

E. M. FORSTER: A TECHNICAL ANALYSIS
OF THE NOVELS

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PREFACE

In dealing with E. M. Forster, most critics take a thematic or interpretive approach. This study focuses on Forster's technique in fiction and the relationship between technique and interpretation in his work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Even though E. M. Forster's last novel appeared in 1924, he is the dean of Britain's living novelists. His technique for constructing a novel can be analyzed into three parts, and in this study I explicate these three aspects of his technique. Together the parts interlace and weave the fabric of Forster's artistic statement, but they are discernible entities in his construction of a novel. Forster's method begins with polarized opposites, opposites that are submerged but felt. Using characterization, he formulates a synthesis of these opposites. Forster then uses author comment to make a general, philosophical statement about the original polarized opposites and the synthesis of these opposites which his protagonist has created.

A detailed examination of two novels--A Room With A View, representing Forster's early writing, and Howards End, representing Forster's mature achievement in fiction¹--shows that Forster employed the same technique in writing his fiction from his first attempts through his mature achievement. The protagonists, Lucy Honeychurch in A Room With A View and Margaret Schlegel in Howards End, in each work have the task of creatively synthesizing the opposites of their fictional world. In each novel, also, Forster steps in as author commentator, directly addresses his reader, and relates the accomplished synthesis to the original opposites on which he based the novel.

Forster is fond of opposites, and he bases every novel on opposites of some kind. Family groupings and geographical locations represent a whole way of life that a part of society follows. In A Room With A View the Honeychurch and Vyse families are as opposite as conventional Sawston and romantic Florence. In Howards End the Schlegel and Wilcox families are as contrary as "Satanic London"² and the rural farm called Howards End. In both instances the family names and the geographic locations are symbols for whole systems of thought concerning Edwardian England.³ Behind the family names of the polarized opposites, Forster is free, and feels the obligation, to make his work comment on politics, religion, imperialism, and the personal relationships among individual members of his society.⁴

No one argues that these opposites would hold interest in themselves. In Forster's own comments on literature, mainly the Clark Lectures, collected in Aspects of the Novel, he gives some hint of his views of the internal workings of the novel. His comments on characters in the novel are especially interesting. He says that fiction has two component elements, ". . . human individuals . . . and the element vaguely called art." (AN, p. 92) He does not develop the statement or define his terms precisely enough for them to be useful in examining a work of fiction (he had no desire to start a 'school' of critical thought),⁵ but Forster's comment does show the heavy responsibility his characters bear for making a novel successful. I contend that Forster submerges his polarized opposites and on that base uses characterization to create a synthesis that rests on the polarized viewpoints. In each of the five novels the protagonist, through a process of events tied to increasing perception, arrives at an awareness denied to the people in

the family groupings which stand for the polarized opposites. Lucy Honeychurch and Margaret Schlegel both experience this synthesis.⁶ The use of character evolution to accomplish a synthesis of the opposites is the second step in Forster's technique of fiction.

His third step is direct author comment. Author comment means that Forster addresses his audience, pointedly attempting to influence its attitude toward a situation. Even though Forster uses the omniscient point of view, the reader might question this characteristic of his technique in an artistic literary work. Some critics, like J. W. Beach and Percy Lubbock, feel that direct address lowers the literary level of the entire accomplishment.⁷ Some feel that direct address shifts the aesthetic distance between the reading audience and the literary work.⁸ Some critics hold that Forster's direct author comment definitely damages his artistic achievement, but most do not comment on this technique in Forster.

But Forster uses author comment in a unique way. He rarely switches from the omniscient point of view to the first person to address his reader. He does not break the structure of a paragraph to include it. He does not cast author comment in the idiom of stream of consciousness writing, leaving phrases or whole passages deliberately vague and hoping the style will cause the reader to assign the comment to the immediate situation or to a character, thereby excusing him for its being there. He uses author comment to relate the situation to the submerged but ever-present polarized opposites, on which the book is based. I maintain that author comment is simply the third aspect of Forster's technique in fiction, that since it relates to the original opposites of the work it is inherent to the work, and that since it does

not violate the third-person narrative of the work it is artistically valid and a decided asset in Forster's technique of fiction.

Because the topic of this study is Forster's technique, the paper's focus will be expository rather than interpretative, but interpretation invariably moves to a discussion of technique. The paper differs from most critics since they have focused on Forster's thematic concern or on interpretative studies of his work. However, their work has relevance even to a discussion of Forster's technique.

Lionel Trilling's critical biography E. M. Forster (1944) was the first book-length study of Forster by an American critic. Trilling agrees that Forster is fond of the dialectical method, and he points out that Forster's plots move by opposites. Trilling maintains that this "dialectical growth" (p. 51) is a product of Forster's allegiance to the liberal tradition while being at war with the liberal imagination. Forster subscribes to ". . . that loose body of middle class opinion which includes such ideas as progress, collectivism, and humanitarianism." (p. 13) However, Forster is against liberalism's insistence on the ideal. Trilling points out that Forster sees the work of the liberal imagination continually having to be redone because disillusionment has caused its projects to be abandoned.

The liberal mind is sure that the order of human affairs owes it a single logic: good is good and bad is bad . . . but the mood that is the response to good-and-evil it has not named and cannot understand. Before the idea of good-and-evil its imagination fails; it cannot accept this improbable paradox. . .

But we of the liberal tradition have always liked to play the old intellectual game of antagonistic

principles. It is an attractive game because it gives us the sensation of thinking, and its first rule is that if one of two opposed principles is wrong, the other is necessarily right. Forster will not play this game; or rather he plays it only to mock it. (p. 15)

Trilling, then, maintains that Forster, in a tone of teasing mockery, chooses two opposed principles which will appear as the black and white sides of human nature. Forster's readers who are also followers of the liberal tradition will feel comfortably in harmony with the plot at the onset, at the stage where opposites are most readily apparent. But Forster begins his "infinite modulation" (p. 45), quickly begins to give the somewhat startled reader little pushes that throw him off his comfortable mental division of the original opposites, and at last ends up outwitting and tricking the reader. Trilling says that the readers find this an uncomfortable feeling to deal with while they are reading Forster, and that its basis is his war with the liberal imagination.

In addition to stating that the plots of the novels move by this dialectical growth between polarized opposites, Trilling takes note of Forster's use of author comment. He writes, ". . . by means of the author's pronouncements . . . they (the novels) never hesitate to formulate and comment." (p. 51) Therefore, Trilling's book agrees with this study's basis premise that Forster's technique is based on opposites. He, too, notices the opposites in Forster, the "infinite modulation" which Forster has so skillfully mastered, and the use of author comment in Forster's novels. Forster's technique, however, is not the focus of Trilling's study, and he does not use the opposites, character development, or Forster's use of author comment as the basis for his study.

In his book The Quest for Certitude in E. M. Forster's Fiction

(1965), David Susterman focuses on the theme of resolution in Forster's fiction. Taking Forster's statement that a "work of art is the only object 'in this material universe to possess internal order,'" Susterman finds it strange that Forster's novels do not present harmonious pictures of human action. Susterman believes that dichotomy within Forster--the wish to be an artist and interpret society juxtaposed against the desire to be a part of society--produces a need for resolution within Forster himself. This need for resolution is the theme for all the novels to Howards End in which Forster works out most completely a harmonizing synthesis. Forster does believe that works of art present examples of internal order amidst a chaotic universe. Susterman is guilty of taking Forster's statement of order within the artistic expression and changing the meaning of order to suit his own purposes. Such misrepresentation naturally renders invalid his evaluation of Forster's work and leads him to miss the connection between Forster's own dichotomy and the dialectical method he chooses to express that dichotomy--all harmoniously within the rules of the universe each novel creates.

The pamphlet, E. M. Forster (1964), was written by Rex Warner for the British Council's "Writers and Their Works" series. Although his is a short, introductory study, Warner does point out that Forster's plots move by the struggle between opposite forces. Another pamphlet study, The Art of E. M. Forster (1959) by H. J. Oliver, is a thematic examination of Forster's stories and novels. Oliver points out that Forster's main concern throughout his fiction is personal relationships.

In his critical study The Novels of E. M. Forster (1957), James McConkey notices the duality in the picture of the world which Forster

presents in his fiction. Rather than concentrating on analysis by literary terminology, McConkey uses the characteristics of the novel Forster set up in Aspects of the Novel for his analytical terminology. McConkey's book is interesting, but suffers in precision because it relies too heavily on Forster's own ambiguous terms for literary criticism.

In his E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism (1962), Frederick C. Crews traces the development of Forster's attitudes

as a humanist--as a man who places his faith in this world and who takes the human norm as the measure of everything. In theory Forster remains loyal to this position throughout his career, but as a novelist he finds himself drawn more and more to its negative side. (p. 6)

Thus Crews accounts for Forster's use of a dialectic method. Crews' study is oriented toward Forster's thought, his thematic concern, and the more explicit development of those thoughts later in Forster's published essays. Crews writes of Forster's "double vision," the realization of the enormous moral complexity of the world. Crews maintains that Forster handles his material by a dialectical struggle, and that Forster's comic manner is especially welcome to counterbalance his tendency toward allegory. In a passing reference Crews describes Forster's author comment as "a wink and nudge at the reader," but neither author comment or technique is ever the primary focus of Crews' study.

In The Achievement of E. M. Forster (1962), J. B. Beer sees Forster as a combination of conflicting personality traits, all of which are reflected in his work. Beer writes of the amenable traits of "comedy and moral seriousness . . . an acceptable mixture, with an honorable ancestry in English satire . . ." (p. 16) Beer goes ahead to note how

Forster's attitude towards moral seriousness and spontaneous passion is reflected in his work. "Forster finds himself at times confronted by the problem in its central form--the puzzling relationship between the inward imagination and the outer world of sense-perception." (p. 27)

The dichotomy in his thought toward life forces Forster to ". . . search for a pattern where the two forms of realism will interlock, where symbolism and plot will be perfectly reconciled It shows that uneasiness at some points is due to a jarring between symbolism and plot." (p. 29) Beer then sees a philosophical orientation producing antagonistic impulses within Forster and these impulses being reflected in plot and symbolism, or in the fabric of Forster's work.

In Art and Order: A Study of E. M. Forster (1962), Alan Wilde says that Forster uses ". . . symbols which act as polarities of belief. . ." and that all the books work by a dialectic. However, since he sees the novels as progressively more pessimistic, Wilde sees the dialectic as destructive philosophically.

All impulses in Forster's books generate, by what seems a law of cause and effect, their opposites: so hope breeds despair, and assurance, doubt, and the movement toward the personal entails retreat into the private. (p. 12)

Wilde does not concern himself with Forster's technique. He notices the use of symbolism in the fabric of the prose but he does not comment on it as a technique, neither does he pay particular attention to Forster's use of author comment.

Wilfred Stone, in The Cave and The Mountain, A Study of E. M. Forster (1964), points out the 'dialectic' in Forster's technique of fiction. He traces the dualism of Forster's fiction to the influences

of society, and he goes ahead to discuss three personal concerns which were uppermost in Forster's mind and which influence the divisions of Forster's novels. Forster asks himself how he should behave toward first, the people he knows; second, toward the people he doesn't know personally (government, society); and third, the Unknowable. (p. 59) Stone's book is therefore a conceptual analysis and deals with the influence of Forster's interest on the divisions into which he divides his novels. Stone writes,

This trinity is the basic structure of his (Forster's) thought and art: its elements must work together--and toward harmony. Whenever Forster gives us a novel divided into threes he is striving for that result. (p. 59)

Stone, therefore, does recognize Forster's use of the dialectic and the function of characterization, but he makes no reference in his work to Forster's use of author comment.

The salient fact to be gleaned from these critics is that they notice Forster's dialectic method, a method based on polarized opposites. Wilde notices Forster's use of author comment in the light of the universal; but none of them, since technique is not their primary topic, discusses the dialectical movement of plot, characterization, and author comment in Forster's work.

It would be dangerous to continue further without examining Forster's writings in literary theory and literary criticism. The very fact, however, that I could work out a three-part approach to Forster's work and then draw support for that method from Forster's own critical statements I believe gives the approach a special validity.⁹ But the

study must be based securely on Forster's own theories of fiction to have the inherent relevance to his work that I claim for it. In his study Aspects of the Novel,¹⁰ Forster makes his most extensive statement on the theory of fiction.

As with most novelists, Forster's work represents a statement, a fictional treatment of his particular viewpoint on life. His comments reveal a dichotomy which leads to the dialectic structure of his fiction. He writes, ". . . daily life, whatever it may be really, is practically composed of two lives--the life in time and the life by values--and our conduct reveals a double allegiance." (AN, p. 36)

Lionel Trilling notices Forster's use of opposites in his study. He maintains that Forster writes in the great Fielding, Dickens, Meredith, and James tradition of comedy, and that this literary tradition works best when the characters can be seen in stark outlines.¹¹

Trilling writes,

Forster's plots are always sharp and definite, for he expresses differences by means of struggle. . . . Across each of the novels runs a barricade; the opposed forces on each side are Good and Evil in the forms of Life and Death, Light and Darkness, Fertility and Sterility, Courage and Respectability, Intelligence and Stupidity--all the great absolutes that are so dull when discussed in themselves. The comic manner, however, will not tolerate absolutes. . . . The plot suggests eternal division, the manner reconciliation; the plot speaks of clear certainties, the manner resolutely insists that nothing can be quite so simple. (p. 13)

This study proposes that Forster uses the "eternal division" as the base for his three-part technique of fiction. The three parts--the submerged but implicitly evident opposites, the reconciliation of the opposites through character evolution, and direct author comment in light of

a universal truth which relates the emerging synthesis to the original polarized opposites--form Forster's technique in writing fiction.

