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WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD BY E. M. FORSTER: THROUGH THE LENSES OF IDENTITY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY CRITICISM

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Abstract

The first novel written by E. M. Forster entitled *Where Angels Fear to Tread* unveils the secrecy of Edwardian period with its distinctive characters. Forster, as an intuitive novelist, creates a setting from different socio-cultural segments of the society by juxtaposing the characters from England and Italy. Through this novel, Forster proves that he has an inborn capacity for writing as a novelist because of the fact that not only his writing technique in terms of its freshness and directness but also his adoption of real-like characters plays a significant role in dealing with even the slightest and the most monotonous scenes in his novel. Thus, this study employs mimetic theory, which commonly deals with the fictional characters whose emotions, notions and thoughts are similar to those of human beings, while analysing the identity of the characters. Additionally, this study also employs identity and social identity criticisms in order to expose the identity of the characters in the novel. This study concludes that each character adopts the most advantageous role identity in the salience hierarchy. It also concludes that characters form their identities by taking into account support, commitment and rewards in the identity formation process as far as prominence hierarchy of identities is concerned.

Keywords: E. M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Identity, Social Identity, Hierarchy.

1. Introduction

Identity criticism, as a theoretical approach to the conceptualization of identity, is not a newly emerging research field. Its roots are deeply embedded in a set of ideas in *symbolic interaction*, which emphasizes the significance of what makes up identities and how they function. The *symbolic interaction*, which can be considered as a background of identity criticism, has been revealed in the works of many scholars such as William James (1890), James Baldwin (1906), Charles Horton Cooley (1902; 1909), W. I. Thomas (1928), and George Herbert Mead (1934). According to Peter Burke and Jan E. Stets (2009), these scholars have contributed much to the emergence of the identity criticism. Yet, identity criticism also stems from other set of ideas such as *perceptual control theory*, which bases its claim to the understanding of purpose

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in all living things, developed by William T. Powers (1973). All these ideas are incorporated into identity criticism to help understand how identities function. Since symbolic interactionism and perceptual cultural theory are considered as the groundwork for appreciating the self, the works of aforementioned scholars such as Mead, James, Cooley and Stryker as well as Powers have been placed at the very centre of exploring identity.

The concept of *symbolic interaction* coined by Herbert Blumer (1962) indicates that the unique character of human interaction can be developed and maintained through shared use of symbols. The symbolic interaction, as the foundation of identity criticism, is interpreted in the work of Mead where the words are regarded as symbols that are used to communicate ideas. In his work entitled *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934), he questions the relationships among mind, self and society as parts of social process. Additionally, Mead suggests that both *imitation and gestures* play a significant role in communication and interaction and he makes a differentiation between them. To him, imitation occurs when one observes another's reaction whereas gesture contains "the meanings and implications of the complete act" both for "the person who uses it" and for "the person to whom it is directed" (cited in Burke & Stets, 2009, pp. 22-23). Briefly, in social communication and interaction apart from verbal language, paralinguistic features of language such as mimicry, imitation and gestures also give meaning to the implied.

As far as identity criticism is concerned, William James can be said to have contributed to criticism, particularly with two important points. In his writings (1890), he states that people are social by emphasizing the importance of *habit*, which plays a significant role in behaviour apart from biology and instinct. He mostly focuses on *complexity of the self and multiple selves* that people have (James, 1890, p. 294). Accordingly, James makes a correlation between *self-esteem, success and pretension* by a formula, which is epitomized as "... even if our achievements [...] are high, our self-esteem will be low if our aspirations [...] are higher still. Similarly, even modest achievements can boost one's self-esteem if aspirations are even more modest" (cited in Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 24). Another distinguished scholar Charles Horton Cooley (1902) contributes to criticism with his notion of a *looking-glass self*. He called his notion as looking-glass theory because he believes that people see themselves when the others reflect their reactions, just like a mirror. In other words, *reflected appraisals* are helpful in understanding who we are in identity criticism.

Shelton Stryker (1980 [2002]), as one of the other originators of identity criticism, asserts the idea that a person has an *internalized positional designation identity*. For instance, if someone has the position of wife, she has a corresponding wife identity. Stryker presents four basic premises on identity. Firstly, he strongly believes that the basic symbols of the world, namely the meanings, are related to physical and social objects. Secondly, Stryker explains how the social structure fits into the structural symbolic models, which are commonly used to label 'positions' such as butcher, policeman or professor. These positions have already been existed in the social structure even if they are inclined to change and evolve slowly. They are all shared by the members of both society and culture. Thus, these labels are all used by all the participants of the social structure. Thirdly, Stryker reveals that how these identities show a complete harmony with their positions. For instance, when an individual name another one or one another in terms of the positions s/he occupies such as butcher or policeman, s/he shows a shared expectation with regard to the other's behaviour in its related culture. Fourthly, Stryker states that people also use the reflective aspect of the self. For instance, not only do others name James as professor but also James names himself as professor. Such a reflective aspect makes James a professor, which is also internalized by James himself. Correspondingly, every individual becomes a part of social structure in a given society. In identity criticism, the general assumption is that the *self-labels* define the place of the individuals by referring their positions in the society. For instance, while mothers are tied to their sons or daughters, professors are tied to students, customers to sellers etc. In the society, each position is expected to behave according to the meanings and expectations of the society. In other words, each individual in the society knows not only the meanings and expectations of the others from him/her but also the responsibilities s/he has. For instance, Professor Julia knows what her behaviour means to the students, and mutually, students also know their responsibilities, and in this way, they interact with each other and achieve their goals.

