

Social Reality in the Writings of E.M Forster

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Abstract - In literature, the link between people and nature has been extensively studied. The primary theme of British and American transcendentalism, which permeates E.M. Forster's work *A Room with a View*, is spirituality, which connects humans and environment (1908). Nature and its place in human life are central to this story, and Forster's attitude on nature and its role in human life is startling and pertinent now when eco-awareness is one of humanity's main aims. It is said that Forster celebrates independence and variety via his images of nature and the environment, which are examined in this article together with the narrative framework and the characters. However, Forster introduces a unique ecological philosophy through overt comparisons and parallelism of environmental fluctuations with the events that take place in the lives of the main characters, highlighting the inseparability of humans from nature and vice versa, thus expressing both humility and rapture with regard to the created symbiosis, its beauty and inscrutability.

Keywords - nature, environment, transcendentalism, individualism, diversity, E.M. Forster

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INTRODUCTION

Literature has dealt extensively with the link between people and nature. *A Room with a View* author E.M. Forster's beliefs on transcendentalism and spirituality are intertwined in *A Room with a View*'s transcendental philosophy (1908). It's interesting how Forster sees nature and the human relationship to it, and it opens the door to a variety of interpretations that are particularly timely in an age when environmental consciousness is finally becoming a top priority for the human race. It is said that Forster celebrates independence and variety via his images of nature and the environment, which are examined in this article together with the narrative framework and the characters. Despite this, Forster introduces a unique ecological philosophy by drawing parallels between environmental fluctuations and the events that occur in the lives of the main characters. This emphasizes the interconnectedness of humankind and nature, and expresses both humility and awe in the face of this symbiotic relationship, with all its beauty and mysticism.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

Postcolonial theory, queer theory, and ecocriticism have all been applied to Forster's writings by a number of researchers. Queer Forster, *Only Connect: E.M. Forster's Legacies in British Fiction*, Francesca Pierini's "Such is the Working of the Southern Mind: A Post-colonial Reading of E.M. Forster's Italian Narratives" (2017–18), and Krzysztof

Fordoski's essays on Forster, including "E.M. Forster and the English," are some of the most recent examples here (2016). Forster's output and contribution to literary studies in general, as well as queer studies, English studies, and postcolonial studies in particular, are examined in these academic studies. The book *A Room with a View* (1908), which Forster contributed to the development of environmental meaning, is one of my suggestions for an eco-fictional interpretation of his work. *A Room with a View* fits under Mike Vasey's concept of eco-fiction as tales created in imagined environments that reflect the spirit of natural ecosystems. It is up to [them] whether they choose to focus on human interactions with these ecosystems or ignore them entirely. Readers are taken into nature and brought to life by this novel, though. Fantasy or realism, the scenery and ecosystems should strive to be as "realistic" as feasible, and the storyline should adhere to ecological principles wherever possible. The following quotation is from the book Dwyer (2010):

Patrick D. Murphy's theories on "nature-oriented literature" and "environmental literature" and the potential of such works "to drive individuals back into the rest of nature with fresh perspectives and frames of reference" are also taken into consideration in this regard (qtd. in Dwyer 2010, 4).

Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905) through *Maurice* (1971), Forster sought to portray the

deepest social, cultural, and political conflicts in his writings from the beginning. Thus, Forster's usage of the term environment was familiar to him, but its meaning should be clear to anybody who reads the novel. Forster examined the social and political contexts that gave rise to a wide range of concerns, including class disparity, intolerance, and a host of others. It's clear from reading *A Room with a View* that the author was also concerned about the environment and the importance of nature in the human world. Forster shows how people and nature work together to create an united environment in this story. The changes in the lives of the characters are inextricably linked to the changing of the seasons, while the characters' activities constantly reflect the shifting of the weather. It is via the many societal pressures the protagonists face throughout the story that the only genuine path of life, namely being honest with oneself and recognizing nature as an intrinsic part of one's existence, is revealed.

This article suggests that one of the methods in which Forster investigates these concerns is via an exploration of nature, despite the novel's rather straightforward storyline addressing Edwardian-era societal issues. Nature imagery is employed extensively throughout the narrative to illustrate the characters' surroundings, emotions, and inner conflicts. Countless allusions to natural imagery help make Forster's societal criticism of gender and class that many English people confronted at the dawn of the twentieth century both effective and evocative.