Forster divides fiction into two component elements, ". . . human individuals . . . and the element vaguely called art." (AN, p. 92) To be sure the division is a rather distressing one, but it does have the distinct advantage of showing the heavy role Forster assigns to characterization in the novel. Forster's theory of flat and round characters has become famous.¹² The flat characters are those whose roles never change or expand during the progress of the novel. The example Forster gives of a flat character is Mrs. Micawber in David Copperfield. "The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as 'I will never desert Mr. Micawber.' there is Mrs. Micawber--she says she won't desert Mr. Micawber; she doesn't and there she is." (AN, p. 75) Forster says that the flat character is useful to the author because it can be pushed about like an unchanging disk. It never needs reintroduction, it can function adequately in its careful little realm, and it provides a useful contrast to the more complex characters necessary in novels. Since some people in life are more fully understood than others, Forster believes that "the outcome of their collisions [flat and round characters] parallels life." (AN, p. 78) Forster defines the fuller, round characters as those "capable of surprising in a convincing way." (AN, p. 85) He says that unlike people in life characters in a novel can be completely understood, the author is free to reveal their hidden life at its source (AN, p. 53), and the constant sensitiveness of characters towards each other within a novel has no parallel in daily life. (AN, p. 62) These privileges put the author under the obligation of knowing his characters thoroughly before presenting them, because,

for Forster, a character will seem real to the reader only when the novelist knows everything about that character. (AN, p. 70) Forster writes,

It (the round character) has the incalculability of life about it--life within the pages of a book. And by using it sometimes alone, more often in combination with the other kind (the flat character), the novelist achieves his task of acclimatization, and harmonizes the human race with the aspects of his work. (AN, p. 85)

The round character, for all its full-blown proportions and psychological depth, must be seen in relation to other characters to be appreciated. The flat character, then, is a significant force in heightening the contrast between complex and less well-developed characters. Not only must characters illustrate contrasts if the novel is to parallel life, but these relationships, as in life, must be seen in the unstatic state of constant flux. Forster says all our experiences teach that

. . . no human relationship is constant, it is as unstable as the living beings who compose it, and they must balance like jugglers if it is to remain; if it is constant it is no longer a relationship but a social habit (AN, p. 62)

Therefore, once Forster has laid his opposites, the main burden of reconciling the opposites falls on characterization in the novel. He further maintains that the novel is to parallel life within its own framework or premises, and that the novelist cannot hope to successfully present a character without knowing that character fully. The author, however, does have some very special inroads to use as ways to fulfill his obligation to character. He first is free to choose the premises on which his novel will operate; he can know his characters without a

single reservation; and he is free to use his own attitudes among the characters in their constant relationships with each other.

Besides character, Forster comments on "pattern" in the novel. He writes:

. . . I will give two examples of books with patterns so definite that a pictorial image sums them up; a book the shape of an hour-glass and a book the shape of a grand chain in that old-time dance, the Lancers. (AN, p. 151)

For his discussion of a book in the shape of an hourglass, Forster chooses Henry James's The Ambassadors, with its carefully worked out character exchange between Chad Newsome and Strether. First, Forster sees the almost fearful awe with which Strether approaches Paris, where Chad has learned to assert himself and be an independent person.

Strether is attracted to Paris, it begins working its magic on him, and a Paris is eventually revealed to him which Chad and his sophisticated putain, Mme de Vionnet, do not know. Forster writes that Strether's

imagination has more spiritual value than their youth. The pattern of the hour-glass is complete; he (Strether) and Chad have changed places (AN, p. 161)

For his discussion of the chain image, Forster chooses Roman Pictures by Percy Lubbock. In this novel the narrator, while traveling in Rome, meets Deering, "a kindly and shoddy friend of his." (AN, p. 153) Deering turns the narrator's head away from the city's tourist attractions to the delights of society.

. . . one person hands him (the narrator) on to another; cafe, studio, Vatican and Quirinal purlieus are all reached, until finally, at the extreme end of his career he thinks, in a most aristocratic and dilapidated palazzo, whom should he meet but the

second-rate Deering; Deering is his hostess's nephew, but had concealed it owing to some backfire of snobbery. The circle is complete, the original partners have rejoined, and greet one another with mutual confusion which turns to mild laughter. (AN, p. 153)

The hourglass and the chain, then, are two of the patterns which Forster sees in the novel. Forster writes that ". . . the pattern appeals to our aesthetic sense, it causes us to see the book as a whole." (AN, p. 152)

After defining pattern and carefully working out examples of two types of pattern, Forster evaluates the technique and finds it a basically damaging one to the works which adhere too closely to pattern.¹³

He writes,

It (pattern) may externalize the atmosphere, spring naturally from the plot, but it shuts the doors on life and leaves the novelist doing exercises, generally in the drawing-room. (AN, p. 165)

We must be aware that both the examples Forster gives of pattern he illustrates through the function of character. When I discuss the character evolution of Lucy Honeychurch and Margaret Schlegel, I am delineating what Forster would term "pattern," but for purposes of more specific terminology, I call the movement of these two characters through the novels character evolution. The movements of the characters through different situations do spring naturally from and are one with the plot. Lucy Honeychurch's frustration that threatens a total withdrawal grows from her indecision concerning the situations other characters cause. Margaret Schlegel's regard for Mr. Wilcox grows from their meetings together as the plot progresses. And the characters externalize the novel's atmosphere by living in that atmosphere in the reader's mind.

Lucy's impetuosity prepares the reader for her decisive decision to marry George Emerson, and Margaret's decision to marry Mr. Wilcox is consistent with their deepening relationship. I, therefore, maintain that Forster's term "pattern" is like characterization and that I do not misuse the term when I call it character evolution.

Whether his topic be pattern or some other aspect of fiction, it is his abhorrence of artificiality, this "doing exercises in the drawing-room," that attracts Forster in his fiction to a looser structure, a structure that can be divided into a foundation of opposites, character evolution, and author comment. But the structure of opposites and the stability which such a structure gives form the foundation of Forster's technique and enable him to avoid the constricting influence of following pattern slavishly.

After Forster establishes the polarized opposites and has gone through the creative process of characterization, the groundwork for author comment has been carefully prepared and represents the third aspect of Forster's technique of fiction. For Forster, editorial comment is the element which combines and extends the opposites and character evolution in the novel.

Forster considers the author's role in Aspects of the Novel when he discusses point of view. He maintains that method in the novel should not depend inordinately on point of view, rather on the author's ability to present his material convincingly; ". . . the power of the writer to bounce the reader into accepting what he says." (AN, p. 86) The question of the novelist's use of point of view is not refinement in technique but the vitality of the prose in which the novelist presents his work and the ability he has to evoke from the reader a realistic

response to his work. Forster maintains that since point of view is one of the literary provinces peculiar to the novel¹⁴ critics and theorists have blown point of view into a position out of its importance to the novel.

Zealous for the novel's eminence they (the critics) are a little too apt to look for problems that shall be peculiar to it . . . they feel it ought to have its own technical troubles before it can be accepted as an independent art; and since the problem of point of view certainly is peculiar to the novel they have overstressed it. (p. 87)

Forster, having adopted the omniscient point of view as especially fruitful for writers in the comic tradition, defends a shifting point of view. He says that both Tolstoy and Dickens profitably employed a shifting point of view in their novels, and not only is it acceptable to fiction, but it parallels events in life and is one of the major advantages of the novel form.

Indeed this power to expand and contract perception (of which the shifting point of view is symptom), this right to intermittent knowledge--I find it one of the great advantages of the novel-form, and it has a parallel in our perception of life. We are stupider at some times than others; we can enter into people's minds occasionally but not always, because our own minds get tired; and this intermittence lends in the long run variety and colour to the experiences we receive. (p. 88)

Forster expands his discussion of point of view and shifting perception into the question "may the writer take the reader into his confidence?" (AN, p. 88) He gives the question two answers. Forster believes that the author should not take the audience into his confidence, or comment directly, on character because it reduces the level of the novel to "bar-parlour chattiness," (AN, p. 89) and the dignity of the whole work

suffers. "Intimacy is gained but at the expense of illusion and nobility." (AN, p. 89) This reservation towards author comment with reference to character is directly related to Forster's comments on character: that a character will only be successful in a novel after the novelist thoroughly knows the character and that the novelist has the option in fiction to show the sides of his character he wishes the audience to know. Besides being an admission of defeat in characterization to comment directly on a character, Forster sees author comment on character as a drop in the tone of the fiction the author is presenting. He writes that it ". . . generally leads to a drop in the temperature, the intellectual and emotional laxity, and worse still to facetiousness . . ."¹⁵

However, on the subject of direct author comment in relation to the view of life the novel is presenting, Forster states that author comment is quite in order.

To take your reader into your confidence about the universe is a different thing. It is not dangerous for a novelist to draw back from his characters . . . and to generalize about the conditions under which he thinks life is carried on. (p. 89)

Therefore Forster does see author comment in the realm of philosophic comment as an asset to technique in fiction.¹⁶ To comment in general, to see his situations and characters in the light of a universal, is not a dangerous practice for an author to follow. This paper will illustrate below that in the practice of his craft Forster makes author comment the third aspect of his technique in fiction.

There are other elements--fantasy, prophecy, and rhythm--which Forster discusses. Fantasy deals with the element of the supernatural

in fiction but it need not be directly expressed. (AN, p. 117) Forster discusses prophecy in terms of the author's tone of voice. Prophecy deals with a kind of electric spark in particular passages that prove to be jewel-like touchstones to a work of fiction. He too says that prophecy is a song, the orchestrations of the author's consciousness floating above and passing through the literal level of his material. (AN, p. 141) Forster sees rhythm of two kinds in the novel. The most obvious type which is overt and can be illustrated by examples is the "repetition plus variation." (AN, p. 169) For his example Forster chooses "the 'little phrase' in the music of Vinteuil" which Proust has used in A la recherche de temps perdu. (AN, p. 166) Forster sees this first type of rhythm as a unique coming and going, ". . . not to be there all the time like a pattern, but its lovely waxing and waning to fill us with surprise and freshness and hope." (AN, p. 168) The second type of rhythm Forster discusses might be called the impact or total impression a work of art leaves on its audience. Forster cites only Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Tolstoy's War and Peace as possible examples. Of the Fifth Symphony he writes,

The opening movement, the andante, and the trio-scherzo-trio-finale-trio-finale that composes the third block, all enter the mind at once, and extend one another into a common entity When the symphony is over we feel that the notes and tunes composing it have been liberated, they have found in the rhythm of the whole their individual freedom. (p. 169)

Extending the explanation to War and Peace:

. . . as we read it, do not great chords begin to sound behind us, and when we have finished does not every item--even the catalogue of strategies--lead a larger existence than was possible at the time? (p. 170)

This enlarged existence, an existence which has germinated in the mind of the work's audience from the fecund seeds and skillful handling of the original material, is Forster's definition of a second type of rhythm in the novel.

In the light of Forster's own comments on the theory of fiction, then, the three-part examination is valid. He places the main responsibility for the success of a novel on characterization; he strongly advocates the genius touches of fantasy, prophecy, and rhythm, and justifies the author's generalization "about the conditions under which he thinks life is carried on." I will illustrate how Forster sets a foundation for his fiction by choosing polarized opposites, how on that foundation he uses characterization to form a synthesis of the opposites, and how Forster steps in as commentator to generalize about life with reference to the original pair of opposites on which he began the structure of the novel. This three-part structure is the subject of this study on E. M. Forster's technique in fiction.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Cf. Lionel Trilling, E. M. Forster (Norfolk, Conn., 1944), p. 114: ". . . Howards End is undoubtedly Forster's masterpiece; it develops to their full the themes and attitudes of the early books and throws back upon them a new and enhancing light. It justifies these attitudes by connecting them with a more mature sense of responsibility."

²E. M. Forster, Howards End (Hammondsworth, 1963), p. 192. Hereafter cited as HE in the text.

³Cf. Frederick C. Crews, E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism (Princeton, 1962), p. 3: "Forster is . . . an Edwardian in point of time and he is equally so in spirit. His outlook on the world and his literary manner were already thoroughly developed in that epoch and have passed through the subsequent years of turbulence and cataclysm with remarkably little modification."

⁴Ibid., p. 5: "Forster's persistent 'moral' is that the life of affectionate personal relations, disengaged from political and religious zeal by means of a tolerant eclecticism, is supremely valuable."

⁵Cf. E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Hammondsworth, 1962), p. 16: "This idea of a period of a development in time, with its consequent emphasis on influences and schools, happens to be exactly what I am hoping to avoid. . . ." Hereafter cited as AN in the text.

⁶I use character evolution as a technical literary term in this paper. By it I mean growing awareness or growing perception on the part of the protagonist. Lucy Honeychurch is only subconsciously drawn to the Emerson point of view in the beginning of A Room With A View. By the novel's end she is fully aware of the optimism and honesty and is beginning to incorporate that viewpoint into her own attitude toward life. Margaret Schlegel only dimly understands the world outside Wickham Place, but she comes to know what the world of "telegrams and anger" is made of. Both characters are examples of character evolution.

