

Symbols in E.M. Forster's Novels

Where Angels Fear to Tread & The Longest Journey

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In Aspects of the Novel, Forster says that the novel should be an aesthetic whole combining form and value and having a story as its backbone. In this self-contained structure there must be an internal harmony which needs the adjustment of characters to one another and adapting them to the story, the plot, the atmosphere of the novel) and so on.

The novelist in trying to give a sense of inevitability, resorts to plot. It is a narrative of events in which the emphasis falls upon causality and which is the novel in its logical intellectual aspects. Meanwhile, the writer wishes to have everything in the novel founded on human nature, in other words, founded on the character's will. The difficulty facing the novelist here is the way of achieving both the sense of inevitability and the human nature. This according to Forster, can be done successfully

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when an incident springs out of the character, and having occurred, alters character to connect people and events closely.

It has been rightly noted by Lord David Cecil that “not character or probability, but the thesis Forster wishes to expound determines the main lines of his plot's structure.”⁽¹⁾ This is to an extent true since most of the characters, especially his heroes, cannot be categorized as round or flat, Ansell in The Longest Journey, Ruth Wilcox in Howards End, and Mrs. Moor in A Passage to India serve as examples. They are memorable for a grouping of qualities not for a dimension, or, as Mr. James McConkey says “they have been constructed to represent a portion of Forster's own insight, to suggest a portion of that vision which the novel as a whole represents.”⁽²⁾

Another point concerning character and form is that Forster shifts viewpoint from character to another and from character to his own position. This method serves, as he affirms, to bounce the reader into accepting what he says. This method also results in making Forster's voice quite clear element in the novel's form. As far as the story is concerned, Forster says in Aspects of the Novel, that voice “transforms us from readers into listeners to whom a voice speaks.” Such a voice assumes the dimension of a major character in all Forster's novels, we are aware of it as we are aware of Margaret Schlegel and Fielding.

Such richness of elements and possibilities Forster sees for the novel makes him stand against rigid pattern. “Pattern” he says, “spring

mainly out of the plot and characters and all else in the novel contribute to it.”⁽³⁾The rigid pattern cannot cope with the richness of the material that life provides.

Forster in most of his novels uses symbols and myths to make his readers grasp with his characters and events. Moreover, Forster sees that they are the most effective ways of expressing his human views and his own understanding of the world in which he lives. A Passage to India serves as a good example. Forster's A Passage to India is a rich novel in form and meaning. Many studies explored this richness and left no room to another attempt. Therefore, in this paper A Passage to India is excluded and two of Forster's great novels are dealt with to point out Forster's brilliant use of symbols. The novels are : Where Angles Fear to Tread and The Longest journey.

Where Angles Tear to Tread

The plan of the book is quite uncomplicated. “The motifs,” Mr, Frederick Karl says “may be seen as a series of antithesis.”⁽⁴⁾ The are true communication versus mere suburban small talk, the fundamental love of which men are capable versus the convenient alliances of Sawston society, the forms of civilization (machinery) versus the apparently formless currents that connect one human being to another. Briefly peaking, it is a clash between the English town of Sawston, the product of a new and shallow society, and the old Italian city of Monteriano where

can be found a mixture of beauty, charm and vulgarity. Mrs. Herriton epitomizes the Sawston traits that are in the clearest opposition to Monteriano.

I am indebted to Mr J.K. Johnstone in remarking that “without Mrs. Herriton Sawston wouldn't exist, but without Monteriano Gino wouldn't exist. This means that Gino stands with his race and draws vitality from it but as for Mrs. Heriton, she is a shallow and new offshoot of her race.”⁽⁵⁾ Between the two, Mrs. Herriton and Gino, the other characters move. Lilia is dominated by each in turn. She bears two children, one belongs to Sawston, the other to Monteriano. Caroline's and Philip's spiritual history binds the novel together, it is , as Johnston says, “the story in so far as the history can be separated from the plot.”⁽⁶⁾

Caroline, Philip and Gino form a triad, it is a triangle which occurs throughout Forster's novels: a triangle of the intellect, the body and the soul. As K.W. Gransden puts it “Philip is capable of understanding the greatest things, but they can only enter his life through Gino and Caroline.”⁽⁷⁾ It is Caroline who, after the baby's death, reconciles Gino and Philip. I think this is the victory Rex Warner mentions when he says that “the two worlds meet and draw apart, meet and draw apart again. On the first occasion that this happens what may be called the forces making for life suffer a defeat, on the second occasion there is a victory.”⁽⁸⁾ it comes to be a rule that no part of the total work of art with Forster is accidental or superfluous. As Lord David Cecil says “Mastery of form

for one thing, not a detail the scene or dialogue, however casual-seeming, but contributes to the general effect.”⁽⁹⁾ Thus in Where Angles Fear to Tread, there an anesthetic justification to the story of the Saint. Fredrick Karl puts it simply that “Forster is impelled to include the story of the Saint, and, at the very end, the parallel of the Endymion myth, to the Caroline-Gino-Philip story because they provide the necessary backdrop for true perspective.”⁽¹⁰⁾

We have two important images in the novel. First the towers of Manteriano, the second is the dark wood with its sea of violets which is found alongside the road approaches the town. Philip comments on one of the towers by saying “I reaches up to heaven ... and down to the other place.” Forster himself says that “the summit of the tower was radiant in the sun, while its base was in shadow and pasted over with advertisement.” Out of these two statements we can deduce the fact that, as McConkey says, “the towers are symbolic of human potentialities in two directions, they may represent an admirable simplicity of elemental passion,” that is the “reaching up to heaven” and the summit radiant in the sun. They represent as well “darkness and violence and stand for a kind of degradation,”⁽¹¹⁾ that is the “reaching down to the other place” and the base in shadow”.