ONE OF FLORENCE'S EARLIEST SCENES IS DESCRIBED THUSLY

As they spoke, the sky became darker, the trees and hills turned a purer shade of green, and the Arno's murky firmness dissipated, allowing it to begin to glitter. Blue streaks appeared in the sky, liquid spots appeared on the ground, then San Miniato's dripping facade shined brightly in the waning sun. To put it another way:

As the day draws to a conclusion, Forster's attention to detail shines through, and the visions of brilliant paintings are brought back to life in the reader's mind. *A Room with a View* is a book that shows the artist's ability to accurately describe nature, since the descriptions like the one above are the norm rather than the exception. "Forster's sunniest book," says John Colmer of *A Room with a View* (1975, 43; emphasis added). The scholar's epithet accurately represents the narrative's heavy reliance on nature. Through the book's "interplay between character and environment," the novel helps "oppose" not just England and Italy, but also individual rights and societal oppression (Edwards 2002, 42, 47).

As George's father, Mr. Emerson, whose name plainly references to American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, says, "[w]e know that we came

from the winds, and that we will return to them," he emphasizes the power of nature and the connection of every human to it (Forster 2012, 28). Despite the fact that people are part of nature, Forster aims to illustrate the oneness of nature and human beings not only via the recognition of their physical relationship, but also through the building of a spiritual bond. The latter is accomplished by describing weather changes and the changing of the seasons in detail. With regard to human nature in its purest form, it seems that Forster believes it is like spring, in that it is new and untouched by the passage of time. There are several allusions to spring in the narrative because of this. Spring in nature and spring in man are not the same thing, according to the British priest Mr. Eager. It's embarrassing because the same laws operate through both of us, but here we are applauding one and denouncing the other as ineffective. (66). Following this encounter with an Italian driver, Lucy "[f]or the first time she felt the influence of spring" (69), which here stands for both a specific season as characters are surrounded by blue violets but also for the inner peace and satisfaction, because "[i]n the company of this common man, the world was beautiful and direct" (69). Because the fresh air of spring makes George want to kiss Lucy, it's clear that the season also symbolizes a re-awakening of the mind and body.

After George kisses Lucy in front of Lucy's cousin, Forster uses nature descriptions as a narrative weapon to ratchet up the tension that is about to break out between the two characters. In this way, "the quick approach to poor weather" is conveyed to the reader by the cold that the characters experience (71). Because of "all these clouds, all this tremendous electrical show," the "storm" (74), which is predicted, is on its way (72). While Lucy's melancholy attitude is mirrored by the dismal environment caused by the rain, the conversation between Lucy and her cousin is preceded by a more detailed description of the setting: "

Rain was drenching the windows of the big room, making it seem stiflingly cold and wet. On the dresser next to Miss Bartlett's hat, one flickering candle threw ominous shadows on the locked door. Despite the fact that she had already wiped her tears, Lucy was overcome with sadness when a tram rumbled past in the dark. There were no colors or shapes on the ceiling, yet she raised them to the sky and let them soar. (76)

Forster uses the rain to convey the characters' inner turmoil. Tormenting Lucy is the fact that she doesn't know how to express her emotions for George, accept them, or act on them despite societal norms, since she lacks self-awareness and doesn't know how to express her wishes. As a result of her agreement with the denial of her own sentiments, Lucy finds herself in a lot of

trouble. Due to Charlotte's worry for Lucy, she categorizes all men as dishonest. This is in part because she has never been in a romantic relationship. However, it will take some time for Charlotte to grasp the significance of what she wants Lucy to be happy. George's statement of love to Lucy will make her realize something new, and she will "push" Lucy toward George by making Lucy's final meeting with Mr. Emerson feasible. According to Fordoski in *The Shaping of the Double Vision: The Symbolic Systems of the Italian Novels of Edward Morgan Forster*, the rain is a sort of "symbolism" that serves to "produce a music-like effect"—the so-called "rhythms."

Any item, animal, plant, or natural phenomena (rainstorm, light, dark-ness) may be utilized to build such rhythms, which attains the symbolic character by its location in the structure of the text rather than by any intrinsic traits that might be classified as 'symbolic'. As of December 12, 2005, One of the ways in which nature is used to characterize the characters is via the use of different natural occurrences (such as the rain portrayed in this scene).