2. Identity and Social Identity Criticism

Identity criticism includes a wide variety of aspects from a number of critics as well. For instance, whereas Stryker and his colleagues such as Serpe (1987), and Thoits (1991) mostly focus on the *influence of social structure* on identity and behaviour, Burke and his colleagues such as Reitzes (1991) and Stets (2000) commonly emphasizes the *aspect of internal dynamics* within the self that has a great impact on behaviour.



Furthermore, George McCall and J. L. Simmons (1978) contribute to the identity criticism as they excavate the maintenance of the identities, particularly in *face-to-face interaction*. However, Erik Erikson (1950) has become one of the first scholars who conveys the concept into the social sciences and made it possible to the use of it among sociologists. Besides, Nelson Foote (1951) has been one of the other scholars who backed the criticism as he has attached great attention to the *prescribed roles and behaviours* as well as the *expectations* associated with the roles. Additionally, Gregory Stone (1962) asserts the idea that a person's identity can only be established "when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself" (1962, p. 93).

Shortly, identity criticism has grown out symbolic interaction (SI), particularly structural symbolic interaction suggested by Stryker (1980 [2002]). As has already been stated, with the introduction of Herbert Blumer's (1969) 'symbolic interactionism', or in other words, 'traditional symbolic interaction', the notion that the creation of social reality is a never-ending process has focused the attention of the other scholars. These two concepts on identity evolve into two distinguishing titles which are coined by Burke and Stets (2009). The first one is 'structural symbolic interaction' and the second one is 'traditional symbolic interaction' and, both of them show similarities and differences in some respects. But the main distinctions between them can be roughly explained hereafter. The first one maintains that social behaviour can best be understood by focusing on the individuals' interpretations of themselves and others as well as their surroundings. However, these definitions and interpretations mean that getting inside the individuals' head and appreciating the world from their perspective. Only in this way, one can comprehend why people do what they do. On the other hand, the latter one, commonly deals with the behaviour of the actors rather than their internal or subjective worlds. It focuses its attention on the actions of the humans rather than their inner self. These two traditional and structural approaches clearly differ from one another, particularly in understanding self and social behaviour. So, Stryker attempts to (re)define self "as undifferentiated, unorganized, unstable, and ephemeral" (2000, p. 27) in terms of *traditional symbolic interaction* as "self reflects society" (2000, p. 27). However, according to the *structural symbolic interaction*, society is not considered in a state of continual change as the traditional symbolic interaction claims. Instead, it is seen as stable and durable. Through this social world, where the individuals are born into, the individuals learn socialization.

As for social identity criticism, identity means seeing oneself as a distinctive individual, that is, it means being different from others as an individual. Hogg identifies personal identity as "idiosyncratic personality attributes that are not shared with other people" (2006, p. 115). However, with regard to social identity criticism, the activation of social identity in a given situation leads to *depersonalization* namely, a concept explained by Burke and Stets as such: "Depersonalization does not mean that one loses his or her personal identity; rather, there is simply a change in focus from the individual to the group. [...] because the personal identity and the social identity are mutually exclusive bases of self-definitions, both are unlikely to be operating at the same time (2009, p. 124). In social identity criticism, one of the most important aspects is that when the concept of *me* takes place the concept of *we*, depersonalization process begins. However, in the depersonalization process, the individual does not lose his or her identity; rather, s/he changes from *person identity* to *social identity* (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 123). In the literature, whereas person identity means an individual having a unique personality rather than a group member, social identity is defined as an individual being in social structures of the society.

In sum, as revealed, identity and social identity criticism have similarities which make them worth seeing as a unified identity criticism. Additionally, even though there exist some differences between them as they have different origins and scopes, for the most part, these differences stem from 'being' and 'doing', both of which are main aspects of identity. Thus, this study attempts to unearth the identity of the characters in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* by focusing on the perspectives of identity and social identity criticisms. In order to do this, this study employs structural symbolic interaction while uncovering the identity of the characters through an in depth-analysis.