⁷Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel (New York, 1932) 1932), p. 195.

⁸Cf. Trilling, p. 10: ". . . Forster uses the novel as a form amenable to the most arbitrary manipulation."

⁹David Susterman, The Quest for Certitude in E. M. Forster's Fiction (Bloomington, Indiana, 1965), p. 5: Susterman believes that Forster's own development as a literary figure followed this same direction. The creative expression in fiction during his early years resulted in Forster's critical comments on literature and the work of other authors during his mature years. Susterman asks, ". . . one ponders . . . whether the creative literature of youth was not necessary to open out the reflective literature of the older man." Susterman goes ahead to assert that the creative work did lead to "self-discovery" and "self-formulation" in Forster's theoretical statements and his appraisal of different works of literature.

¹⁰Cf. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 31: Forster refuses to be tied to what we would call a detailed, systematic approach to literature. He writes, ". . . I have chosen the title 'Aspects' because it is unscientific and vague, because it leaves us the maximum of freedom, because it means both the different ways we can look at a novel and the different ways a novelist can look at his work."

¹¹Trilling, p. 8.

¹²Cf. James McConkey, The Novels of E. M. Forster (Ithaca, 1957), p. 17: Both McConkey and Trilling agree that Forster's division does not even describe his own best characters, never to mention characterization throughout literature. Trilling says that Ansell in The Longest Journey has character dimensions that Forster does not mention in either the flat or round characters. McConkey sees Ansell, Mrs. Moore, and Ruth Wilcox as similar characters who do not fit into Forster's definition of characterization. McConkey writes,

None of these characters (Mrs. Wilcox et al) can be placed with any measure of success in a dimensional category; rather the impression given by all three is one imposed in terms of the particular values they possess--values which relate, in one way or another, to those held by their author.

¹³Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 161: Forster's evaluation of pattern in The Ambassadors is:

The beauty that suffuses The Ambassadors is the reward due to a fine artist for hard work
But at what sacrifice!

So enormous is the sacrifice that many readers cannot get interested in James, although they can follow what he says . . . and can appreciate his effects.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁵Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 92: Forster does give himself the leeway of part or all of a character's psyche at different times during the development of the novel. He holds that the author

. . . commands all the secret life, and he must not be robbed of its privilege. . . 'How did the writer know that?' it is sometimes said. . . 'What's his stand-point? He is not being consistent, he's shifting his point of view from the limited to the omniscient, and now he's edging back again.' Questions like these have too much the atmosphere of the law courts about them. All that matters to the reader is whether the shifting of attitude and the secret life (of the character) are convincing . . ."

¹⁶George H. Thompson, "Symbolism in E. M. Forster's Early Fiction," Criticism, III (1961), p. 304: Thompson terms the moment of heightened tension the fusion of Forster (the creator) with his creation. He writes,

. . . the reader, along with the creator, experiences . . . oneness with the world he contemplates, and an accompanying release into freedom. . . There is incalculable power here. It gives to the moment a feeling of absolute . . . pluteness; a quality of myth. (p. 317)

CHAPTER II

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

Forster's three-part technique in fiction--the polarized opposites, the working of pattern and characterization between the opposites, and the direct voice of author comment--is apparent in his early novel A Room With A View. Also, among Forster's novels A Room With A View occupies a unique position. Forster first started writing this novel in 1903. It is the first novel he undertook after the short stories; therefore, it exemplifies the techniques of Forster's earliest attempts at fiction. However, Forster did not finish A Room With A View until 1908, only two years before the appearance of Howards End. The novel then is a complete example of Forster's early work; it encompasses the short stories and the novels up to the maturity of Howards End and A Passage to India. A discussion of it will by implication serve for a discussion of the early fiction.¹ In A Room With A View rural Sawston is geographically polarized to cosmopolitan Florence; and the pedantic Cecil Vyse is opposite in character to George Emerson.² The character metamorphosis of Lucy Honeychurch from a timid, conventional girl to a responsible, creative adult provides the most obvious example of character evolution between the polarized opposites. And Forster's editorial comment is the witty, objective capstone to the fictional world he is manipulating in A Room With A View.

Sawston is the epitome of rural English provincialism. The town's

resident lord is Sir Harry Otway and, like the people he represents in Parliament, he is benignly dull, affluent, and politically Radical. The people living in Sawston loathe Suburbia and find a communal delight in the fact that their pine woods partially block the fog that periodically drifts from London's direction. Florence, on the other hand, symbolizes robust living under the open sun. The town's lord is felt through the countless imprints of the Medici.³ The citizens of Florence accept the fame of their city lightly and noisily fish in the Arno or pester the English tourists to buy souvenirs. Purpose in life to these Italians is food, giving birth to children, and enjoying the ribald companionship of other Italian working people. They know little of Radical politics, of living the kind of life that would please visitors to their famous city, or of excluding sections of their own society because "they wouldn't do." The English visitors to Florence, of course, are guided by all these petty and restricting thoughts. Therefore, the situation is not at all unusual when an English "who has gone to Italy to study the tactile values of Giotto, or the corruption of the Papacy, may return remembering nothing but the blue sky and the men and women who live under it." (ARWAV, p. 31) The geographic opposites then of Sawston and Italy are clearly meant to operate as centers for opposite forces, mainly human forces of personality or character change in the lives of the English people who travel back and forth between Sawston and Florence.⁴

The character arrangement Forster chooses for A Room With A View also reflects the polarized opposites symbolized by Sawston and Florence. The Emerson family is directly opposite the Vyse family. The father and son (the mother is dead) family unit is physically opposite

Mrs. Vyse (the father is never mentioned) and her Gothic-statue son Cecil. Cecil is prim, pedantic, condescending. Forster comments on him, "A Gothic statue implies celibacy, just as a Greek statue implies fruition" (ARWAV, p. 136). George Emerson does imply fruition; his personality is expansive and encompassing. Lucy's spinster cousin Charlotte is shocked ". . . when he (George) . . . argued that liking one person is an extra reason for liking another." (ARWAV, p. 119) When George mentions kindness and Lucy responds tritely that she hopes "everyone tries" to be kind, George replies that everyone does try

Because we think it improves our characters.
But he (Mr. Emerson) is kind to people because he
loves them; and they find him out, and are offended,
or frightened. (p. 45)

At one point in the book George is with Lucy's brother Freddie, who suggests that they go for an afternoon swim in a nearby pool of water. Forster calls the little pond The Sacred Pool and it functions as a pantheistic shrine where direct contact with or immersion in nature is possible. The pool is only full for a day or two after a big rain, hence its continually fresh yet ephemeral nature. George is at first reluctant to plunge in; the bank gives way beneath him and he is in totally. George and Freddie soon are immersed in the spirit of nature the ephemeral pool holds. Their spirits are so elated that when Lucy, her mother, and Cecil Vyse accidentally pass the pool on an afternoon outing, George stands full in the sun and greets them. "Hullo," he yells. He ". . . regarded himself as dressed" mainly because he was standing full in the sun." (ARWAV, p. 203).

The Gothic Cecil Vyse, however, does not respond to nature; he likes art; he is an effete esthete.⁵ Cecil is restricted, critical.

Tall and refined, with shoulders that seemed braced square by an effort of the will, and a head that was tilted a little higher than the usual level of vision, he resembled those fastidious saints who guard the portals of a French cathedral. Well educated, well endowed, and not deficient physically, he remained in the grip of a certain devil whom the modern world knows as self-consciousness, and whom the medieval, with dimmer vision, worshipped as asceticism. (p. 136)

The reader can never imagine Cecil swimming in a natural pool. Freddie says that Cecil is the type of person who would never wear another fellow's cap and the Reverend Mr. Beebe thinks that Cecil is an ideal bachelor.⁶ Freddie asks him why, and he replies, "Oh, he's like me--better detached." (ARWAV, p. 134) Once while hiking, Cecil suggests to Lucy that they follow a branching footpath that leads through the woods. Lucy instinctively hesitates and Cecil accuses her of feeling most natural with him in a room. He further charges that the room has no view and Lucy, to his chagrin, agrees. To Cecil who knew bookish art and who had fallen in love with Lucy on an Alpine slope with thousands of feet falling into a spectacular view behind her, Lucy's comment is deadly penetrating.⁷ The sitting-room Cecil, then, is Forster's opposite to the natural, open, honest, George Emerson.

Although Mrs. Vyse figures only indirectly in the novel, she is a part of the polarized opposite in the Emerson-Vyse antithesis. Mrs. Vyse and Cecil are part-by-part counterparts to Mr. Emerson and George. Just as Lucy's mental image of Cecil is trapped in a viewless room, her only physical meeting with Mrs. Vyse is in Mrs. Vyse's London flat. Lucy is trying to adjust her psychology to Cecil's London friends, but her mental comments on her experience are as telling as her mental image of Cecil. She is impressed by the "witty weariness" and lack of enthusiasm that the "grandchildren of famous people," Cecil's friends,

exhibit. She found that

One launched into enthusiasms only to collapse gracefully, and pick oneself up amid sympathetic laughter. (p. 187)

Lucy realizes her reaction to the situation without realizing the judgment her response implies against the Vyse household.

In this atmosphere the Pension Bertolini and Windy Corner appeared equally crude, and Lucy saw that her London career would estrange her a little from all that she had loved in the past. (p. 187)

After Mrs. Vyse's dinner party in Lucy's honor, Mrs. Vyse and Cecil discuss the party and Lucy's acceptability to the group of famous grandchildren invited. Forster comments on Mrs. Vyse.

Mrs. Vyse was a nice woman, but her personality, like many another's had been swamped by London. . . . The too vast orb of her fate had crushed her; and . . . even with Cecil she was mechanical, and behaved as if he was not one son, but so to speak, a filial crowd. (p. 188)

Besides addressing Cecil as though he were a filial crowd, she speaks ". . . looking round intelligently at the end of each sentence, and straining her lips apart until she spoke again." (ARWAV, p. 188)

Clearly Forster has created a gargoyle who gave birth to the Gothic Cecil.

Mr. Emerson's fatherly concern over his son George is a contrast drawn from the opposite side of human emotion. The antithesis is clearer when Mr. Emerson's concern for George can be seen against the mother-son relationship of the Vyses. Mr. Emerson is such an honest person he forgets the usual conventionalities the English follow for

separating individual members of society into lonely isolation. He was conversing with Lucy actually for the first time when "In his ordinary voice, so that she scarcely realized he was quoting poetry, he said:

From far . . .
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I. (p. 49)

Mr. Emerson uses the quotation from Carlyle's Sartor Resartus to illustrate his own life to Lucy. Mr. Emerson's philosophy, too, has influenced his son George in such a way that George is continually melancholy and depressed.⁸ Mr. Emerson is asking Lucy to be a companion to his son. He appeals to her without any pretense or reservation whatsoever,

'Then make my boy think like us. Make him realize that by the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes--a transitory Yes if you like, but a Yes.' (p. 49)

Mr. Emerson's probity remains his primary character trait throughout A Room With A View. His character is totally consistent; he is the embodiment of Forster's one-dimensional character.

Toward the book's end Mr. Emerson's honesty is fundamental to the whole scene. Lucy tells Mr. Emerson that she has broken her engagement to Cecil Vyse. Seeing that Lucy has taken this first step toward honestly following her own desires, Mr. Emerson boldly urges her to declare her love for his son George. Mr. Emerson bursts out excitedly,

". . . You love George! . . . I have not time for the tenderness, and the comradeship, and the poetry, and the things that really matter, and for which you marry . . . You can transmute love, ignore it, muddle it, but you can never pull it out of you. I know by experience that the poets are right; love is eternal . . ." (p. 307)

The stark truth, the force Mr. Emerson throws into his truth, makes Lucy cry. Mr. Emerson softens his oration but does not change his meaning:

Dear girl, forgive my prosiness; marry my boy. When I think what life is, and how seldom love is answered by love--marry him; it is one of the moments for which the world was made. (p. 308)

Old Mr. Emerson, who loves both his son George and Lucy, knows the love they have for each other. A lifetime of believing in the transitory "Yes" has made him examine life for an habitually honest point of view. He is dying and does not fear it. He has no personal motive in wishing George and Lucy married other than satisfying his recognition of their affection for each other.

Therefore, the antithesis is built. The flat-locked, insincere Mrs. Vyse, speaking to Cecil through all the appropriate words, but addressing him as though London listened, is the polarized opposite to Mr. Emerson, speaking to Lucy as though she were the only person on earth who had ever fallen in love. Mrs. Vyse's hackneyed phrases are a rude contrast to Mr. Emerson's prose interspersed with poetry. Mrs. Vyse's concern over how Lucy will "do" with their swift London set shows her attitude of false propriety toward Cecil's fiancée. Mr. Emerson's recognition of George and Lucy's mutual affection makes him urge their union for their own fulfillment.

Clearly the wholesome, robust George Emerson and his optimistic, philosophizing father represent a polarized grouping to the painfully masked Mrs. Vyse and her celebic son Cecil.

Lucy Honeychurch is an early example of the character evolution that Forster minutely works out in Howards End's protagonist, Margaret Schlegel. Lucy Honeychurch has grown up in Windy Corner, her mother's house in Sawston. Although Lucy's father died before he had any formative influence on the child, his decision to build Windy Corner in Sawston forms her viewpoint and establishes her value systems toward life. Mrs. Honeychurch, the kindly, humorous, somewhat befuddled matron who symbolizes the values Sawston holds sacrosanct, has reared her daughter Lucy and her son Freddie in an atmosphere of homegrown meals, overstuffed, highly protected velvet furniture, Puritan thrift, Radical politics, and low church irreligiosity. Lucy matures into late adolescence in this atmosphere, accepts it, but feels still unsettled and ill at ease with herself. Therefore, Mrs. Honeychurch decides a trip to Italy will be therapeutic for her daughter.

