

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**DEFIANCE OF CULTURAL DOMINANCE:
REFERENCE TO E.M. FORSTER'S "WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD"**

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Abstract:

The dominant culture in a society refers to the established language, religion, behavior, values, rituals, and social norms. These traits are often the norm for the society as a whole. E. M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is a witty comedy of manners that is tinged with tragedy. This study is meant to remove the gaps between the experimental realities and the didactic moralities in the contemporary world. To conclude, Forster's selected novel is a subtle attack on decorous Edwardian values and a humanely sympathetic portrayal of the clash of Italian and British cultures.

Keywords: Moralities, Realities, Culture, Dominance

Introduction:

The dominant culture in a society refers to the established language, religion, behavior, values, rituals, and social customs. These traits are often the norm for the society as a whole. The dominant culture is usually but not always in the majority and achieves

its dominance by controlling social institutions such as communication, educational institutions, artistic expression, law, political process, and business. The concept is generally used in academic discourse in fields such as sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. In a multicultural society, various cultures are celebrated and respected equally. Dominant culture can be promoted with deliberation and by the suppression of other cultures or Subculture. E. M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is a witty comedy of manners that is tinged with tragedy. These themes have been investigated by different researchers and we will refer to some of the most important articles, theses and books in the next part of this study.

Limitations of the study:

In this paper, the researchers have chosen only one work from E.M. Forster and the emphasis is mainly put on novel rather than the other literary genres. Besides, the investigation of the existing paradox demands an interdisciplinary study which is out of the capacity of this study.

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Discussion:

A. E.M. Forster: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905)

“Fools rush in where angels fear to tread,” is a saying is commonly used to emphasize how ignorance can result in decisions that lead to unfavorable situations. Likewise, in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Edward Morgan Forster uses irony, point of view, and satire to effectively emphasize how stereotypes, prejudices, misunderstanding of cultural differences, and hypocrisy could lead to unfavorable circumstances. Lilia Herriton, a widow of several years who has been living with her husband’s family since his death, cheerfully leaves Sawston, England, with her friend Caroline Abbott for an extended visit in Italy. The Herriton family encouraged such a visit because of their concern over Lilia’s growing relationship with a man they consider unsuitable for her and also because they welcome a chance to train her daughter during the mother’s absence. The trip, which is Philip’s idea, is quickly agreed to by everyone concerned. Fortunately, Caroline, a woman ten years younger but much more levelheaded than Lilia, is also planning such a trip and needs a companion.

The winter passes peacefully for everyone, and the tour seems to be a success. Lilia is apparently gaining some degree of culture and taste under Miss Abbott’s guidance, and back in England Lilia’s daughter Irma is improving through

the efforts of Mrs. Herriton. In the spring, however, Mrs. Herriton hears from Lilia’s mother that Lilia is engaged to an Italian, supposedly someone she met in a hotel. She immediately wires Caroline for details but is answered only by the terse comment that Lilia is engaged to an Italian nobleman. Instinctively recognizing this to be a lie, she insists that Philip go at once to Italy and stop the marriage.

Caroline meets Philip’s train when he arrives at Monteriano, the village in which Lilia and Caroline are staying for a month. Nervously, she agrees to tell him everything. According to her story, Lilia and the man fell in love with each other, so she rather offhandedly suggested marriage. Unfortunately, Signor Carella, who is about twelve years younger than Lilia, is the son of a dentist in that provincial village, and he has no money. His social position, therefore, is little better than that of a peasant. Philip is even more appalled when he sees the man, for everything about him except his physique is extremely vulgar. Philip is, however, too late to stop the marriage, for the couple married as soon as they heard he was coming. He can do nothing but return home, and he takes Caroline with him. The Herriton family refuses to have anything more to do with Lilia, but they keep Irma with them to be brought up as one who bears the Herriton name.

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Forster depicts the distinctive cultures of England and Italy. Indeed, novelists have been the products of cultures and their perspectives are likely to be biased. Edward Said states:

Forster, by representing the barriers to Fielding and Aziz friendship in terms of ontological rather than political difference, merely reaffirms stereotypes about Indians by adopting the assumption that Indians cannot be taken seriously as political agents.

In *Where Angels Fear to Tread* Philip Herriton is his spokesman when he states: 'These people know how to live. They would sooner have a thing bad than not have it at all. That is why they have got so much that is good'. Forster believed that men and women should keep in contact with the land to cultivate their imaginations. For him, places and the events of his past were of central importance in developing his literary works of art. Forster mocks Lilia's religious belief that her marriage is a failure only because it has not been done according to the rules of the Church of England. He writes:

She [Lilia] reflected chiefly about her marriage. The ceremony had been

hasty and expensive, and the rites, whatever they were, were not those of the Church of England. Lilia had no religion in her; but for hours at a time she would be seized with a vulgar fear that she was not "married properly," and that her social position in the next world might be as obscure as it was in this. It might be safer to do the thing thoroughly, and one day she took the advice of Spiridione and joined the Roman Catholic Church, or as she called it, "Santa Deodata's."

This shows that nothing is worse than false beliefs which are institutionalized in the individual's mind and have the potential for harm. Indeed, it was only the subject of man's innate limitations on which Forster was dogmatic. He observes:

We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we can not reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion.

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In the above cited lines, Forster shows that we are not even in a position to judge our knowledge of the characters of a fiction or to assume that we know ourselves perfectly and use ourselves as standard. He points out:

Faith, to my mind, is a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible I do not believe in it for its own sake at all.

Though the writer disapproved of having a blind faith in anything, religion was a recurring theme in their fictions. In fact, he disapproved of fanaticism in all its shapes.

Conclusion:

Forster's selected novel is a subtle attack on decorous Edwardian values and a humanely sympathetic portrayal of the clash of Italian and British cultures. Differences lead into evolution in this world and the desired perfection will be achieved by the life's detachments as well as attachments. The true word has come from the side of god toward his creatures and they must examine and get examined to attain maturity and ultimate reality. In spite of the existing discrepancies between experimental realities and teachable moralities, the pious people should attempt to reconcile these two

opposites and try to coexist with their peers peacefully.

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