After returning to England, Cecil, the novel's most tiresome character, acknowledges the need of appreciating nature: "Nature simplest of themes, he thought lay about them." His praises for the pine-forests, bracken lakes, the red leaves on the hurt-bushes, and the useful beauty of the turnpike road ranged widely (104). Because of this, Cecil believes that the natural world's greatest individuals are those who live surrounded by nature. "After all," he says in reference to the beauty of London's suburbs as well as its urbanization (104). "Nature the simplest of themes, she believed was around them" is how Lucy describes her thoughts about nature. (110). In order to show the gulf between Cecil and Lucy, Forster used Cecil and Lucy's statement about nature. When it comes to admiring nature, Lucy is serious, while Cecil is striving to overcome his snobbery as always, with disastrous consequences. Lucy does not live among stupid people who have seen far too much of the natural world and far too little of the urban world, he tries to tell himself. He is attempting to show Lucy that he is a person who can appreciate the little things in life. There are persons (like Cecil) who are so influenced by societal norms that they cannot really or immediately enjoy nature's beauty. Although Cecil is significantly different from Lucy in terms of his personality traits, Forster believes that humans are inseparable from nature, regardless of how they behave or what they choose to do.

Only to emphasize how much the lives of the major characters, notably Lucy, had changed throughout the book are the seasons prominently included in the story. The decision to concentrate on the three seasons (rather than the four) is telling: Using the Greek (Mediterranean) calendar, Forster only has three distinct seasons, with fall and winter being treated as an one season. Summer and fall are the

best seasons to read *A Room with a View*. In addition to the allusions to spring that were highlighted previously, Forster introduces his readers to numerous other seasons. To begin with: It had just been raining heavily and was a sunny Saturday afternoon. The energy of youth was still there, even though fall had arrived. "Graciousness prevailed" (129). To begin with, "She [Lucy] complied, although she remained dejectedly staring out the window." Due to the fact that it faced north, there was little to no view of the sky from there. The pine trees were as near to her eyes as they were in the winter. One may link the window on the tarmac to a depression" (142). "But Lucy had matured since the spring," says the third (169). As a concluding word:

Then, as soon as she was outside, she hesitated. She was overcome by a tremendous feeling, and she became aware of the changing seasons. The summer was drawing to a close, and the nighttime brought with it the melancholy odors of decay that harkened back to spring. That anything cognitively significant had taken place? While other leaves remained still, she was distracted by a wildly agitated leaf that danced by her. Windy Corner would soon be enveloped in the shadows of those trees, as the earth rushed back into darkness? (176)

Human nature is complicated and beautiful, and Forster's reminders of its cyclicity serve to emphasize this to his readers. The work often exhorts readers to value and respect the natural world. "Listen to the wind among the pines! ", by Robert Frost. From "the wonder of the water" (136) and Lucy's "Salut[ing] the dear view, and above them, scarce conceivable elsewhere, the dear sun" to George's meditations on "kindness," "light," and "chooses a place where you won't do harm—yes... choose a place where you won't do very much harm, and stand in it for all you are worth, facing the sunshine" (158), there is a lot going on in this novel (159). The work by E.M. Forster emphasizes the concept that failing to appreciate nature is a dreadful sin. As a result of humanity's disregard for nature, the writer points out that current societal issues, such as gender and class inequality, may be traced back to this same disregard for nature.

E.M. FORSTER'S ECO-PHILOSOPHY

Although Forster's unique method of portraying nature is intriguing, his use of environmental imagery to illuminate societal issues is much more so. While reading Forster's work, Judith Scherer Herz noticed that the topic of love was prevalent throughout the author's work. It is the glue that holds his writing together, giving it a physical form and injecting it with a life force that is at once passionate and spiritual. In fiction, it may be difficult to tell the difference between theory and practice. Even as an abstract term, love speaks of