Forster first introduces his heroine to the reader while she is touring in Florence. Fortunately her dowdy chaperone-cousin, Miss Charlotte Bartlett, has found a friend among the other guests at the Pension Bertolini and Lucy has more freedom from her. In an argument over their rooms without views, Lucy and Charlotte meet Mr. Emerson and his son George who have rooms with views. Mr. Emerson, seeing no need to restrain truth, offers to trade rooms; Charlotte is appropriately affronted, and quickly decides that the Emersons will "not do." But Charlotte does not will Fate, at least when Forster is constructing the plot. Through the intercession of the Rev. Mr. Beebe, Charlotte approves of the room exchange, and she and Lucy trade their viewless rooms for those of the Emersons', which overlook the Arno. Three times in Florence Lucy is involved in scenes with George Emerson. In each,

her attraction toward him grows; in each, the action is successively more overt; and in each, it is apparent that he returns her affection toward him.

To accomplish their first meeting Forster places Lucy alone at the church Santa Croce. The Emersons see her and explain the parts of the building to her that she wishes to know. Mr. Emerson goes to see an acquaintance whom his honesty has offended and George and Lucy are left alone. For the first time Lucy looks at George:

For a young man his face was rugged, and--until the shadows fell upon it--hard. Enshadowed, it sprang into tenderness. She saw him once again at Rome, on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, carrying a burden of acorns. Healthy and muscular, he yet gave her the feeling of greyness, of tragedy that might find solution in the night. The feeling soon passed; it was unlike her to have entertained anything so subtle.
(p. 46)

The effect on Lucy of looking honestly at George is physically appealing and emotionally disturbing. It is significant that "the feeling soon passed"; she shrank in mystified terror from it.⁹ Forster is eager in this particular instance to show Lucy's very strong physical reaction to George. Since she has just arrived in Italy, Forster intends her expansion of vision to symbolize the effect Italy is working on her psyche. Lucy's actions and mannerisms are covert; her Sawston inhibitions are just beginning to crack.

The second meeting between George and Lucy is also accidental. In a fit of revolt against Charlotte and against an Italian rainy morning that has kept her in, Lucy rushes out to buy prints in the late afternoon. Having bought her prints, she lingers in the twilight-darkened Piazza Signoria. As she crosses the piazza, two men who have been

arguing over a cinque lire debt begin hitting each other. One stumbles toward her with blood oozing out the side of his mouth; he falls and dies on the stones just in front of her. George is in the crowd that quickly gathers and Lucy faints into his arms. After she comes to, she and George start walking slowly and from a bridge George tosses her prints into the Arno. Sawston demands an explanation. He tells her that the prints were covered with blood, they frightened him, and clouded his thinking toward the murder they had witnessed in the piazza.¹⁰ George continues, "For something tremendous has happened; I must face it without getting muddled. It isn't exactly that a man has died." (ARWAV, p. 74) Lucy, thinking to shake him out of a brown study she has no experience with or appreciation for, says that exciting incidents happen and then their lives lapse into the old patterns. George replies, "I don't." (ARWAV, p. 76) His honesty unsettles and further upsets Sawston-in-Lucy.

The third meeting between Lucy and George is arranged by the clergy and results in the most licentious of their meetings.¹¹ On an afternoon outing which the Rev. Mr. Egar and the Rev. Mr. Beebe arrange, the group drives to Fiesole, then breaks into clusters of threes and fours to appreciate the view of Florence. Lucy goes looking for Mr. Beebe; the Italian lackey misunderstands her question and directs her toward George. Suddenly, in an earth-caving action similar to George's tumble into the pool, Lucy, white dress akimbo, falls down a violet-covered ravine and onto a terrace where George is alone.

For a moment he contemplated her, as one who had fallen out of heaven. He saw radiant youth in her face, he saw the flowers beat against her dress in blue waves . . . he stepped quickly forward and kissed her. (ARWAV, p. 110)

Charlotte sees them kissing, is scandalized, carries on as though Lucy had lost her maidenhood, and bundles the poor girl off to Rome on the morning train.¹²

The reader next sees Lucy at Windy Corner, where, after his third proposal, she has unenthusiastically agreed to marry Cecil Vyse. The Vyse family, friends to Lucy's mother, had been travelling in Rome when Charlotte and Lucy made their flight to staid safety. While visiting at Windy Corner, Cecil is bored and condescending toward the people; and although he tries to be nice to Mrs. Honeychurch and Freddie, the gesture is purely artificial. Freddie jokingly nicknames Cecil (in thinly veiled irony) "Fiasco" and for his part Cecil realized that

The Honeychurches were a worthy family, but he began to realize that Lucy was of another clay . . . perhaps . . . he ought to introduce her into more congenial circles as soon as possible. (ARWAV, p. 414)

Cecil is bookish and uncomfortable at Windy Corner and gradually reveals his boorish personality. Lucy realizes what is happening one day when Cecil pokes fun at Sir Harry Otway, the district's Representative. Sir Harry is worried about a house that is to be let; he wants tenants suitable to genteel Sawston. Lucy suggests the Misses Alan, acquaintances from the Pension Bertolini. Sir Harry thanks her saying he will write the Misses Alan; Cecil, Lucy, and Mrs. Honeychurch drive away.

'Hopeless vulgarian!' exclaimed Cecil, almost before they were out of earshot.

. . . .
If Cecil disliked Sir Harry Otway and Mr. Beebe, what guarantee was there that the people who really mattered to her would escape? For instance, Freddie. Freddie was neither clever, not subtle, nor beautiful, and what prevented Cecil from saying, any minute, 'It would be wrong not to loathe Freddie'? And what would she reply? (ARWAV, p. 164)

But by this time Italy has faded from her mind; Sawston's conventionalities are guiding her through Cecil's visit and the little round of garden parties for them. That same blinding conventionality makes Lucy put George out of her mind completely, convince herself that Cecil does not mean the way he is acting, and that her marriage promise, once given, must not be retracted.

Cecil's announcement visit to Windy Corner over and only slight irritations among the family members, Lucy and Cecil go to London to visit his mother in her "well-appointed flat." Lucy sees that the "grandchildren of famous people" (ARWAV, p. 187) whom Mrs. Vyse marshalls together to meet her are not especially exciting; Mrs. Vyse's expensive food is not tasty; and the guests compliment her piano playing, which she knows is bad that evening. The atmosphere of London catches Lucy off balance, however; and she reacts passively to the situation.

. . . Lucy saw that her London career would estrange her a little from all that she had loved in the past. (ARWAV, p. 187)

Even realizing her feelings toward the life Cecil leads and seeing the adverse effect he has on her family life, Lucy does not break the engagement. Although Lucy is not in Forster's favor in choosing Cecil, she has made a choice and is following through with that choice. Forster sees as catastrophic those people who make no commitments and wander from birth to death without goal or direction.¹³ However, the realization of Cecil's inadequacies becomes more and more apparent to Lucy as she is with him longer.

When they return to Windy Corner from the London visit, Lucy learns

that not the Misses Alan but Mr. Emerson and George have become Sir Harry's tenants. She is mystified and unconsciously flustered. She further learns that Cecil is responsible for the plan's change and that he persuaded Sir Harry to rent to the Emersons as a joke against her. Personal slights Lucy can overlook more easily than those to her family, and still she says nothing to Cecil. The Emersons have already moved to Sawston and the Cecil-Lucy, George-Lucy plot lines converge. The setting of the first George-Lucy-Cecil meeting is the Sacred Pool where Freddie has taken George to swim and where George has fallen in with the crumbling dirt bank.

George, reluctant to swim before he falls into the Pool, gleefully plays, jumps, and splashes about once he is in the water.¹⁴ George and Freddie play tag; the game soon leads from the water to the shore and into the woods. The luckless Mr. Beebe, who is quietly swimming as George and Freddie grab articles of his clothing and chase through the woods, can only shriek out. Mrs. Honeychurch, Cecil, and Lucy, returning from an afternoon social call to old Mrs. Butterworth's, happen past the Pool. Mr. Beebe hears the approaching party and shouts "Ladies!" but neither Freddie nor George hear him. They run straight into the cultured threesome, give a whoop, and scuttle away to hide in the bracken. Cecil, who feels called upon to manage in the genteel spirit of their afternoon, commands the ladies, 'Come this way immediately,' (ARWAV, p. 202) and leads them directly towards the bracken where Freddie had concealed himself. Freddie pops up before them and Mrs. Honeychurch is amazed.

'Good gracious me, dear; so it's you! What miserable management! Why not have a comfortable bath at home, with hot and cold laid on?' (ARWAV, p. 203)

Leadership of the threesome naturally falls to Mrs. Honeychurch; her approach to the emergency is so much more realistic. She shouts,

'Oh, look--don't look! Oh, poor Mr. Beebe! How unfortunate again--' (ARWAV, p. 203)

Gasping, clucking, telling the boys to dry themselves well, Mrs. Honeychurch conducts Cecil and Lucy on up the path.

'Hullo!' cried George, so that again the ladies stopped.

He regarded himself dressed. Barefoot, bare-chested, radiant and personable against the shadowy woods, he called:

'Hullo, Miss Honeychurch! Hullo.'

'Bow, Lucy; better bow. Whoever is it? I shall bow.'

Miss Honeychurch bowed. (ARWAV, p. 203)¹⁵

The George-Lucy, Lucy-Cecil plot lines meet and Lucy's ruin comes one week later when Freddie invites George for tennis. Floyd, another friend, is visiting Freddie and the boys ask Cecil to make a men's fourth. He refuses, saying he would spoil the fun of all the players. Lucy has to change her Sunday frock and play. George plays to win; Lucy hates to lose and finds the competition stimulating. After the match, Lucy and Charlotte boldly confront George and try to make him promise never to tell that he has kissed Lucy. They are shocked by his response. He declaims he cannot imagine Lucy being serious about Cecil. George mentions the afternoon the threesome happened upon the cavorting boys at the Sacred Pool.

'... I meet you together, and find him (Cecil) protecting and teaching you and your mother to be shocked, when it was for you to settle whether you were shocked or not. Cecil all over again. He daresn't let a woman decide. He's the type who's kept Europe back for a thousand years.' (ARWAV, p. 254)

George talks about kissing Lucy.

'I'm not ashamed. I don't apologize. But it has frightened you, and you may not have noticed that I love you. Or would you have told me to go, and dealt with a tremendous thing so lightly?' (ARWAV, p. 254)

In spite of George's onslaught, Lucy remains calm. She reminds him that she is engaged to Cecil, that she will soon be his wife, and asks George to leave. He goes and she returns to the tennis game. Walking outdoors, the ideas George has so forcefully planted in her mind meet the sunshine and fresh air. Also, George's leaving creates a vacancy in the tennis set. Freddie tells Cecil that it is Floyd's last day and his playing would greatly oblige them. Again Cecil refuses.

The truth of George's statement strengthened by her walking into the airy sunlight; the sincerity of Freddie's pleading Cecil to complete their foursome; the hasty, thoughtless 'no' Cecil replies--all make Lucy see the truth in a great rushing wave.

The scales fell from Lucy's eyes. How had she stood Cecil for a moment? He was absolutely intolerable, and the same evening she broke off her engagement. (ARWAV, p. 257)

However, Lucy Honeychurch reaches the low point in her character evolution when she refuses to marry Cecil. She first of all pretended to accept Cecil's proposal of marriage. Her acceptance was half-hearted and given in the spirit of resignation after Cecil's third attempt. The Vyse family have been friends to Mrs. Honeychurch; they are more than acceptable; and Lucy, caught between Cecil's persistent asking and Mrs. Honeychurch's continual urging, surrenders to convention, pretends to find Cecil acceptable, and agrees to marry him. She is untrue to her

own nature, her own inner voice, when she makes the choice. But when, after George has forcefully spoken the truth to her, she breaks her engagement to Cecil and still does not accept the truth that George has revealed; Lucy's hypocrisy is doubled. Pretense is unimaginatively drawing her toward a fatal tie with convention. In denying Cecil and still refusing to face her love for George, Lucy commits a doubly negative action. She is now committed to nothing. She is most obviously living by "catch-words," and Forster's sanction is severe.

She (Lucy) gave up trying to understand herself, and joined the vast armies of the benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain, and march to their destinies by catch-words. . . . They have sinned against Eros and against Pallas Athene; and not by any heavenly intervention, but by the ordinary course of nature, those allied dieties will be avenged.

