

THE INFLUENCE OF FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY
ON E.M. FORSTER AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

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ABSTRACT

Dostoevsky's novels intrigued many English novelists when Constance Garnett's translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* introduced him to English readers in 1912. Both Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster wrote critically about Dostoevsky's works and published major novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *A Passage to India* (1924), in the wake of the "Dostoevsky cult." This study examines the influence of Dostoevsky's fiction on Forster's and Woolf's novels and suggests that both works are influenced by Dostoevsky in their depictions of character and their expression of a spiritual message.

Forster's *A Passage to India* has distinct parallels to Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, especially in its expressions of collective guilt and its emphasis on the oneness of all beings, and this study argues that Forster's novel seeks to delineate a new form for the novel, one that emphasizes oral tradition and communal existence over the novel's traditional emphasis on individuality. *A Passage to India* is Forster's own attempt to write a "prophetic novel," a form he associated with Dostoevsky and envisioned as capable of conveying the spiritual message of interconnectedness.

Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* also draws from Dostoevsky to create a concept of the self or character which is permeable to the surrounding environment and to other characters in the novel, and her work uses structures that are integral to Dostoevsky's fiction, such as double characters and the sacrificial narrative, to communicate her message about insanity, society, and spirituality.