasping, but also poetic, painted with the brush of an impressionist.

He sat down and laid it on his knee. Then he tried to cleanse the face from the mud and the rain and the tears. His arm, he supposed, was broken, but he could still move it a little, and for the moment he forgot all pain. He was listening—not for a cry, but for the tick of a heart or the slightest tremor of breath.[...] "Silence!" he called again, and again they obeyed. He shook the bundle; he breathed into it; he opened his coat and pressed it against him. Then he listened, and heard nothing but the rain and the panting horses, and Harriet, who was somewhere chuckling to herself in the dark. Miss Abbott approached, and took it gently from him. The face was already chilly, but thanks to Philip it was no longer wet. Nor would it again be wetted by any tear. (119-120)

As he puts the death at the end of the chapter, he avoids any further details or explanation and leaves the reader in shock and curiosity

Forster's characters really hardly ever sleep. Philip falls asleep once when he is traveling to Monteriano for the first time. That is only to show the nature of Italian people who care about people around them, even though they do not know them,

therefore “when Monteriano came they knew he wanted to go there, and dropped him out” (16). Miss Abbott was asleep when Philip and Harriet arrived to Stela d'Italia – only to make her stage appearance even more dramatic: “For the young lady, whose sleep they were disturbing, awoke and opened her bedroom door, and came out on to the landing. She was Miss Abbott” (75). And, there is of course the baby. He is asleep the first time Caroline sees him and then, when Harriet kidnaps him, she claims he is asleep just to avoid her brother's meddlesome questions. “She would not let him talk. The baby, she repeated, was asleep” (116).

As for meals, at best, three of them are mentioned in the book. Two of them truly function just as a background for conversation (chapter eight) or in the case of chapter four, for the first and only sign of violence from Gino towards Lilia. The dinner, in chapter two is a completely different matter, and Forster treats it as such by giving it whole two pages. It is a truly social occasion; it is Philip's first proper chance to get to know Gino. Although he tries not to like him, one scene can change that, and one can find something which might seem as the start of their very unusual relationship: “when those delicious slippery worms were flying down his throat, his face relaxed and became, for a moment, unconscious and calm. And Philip had seen that face before in Italy a hundred times—seen it and loved it, for it was not merely beautiful, but had the charm which is the rightful heritage of all who are born on that soil” (23).

Although, you would not find a classical romance love-story in Forster's novel, the book is still full of love, full of human interactions which are at least in the case of the main characters, based on love. Lilia loves Gino. Gino later on loves Caroline: “The person who understands us at first sight, who never irritates us, who never bores, to whom we can pour forth every thought and wish, not only in speech but in

silence—that is what I [Spiridione Gino's friend] mean by SIMPATICO."[...] "One I [Gino] have seen who may be so. She spoke very little, but she was a young lady—different to most. She, too, was English, the companion of my wife here" (38). Caroline loves him as we know from the end of the novel. Philip loves Caroline too – at least he thinks he does: "By this time he loved her very much, and he could not bear to be puzzled" (129). In fact, he might be in love with Gino.

One of the main features of Forster's theory is that he divided characters into 'flat' and 'round'. As one goes through the *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, one can find many 'flat' characters, characters which can be easily described by one sentence, one very strong side of their character.

Mr. Kingcroft: He is a bit useless, someone who is unable to tighten up things at the end. He is there and has a chance to achieve something but he prefers to let it slip away at the last minute. One can see it right from the beginning in the opening scene when he tries to bring the foot-warmer, but he misses the train. (1) Or, if one remembers his affair with Lilia: "Lilia confided to a friend that she liked a Mr. Kingcroft extremely, but that she was not exactly engaged to him" (7). And, later on, when Lilia writes a letter asking him to come and rescue her, he never received the letter and the opportunity once again turns to dust, even though he was not at fault. (50)

Perfetta: She is a truly comic character. Half of the book she runs through Monteriano looking for Gino. In the other half she is pretending to be deaf (70), pouring water over people (92) and bringing the milk for the dead baby (167).