Lucy entered this army when she pretended to George that she did not love him, and pretended to Cecil that she loved no one. The night received her. . . . (ARWAV, p. 266)

From this low point, after so much of the book's action has passed, the reader might expect dire consequences for Lucy and a statement of fatalism from Forster. Characteristic of her confused mental state, Lucy lashes out without purpose. The Misses Alan are planning a trip to Greece and she proposes to join them. Certainly the Lucy Honeychurch who felt restless in Sawston and travelled to Italy to be kissed by George Emerson on a violet terrace has changed her perspective when she elects to join two old ladies going to Athens for the winter cure.¹⁶

However, before Lucy leaves, Charlotte arranges for her to be alone with Mr. Emerson in Mr. Beebe's study. The scene is discussed above; in it Mr. Emerson speaks for truth. He encourages Lucy to marry George; he attacks as folly her vague lack of commitment; and with all the energy

and command for respect the dying victim traditionally takes, he tells her the really fatal quality, lack of commitment. He says,

'Take an old man's work; there's nothing worse than a muddle in all the world. It is easy to face Death and Fate, and the things that sound so dreadful. It is on muddles that I look back with horror Do you remember before, when you refused the room with the view? Those were muddles--little, but ominous--and I am fearing that you are in one now.' (ARWAV, p. 306)

Mr. Emerson continues his argument when Lucy refuses to concede his point, and at last, to make his point effective, Mr. Emerson has to accuse Lucy of deceit toward the people who trust her before she will admit that, yes, she does love George.

The emotional appeal Mr. Emerson finally has to use to score his point is excruciating and even maudlin, but Forster is dealing with a very young heroine. Once Lucy has seen the truth of her love for George, she rushes into action with the same thoroughness which in her muddle-period had led her to plan a trip, book passage, and buy a ticket to Greece.¹⁷ Lucy and George are married and go to Florence on their honeymoon. Far from the possible statement of pessimism or fatalism the reader perhaps expected until late in the novel, Forster reverses the action, makes Lucy a decisive rather than a passive heroine, and ends the book making a very positive statement about those people who dare to make a choice.

Part of the problem Lucy's characterization presents to Forster is her youth, and part of the problem is the abrupt change of direction she makes as her character evolves. To convince his reader that Lucy's state of no-commitment would have been fatal, Forster is obligated to present the embodiment of a person like Lucy would have become.

Charlotte Bartlett functions in A Room With A View as the mature person who actually "marched to her destiny by catch-words."

Charlotte Bartlett is an officious, petty old-maid. She is without charm or any real interest in other people. Needless to say, she is unpleasant company.¹⁸ Because she is old enough to be considered responsible, Mrs. Honeychurch chooses Charlotte for Lucy's travelling companion to Italy and to enable Charlotte to go, Mrs. Honeychurch has to pay part of her expenses. The fact that Charlotte did not choose to go, that she did not have the money to go, that she accepted the money to go but continually and pedantically mentioned Mrs. Honeychurch's generosity are all symptomatic of the individual who has made no commitment. She looks down her nose at the Emersons when she and Lucy meet the father and son at the Pension Bertolini. In this instance Forster uses author comment to highlight Miss Bartlett's character; Miss Bartlett is mentally censuring Mr. Emerson for boldly offering to trade rooms with her and Lucy.

Miss Bartlett was startled. Generally at a pension people looked them over for a day or two before speaking, and often did not find out that they would 'do' till they had gone. She knew that the intruder was ill-bred, even before she glanced at him. (ARWAV, p. 15)

Forster, with ironic humor, clearly is commenting on Charlotte's narrow-minded prejudices.¹⁹ Reserve toward other human beings, shying from relationships with them, thinking that days must pass--as though time were a test--before one speaks to fellow countrymen in a foreign country are all inhibiting character traits with which the person who obeys neither passion nor intellect gradually, but surely and fatally fills his life. All her reserve toward other people Charlotte hides behind

petty Anglican piety. To compound her hopeless lack of involvement with life, Charlotte tries to respond overtly to people through her kindness. But her motivation for kindness is transparently clear in a passage in which she explains to Lucy her choice of the Emerson rooms.

'I want to explain,' said Miss Bartlett, 'why it is that I have taken the largest room. Naturally, of course, I should have given it to you; but I happen to know that it belongs to the young man, and I was sure your mother would not like it.' (ARWAV, p. 28)

Charlotte's concern for doing her job well is showing cracks; her unselfishness is becoming hypocrisy. She clearly wants the larger room, rationalizes it to herself through a sense of morality verging on the prurient, and calls down the blessing of Lucy's absent mother to sanctify her decision. But Charlotte is censured. By the trip's end Lucy has become ostracized from her. Lucy had sensed even in Florence that Charlotte used her plea for "forgiveness" as a tool. After a small emotional crisis, Lucy embraces Charlotte, who says, "Dearest Lucy, how will you ever forgive me?" Lucy's response is unconsciously the beginning of Charlotte's censure.

Lucy was on her guard at once, knowing by bitter experience what forgiving Miss Bartlett meant. Her emotion relaxed, she modified her embrace a little. . . . (ARWAV, p. 123)

After Charlotte and Lucy part in England, Lucy never writes to Charlotte. Several months later Mrs. Honeychurch proposes to have Charlotte visit them for a few days. Lucy is irrate; she tries to make the excuse that guests overwork the household staff. Mrs. Honeychurch, who embodies the person who follows the heart, speaks the truth. She says, "The truth is, dear, you don't like Charlotte." Lucy, exposed and

exposed to the truth, goes into a tirade. She replies with emphasis,

'No, I don't. . . . She gets on my nerves. . . . You haven't seen her lately, and don't realize how tiresome she can be, though so good. So please, mother, . . . spoil us by not asking her to come.'
(ARWAV, p. 214)

Mrs. Honeychurch, following her sense of pity, invites Charlotte and she comes. Charlotte feels uncomfortable and she produces the feeling of discomfort in the Honeychurch household. Her letter of acceptance is the harbinger of discomfort to come. Forster writes,

Of course, Miss Bartlett accepted. And, equally, of course, she felt sure that she would prove a nuisance, and begged to be given an inferior spare room. . . . (ARWAV, p. 217)

Her arrival is equally catastrophic.

In spite of the clearest directions, Miss Bartlett contrived to bungle her arrival. She was due at the South-Eastern station at Dorking, whither Mrs. Honeychurch drove to meet her. She arrived at the London and Brighton station, and had to hire a cab up. No one was home except Freddy and his friend, who had to stop their tennis to entertain her for a solid hour. (ARWAV, p. 219)

In bold caricature with dismal detail and maissmal environment, Forster carefully draws the end product of the noncommittal existence, the character who follows neither the head nor the heart. 20

Taken together then Lucy Honeychurch and Charlotte Bartlett make the complete picture of the uncommitted person. Forster had to utilize two characters because Lucy is too young to represent the wholly undecided person and quite characteristic of her youth, she makes the sudden turn toward commitment. But since Forster's theme in the novel is

muddle and the embodiment of muddle is the person who does not make a commitment, Forster is obligated to show the mature adult who has lived a life characterized by non-commitment. This obligation Forster does fulfill through Charlotte Bartlett.

This problem of development does not arise in Howards End. Margaret Schlegel is an adult. She can move gradually and quite naturally from her position of the enlightened intellectual to the wisdom of tradition. The character evolution can be accomplished through the one person.

The role of author comment in A Room With A View functions much as in Forster's other fiction. In this early novel, and again in those he wrote after it, Forster makes author comment the third aspect of his technique in fiction. Forster's technique, even in this early novel, which for many authors would be an amorphous, experimental novel, displays the dominant characteristics his fiction consistently follows throughout the five novels. He chooses his polarized opposites of Sawston-Florence, Emerson-Vyse. He manipulates character evolution on the opposites, and he uses author comment to complete his technique in the novel. He comments on character, on the actions of his characters, and on the philosophic topic which he wishes the novel to deal with.

In A Room With A View, Forster's philosophic concern is with muddle. As I noted above in the section on character development, lack of commitment is the original sin of any character in this novel. The groping for choice, the easy, fatal decision to make no choice are the subject of and form the philosophic background to Lucy Honeychurch's

character evolution. Her lack of commitment climaxes when she tells Cecil she will not marry him, and when she tells George that she does not love him. She is, as Mr. Emerson suspects, guilty of being in a muddle; and Forster expounds at length on the theme of muddle in A Room With A View.²¹ His focus is on that majority who will not commit themselves to anything and who "march to their destiny by catch-words"; they form the damned group. Forster writes that the group is

... full of pleasant and pious folk. But they have yielded to the only enemy that matters--the enemy within. They have sinned against passion and truth, and vain will be their strife after virtue. As the years pass, they are censured. Their pleasantry and their piety show cracks, their wit becomes cynicism, their unselfishness hypocrisy; they feel and produce discomfort wherever they go. They have sinned against Eros and against Pallas Athene, and not by heavenly intervention, but by the ordinary course of nature, those allied dieties will be avenged. (p. 266)

The group is certainly not a happy one and the great majority of the people Forster presents are a part of that group. Charlotte is the character who embodies lack of commitment, but Forster uses other characters to show degrees of indecision. He uses the conventionalities of Sawston very subtly as a form of author comment on a group of people who do not make an overt commitment. Sir Harry, as the political leader of Sawston, calls himself Radical and that becomes the fashionable label for the citizens to adopt. But in their state of uncritical conventionalality, the citizens have no interest or knowledge of early twentieth century radical movements. Mrs. Honeychurch never mentions women's suffrage; most of the characters in the novel have a condescending attitude toward workers. They are certainly not interested in championing their rights as the radical political label would imply. The people in

Sawston think they are liberal as well, but their liberalism is nonprogressive.²² Forster tells the reader that "nothing roused Mrs. Honeychurch as much as literature in the hands of females." He writes,

She would abandon every topic to inveigh against those women who (instead of minding their houses and their children) seek notoriety in print. (p. 212)

Cecil counts himself well-informed in matters literary and artistic; yet when through a childish spitefulness he persuades Sir Harry to let the house to the Emersons, Cecil rationalizes his pettiness by citing Meredith's comic theory. Cecil says,

George Meredith's right--the cause of Comedy and the cause of Truth are really the same: and I, even I, have found tenants for the distressful Cissie Villa. (p. 180)²³

It is apparent then that Forster means for author comment to function throughout A Room With A View through characterization. Even if the extended statement is the only passage of direct comment in the novel, the element of author comment is not small.²⁴ Indeed, it permeates the whole texture of the work.²⁵ However, in this early novel Forster has not yet developed the technique of author comment in relation to the book's dominant symbols. The reader misses and anticipates the lovely passages of description Forster is to build around the land image, combining symbol and author comment, in Howards End.

NOTES

CHAPTER II

¹ Wilfred Stone, The Cave and The Mountain, A Study of E. M. Forster (Stanford, 1966), p. 217: "As a piece of writing, A Room With A View (1908) is less a new departure for Forster than a cleaning up of old business. The two parts of the book, the Italian and the English, were written years apart. . . . The first half, 'almost the first piece of fiction' Forster attempted, recalls the manner of Angels. . . . But the second half, which returns us entirely to England and introduces Cecil Vyse, is Angels with the breath of The Longest Journey blowing through it."

² *Ibid.*, p. 226: Stone points to other antitheses: "Medieval versus classical, ascetic versus pagan, and Gothic versus Greek--these are some of the important sets of contrasts. . . . Along with truth versus lies, light versus darkness, and view versus room, these are the symbolic antitheses that make up the book's tapestry of interwoven themes."

³ Forster, A Room With A View, p. 103: During the Fiesole outing Mr. Emerson questions Mr. Egar's separating the Italian driver from his girlfriend by saying, "It doesn't do to injure young people. Have you ever heard of Lorenzo de Medici?" Hereafter cited as ARWAV in the text.

⁴ Crews, p. 71: "Forster partakes of the Romantic tradition of embracing Italy as the home of brilliance and passion, of emergence from the English fog of snobbery and moralism."

⁵ Cf. Alan Wilde, Art and Order: A Study of E. M. Forster (New York, 1964), p. 54: Wilde calls Cecil, ". . . the spectator par excellence, completely unable and unwilling to participate in the life around him."

Also, cf. Edwin Nierenberg, "The Prophecy of E. M. Forster," Queen's Quarterly, LXXI (1964), p. 189: Nierenberg comments on Forster's choice of the name Vyse. He holds that Cecil ". . . signifies the 'Vyse' of a dark force that seeks to make love shameful and incomplete." (p. 193)

⁶ Cf. Trilling, p. 104: "Cecil. . . is the cultured man in this story and. . . his culture makes him peevish and superior. Culture for him is a way of hiding his embarrassment before life."

⁷ Cf. J. B. Beer, The Achievement of E. M. Forster (London, 1962), p. 55: "Cecil. . . thinks that he loves Lucy, (but he) really loves her as a work of art, not as a person."

⁸Cf. Beer, p. 53: "George, a pleasant young man, is beset by a fin de siècle melancholy."

Cf. Crews, p. 82: Crews too notices George's melancholy and shows the contrast between George and Mr. Emerson. "George's despair represents the state of mind of, say, Mill and Carlyle in their period of disillusionment with human hopes, while the ebullient Mr. Emerson represents the stage of recovery and new-found faith in humanity."

⁹Beer, p. 61: Beer terms the experience an "aesthetic vision."

¹⁰Cf. Trilling, p. 99: Trilling says that George's reaction testifies to his honesty. ". . . the art of the timid is not life: to the courageous the pictures have had blood on them from the first."

¹¹Cf. Stone, p. 224: Stone labels this outing "the central event of the first half." He goes ahead to say that an expedition "is to Forster's fiction what the picnic is to Jane Austen's."

¹²Stone, p. 226.

¹³Cf. Stone, p. 228: "The social lie, the nervous lie, is the result of the soul's falsehood, and she must continue her course of mendacity until she is ready to regard truth as a total commitment of her being, and not merely a matter of manipulated details."