3. Identity Formation Processes of the Characters

The novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* written by E. M. Forster unveils the secrecy of the Edwardian period through its distinctive characters. Forster, as an intuitive author, creates his characters from different socio-cultural segments of the society in order to give his readers deeper insights about human psyche. The characters in the novel commonly display humane characteristics similar to those of real people. Thus, this study employs mimetic theory regarding the identity of the characters. On the basis of mimetic theory, characters in fiction can be said to have been presented as if they were real-like characters. As far as mimetic



theory is concerned, the fictional characters, who are completely similar to human beings in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, commonly present the aspects of real-like people. So, the readers develop an empathy or identify themselves with the characters in the fiction because the characters are created through realistic settings and are generally considered as life-like entities (Gu, 2005). Correspondingly, the characters are the (re)generated productions that are the prototypes of actual human beings who existed or who have still existed in their historical context. In other words, the context where the fictional characters exist is called fictional reality, a fictional place where they are “supposed to be living” and “where the events are supposed to take place” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983, p. 7).

The characters in the novel are considered as real entities whose thoughts and emotions are similar to those of real human beings, that is, genuine characters. Likewise, in his study, Madran also explains that how Forster creates his characters genuinely: “Forster, by adding the qualities of genuineness and naturalness to his characters, creates the sensation that he is dealing with not imaginary, but real characters. His understanding of human nature and his keen observation help him to focus on the individual identity” (2004, p. 158). In other words, Forster skilfully forms the nature of individual identity in his novel. Additionally, Forster throws a light into the aspects of life, particularly with a focus on the concepts of reality and appearances. With this regard, Alan Wilde in his work entitled *The Aesthetic View of Life: “Where Angels Fear to Tread”* (1961) reveals that “Appearances are essentially more important than the realities behind them, and life is a kind of mechanized game with seemingly important but actually trivial counters moving constantly in a meaningless round” (Wilde, 1961, p. 208). Interestingly enough, nearly all the characters attempt at leading their lives in congruous with the societal norms and cultural codes of the Edwardian society in the novel.

As this part of the study involves a comprehensive analysis of the identity of the characters in terms of identity and social identity criticisms, it is of great significance to state that each character bears a unique identity formation process that is typically related to the theme of the novel. Additionally, each character is lifelike, and each has ‘role identity’, which is defined as one’s “imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant” of a particular society (McCall & Simmons, 1978, p. 65). On the condition that a cautiously conducted identity analysis is carried out, it becomes rather discernible that Mrs. Herriton’s role identity is related to her socio-cultural position as a mother, mother-in-law and grandmother in the Herritons. But she is sometimes in conflict with her role identity because of the fact that her role identity as a grandmother is beyond her imagination. As an illustration for Mrs. Herriton’s role conflict, the scene where Lilia is leaving England for Italy and, in the meantime, she is telling her daughter Irma, “Good-bye, darling. Mind you’re always good, and do what Granny tells you” can be given. After this statement, the narrator strongly emphasizes that Mrs. Herriton is the one “who hated the title of granny” (Forster, 1905, p. 1). This explanatory statement suggests that Mrs. Herriton does not want to accept her role identity as a granny even if she is the grandmother of Irma. Because, most probably, still in her own mind, the child is the product of an unwanted marriage, which she may eventually think that the marriage leads her son’s death. So, she does not like to think of herself being and acting as a “granny”.

4. Prominence Hierarchy of Identities

With regard to identity criticism, according to McCall and Simmons (1978) role identities are classified into two: the first one is *conventional dimension* (the role of role identities) and the second one is *idiosyncratic dimension* (the identity of role identities). While the former is to do with cultural expectations and social positions of the individuals in order to meet the demands of the society, the latter one is the distinctive definitions that individuals themselves bring to their roles. Accordingly, in the novel, the conventional dimension of Mrs. Herriton is indicated by the way how she dedicates her life to meet the cultural expectations of her own society. Furthermore, her social position, as a strict supporter of upper-middle-class Edwardian values, also suggests her conventional dimension in the social structure. Her subconscious mind is under the strong influence of the Edwardian values as stated by Womack. To him, the Herritons utmost aim is “to protect the family’s upper-middle-class Edwardian values of social restraint and interpersonal decorum” (2000, p. 130). Thus, it becomes clear that the matriarchal Herriton family is affected by the mores of the Edwardian society whose roots are deeply embedded within the Evangelical doctrines. Moreover, it is significant to state that Mrs. Herriton tries every means as the main character in order to protect her *conventional dimension*. After her son Charles Herriton’s sudden death by remaining his wife Lilia and little daughter behind, Mrs. Herriton becomes stricter and more anxious about her family. For instance, she neither lets her daughter-in-law Lilia to be involved in a love affair with a man named Mr. Kingcroft nor approves her marriage with an Italian named Gino Carella. As a class-conscious female in the Edwardian