Harriet: She is, as Padel pointed out in her introduction to *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, an "unwitting villain." (Padel 2007, x) For her, the world is black and white,

and she lacks tact and self-control. Her brother Philip said that “she had bolted all the cardinal virtues and couldn't digest them” (Forster 2007, 10).

Mrs. Herriton: She is the 'flattest' of all characters. Philip even called her a “well-ordered, active, useless machine” (64). She would do just about anything to save her face in ‘moral’ Sawston. She represents everything that Edwardian Britain stands for.

Lilia: She is a wishful thinker. She was revolutionary in her head, but she missed in the action. “She was not obedient, but she was cowardly” (43).

Gino: He is everything that Italy stands for: handsome, free and real. Real in the way that he never pretends to be anything, which the reader can see best in the last chapter when Philip tries to explain to Miss Abott: “He [Gino] is unhappy, like the rest of us. But he doesn't try to keep up appearances as we do. He knows that the things that have made him happy once before, will probably make him happy again...”(129).

Philip: He would be what Forster calls a “flat [character] pretending to be round” (Forster 2005, 81). He comes very close to be rounded, as the reader thinks that he will, finally, for the first time in his life, step out from his shadow, take action and reveal his feelings to Caroline. But he fails and remains only an idealistic spectator.

‘Round’ characters, compared to ‘flat’ ones, cannot be described in single sentence. “The test of round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way” (88). And, Caroline Abott truly surprised the reader several times. The first eye-opener comes in chapter five. Until then, one could not even consider her as a main character and she seemed to be proper Edwardian young lady. But, as she starts revealing to Philip her true feelings about English morals, taking into account her vital involvement in the whole Lilia-Gino situation on the train to

London, her identity, assumed by the reader and Philip himself, changes for the first time. She was the one who suggested the marriage to Lilia: “Why don't you marry him if you think you'll be happy?” (Forster 2007, 55).

Her remark on Sawston explains why later in the story Mrs. Herriton wants so badly to save the baby from Gino: “everyone here spent their lives in making little sacrifices for objects they didn't care for, to please people they didn't love; that they never learned to be sincere” (56). One can see how fast the novel graduates from the end of chapter four as another aspect of Caroline's character is revealed just a few pages after. She visits Mrs. Herriton and openly asks her to take steps in rescuing the baby from Italy, and also confronts her with the bitter truth that Mrs. Theobald (mother of Lilia) was always just her puppet (62). Her behavior is astonishing to everyone; even Philip thinks that her visit was “impertinent in the extreme” (62).

Later, in chapter six, she appears out of the blue in Italy. She was even traveling by herself which is something unheard-of for a young English lady. She really does change to a different woman when she is in Italy as she also goes by herself to visit Gino in chapter seven – something which Harriet refused to do because it is inappropriate: “how could a lady speak to such a horrible man?” (105). Later on in chapter nine, she takes huge action for any woman of the time, when she breaks up the fight between Gino and Philip, and saves Philip's life.

Last, but not least, she shocks the reader in the final chapter, this time in a different way as the reader has already become used to her strong ‘Italian’ personality. The reader is already expecting her to come up with some kind of surprise at the end – possibly that she might move to Italy and live with Gino, or maybe Philip - or at least move from Sawston. She, instead, gives away the truth about loving Gino and literally continues on with “and I'm going to Sawston” (133).

She is transformed from a weak, obedient Sawston girl to a strong emancipated woman, full of passion and action. Then, changing again, she decides to go back to her old life and never return to Italy again. It is a shock for the reader, but it actually fulfills her expectations of the trip to Italy, as she states when trying to convince her curate to let her go to Italy: “Oh, but you must let me have my fling! I promise to have it once, and once only. It will give me things to think about and talk about for the rest of my life” (17).