The description of the Saint is a minor variation on the main theme of Philip's refusal to accept responsibility. McConkey finds that “his

detachment in the name of culture corresponds to the religious detachment of Santa Deodata.”⁽¹²⁾

The second image, that of the dark wood with its sea of violets serves the unity of the novel. It first appears when Philip approaches Monteriano on his way to rescue Lilia from Gino, it appears again towards the conclusion of the novel, it is the place where Gino's baby dies.

There is a kind of cycle in the incidents associated with the image of wood and violets. When we see the wood and violets for the first time we notice the contrast between the beautiful flowers and the small, leafless trees. It is clearly springs when promise and threat become one. According to McConkey, it is indeed from that basic creative intent of nature, “the irresistible drive towards continuation after death, that Philip's detachment is at least partially a refuge.”⁽¹³⁾

The cycle emerges triumphant: out of death comes rebirth; it is Philip Herriton who is “born” from the death of the baby.

The Longest journey

Mr. K.W. Gransden has noted that The Longest Journey is “epic in structure and symphonic in pattern.”⁽¹⁴⁾ Life and death, the past, the present and the future are integral parts of the plan of the novel. Forster looks both up and down the stream of life, the past is part of the present, the present merges into the future. The novel expands: it reveals the past

and its significance, and most of the rhythms are associated with the stream of life. Running water recurs repeatedly in the novel. The flame boat on the stream symbolizes the consuming but over-burning life flame in the ceaseless flow.

Rickie hears his mother's voice in a dream calling "come away-let them die out." He hears the voice again when he recalls the dream and when Stephen asks him to leave Sawston. The constellation of Orion is related to his mother, for after hearing his mother's voice in his dream, he hurried to the window and saw "the frosty glories of Orion." The same star is watched by Rickie again when he accepts Stephen (The man whom the gift of fertility is granted) as his brother. Orion becomes a symbol of the stream of life.

The flow of life is also symbolized by the image of Cadburg Rings. These Rings, graves of the ancient dead that they represent, through man's relation with the past, a basic truth. As McConkey says, "one knows this from the parallel that exists between the geometric pattern of the Rings and the one which Ansell draws to illustrate reality for Rickie",⁽¹⁵⁾ reality, says Ansell exists in the center of the circles and squares, it is "the one in the middle of everything, that there is never room enough to draw." The Rings are described in somewhat similar fashion "A bank of grass, which encloses more turnips, and in the middle of the pattern grew one small tree." Significantly enough, it is beneath this tree

that Rickie learns that Stephen is his half brother this is the relationship which the past bequeathed to him.

Rickie, Stephen and Ansell form a triad which finds its similarity in the Caroline-Glno-Stephen triangle.

Ansell goes home to Sawston. His visit coincides with a visit from Stephen, the two complementary aspects of reality, the intellectual and the physical come together to try to save Rickie's soul. Another significant image in the novel is the Roman road level crossing. It is important to the structure since it serves the plot to bind the novel together. Each recurrence of the level crossing reminds us that here a child died, run over by the train bringing Rickie and Agnes to Cadover, here is juxtaposition of death and love, for at the moment of the child's death Rickie had been holding Agnes in his arms. It is the crossing where Rickie will be killed in an attempt to rescue Stephen.

The other image is of the bridge which has finally been constructed "gives a sense of completion .as Peter Surra has noted."⁽¹⁶⁾ Death itself is almost a rhythm in The Longest Journey, a rhythm which emphasizes, as J.K. Johnston has remarked, the survival of Stephen, "the sudden deaths, like a progression of great chords, culminate in the death of Rickie. Surrounded by all this death, it is marvelous that Stephen should survive. His theme, as it were, expands, and continued after the novel has ended."⁽¹⁷⁾

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ملخص

الرمز في روايات فوستر

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يعد استخدام الرمز في الأعمال الأدبية سواء كانت شعرا أم رواية أم قصة إلى غير ذلك من بين الأساليب التي استخدمها الكتاب في أعمالهم الأدبية. إلا أن هناك كتاب معينين برعوا في استخدام الرمز وهنا نخص بالذكر الروائي المعروف أي. أم. فور ستر الذي كان بارعا في استخدام أسلوب الرمز للتعبير عما يجول في خاطرة من أفكار يريد إيصالها إلى القارئ. الرمز هو استخدام يعرض مسألة حقيقة من خلال الشخصية أو الحدث ويراد بها إثارة عنصر التشويق والإثارة لدى القارئ. في هذا البحث نعرض استخدام فور ستر لعنصر الرمز في اثنتين من روائع رواياته المكان الذي تخشى أن تطأه الملائكة و الرحلة الأطول. في هاتين الروايتين يكثر فور ستر من استخدامه للرمز ليضيف عنصر الإثارة والتشويق وليجعل القارئ يعيش الحدث ويتفاعل معه. لقد كان لاستخدام فور ستر للرمز نكهة أضافها على ما يعرضه في رواياته حيث كان الناتج نسيجا رائعا من الحدث والشخصية وتفاعل للقارئ.

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