society, she has never refrained from displaying her hatred and arrogance to the ones whose status are lower than herself. Apart from conventional dimension, Mrs. Herriton is also presented with her *idiosyncratic dimension*. Namely, the identity of her role identity as a mother includes distinctive interpretations. For instance, on learning that Lilia's impetuous manners lead her to marry an impoverished son of a local dentist and, that the Italian boy wishes to marry her only for her wealth, Mrs. Herriton exclaims "Lilia has insulted our family, and she shall suffer for it" (Forster, 1905, p. 10). Her idiosyncratic statements, which are distinctively unique to her own character, display that she plays the role of a dominant mother. As the statement unveils, it is implied that Mrs. Herritons' reaction to Lilia is completely connected with that of another individual, in this case, Lilia herself. Mrs. Herriton specifically pronounces that Lilia will pay the cost of what she has done so far. Explicitly, she makes rather threatening remarks in a rueful way.

On the issue of how the individuals conceptualize all the role identities they have, McCall and Simmons (1978) reveal that individuals claim more than one role identity naturally, and they place all these identities in a hierarchical level within the *self*, which is labelled as *prominence hierarchy of identities*. Notably, each character in the novel predictably claims more than one role identity, namely multiple role identities. For instance, Mr. Philip Herriton, as the son of Mrs. Herriton, the brother of Miss Harriet, the brother-in-law of Lilia and the uncle of Irma, displays more than one role identity. Furthermore, Mr. Herriton, who also has a career at the Bar as a lawyer in the higher court, has already had a role identity related to his own occupation. When Mr. Herriton is considered in relation to identities, it is evident that he has many role identities which have different degrees of prominence in relation to hierarchy level. Among his multiple role identities, he attempts to assume the role of a father-like figure in the family even if he does not seem to be very successful in performing it. Namely, he prefers assuming parental identity more than the other role identities. For instance, his personal preference on staying with his family rather than travelling displays that he assumes the role of a parental identity. As a proof, the statement on "his career at the Bar was not so intense as to prevent occasional holidays" (Forster, 1905, p. 1) can be given. More explicitly, even if he is not busy in his job, he prefers staying at Sawston rather than travelling freely. This statement indicates that he places much more importance to his parental identity than any other forms of role identities. Unambiguously, he adopts a parental identity in the prominence hierarchy as he contemplates that it is much more important than other forms of identity.

As for Lilia, she also has multiple role identities just like Philip. Firstly, she is the wife of Charles at the very beginning of the novel, then the mother of Irma, the daughter-in-law of Mrs. Herriton, and the sister-in-law of Harriet. At last, she becomes the lover of an Italian boy who is younger than herself and becomes the wife the Italian later. Among her multiple role identities, she assumes a more liberated role identity, for instance, being a lover of an Italian, among many other role identities. In other words, rather than preferring a mother, a wife, a daughter and a sister identity, she is much more inclined to an independent role identity as a lover at the very beginning of the novel. However hard it is to be an independent female in the Edwardian period, she tries at least. In the novel, it is vividly described that she prefers travelling as she desires to reach salvation in her challenging life but with the permission of her mother-in-law. Nonetheless, that does not mean that her going to Italy for a vacation by leaving her daughter Irma in Sawston can be considered as being a bad mother. Yet, it indicates her preference on the hierarchy of her role identities. If the mother role identity of Lilia would have been higher in the prominence hierarchy, she would not have left her daughter Irma behind and gone to Italy. Yet again, it is also discernible that she has endured all the mistreatment of her mother-in-law's family since her husband's death, and this journey should be taken as a remedial action for her wellness. So, in the prominence hierarchy, Lilia's role identity as a lover seems to be higher than her mother role identity as well as the other forms of identities she employs.

On the issue of *prominence hierarchy of identities*, McCall and Simmons (1978) maintain that identity places itself in the prominence hierarchy depending upon three factors: *support*, *commitment* and *rewards*. To them, first, to what extent an individual gets support for the identity s/he claims in a given situation is related to prominence hierarchy of identities. In other words, the more individuals get self-support and support from the others for an identity among many other role identities, the higher that identity is placed in the prominence hierarchy. Second factor is *commitment* of an individual to the role identity that s/he places higher in the prominence hierarchy of identities. Among the three factors which has a serious impact on the placement of identity in the prominence hierarchy is *rewards*, both of which are extrinsic and intrinsic. In other words, an individual receives both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards from identity that s/he places too much importance. Extrinsic rewards are the resources such as money, valued items, favours and prestige



that an individual acquires from the others while the intrinsic rewards include some emotions such as efficacy and competency while exhibiting any kind of behaviour.