The only aspect Forster betrayed his own theory would be the point of view in which the story is told. Although his theory does not implicitly ask author to use a certain point of view, Forster does point out that it is good for the novel if the author does change his point of view through the novel to keep it as close to human perception of life as possible (Forster 2005, 83). However, he does not do so in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and only keeps an omniscient point of view throughout the novel. Indeed, the story appears to be told by a third person who is all-knowing and all-seeing, almost like a god looking down at his children, wondering what will happen next but understanding the dynamics behind the events as they take place. We get to see everything behind the scenes. (64)

Unlike in his other novels (for example *A Passage to India*), in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* the reader can see much less of the emotional life of Forster's characters. However, one can read much of the inner thoughts through actions and many long conversations between the characters, specially Philip and Caroline Abbott – the main are in train on their way to London (Forster 2007, 55-58) and in Santa Deodata (church in Monteriano) where, it seems, Caroline almost functions as Philip's conscience when encouraging him to take an action for once in his life: “That's not doing anything! You would be doing something if you kidnapped the

baby, or if you went straight away. But that! To fail honourably! To come out of the thing as well as you can! Is that all you are after?” (109). The only one whose thoughts are shown as he thinks about them is Philip. Forster seems to hold lots of control over Philip and one cannot help to wonder if he was telling the story more through Philip's eyes, would the reader see more of Philip's passion for Gino?

2.4.3 The Plot

The three main parts of Forster theory this analysis will deal with in relation to plot certainly are a causality as an answer to the question “Why?”, cross-correspondences leading to the mystery and also the suitable ending.

Forster is stronger in raising curiosity in “what” happens next than “why” it happened. Although many scenes are unexpected and surprising for the reader, thanks to Forster's approach to the time (he always move forward never backwards), they are, indeed, logical. Even though unseen before the explanation is present, prior to the event. Forster emphasizes the importance of reader's memory and intelligence (Forster 2005, 87). This is very important for Forster as he gives very little information or explanation for any of the shocking events that occur in his stories both before or after the event.

As for Forster's “mystery” - the peak of the plot – one can identify as such Caroline's revelation of loving Gino. Forster is a master in cross-correspondences and foreshadowing. While he is openly showing the reader Philip's growing affection to Caroline (through revealing his inner thoughts), it requires much closer attention to foresee Caroline's affection to Gino and even if so, the reader would never expect her to admit that out loud, even if just to Philip. One can track her interest in Gino as far as to chapter two where she first commented on his appearance to Philip: “Very

good-looking. All his features are good, and he is well built” (Forster 2007, 18). In next page she admits she likes him. However, there it has nothing to do with love, yet. Another comment, this time much more emotional, appears in chapter five and she even excuses Gino for what happened to Lilia: “But I still feel he cannot have been quite bad when we first met him. [...] He was only a boy—just going to turn into something fine, I thought—and she must have mismanaged him” (57). The question here would be whether she already had feelings for him or it was more her bad conscience trying to excuse her for letting them to be together. And then there is of course the scene where Gino and Caroline are washing the baby in chapter seven. This scene is full of tender passion on both sides.³ The novel is full of little cross-correspondences and foreshadowing as they have already been mentioned here before – mainly in chapter People.

As it was disclosed above in chapter The Story, Forster managed to create something inbetween the traditional closed and modern sharp open ending. The mystery is revealed and now Miss Abbott and Philip travel back to England. The novel is already closing with their travel back, but Philip is still hoping for Caroline to leave Sawston: “you can't go back to the old life if you wanted to. Too much has happened” (131). For Caroline Sawston is a safe haven, with her family and all its rules and morals it does not give a space to move, to fall. Everything returns to the beginning - to the old order. Although this can be seen as the last turn in the novel and it can still be accepted as an open ending (she might marry Philip, who would like that very much), Forster goes even further when he stops their conversation in order to save Harriet from getting smut into her eyes as they approach a tunnel. As the novel started with two English people going by train to Italy, it ends with three English people coming back to England as if nothing ever happened. As Ruth Padel

3 Gino has certain feeling for Caroline too as it was shown before in chapter People

states: “They have been transformed by Italy, and all it stands for, yet in the last sentence they scurry to act out the Englishness they are doomed to” (Padel 2007, xix).