¹⁴Cf. Crews, p. 89: Crews calls George's plunge a pagan baptism and relates it to Lucy's fall down the violet-covered ravine during the Fiesole outing.

George has not had a Christian baptism, but he gets a pagan one in a mysterious pool near Windy Corner, where his worldly salvation is to be effected; and we may recall, when we find George immersed in this pool, that on the Fiesole hillside he had looked "like a swimmer who prepares."

¹⁵Cf. Wilde, p. 55: Wilde pushes the interpretation of George's immersion in the pool further than I. He sees the immersion as a sudden change from pessimistic reflection to direct action.

George finds salvation once more through a symbolic swim in a symbolic pool. . . . The influences of nature, of youth, of good spirits, and if we may say so, of camaraderie triumph, and the waters of the pool wash away the grayness from his soul, confirming his resolution to win Lucy's love.

¹⁶Cf. Trilling, p. 107: "Charlotte Bartlett's words of congratulation are the first Lucy hears when she refuses George and she responds to them with the part and vulgar words of her own self-congratulation; her voice rings with Charlotte's favorite manner. As she goes out of doors, she is 'aware of autumn'--'summer was ending and the evening brought her odours of decay, the more pathetic because they were reminiscent of spring.' In the subtle--sometimes too subtle--thematic

fashion he often uses, Forster had written almost these very words earlier in the novel when he had said of the sweet elderly Miss Alan of the Pension Bertolini that 'A delicate pathos perfumed her disconnected remarks, giving them unexpected beauty, just as in the decaying autumn woods there sometimes arise odours reminiscent of spring.'

¹⁷Cf. Crews, p. 82: "In accepting George Emerson, Lucy effectively resigns from the 'vast armies of the benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain, and march to their destiny by catch-words.'"

¹⁸Cf. Stone, p. 232: ". . . Miss Bartlett represents the hell of repressed desire"

¹⁹Cf. Stone, p. 219: "No scene in Forster's fiction brings home more vividly the stuffiness of upper-middle-class Edwardian society than the encounter between Sawston and Emerson in the Pension Bertolini."

²⁰Cf. Wilde, p. 48: ". . . it is Charlotte throughout who suggests fog and thick curtains, closed spaces and dense air."

²¹Cf. Beer, p. 56: ". . . the word 'muddle' rings with insistency through the novel. It occurs first in Santa Croce, when Mr. Emerson says to Lucy, almost in passing, 'You are inclined to get muddled, if I may judge from last night. Let yourself go. Pull out from the depths those thoughts that you do not understand, and spread them out in the sunlight and know the meaning of them.' Some time later, when Charlotte is whisking Lucy off to Rome, she protests late at night, 'It isn't true. It can't be true. I want not to be muddled. I want to grow older quickly.' The word recurs in George's long speech to her: ('That's why I'll speak out through all this muddle even now!') and again in her doubts after her rejection of both men ('Was it possible that she had muddled things away?')

²²Forster, A Room With A View, p. 34: Miss Lavish, who represents the creative person in the Sawston mind, goes walking with Lucy in Florence. Her speech betrays her attitude toward the working Italians they meet. She bows "right and left" as they are walking along.

"Buon giorno! Take the word of an old woman, Miss Lucy; you will never repent of a little civility to your inferiors. That is the true democracy. Though I am a real Radical as well."

²³Cf. Beer, p. 55: Cecil ". . . believes with George Meredith that the cause of Comedy and the cause of Truth are the same"

²⁴Cf. Crews, p. 73: "Their meaning (the Italian novels) is largely ethical, and Forster is quite certain about his ethics: His certainty manifests itself in the form of ironic control over narrative language and the total structure of plot. With the metaphysical background virtually eliminated, the social foreground can be rendered with an easy assurance of tone and a deft manipulation of comic adventure. Since the theme is now simple and clear, the reader's interest is drawn not to subtlety of meaning but to verbal and dramatic irony We are

... expected to see through the 'wrong' characters without his help, and to turn our attention to the suspense of his well-made plots."

²⁵ Cf. Beer, p. 57: Beer notices the tightness of background in A Room With A View. He says that "... the plot is tightened and stiffened by the fact that so many events and actions minister to a precise undercurrent of meaning."

Also, cf. Crews, p. 82: Commenting on the role of society in the novel; Crews writes that "... by providing an illusion of completeness to lives, such as Lucy Honeychurch's, that are actually very controlled, society obscures the pressing need for sincerity and fidelity to instinct."

CHAPTER III

HOWARDS END

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Forster's 1910 novel Howards End in relation to the three-part technique of fiction I am discussing. Just as A Room With A View represents Forster's early fiction, Howards End represents Forster's mature artistic achievement. In this novel the Wilcox and Schlegel families stand for the polarized opposites, the character evolution of Margaret Schlegel guides the novel's action toward a synthesis of the opposites, and here again Forster steps in using direct author comment in connection with the novel's dominant symbol to comment on the original polarization from which the book started.¹

First there are the two great extremes symbolized by the Wilcox and Schlegel families. The Wilcoxes are the spirit of capitalism; the Schlegels are progressive intellectuals.²

Professor Schlegel is dead when the book opens, but his daughters Margaret and Helen and their brother Tibby are still living surrounded by their father's books and household items in his house on Wickham Place. Mr. Henry Wilcox has two sons--Charles and Paul--a daughter, Evie, and his wife, Ruth Howard Wilcox. The two families first become associated with each other when Helen Schlegel and Paul Wilcox fall in love. The affair is of the night but the lives of the two families continually touch. The Schlegels have other people in their lives--Aunt

July, sister to their dead mother; German relatives; and Leonard Bast, a worker who has led them to believe he appreciates and strives after the spirit of adventure.³ The Wilcoxs rent a flat across from the Schlegel's house on Wickham Place, and in making it clear they do not wish Paul and Helen to see each other, Ruth Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel get acquainted. Mrs. Wilcox, however, dies early in the novel, Evie gets married, and Mr. Wilcox courts Margaret. Leonard Bast loses his job, Helen believes that Henry is responsible and confronts him with Leonard Bast and his aging mistress Jacky. Quite suddenly the group realizes that Jacky has also been Henry Wilcox's mistress.⁴ Helen throws herself at Leonard, gets pregnant, and goes to Germany. Tibby goes to Oxford. The Schlegel's lease on Wickham Place expires; Margaret marries Henry; and he permits her to store the Schlegel household items at Howards End, Ruth Wilcox's family farm. Helen goes to Howards End to collect some books and Margaret traps her there. Leonard accidentally appears, Charles Wilcox thinks it his duty to attack the father of Helen's illegitimate child, and hits Leonard with Herr Schlegel's old sword. Leonard has a heart attack and dies, but Charles is charged with manslaughter and is imprisoned. Charles's disgrace breaks Mr. Wilcox's spirit and he retires to Howards End with Margaret. Margaret brings Helen to Howards End also, and her baby is born in the house. Clearly, on the plot level, the lives of the two families are mixed and joined.⁵

Being people rather than abstractions, the characters within the Wilcox-Schlegel family units are more fully drawn and display less of Forster's absolutes than the plot does. However, throughout the book, Henry Wilcox and Helen Schlegel represent the two polarized opposites of the creative individual versus the all-powerful organization.⁶

Henry Wilcox presides over the Wilcox family just as he does over his Imperial and West African Rubber Company. He runs his personal life and the policies of his company all from his singular chairman-of-the-board point of view. He is against women's suffrage and believes women incapable of comprehending anything not directly related to household or child care duties. Mr. Wilcox loves his children; they are assets. He gives them enough money to freely follow their whims; but this freedom, of course, ties them all the more to him. He believes in profits, efficiency, orderliness, and decisiveness.⁷ The realm of personal relationships is a foreign one to him.⁸ Excessive shows of affection and untoward situations he avoids with fastidious planning. He believes that people are poor because they are not industrious; that the world has always been divided into the rich and the poor; and that the conditions will never change.⁹ He believes firmly in the Empire and reveres the Englishman with courage and fortitude enough to leave the Island and make Empire a reality. He likes motoring. He does not mind whisking often from one place of lodging to another; he has no ties to the soil and the yeoman tradition in England's past. He is a skillful entrepreneur and sees nothing but negligence and sloth in the rapidly gaining socialist political thought.

Henry, after the death of his first wife early in the novel, is racked by grief. But he is not prostrate. Item by item he goes through the arrangements that need to be made, and without the enormity of the whole situation ever making itself felt to him, disposes of the whole situation in an orderly way. He approaches Evie's wedding from the same point of view. The guests are firmly and comfortably in Henry Wilcox's hands from Paddington Station onwards.¹⁰ Forster writes,

Henry treated a marriage like a funeral, item by item, never raising his eyes to the whole, and 'Death, where is thy sting? Love, where is thy victory?' one would exclaim at the close. (HE, p. 205)

The safety of objectivity, or never getting caught up in the time-wasting escapades of those people around him, is Henry's guide in his relationships with other humans.¹¹

In choosing Helen Schlegel to represent impulsive personal involvement in human relationships, Forster makes an equally damaging comment.

Helen "was apt to entice people, and in enticing them, to be herself enticed" (HE, p. 30) Here is an equally disastrous lack of judgment, characterized by seeing people in theoretical terms rather than as individuals.¹² Once when Helen visits the Basts, she finds that they are penniless and have just been evicted from their basement flat.

Helen's wild venture to help the Basts is best characterized through Jacky's eyes.

She (Jacky) only knew that the lady had swept down like a whirlwind last night, had paid the rent, redeemed the furniture, provided them with a dinner and a breakfast and ordered them to meet her at Paddington next morning. . . . She, half mesmerized, had obeyed. The lady had told them to, and they must, and their bed-sitting-room had accordingly changed into Paddington, and Paddington into a railway carriage, that shook, and grew hot, and grew cold, and vanished entirely, and reappeared amid torrents of expensive scent. (HE, p. 211)

The reader continually gets the 'fools rush in' impression of Helen that is so strong in the scene above.¹³ Her overly emotional response to

Leonard's having been twice wronged by Mr. Wilcox leads not only to her pregnancy and a year's estrangement from her family, but more important to her own view of social responsibility, she absolutely lays waste the

Basts. After the debilitating flight to Shropshire, Helen, early the next morning, dashes impetuously away. In her mad haste, Helen forgets to settle the hotel bill and she takes the Bast's return rail tickets with her. Whereas only two days before Helen has reinstated them from off the street into their bed-sitting-room, this impetuosity on her part leaves them stranded, penniless, and in Shropshire. Her overly extravagant response to their situation, her actual lack of appreciation for them as individuals, her haste to flee the scene of her own involvement with another human being--all miss the mark of seeing and helping the human predicament just as much as Henry's item-by-item approach.¹⁴

Henry knows that emotional involvement impairs his judgment and cuts down his efficiency; so to sidestep involvement, he approaches any human situation in essentially business terms.¹⁵ Likewise, Helen, who has always thought of the poor in theoretical terms and sought to help the poor by voting socialist and contributing to charity, is destroyed in her attempt to help real people. She, like Henry, does not have the steadiness of character to venture into the realm of personal relationships.¹⁶ This inadequacy she covers in emotional outbursts; Henry, in the business approach. Consequently, Helen bears Leonard's child and Henry's investments grow in an almost geometric progression. 'Panic and Emptiness,' Helen's words for describing the Wilcoxes behind their facade of business journals and sports activities apply equally to Helen.¹⁷ Both Henry and Helen, then, representing opposite ends of the philosophy of personal relations guiding the affairs of humans, represent equal failure. In Forster's structure of Howards End, Helen and Henry are the characterization of the polarized opposites.

Forster modifies both of these extremes by providing Henry and

Helen with stabilizing influences; to Henry, Mrs. Wilcox, and to Helen, Margaret. The reconciliation of these two polarized attitudes into a comprehensive modern character Forster effects through character evolution in the structure of Howards End.

Character evolution in Howards End begins on the firm base of England's yeoman tradition symbolized by Ruth Wilcox.¹⁸ She both symbolizes the yeoman past and she is the embodiment of England's strength of character which comes from that past. "This spirit of Ruth Wilcox, and her complete identification of herself with her home as a piece of England, endows her with qualities that the Schlegels, London's intellectual nomads, lack and need no less than the rest of the Wilcoxes do."¹⁹ Even though the Wilcox family represents segmented parts of Mrs. Wilcox, they never realize her strength or dignity. Speaking of Mrs. Wilcox towards the end of the novel, Margaret says to Helen, "I cannot believe that knowledge such as hers will perish with knowledge such as mine. She knew about realities."²⁰ (HE, p. 292)

It is, however, because Mrs. Wilcox is so strongly tied to the past that Forster must remove her early from the book. Because she represents so totally the spirit of the past, Forster is obliged to remove her if his novel is to comment on the contemporary human experience. Mrs. Wilcox does her work well; she is a beautifully drawn character—spirit. From the opening page where Helen describes her morning walk over the meadow at Howards End until Mrs. Wilcox dies, her character is consistent. Even when she is the direct focus of a scene, she is consistent with the spirit essence of her character. The first time the reader directly sees Mrs. Wilcox is when Margaret dashes across the

street to the Wilcox apartment and is shown directly into Ruth Wilcox's bedroom. Margaret's reaction to her is significant.