In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, characters display different quantities of role identity that they place in the prominence hierarchy. As far as the factors such as *support*, *commitment* and *rewards* proposed by McCall and Simmons (1978) are taken into account, Mrs. Herriton, as an upper-middle class Anglo Saxon and Protestant female, can be said to have placed too much importance on the concept of motherhood in the prominence hierarchy. In other words, as a widow in the Edwardian period, she firstly generates self-support and then she experiences support from other members of the family as well as from the servants, who obey her for years. It is unambiguously stated that her utmost aim is to protect her family from any intruders for the sake of surviving her family name. Unquestionably, the *support* she generates both from herself and her environment is reconcilable with her beliefs, opinions and emotions. Namely, the support from the inner and outer self are helpful in shaping Mrs. Herriton's identity. Specifically, the more she experiences support from her son, daughter and all the households including her social environment she is responsible for, the higher that identity in the prominence hierarchy becomes. Thus, she places mother role higher level than the other role identities in the prominence hierarchy.

Secondly, *commitment*, as another factor which influences the engagement of an identity in the prominence hierarchy, is related to the commitment of the individuals to that role identity. The following extraction clearly illustrates how the two women, namely Mrs. Herriton and Lilia Herriton, commit to their role identities:

Mrs. Herriton took the opportunity of speaking more seriously about the duties of widowhood and motherhood than she had ever done before. But somehow things never went easily after. Lilia would not settle down in her place among Sawston matrons. She was a bad housekeeper, always in the throes of some domestic crisis, which Mrs. Herriton, who kept her servants for years, had to step across and adjust. She let Irma stop away from school for insufficient reasons, and she allowed her to wear rings (Forster, 1905, p. 5).

Considering the placement of an identity in the prominence hierarchy, the statements of the narrator explicitly reveal that Mrs. Herriton is the one who commits her role identity as a mother whereas Lilia fails in carrying out her responsibilities. Mrs. Herriton seems to have a growing sense of self-esteem when she believes that mother identity is placed at the highest position in the prominence hierarchy. Unlike Mrs. Herriton, Lilia ignores her role identity as a mother. For instance, Lilia's falling in love with an Italian and marrying him in Italy also indicate how low her commitment to her role identity as a mother. In the prominence hierarchy, she gives little or no notice to her role identity as a mother even if she has a daughter in her homeland. As known, she decides to marry a man who is living in Italy and follows her incentives rather than her rationality. The reason of the difference between their commitments to their mother roles is explained by Burke and Stets with these words: "One is more committed to an identity when one strives harder to maintain a match between perceived self-in-situation meaning and the meaning held in the identity standard. Commitment thus moderates the link between identity and behavior making it stronger (high commitment) or weaker (low commitment)" (2009, p. 51). Explicitly, whereas Mrs. Herriton's commitment to her role identity is higher, that of Lilia's is weaker.

The *rewards* an individual receives are considered as the last factor influencing placement of an identity in the prominence hierarchy, as previously indicated by McCall and Simmons (1978). The rewards, which are distinguished into two such as extrinsic and intrinsic, are functional in the identity formation of the characters in the novel. It is explicitly revealed that some of the characters in the novel get both of the rewards types whereas some only one and some none. For instance, Mrs. Herriton obtains commonly intrinsic rewards such as self-efficacy and self-respect whereas Lilia obtains neither intrinsic nor extrinsic rewards from the others for the identity she claims. Furthermore, Mr. Philip Herriton also gets intrinsic rewards from his mother when he has offered his mother to permit Lilia to go to Italy. Once in a while, Mrs. Herriton has not had such a feeling of relaxation in her life when Lilia departs from England to Italy. Mr. Herriton feels proud of her son and praises him by saying: "My dear boy! [...] It was your idea of Italian travel that saved us [from Lilia]. Philip brightened at the little compliment" (Forster, 1905, p. 3). As inferred, the intrinsic rewards are predominantly related to internal experience like sense of efficacy or competency. According to Sharma, "At Lilia's departure the Herritons heave a sigh of relief; she [Lilia] has been separated from Kingcroft, whose relationships with her has become an embarrassment" (2002, p. 22) on the eyes of the Herriton family. As for the extrinsic rewards, the characters can be said to have already had extrinsic



rewards that they obtain from the other for the identity they claim. For instance, in the event that Gino Carella does not marry Lilia, Philip Herriton offers him “a reward”, rather it is “a bribe” in order to compensate his disappointment. The interaction between two men is epitomized below:

“I am not marrying her because she is rich,” [Gino] was the sulky reply. “I never suggested that for a moment,” said Philip courteously. “You are honourable, I am sure; but are you wise? And let me remind you that we want her with us at home. Her little daughter will be motherless, our home will be broken up. If you grant my request [sic.] you will earn our thanks - and you will not be without a reward for your disappointment.” “Reward - what reward?” He bent over the back of a chair and looked earnestly at Philip. They were coming to terms pretty quickly. Poor Lilia! Philip said slowly, “What about a thousand lire?” (Forster, 1905, p. 23).