3 René Wellek

René Wellek (1903-1995) was great literary scholar. He was born in Vienna and studied at the Charles University in Prague where he received his doctorate. He became a world traveler mainly living and working in the United States. After several working experiences he anchored in 1946 at Yale university where he became director of Comparative Literature. Here he also wrote most of his work – the well-known *Theory of Literature*, co-authored with Austin Warren (1949) and also *Concept of Criticism* (1963), which chapter The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship is used in this thesis. (Holquist 2010, 163)

3.1 The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship

All of Wellek's essays in *Concept of Criticism* does not present his own theory on Baroque, Romanticism, Realism and others but they are rather “judgemental overviews” on these fields. Wellek provides the reader with a study into the history of the certain term (like realism), it shows development in various areas and then gives definitions from various critics and “takes what is good or bad” in order to sum it up into one general theory. (Holquist 2010, 164)

René Wellek is very careful in his statements about realism. He is aware of most of the mistakes made by other scholars in order to create generalization of this term. In particular when is the period of realism, who belongs to realism and finally what is realism. Wellek sets the rules for his attempt as follow:

It must not be merely the description of a style of literature which occurred in all times and ages, as we are not trying to establish typology of literature, but a period concept. [...] And if it is to be a period concept it cannot be conceived so narrowly that it would exclude writers who

dominated the time and seem most representative and typical of it.
(Wellek 1963, 240)

First of all realism must be objective in the way that it shows reality as it is. There are no miracles allowed. Nothing can be just decorative or symbolic and science is the one who identifies what is real and what is not. Also it is no more just a picture of pretty things. Quite the contrary, taboos and the ugly and the revolting should be present in realistic art to give the whole picture of contemporary society. (241) As Wellek points out objectivity only exists in theory. Realistic works often function as “propaganda” or as “rejection or revulsion against society” (242).

In this aspect Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* certainly is realistic. Forster does not hesitate to show deformed Edwardian morals through the actions of Mrs. Herriton, he does not idealize Italy even though he loves it so much. He finishes by showing everyday life tragedy on every corner: the way Lilia was treated in her husband home, the fact that Gino was never tolerated as Lilia's lawful husband, the differences between newly-wedded couple leading to the Lilia's death, Caroline's bad conscience about everything that happened, the tragic accident and the death of the child and also the unfulfilled love triangle between Caroline, Gino and Philip.

When one wants to write fictional but realistic novels (and not a biography) another aspect needed is “type” or “social type” (243). One can imagine it as condensations of typical traits in society (bad or good) or their parody or even idealization. This is very similar to “novelist's touch” as it is introduced by Norman Douglas⁴. The characters lose their individuality in order to become a type but Wellek draws our attention to Luigi Capuana's witty theory that this happens because

4 Novelist's touch is discussed on pages 8 and 9 of this thesis

of time and not the writer – our mind tends to simplify; it remembers only those traits of the character which most stand out. (246)

This aspect is very closely connected with another one: impersonality. Not only does the author create a character which is not one person but rather social type, but also a realistic novel author has to lose himself in order to stay objective. The theoretic mentioned by Wellek on this topic is Henry James.⁵ Author should not interfere in novel in any way. He/she can only stay as spectator (the third person telling the story) and avoid any personal comments regarding his characters or events. (247-249) Forster is on the same page asking: “may the writer take the reader into his confidence about his characters?” and answering: “better not” (Forster 2005, 84). And although he mentions in his *Aspect of the Novel* that the novelist should not tell the story only as a spectator but intensify it by adding other points of view (83), the *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is just narrated by third-person. As Wellek progresses in explaining James' theory one cannot help wonder if Forster was inspired by James; he did certainly mention his work in his book (60). His emphasis on creating illusion in fiction (Wellek 1963, 249) can be easily recognized as Forster's “bouncing the reader” (Forster 2005, 82). Moreover, even though James was quite dogmatic about objectivity of the author he was aware of the fact that the author cannot cut himself completely from his work – as was Forster: “A novel is based on evidence + or – x, the unknown quantity being the temperament of the novelist;” (Forster 2005, 55) In order to create as objective novel as possible James wrote *The Awkward Age*, which is almost completely based on dialogs. When one looks at *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Forster does use dialogs just not as much as James in this novel.