the paradoxes of want, the yearning to connect, and the sense of touch. Love produces. the author's focus in 1978, p. 254 *A Room with a View* uses the idea of love as a way to explore the relationships between many individuals, but it is also a way for Forster to express his thoughts on the social and natural contexts. One of Forster's primary touchstones is ordinary life, experienced directly and with affection," says Jeffrey Heath. Arno and the untempered sun are only two examples of nature's daily cycles in this realm, which also includes furniture, bones, [etc.]." (410) and (405) in the same year. A fundamental tenet of *A Room with a View* is the importance of self- and environment-love, which encompasses both people and places. Eco-philosophy, as defined by my ecocritical interpretation of the work, is a more accurate term, since Forster's handling of both the social and natural environments is intimately linked. Natural and social concerns, such as inequality, may be traced back to humanity's disregard for the environment, which is a central theme in the work. An anthropocentric existence – the kind of existence that Forster is aware of (since the human does matter) but strongly condemns – results in our not seeing and appreciating nature as a unique and vital part of our (social and natural) environment (for the centrality of the human undermines the significance of nature, as well as leads to an establishment of a hierarchy within the human world as such, making some humans, or human traits, more valuable and acceptable than other). As a way to challenge the "hierarchy of culture over nature," *A Room with a View* uses energy to explore the supposedly distinct nature-culture split (Giblett 2014, 21). E.M. Forster argues that people must embrace, respect, and value their most authentic selves in order to flourish. Thus, Forster's eco-philosophy proposes that the social might be reached via the natural.

Forster's studies of such topics as identity, gender, and sexuality benefit greatly from an environmental/ecological perspective to human beings. Forster's *A Room with a View* is one of his works that "offers women and men suffering from the diseases of middle-class Englishness a gateway to nature, passion, and liberation," according to the classification (Peppis 2007, 47). In addition to protesting against or forgetting about the prevailing patriarchal standards and expectations, this retreat to nature provides a chance to realize one's actual identity. Forster certainly investigates and legitimizes homosexuality via nature as one such topic. The "greenwood" is a gay version of what Harry Berger Jr. refers to as the "second world," according to Forster. A critique of conventional sexual behaviors and ideals through the perspective of ecocriticism, Forster's "second world" is based on the material ("first") world but uses creative imagination to improve on it. Christian (2005),

Forster shows "how aesthetics may become a significant factor for or against environmental

change" (Buell qtd. in Christie 2005, 2). As shown in *A Room with a View*, humankind and nature for Forster are not just coexisting entities, but rather an integral part of one another. Humanity is defined by nature as Forster examines the characters' battles to resist certain societal standards, define themselves, and find their position in the social context they create. "The ecocentric roots of his [Forster's] ideas actively complicate the fundamental concept of what it is to be human," Kelly Sultzbach notes in her examination of Forster's work (2016, 25). It is only through addressing the meaning of "being a creature in a broader natural habitat" that "essential human attributes" may be fulfilled (Sultzbach 2016, 25). As a result, the concept of 'being human' is fundamentally defined by our ability to coexist with the natural world. Forster's eco-philosophy is based on the idea that the human and the (natural and social) environment have a close and complicated connection, and that this relationship may be understood and explained via the use of an eco-philosophy.

While the novel's view of the world isn't entirely optimistic, Forster encourages us to look for the possibility of being positive in an almost beautiful way. A good example of this transformation is Lucy's journey from "darkness" to "light," which Michael L. Ross describes as "an often-backtracking journey away from 'darkness,'" according to Lynne Walhout Hinojosa. Lucy "must find her true self by learning to read the depths of her soul," she writes (2010, 73). (1980, 155). It's clear that this "travel" is necessary for everyone in the narrative, not just Lucy. Forster uses natural descriptions to take readers through the characters' shifting worlds as they go through their own personal "journeys." Most of them are obviously unable of altering their ways; others are unable to see the potential of change (such as Cecil), while others are apprehensive about doing so (Charlotte). Although Forster doesn't try to imagine an ideal society, where change is a simple process, he does not. Contrary to popular belief, however, he sees both successes and failures as vital aspects of the process. To expand on Herz's remark that "[t]he descriptions of place are closely aligned to the development of the characters" (2007, 145), I believe *A Room with a View* shows that human nature can only be fully recognized as unique and changing when natural changes in the ecological environment are observed.

As may be seen in several scenarios, the tyranny of human uniqueness, which Forster fiercely opposes, is seen as the worst of human vices. It has been suggested by Ross, who believes that the title of the book alludes to the manner in which the author, Charlotte, uses sight to exert control over Lucy (157). When Charlotte sees a "bare human body," she interprets it as "something that must be dressed," and the scholar uses this as an

example (157). The view that Forster takes a stand against is that of Mr. Emerson, for whom "[a]renaissance, [...] involves the return to the body of a simple being or presence in the world outside of any typological interpretation, and the fullest living of the body in a life of love among other humans," which Forster may speak through the character of. For him [Mr. Emerson], every human being should be allowed to live in freedom in the same manner. (Hinojosa 2010, 82).