As the quotation above indicates, Gino is offered an extrinsic reward by Philip as he believes that “Gino worked by a cheque” (Forster, 1905, p. 59). The cheque itself, which is about a thousand lire, is going to be handed over to Philip on the condition that he decides not to marry Lilia. As indicated, the more extrinsic rewards associated with identity, the higher that identity in the prominence level becomes. However, Gino refuses to get money because of the fact that they have already got married. Nevertheless, his refusal remarks that his identity as being an honest person is placed in the prominence hierarchy of identities. At first sight, he seems that he is the one who does not leave his lover for the sake of money, namely, he refuses an extrinsic reward. Yet again, it is implied in the novel that he regrets in the later parts because of his refusal about not to get the money. Perhaps, the reason why he refuses not to marry Lilia may be that he wants to receive the “highest reward”, namely Lilia herself, as he thinks that Lilia is richer than it is expected. Indeed, he later appreciates that she is richer than he expected. Briefly, according to McCall and Simmons (1978), these three factors, that is, *support*, *commitment* and *rewards* are functional in forming the identity of the characters in terms of *prominence hierarchy of identities*, which is labelled as the *ideal self*. Last but not least, the ideal self is the one which requires support, commitment and rewards. Only under these circumstances, the characters display an ideal self.

With regard to identity criticism, McCall (2003) has also offered theoretically rich sources in appreciating the mutual relationship between *the self* and *the other* in interaction. More justifiably, to him, whereas *self-identification* is a process, which clearly answers the question “Who am I?”, *self-disidentification* is an answer to “Who am I Not?”. Additionally, self-identification is positive while self-disidentification is negative poles of identity, that is “Me” and “Not-Me”. For instance, in the novel, *self-identification* of both Mrs. Herriton and Harriet claim *who they are*. Namely, not only they but also the members of their own society typically identify them as upper-middle class, Anglo Saxon and Protestant white women. Mrs. Herriton, who is a strict follower of the mores in Edwardian period, all of which are deeply rooted in the doctrines of Victorian period, is an advocate of her own conventional society. To her, a widowed woman with a daughter has to lead a life according to societal norms and cultural codes of the upper-middle class, Anglo Saxon and Protestant society. Both Mrs. Herriton and her daughter Harriet identify themselves in relation to their own role identities and, accordingly they behave. They both are strict, restricted, and conventional. They typically self-identify themselves by answering the question of who they are.

In the identity criticism, whereas “Me” is surrounded more by roles and statuses, “Not-Me” is to do with characteristics and dispositions. Correspondingly, *self-identification* of Mr. Herriton and Gino are completely different from one to another. For instance, whereas the “Me” of Mr. Herriton suggests that he is a lawyer, Gino’s “Me” suggests that he is unemployed. On the other hand, in terms of *self-disidentification*, Harriet is defined as someone who is “pious and patriotic”, but she lacks “pliancy and tact” (Forster, 1905, p. 7) by her mother. However, she never sees herself as the others see her. She believes that she is within the standards of her own society. In other words, whereas her self-identification is religious and nationalistic, her self-disidentification is presented as a woman who is not flexible and considerate. Moreover, “Harriet, physically unattractive and awkward, adherent to a rigid and unbeautiful Evangelisms, is in some ways a much more attractive person, for however peevish and gloomy her creed may be, it is strongly felt” (Wilde, 1961, p. 208). As indicated, the extraction highlights both Harriet’s self-identification as well as her self-disidentification.

McCall and Simmons (1978) define a second hierarchy of identities: *salience hierarchy*, which reflects *the situational self* rather than *the ideal self*. Salience hierarchy is the identity that is considered the most advantageous to adopt in some certain situations to get support. It should be noted that salience hierarchy is



rather fluid because of the fact that role identities are temporarily activated in different situations. In other words, whereas *prominence hierarchy* is more stable, *salience hierarchy* is more changing. Among the factors which influence the salience of identity in a particular situation are *prominence*, *support*, *rewards* and the *perceived opportunity structure*. However, one of the most important factors is how much individuals need *support* for a particular identity. To McCall and Simmons (1978), if the support for an identity is less than expected, he or she commonly focuses more on another identity. In other words, an individual does not want to risk the identity not being supported. For example, in the novel, when Lilia faces the reality about her husband whose interest is on the money rather than herself, she thinks of leaving Italy and going back to her earlier life in Sawston with her ex-husband's family. But she is aware of the fact that she will never and ever be welcomed by the Herritons. Because mutual identity-verification is not approved by the Herritons. Let alone being verified by her ex-husband's family, she is blamed for defaming the Herriton's family name by marrying a boy who is twelve years younger than herself. In other words, whereas it is revealed that "[m]utual identity-verification in a situation often requires cooperative and mutually agreed-on arrangements of role performances" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 116), the marriage of Lilia as a widow woman with a daughter is considered as an act of inappropriate. Besides, her manners have never been considered as a cooperatively and mutually agreed ones by the Herritons. Besides, the reason why she falls in love at the very minute of her travel to Italy is that the support from the others for her mother identity has always been less weak. More explicitly, Lilia has never been supported by her husband's family with her role identity as a mother. Thus, she leaves her mother identity aside and instead, she employs another identity, namely being a lover of a young Italian. Because she knows that her identity as a lover once had already been supported by her daughter's father, Charles as she is a charming woman. Thus, rather than maintaining a previously non-supported identity as a mother, an identity which is ignored and despised by the Herritons, she does not risk her identity as a lover. Thus, she reinvests a nonthreatened identity and adopts a lover identity firstly. And then, she adopts wife identity of Gino in the course of the novel.