5 The comparison of James' theory and the one of Forster's is quite useful because the topic of their novels is for both of them cultural clash. However one is considered as realist and one as modernist.

Last criterion is for the realistic novel to be “historicist”. It should be bound with its historic background. Reality is never just in one's home, street or town. One's mood or views are influenced by country or world mood or views, even if he/she is not in the middle of world events not only “just as Balzac sets his action within a changing society after the fall of Napoleon” (Wellek 1963, 251). Although history surely completes the picture of objective contemporary reality, Wellek admits himself that many great figures of realism actually lack historicism in their works, like Jane Austen and Tolstoy. As Austen and Tolstoy, Forster also is not historicist, at least not in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. There is not a single reference to the year, period of time in which the story takes place or to any other world events taking place in time of our story. The only link is the English manners in that time and mention of “Edwardian upper middle class” (Padel 2007, ix) in the introduction.

4 Conclusion

This thesis focuses primarily on Edward M. Forster's theory on the story, people and the plot in his theoretical book *Aspect of the Novel*. It analyzes his work manifested by one of his first novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* in the spirit of his theory. While studying those materials one cannot help to realize that even Forster belongs to the twentieth-century writers and to Bloomsbury group (which is also shortly introduced in this thesis) his theoretical thinking and his work could, indeed, fall easily between the works of realism. Therefore the next logical step is to study Wellek's description of Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship in his book *Concept of Criticism*. Through Wellek's work one can see a different angle of Forster's work and identify major similarities between those two theories.

Forster certainly gives the objective picture of contemporary society. And even though in his theory he asks for more inner life of the characters to be revealed (this is definitely aspect of modernism), in his actual creative work he kind of fails that. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* does not exactly lack the inner life of the characters but it does not compare to modern writing such as of his friend Virginia Woolf. His book was first published 1905 when Forster was only twenty-six and in his later work one can see more of the inner life of his characters than in this book so this failure could be ascribed to his immature writing. However, this is not the only aspect of his writing which binds him with realism.

He also fails in his creative work two other modernist appeals he makes in his theoretical work: point of view and open-ending. The first one he betrays completely when using only third person narrator and the second one he kind of cheats by not closing his book but rounding it instead.

Another aspect of realism according to Wellek would be the presence of “type”. Well, Forster uses instead the term “flat” character and although he himself draws the attention of the reader to the fact that modernist writers are against this kind of character, he stands firmly that a novel should have a mixture of characters (Forster 2005, 75). In *Where Angels Fear to Tread* one can find several “flat” characters from which the most significant would be Mrs. Herriton.⁶ Wellek would most likely recognize her character as a “social type” as she is everything what Edwardian society stands for.

The only aspect where Forster does not fit into Wellek's Concept of realism is historicism. Although Forster sets his novel into Edwardian Britain it does lack any references to this period except the typical manners of Edwardian society. However, Wellek himself states as he concludes his little survey into Concept of Realism in *Literary Scholarship* that:

Realism [is] a period concept, that is as a regulative idea, an ideal type which may not be completely fulfilled by any single work and will certainly in every individual work be combined with different traits, survivals from the past, anticipations of the future, and quite individual peculiarities.” (Wellek 1963, 252)

One can consider Forster as a bridge between the old and new world. After all he was still born in nineteenth-century, in century of realism, but most of his life he lived in a new and engaging era. Adding his own problems of sexuality⁷, which could be one of the reasons why he felt so comfortable in the Bloomsbury group, one can see a great young writer who combines the good old realism with a playful touch of modernism.

⁶ More of her description is given on page 26 of this thesis

⁷ Problems only because how was homosexuality seen within the society

5 List of references

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