"Yes?" asked Margaret, for there was a long pause--a pause that was somehow akin to the flicker of the fire, the quiver of the reading-lamp upon their hands, the white blur from the window; a pause of shifting and eternal shadows. (HE, p. 69)

The images are conventional ones for courage and wisdom. The fire, the lamp, the window, but Forster has used them in the very specific setting of Ruth Wilcox's bedroom and they indeed suggest the ethereal person, the fragile embodiment of truth that is the first Mrs. Wilcox, a person, a spirit, "a pause of shifting and eternal shadows."

It is, however, precisely Ruth Wilcox's strong tie to traditionalism without the broadening influence of education that makes it imperative for Forster to remove her from the book. For the purposes of modern society Ruth Wilcox, while admirable, is mute. Margaret Schlegel notices,

Mrs. Wilcox's voice, though sweet and compelling, had a little range of expression. It suggested that pictures, concerts, and people are all of small and equal value. Only once it quickened--when speaking of Howards End. (p. 67)

She has never cared to learn the modern idiom; therefore, her breadth of vision serves no purpose to interpret her unique gift to her husband or her children.²¹ The mouthpiece for traditional wisdom spoken through a modern idiom directly aimed at and comprehensible to Henry Wilcox, his children, and all their rapidly multiplying herd is Margaret Schlegel.²² Her education, her exposure to a cross-current of ideas, her appreciation and love for Mrs. Wilcox and the tradition she symbolizes qualify

Margaret to carry on in a more meaningful, direct, and dynamic way than Ruth Wilcox was able to do.²³ Realizing this fact, Ruth Wilcox, from the depth of her wisdom, actually chooses Margaret Schlegel as her spiritual heir and leaves a scribbled note willing her Howards End.

Thus the reader reaches the crucial point in Forster's plot where the polarized opposites must begin their reconciliation. The opposites of plot remain. Wilcoxes and Schlegels do not understand each other or communicate openly. Wilcoxes prefer the direct, quick comprehension of journalism; Schlegels the levels of nuance, the quiet contemplation of literature or music. However, through the manipulation of character, Forster begins his demonstration of how each type can enhance the existence of the other if only a spokesman capable of interpreting the actions of each to the other exists.²⁴ To this task, Forster assigns Margaret Schlegel.²⁵

Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox had met inconsequently in a cathedral in Germany before the novel opens. But in their first direct meeting in the book, it is obvious that the two have much in common. First, they agree that Paul and Helen should not meet again. When Margaret asks Mrs. Wilcox why she feels that way, Mrs. Wilcox throws the question back. "I think you put it best in your letter--it was an instinct . . ." (HE, p. 65) Margaret then goes ahead to explain her choice of the word to which Mrs. Wilcox replies, "I had nothing so coherent in my head." (HE, p. 66) When Margaret rises to go Mrs. Wilcox asks her if she ever thinks of herself. The straightforward question catches Margaret unawares and she grows slightly annoyed. When Mrs. Wilcox gropes for words to express her meaning more clearly, Margaret suggests that perhaps Mrs. Wilcox finds both the Schlegel girls inexperienced. Mrs.

Wilcox says, "I cannot put things clearly. . . . You have got it. . . . Inexperience is the word." (HE, p. 69) This observation leads Margaret to defend herself, and after Margaret holds forth, Mrs. Wilcox replies to Margaret, "Indeed, you put the difficulties of life splendidly It is just what I should like to say about them myself." (HE, p. 70)²⁶

Another scene between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox occurs when Mrs. Wilcox asks Margaret to help her with the Wilcox Christmas shopping. Here Forster shows Mrs. Wilcox in conversation with one of the Wilcoxes set and shows how thoroughly inadequate is that atmosphere for a person like Mrs. Wilcox. She "found a friend. . . . and conversed with her insipidly, wasting much time." (HE, p. 78) But she and Margaret are continually becoming better friends. During this shopping excursion, Margaret mentions that the Schlegel's lease to the house in Wickham Place will soon expire. Mrs. Wilcox retorts, "To be parted from your house, your father's house--it oughtn't to be allowed. It is worse than dying." (HE, p. 79) Perhaps this reference to property, perhaps her enjoyment of Margaret's company, perhaps her desire to share the thing dearest to her prompts Mrs. Wilcox to invite Margaret, at that very moment, to drop the shopping expedition and take the train to Howards End. Mrs. Wilcox says, "I want you to see it. You have never seen it. I want to hear what you say about it, for you do put things so wonderfully." (HE, p. 80)²⁷ Thus by overt invitation as well as sympathy of feeling, Margaret Schlegel adds the mellow voice of Mrs. Wilcox's traditionalism to her own quick and intelligent voice to become Forster's interpreter for both sides of the Wilcox-Schlegel polarity.

With her continually receiving more of Ruth Wilcox's philosophy

with its traditional land symbols; Margaret must imbibe the sincere appreciation for the land that goes with such an attitude. Forster accounts for her growing interest in property by the specter of the lease at Wickham Place expiring. Margaret had never noticed the link between character and architecture until she is being thrust from her home. She did not realize that Wickham Place had come to stand for so much in her mind.

In the streets of the city she noted for the first time the architecture of hurry, and heard the language of hurry on the mouths of its inhabitants--clipped words; formless sentences; potted expressions of approval or disgust. (HE, p. 103)

Architecture and speech, visual and oral surface symbols surely, but they stand for the entrance of Margaret's psychological probing into an awareness of the land's being the basis for noble tradition. Not long after this incident Margaret and Helen attend a discussion group. In stating her point, Margaret says that money is the warp of the world. Questioning her afterwards, Helen says if money is the warp of the world, ". . . then what's the woof?" (HE, p. 122) To this Margaret replies:

'Very much what one chooses. . . . It's something that isn't money--one can't say more. . . . Now that we have to leave Wickham Place, I begin to think it's that.' For Mrs. Wilcox it was certainly Howards End. . . . I believe we shall come to care about people less and less, Helen. . . . I quite expect to end my life caring most for a place.' (HE, p. 123)

Unconsciously, in a casual conversation, in a relaxed, almost joking tone, Margaret states the second step on her pilgrimage towards realizing the character value in a tie with place.

Still, however, Margaret's ideas are bound to the sterilizing influence of theory. At this time in the novel's plot, Margaret and Helen invite Leonard Bast to tea. When they start asking some questions about the firm he works for, Leonard becomes frustrated and feels the Schlegels are inquiring too deeply into his personal business. In trying to explain their interest in him to Leonard, Margaret betrays a theoretic rather than a realistic concept of the place-character-tradition tie. She asks Leonard, "Haven't we all to struggle against life's daily greyness; against pettiness; against mechanical cheerfulness, against suspicion? I struggle by remembering my friends; others I have known by remembering some place--some beloved place or tree--we thought you one of these." (HE, p. 135) Clearly then Margaret understands the tie between pleasure in life and association. But the concept for her is still one step removed from a real experience of the concept. She remembers people, but expects to end life caring most for a place. Too, the fact that she would mistake Leonard for a person who draws his strength from the soil attests to the fact that she has not risen to Mrs. Wilcox's point of perception. But drop by drop, slowly, subconsciously in Margaret's mind, she is becoming aware of the direct connection between property and character. One day while Margaret is lunching with Mr. Wilcox, she asks him to rent Howards End to the Schlegels. Margaret jestingly says, "Gentlemen seem to mesmerize houses It's the houses that are mesmerizing me Houses are alive." (HE, p. 146)

The next week Mr. Wilcox asks Margaret to marry him and gives her permission to store the Schlegel belongings at Howards End. It is during a trip to Howards End to arrange about storing her things that

Margaret meets old Miss Avery who mistakes her for Ruth Wilcox. To this point the complete assimilation of the dignity of the land is not complete in Margaret. She is to become Mrs. Wilcox; she realizes from bitter experience that lodgings are essential and difficult to find, but still she does not realize that tradition affects every member of her society. But on the afternoon that Henry takes her to visit Howards End a union of Margaret's spirit with that of the soil takes place. She is walking through the empty house alone when she feels it vibrate.

"Is that you, Henry?" she called.

There was no answer, but the house reverberated again. . . . But it was the heart of the house beating, faintly at first, then loudly, martially . . . Margaret flung open the door to the stairs. A noise as of drums seemed to deafen her. A woman, an old woman, was descending, with figure erect, with face impassive, with lips that parted and said dryly. "Oh! Well, I took you for Ruth Wilcox." Margaret stammered: "I--Mrs. Wilcox--I?" "In fancy, of course,--in fancy. You had her way of walking. Good day." (HE, p. 189)

In this scene the soul of Mrs. Wilcox merges completely with the youthful vigor and enlightened spirit of Margaret Schlegel and the old housekeeper says blessing and benediction over the union of the two.²⁹ From this point onwards Margaret becomes the interpreter between both sides of the Wilcox-Schlegel polarity symbol and the spokesman for Forster as he comments on England's connection between the people and their land.

The natural assumption about Forster's author comment in Howards End is that it deals with the land symbol and different character's relation to that symbol. Through the characters Forster is showing the attitude of major segments of the English population toward the land.

Four characters relate primarily to the land; using these four characters, Forster builds the land image on three levels. One type of character is Ruth Wilcox to whom land ownership has given strength of character, dignity; the second type is represented by Henry Wilcox who sees land solely for its exploitative value; the third type is Margaret Schlegel who comes to a realistic appreciation for land and the strength the land symbol represents. The fourth type is hinted at but only in the briefest outline. This fourth type is "baby," Helen's child.³⁰ In the novel's last scene, Helen is happily returning from the meadow carrying her baby. Clearly Forster implies a connection with the land for the child. The fact that the baby is playing with Tom, Miss Avery's nephew, indicates a further connection with the yeoman tradition so important to the Ruth Wilcox-Margaret Schlegel synthesis. Forster builds the literary image of land on three levels; Ruth Wilcox, Margaret, and the baby are the characters most involved in these levels. Henry Wilcox has no separate level in the literary image of land. "To Henry Howards End is not a place to come to rest in: no house is; it is something to buy, do up, get tired of, and sell again."³¹ His character functions as part of both Ruth and Margaret's part of the land image.

Ruth Wilcox, of course, is the basis of the land symbol.³² Helen makes the reader aware of Ruth's devotion to the land in her letter that is the book's beginning. Helen writes,

I looked out earlier, and Mrs. Wilcox was already in the garden. She evidently loves it. . . . She was watching the large red poppies come out. Then she walked off the lawn to the meadow. . . . and she came back with her hands full of the hay that was cut yesterday. . . . she kept on smelling it. (HE, p. 6)

Forster has Helen write the note because Mrs. Wilcox cannot express

or describe herself. Even if she did not understand Henry's business or her children's activities, she could have contributed to her family's quality of life by speaking out for love of place. She tells only Margaret Schlegel about a ring of pigs' teeth stuck into the wych-elm at Howards End. She says an older generation of people believed them medicinal.³³ Ruth Wilcox cannot interpret her existence, but she does embody the dignity of tradition. Forster comments on her tradition.

The feudal ownership of land did bring dignity, whereas the modern ownership of movables is reducing us again to a nomadic horde. We are reverting to the civilization of luggage, and historians of the future will note how the middle classes accreted possessions without taking root in the earth; and may find in this the secret of their imaginative poverty. (HE, p. 141)³⁴

In this passage Forster is speaking directly to his reader. In spite of Ruth Wilcox's muteness, she does embody a dignity that the modern "nomadic horde" is very much in danger of letting slip from it. The passage advocates maintaining the dignity which a tie with the land produced. Forster's comment is related to the opposites upon which he built Howards End. Ruth Wilcox is the person the passage obviously refers to; it is addressed to Forster's modern reader--the Margaret Schlegels who dash about London searching for apartments, never establishing an appreciation for the beauty of place. Forster's words are addressed to those city dwellers who underrate the power of contemplation, of knowing their ancestors and letting them help them.³⁵ And yet Forster is not didactic. He does shift to the first person, but the spirit of his comment is in passing. It is one of the nudges to the reader, a comment in general but universal terms which not only touches the Wilcox-Schlegel polarity but also the author-audience separation.

The real development of Margaret's appreciation for place begins as she leaves Wickham Place and plunges first into London in search of another house and about the same time becomes part of Mr. Wilcox's busy life as his intended wife. Her being forced out of Wickham Place first shows her the formlessness of much of the hastily erected architecture around her. And this awareness of the "architecture of hurry" leads her to a further awareness of this architecture's influence on the people living in London. She questions, "Month by month things were stepping livelier, but to what goal?" (HE, p. 103). Margaret, then, being forced from her gingerbread house of theory, begins to realize that man really is influenced by the things around him. As Margaret plunges deeper into the world of everyday affairs, as her involvement with Mr. Wilcox takes more of her time, she realizes evermore clearly the stability of place. The truth about society that London had forced on her becomes evermore meaningful.

Apart from the realization of place, it is Forster's obligation to show Margaret's perception of the particular value of Howards End, the farm symbol which is the cornerstone for the land image in the book. This unique perception is possible only through the hallowed vision of Ruth Wilcox and it is a perception that Margaret gradually becomes capable of accomplishing. Margaret perceives the uniqueness of Howards End, at least its uniqueness to Ruth Wilcox, during the Christmas shopping expedition. She puts Mrs. Wilcox off when she impetuously suggests they visit Howards End, and Mrs. Wilcox immediately calls the shopping expedition to an end.