As for the motherhood of Lilia, it is significant to state that she has never been a woman "with a more salient mother identity" because of the fact that, according to Burke and Stets, "women with a more salient mother identity are more likely to accept the burdens of motherhood, that is, perform the parenting role without help from others such as their husband, and they are more likely to make sacrifices for their child including spending the necessary time and energy with the child" (2009, p. 48). As the explanation suggests, Lilia has never behaved in constant with the standards of a salient mother identity who is caring, responsible and considerate. Furthermore, she does not take the prerequisite acts for her daughter's care and education. Namely, "She [Lilia] let Irma stop away from school for insufficient reasons, and she allowed her to wear rings" (Forster, 1905, p. 5). As the quote reveals, Lilia has always been averse to the common codes of the society as well as those of the Herritons, who are apprehensive about Irma's education and care. As denoted earlier, contrary to the common belief of the Edwardian society, Lilia adopts a lover identity rather than a mother identity as she believes that "I can stand up against the world now, for I've found Gino, and this time I marry for love!" (Forster, 1905, p. 22).

Gino's exploitation of his own son can be given as an example for *the situational self* as he has acclaimed some money from the Herritons. In this case, Mrs. Herriton, after writing to Gino, imagines the following scenario: "When he [Gino] gets it [the letter] he will do a sum. If it is less expensive in the long run to part with a little money and be clear of the baby, he will part with it. If he would lose, he will adopt the tone of the loving father" (Forster, 1905, p. 55). Remarkably, Gino is avaricious and hypocrite as he has already married Lilia only for her money: "She was even richer than [Gino] expected" (Forster, 1905, p. 27). Moreover, Philip calls him "a bounder" in the sense of a man who behaves badly and cannot be trusted: "A bounder's a bounder, whether he lives in Sawston or Monteriano" (Forster, 1905, p. 56). As seen, when the situation changes, namely when he runs out of money after his wife's sudden death, Gino adopts a situational self, which is mainly reflected in his actions. He even exploits his little son in order to get the most benefit from him. Accordingly, he prefers the most advantages self, that is *the situational self* when the circumstances change.

In the course of the novel, the readers witness that Lilia marries Gino, and when she realizes that she will be unable to catch the attention of Gino as a woman, she immediately decides to have a baby boy to make Gino more interested in her. Unfortunately, she dies while she is giving a baby boy to Gino. On hearing that Lilia has a son from Gino, Mrs. Herriton sends both Philip and Harriet to get the baby back in order not to defame their family name. Accordingly, the *prominence hierarchy* of Mrs. Herriton reveals that she deliberately puts all her energies into the pursuit of baby boy as the main representative of Sawstonian characters in the novel. What she is mostly interested in is power as a patriarchal character. Because of the



power she has always had or supported for, she acts as a director rather than an actor. Her prominence hierarchy is stable, namely unchanging. As for Harriet, her prominence hierarchy is also stable. She shows no signs of change in the novel even if she experiences one of the most important sorrows one can endure. Obviously, she is the one who is responsible for kidnapping Gino's baby and murdering it in a carriage accident even if it is a mistake. Unlike that of Mrs. Herriton and Harriet Herriton, Lilia's salience hierarchy is more flexible and adjustable in some certain situations in which she is involved. In the *salience hierarchy*, Lilia adopts the most advantageous role identity, she prefers a wife identity in her new house in Italy to get support from the other. Unfortunately, when she prefers a role identity, that is being the wife of an Italian in the salience hierarchy, which is fluid in its nature, she does not get the support she claims for her new identity by the Herritons, as displayed in the following extraction:

Lilia enjoyed settling into the house, with nothing to do except give orders to smiling workpeople, and a devoted husband as interpreter. She wrote a jaunty account of her happiness to Mrs. Herriton, and Harriet answered the letter, saying (1) that all future communications should be addressed to the solicitors; (2) would Lilia return an inlaid box which Harriet had lent her - but not given - to keep handkerchiefs and collars in? (Forster, 1905, p. 27).