During the conversation between Mr. Beebe and Mr. Emerson, the latter brings up the Garden of Eden to highlight nature's holiness. While the discussion is mostly about gender discrimination, Mr. Emerson believes that "[w]e will enter there [the Garden of Eden] when we no longer scorn our bodies" (131). It was once at a time when I believed in the return of Nature." However, how can we go back to Nature if we have never been there before? Today, I feel that we need to learn more about Nature. Eventually, after many victories, we will reach a state of sanity. We are proud of it (131). Regardless of one's gender, sexual orientation, or any other attribute that would set one person apart from another, Forster believed in the divinity of each and every person. This view emphasizes the importance of variety and the uniqueness of each person.

There are various metaphorical meanings to the scene in which George, Fred, and Mr. Beebe bathe nude in a pond before running into the woods. When it "acts as a baptism into brotherhood," it "serves its duty of developing a respect for naturalness and spontaneous delight," but "the substance of its sensuality is gay," according to Colmer (50). (51). In this episode, Forster undoubtedly raises problems about gender and homosexuality, but what is more significant is that he, in fact, emphasizes the value of being natural and true to oneself. According to Colmer, "Forster's notion of honesty," which "implies an antithesis between the individual and society," is a "key method" the book "explores the value of stating the truth in a variety of ways" (49). Individually and collectively, all of the characters in the book are confronted with a "conflict between naturalness and conventionality" (44) that must be resolved by these individuals. It is in this context that the characters' "isolation from one another" (Herz 1978, 258) should not be considered as a drawback but rather as a tool to establish the transcendental oneness between self and naturalness, which is the goal of the story. According to Hinojosa, this idea gets a boost.

By making fun of typological ethics while presenting a "aesthetic" moral vision, Forster provides an alternative to typology in which one's actual self is somehow restored (though vaguely) to a moral life of love and equality via a renaissance or rejoining with oneself. The conventional and transcendental ideas of character and morality must be thrown off in order to accomplish this goal. Even while Forster does not get inside the minds of his characters as his modernist contemporaries did, his reworkings and

inversions of the metaphysics and morality of Puritan typological hermeneutics hint to an extremely modernist vision of morality and the individual self.. To put it another way:

Because of Forster's eco-philosophy, environmental awareness is not only established, but equality is also emphasized as the foundational premise of human life. Embedded in his love of nature, the author's philosophical stances on existentialism, ecology, feminism, and diversity emphasize the uniqueness of each individual human being as a work of art.

CONCLUSION

To fully appreciate E.M. Forster's views on gender, ecology, and equality, one must read *A Room with a View*, which delves deeply into the complex interaction between people and environment. A broad range of issues confronted British society at the beginning of the twentieth century are addressed in this environmental tale. In his exploration of class and gender concerns, Forster is forced to confront deeper themes of identity, metamorphosis, and even the passage of time. Forster asks his audience to evaluate the idea of "norm," which he strongly criticizes, as a way of looking at human diversity. Forster succeeds in highlighting the need of developing variety as a guiding principle for the social order via his extensive examinations of the role of nature in our lives.

In spite of Forster's transcendental beliefs on human-nature partnership, the author's presentation of the issue deserves to be considered masterful. With the goal of demonstrating how unique each individual is in comparison to others, much as nature has its cycles (every day is different than the last; spring, summer, and fall are all lovely but separate seasons). Eileen Forster masterfully builds her eco-philosophy, which states that only when one recognizes nature as a continually changing, but beautiful and magnificent force, can one comprehend the actual importance of human beings in the natural world.

Today, in the twenty-first century, Forster's views on nature as immensely complicated, magnificent, but also loving and life-giving are especially relevant because of the crisis of climate change that mankind is facing. People's responsibilities toward nature and enjoyment of nature are at the forefront when it comes to the preservation problem, which has clearly been overlooked long enough to have led to anthropogenic climate change. Because of our tendency to take nature and the conveniences it affords for granted, and because of this, Forster's *A Room with a View* serves as a credo for all of us.

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