Identity criticism has two main dimensions which are labelled as *quantitative* and *qualitative* (Stryker & Serpe, 1982; 1994) or *interactional* and *affective* aspects (Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 1987) of commitment respectively. The former exposes an individual's connections to the social structure and in this dimension, commitment deals with the number of persons. In other words, "The greater the number of persons to whom one is connected through having a particular identity, the greater is the commitment to that identity" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 47). The latter one, namely the qualitative or affective dimension of commitment, reflects that the stronger or deeper the connections to others, the higher the commitment to that identity. In other words, the greater the commitment to an identity, the higher the identity in the salience hierarchy, as proposed by Stryker (1980; 2002). As far as *qualitative* or *affective* aspects of commitments are concerned, conceptualization of the self, in some way or another, can be said to have been related to social structure. Stryker's conceptualization reveals that individuals lead their lives in a network of social organization. Therefore, the commitment is completely related to the identities which are invoked in a situation. For instance, regarding the qualitative or affective commitment of Mrs. Herriton, it is noticeable that the stronger and the deeper the connections with her daughter Harriet and her son Philip on mother identity, the higher the commitment she makes. She makes every endeavour to meet the demands of her family with the standards of Edwardian period. Furthermore, the quantitative and/or interactional aspects of Mrs. Herritons' commitment to her motherhood identity is related to the number of persons with whom she is getting in touch. Mrs. Herriton, represented as the matriarchal stereotype of Edwardian culture, has strong connections with her children, her daughter-in-law and the people around her including the servants. Lilia, as an unwelcome person in the Herriton family both at the very beginning of her marriage and after the death of her husband, also obeys what her mother-in-law tells her to do. For instance, on hearing that Lilia "like[d] a Mr. Kingcroft extremely" (Forster, 1905, p. 4), Mrs. Herriton decisively makes a statement which shows her authority and power: "Lilia must either be engaged or not, since no intermediate state existed" (Forster, 1905, p. 5). Then, Lilia obeys her mother-in-law, and immediately leaves "Mr. Kingcroft without even the pressure of a rescue-party" (Forster, 1905, p. 5).

As the analysis on identity above suggests, Sheldon Stryker's theoretical background commonly focuses on the hierarchical structures and how identities are connected to social structure. Unlike Stryker's analysis, Burke (1980) and, Reitzes and Burke (1980) focus on a common system of meaning which is connected through identity and behavior. In trying to understand an individual's behavior, one may recognize the meaning first that the behavior suggests that is held in one's identity. Meaning is critical and essential for the individuals to understand an identity. For instance, in the novel, Gino as a young and unemployed Italian is devoid of having the characteristics of being a husband in a general perspective. If Gino had had a husband identity that includes being a "man" rather than spending "whole days in the loggia leaning over the parapet" (Forster, 1905, p. 28), Lilia would not have shouted at him; "Look what I am giving up to live with you!" (Forster, 1905, p. 27). Being a husband means that, for Lilia, Gino would have gone and worked for his household in order to meet the demands of his family, and eventually become familiar with his responsibilities, and lastly struggled to make his family a contented one. However, Gino has shown his masculinity over his wife in all respects by continually reminding her of that he is her



husband. The meaning of Gino's identity is completely related to his behavior as his behavior to his wife confirms the meanings in his identity. In the course of his marriage, Gino is unable to assume a husband identity, which is in accordance with the expected roles of a man in the society.

5. Conclusion

The characters in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* are presented with their own individualistic and distinctive qualities in conformity with the mores of the Edwardian Period. Unquestionably, Forster places great significance on the identity formation process of his characters, particularly by employing fictional characters whose emotions, notions and thoughts are similar to those of real human beings. Besides, he attempts to unveil the intrigues, hypocrisies and agonies of the characters either implicitly or explicitly. He also creates his characters whose psychological insights are also similar to those of the common man and woman. Thus, it becomes proper to analyse the identity of the characters through the lenses of mimetic theory. In a similar vein, Forster creates his characters deeply whose psychological weaknesses and strengths are exposed in settings where cultural codes and societal norms of the Edwardian period are knitted wisely. So, this study uses both identity and social identity criticism to expose the identity of the characters in the novel.

This study concludes that the characters in the novel typically adopt role identities which are in conformity with societal norms and cultural codes of the Edwardian period. However, as far as identity and social identity criticisms are concerned, they adopt their role identities by taking into account the most advantageous ones in the salience hierarchy. Besides, they commonly display conventional and idiosyncratic dimensions of their own identities. In this study, it is also found that the characters form their identities by considering the pros and cons of the role identities they adopt. They exhibit their role identities with regard to the support they received from the others in the society. Accordingly, after they receive support, they make commitments to that role identity. Unless they receive any support, they make no commitments as in the case of Lilia. Additionally, it is explored that the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards play significant roles in reshaping the identity of the characters in general. As a last remark, the characters generate their role identities by taking into account prominence hierarchy. In other words, the more the characters receive self-support and support from the others for an identity they claim among many other role identities, the higher that identity is placed in the prominence hierarchy.

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