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She (Margaret) discerned that Mrs. Wilcox . . . had only one passion in life--her house--and that the moment was solemn when she invited a friend to share

this passion with her. To answer 'another day' was to answer as a fool. 'Another day' will do for brick and mortar, but not for the Holy of Holies into which Howards End had been transfigured. (HE, p. 81)

Therefore, Margaret does perceive the sacredness of the particular place in Mrs. Wilcox's mind. It is a testimony to this perception and to her recognition of Mrs. Wilcox's connection with the earth that Margaret orders chrysanthemums as her tribute when Mrs. Wilcox dies. Forster confirms Margaret's ability to rise to Mrs. Wilcox's view of the land through Ruth herself when she leaves the note directing that Margaret and Schlegel inherit Howards End.³⁷ Of course, the Wilcoxes have no capacity for appreciating either Margaret's flowers or Mrs. Wilcox's view-point towards Howards End. "To them Howards End was a house; they could not know that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir." (HE, p. 94)³⁸

With Margaret's growing awareness of place and her realization of Howards End as a place above the ordinary, it is inevitable her first visit there would not be a focal point of the novel. By the time she finally visits Howards End in person, she is engaged to Mr. Wilcox and is within days of leaving Wickham Place. She hardly realizes that Howards End does influence her until that evening when she's back in London. She muses:

The sense of flux which had haunted her all the years . . . appeared for a time . . . She recaptured the sense of space, which is the basis of all earthly beauty, and starting from Howards End, she attempted to realize England. She failed--visions do not come when we try. . . . But an unexpected love of the island . . . awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joys of the flesh, on that with the inconceivable. Helen and her father had known this love, poor Leonard Bast was groping after it, but it had been hidden from Margaret till this afternoon. It had certainly come.

through the house and old Miss Avery. Through them: the notion of 'through' persisted; her mind trembled towards a conclusion which only the unwise have put into words." (HE, p. 191)

The house then is a catalytic agent for Margaret's character evolution and for Forster's author comment.³⁹ In this passage the flux of hurrying people; the "potted expressions of approval or disgust," the dirt and clutter of motor-cars jammed are all replaced by the beauty of place. Margaret, although she abhorred these by-products of industrialization, never realized before her visit to Howards End that a sense of place--even in contemplation without needing to be in the place, but to have had an intimate experience with it--could give her strength to deal with the flux of London. As beauty replaced metropolitan hurry in her mind, the people most meaningful to her come to mind: Her father, Helen; the grasping Leonard. She realizes they had felt what she is now experiencing; but that they could not make her feel what they felt. She must have the experience with place herself. The experience must be hers and Forster arranges for it to occur at Howards End with Miss Avery to help. Her mind then verges toward the mystical in the strengthening experience she has had, but quickly she trembles mentally to the familiar. The familiar she finds are "ruddy bricks; flowering plum-trees, and all the tangible joys of spring."

As author-commentator Forster makes this passage much more intimate in tone; Not only does that stylistic element make the event more meaningful to Margaret; but also makes the reader aware of the dynamic intimacy of the experience. There is no shifting to the first person for this passage. Schlegels and Wilcoxes are connected in the experience. Margaret had been to Howards End with Henry; they had driven there in

his motor. But more significantly, Margaret admits at the very first of the passage that Wilcoxes "connect so little." No condemnation is implied, but they share less of her experience than her more perceptive sister and father. However, when Margaret draws back from the mystical she is into the warm familiar, among pleasures readily available to both Wilcoxes and Schlegels--bricks, plum-trees, the spring.

The events and people of her life become for Margaret connected with the events and people of the inner life when she visits Howards End. The constant rush of her life which leaves less and less time for contemplation is somehow brought to a restful pause by the visit to Howards End. She realizes the full pleasure of "the joys of the flesh." The strength she draws from Henry, the quiet corner that civilization defended which was Wickham Place, the spreading protective wych-elm at Howards End all spring to her mind with an enhanced view of their presence after her visit to Howards End.

After establishing his land symbol through the two levels of Ruth Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel, Forster is prepared to comment directly on what he believes is the dignity of English tradition. He steps into the role of author commentator and using the specific images of Howards End and the wych-elm tree reveals in the light of the universal a truth not only about England but the state of mankind. This author comment in light of a universal truth related to the original polarized opposites is the culmination of Forster's technique in fiction. He begins with the image of the wych-elm tree.

... the wych-elm that she saw from the window was
... an English tree. No report had prepared her for its
... particular glory. It was neither warrior, nor lover,

nor god: in none of these roles do the English excel. . . . it was a comrade, bending over the house, strength and . . . adventure in its roots, but in its utmost fingers tenderness, and the girth that a dozen men, could not have spanned, became in the end evanescent, till pale bud clusters seemed to float in the air. . . . It was a comrade. . . . House and tree transcended any similes of sex. Margaret thought of them now, and was to think of them many a windy night and London day, but to compare either to man, to woman, always dwarfed the vision. Yet they dwelt within limits of the human. Their message was not of eternity, but of hope this side of the grave. . . . As she stood in the one, gazing at the other, truer relationship had gleaned. (HE, p. 193)

In this passage Forster's intimate tone continues but the emphasis is away from the Wilcox-Schlegel polarity, the emphasis is even away from Margaret. Forster enlarges the experience by making it less Margaret's personal experience. He enlarges the experience by making the symbol he treats--the elm, the house--fewer in number and much more detailed. The focus of the experience is not Margaret or the Wilcox-Schlegel; the focus is English. Forster's audience is included much more in the experience than in the passage above. ". . . the wych-elm . . . was an English tree." The virtues--strength, tenderness, adventure--are very much English Forster hopes. The tree and the house are extremely familiar objects to every Englishman, objects he has a continuing relationship with. The passage is cast in terms applicable to all Englishmen. The objects are familiar ones to them, the experience with the objects need not be restricted to Margaret. The hope Margaret feels, the truer relationships she distills are Forster's hope for his age. Certainly they are euphoric, but Forster does step in as author and comment in universal terms on the state of his audience.

However, in spite of Margaret's perception, her ability to weld reality and theory into a meaningful synthesis, she lacks one quality

necessary for a complete statement, to become a complete archetype for modern man. First Margaret Schlegel is a woman and the image does not lend itself to the representative of all of mankind. The wych-elm and the island symbols of courage and comradeship are masculine rather than feminine ones. Second, perhaps because of her existence in the realm of theory until she is thirty years old, perhaps because her assimilation of the realities of the qualities of the land did not begin until after that age, perhaps because she had so thoroughly learned the scientific detachment of the modern age before she could imbibe the spirit represented by Ruth Wilcox, Margaret Schlegel's own ability to connect totally with the yeoman tradition lacks a quality of paramount importance--the love of children.⁴⁰ She has no sympathy with them or desire for having them. It is as if the spirit of men, unleashed in the world of pounds, dollars, and interest, forgot the more noble side of its nature, and the precious distillations of time--respect, brotherhood, comradeship--had to pass into woman for safekeeping.⁴¹

It is through the less-adulterated spirits of idealism and intellect combined with yeoman strength and quest for adventure that a physical heir for Howards End and the symbol of mankind it stands for must be found. It is on this physical embodiment, the child of Helen and Leonard Bast, that Forster builds his third ring of the land symbol. The child appears only on the last two pages of the book and is always amorphously called "baby," but the reader sees him at play with Tom, Miss Avery's nephew. The nebulous state of the child makes it a more probable physical representative of the mental union that has taken place in Margaret's mind, its body is the sexual union of Helen and Leonard, and its having been born in the center room of Howards End

makes it the union of urban London and rural England. Thus Helen's quest for the ideal or theoretical is united with Leonard's yearning toward adventure in the physical body of their child. The child is to inherit Howards End after Margaret dies.⁴²

Therefore, Forster follows a three-part technique in Howards End. He begins with the stark opposites represented by Schlegels and Wilcoxes. He then combines Ruth Wilcox with the character of Margaret Schlegel, and on this union builds a land symbol standing for all of mankind. He then steps in as author-commentator and makes a statement about man's estate in the light of the universal truth, then produces another character which can accomplish the union of and become the spiritual heir to the pair of beginning opposites. On this basic foundation of opposites, the Wilcox-Schlegel polarity, Forster, using the three-part technique found throughout his fiction, builds his novel Howards End.

NOTES

CHAPTER III

¹Cf. Crews, p. 19: "The theme of Howards End is the need not for reform but for broad compromises between men and women, innovation and tradition, intellect and action, the upper classes and the lower."

Crews, p. 105: Crews discusses structure in relation to meaning. "The framework of the novel is a series of antitheses between . . . liberalism and its opposite, a kind of blunt and humorless materialism; and the course of the plot, we might say, is an extended test of liberalism's ability to come to terms with its antagonist."

²Cf. K. W. Gransden, E. M. Forster (New York, 1962), p. 55: "The period it (Howards End) deals with is the high-water-mark of economic and intellectual expansion. It is no accident that the heyday of the Schlegels (the 'Bloomsbury' liberal people in the book) was also the heyday of the Wilcoxes (the Tory business people)." The overwhelming prosperity of the country, too, would account for the theme of imperialism, represented in the book by people like Leonard Bast who works for the Wilcox class. Gransden continues with his contrasts between Wilcoxes and Schlegels, ". . . each with its faults and its virtues, . . . Forster, while himself firmly a Schlegel, is trying to work out a formula, both rational and patriotic, which should preserve the best qualities of each kind of outlook and condemn the worst--and not only condemn, but also punish, for the moralist has by no means abdicated in favor of the social historian."

³Forster uses Leonard Bast to show the horrid constrictions poverty places on both the body and the intellect. He says that Leonard ". . . was inferior to most rich people, there is not the least doubt of it. He was not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable." (Howards End, p. 67)

⁴Cf. Trilling, p. 132: "Here the story takes its operative turn. . . ."

⁵Cf. Gransden, p. 72: ". . . (Forster) always intertwines his characters until their lives can no longer be separated or considered in isolation."

⁶Crews, p. 119.

⁷Cf. Crews, p. 107: "These (the Wilcoxes) are not harmless eccentricities, but grave and typical threats to the future of English culture, for the Wilcoxes and their kind are in control of industrialism,

mechanization, urbanism--the forces to which all others seem fated to bow."

⁸Cf. Gransden, p. 78: Gransden maintains that Henry will never seek personal relationships. "His sort never learn; though they can be broken by defeat, they cannot be enlightened by success."

⁹Cf. Crews, p. 118: ". . . they (the Wilcoxes) take the Benthamite position that there will always be rich and poor, and that the market of free competition justly eliminates the weak and unworthy."

¹⁰Cf. Gransden, p. 72: Gransden comments on Henry, "Where it was his duty he considered other people's welfare, but never their feelings."

¹¹Cf. Crews, p. 105: "Henry Wilcox is somewhat awesome in his practical power, yet at the same time he is pitiful in his ignorance of private values. He needs the civilizing force of liberalism, just as liberalism needs his political and economic power."

¹²Cf. Crews, p. 114: "Helen Schlegel . . . lacks Margaret's and Mrs. Wilcox's moral flexibility, and she lacks it precisely because she is incapable of normal sexual love. She recognizes this incapacity . . . but she fails to see its restrictive effect on her judgments of the world."

¹³Cf. Cyrus Hoy, "Forster's Metaphysical Novel," PMLA, LXXV (1960), p. 133: Hoy comments on Helen's extreme personality. He writes, ". . . Helen fiercely rejects things as they are in favor of things as they ought to be"

¹⁴Cf. Beer, p. 113: ". . . Helen is constantly in pursuit of an absolute--she will give herself to an experience that promises spiritual intensity Her reaching out to the absolute is informed by passion, not by greed, and the resulting issues are therefore precipitated also in human terms."

¹⁵Cf. Gransden, p. 78: ". . . Henry would not have changed. His sort never learn."

¹⁶Cf. Crews, p. 120: "Both the Wilcoxes and Helen are reluctant to come to grips with prosaic reality."

¹⁷Stone, p. 264.

¹⁸Gransden, p. 61: Gransden finds it strange that Forster gives Ruth Wilcox origins.

¹⁹Gransden, p. 62.

²⁰Cf. H. J. Oliver, The Art of E. M. Forster (Melbourne, 1962), p. 49: Ruth Wilcox ". . . has this knowledge--is right because she is part of a tradition Or perhaps she is the tradition--a tradition which by itself can help people to the truth."

²¹Cf. Trilling, p. 120: "Her husband had loved her, but his best praise had been for her 'steadiness.' Nor could her children draw on her for anything good. Her daughter Evie, handsome and tightlipped, is a breeder of puppies, a dull and cruel girl; her younger son Paul . . . is a competent colonial administrator but a weak and foolish man; her elder son Charles is a bully and a righteous blunderer"

Hoy, too, (p. 127) comments on Mrs. Wilcox: "In all essential ways, Mrs. Wilcox represents the unseen, and her impact upon the scene is just what one would expect. Her family . . . has made . . . little of the mystery which she embodies"

²²Gransden, p. 65: "The intellectual and the intuitive combine: it is the characteristic process, or one of the processes, without which the chemistry of a Forster plot cannot work."

²³Cf. Crews, p. 111: ". . . Mrs. Wilcox 'means' more after her death than before it. Margaret Schlegel in particular feels her post-humous guidance, until Mrs. Wilcox has become virtually a patron diety for her."

²⁴Cf. Hoy, p. 126: Hoy makes the complimentary opposites more compelling than I. He writes, ". . . the conflicting halves of experience, must be reconciled . . . because they are halves that are mutually dependent, and one without the other cannot adequately endure."

²⁵Hoy, p. 132: Hoy agrees with the idea of character evolution in Margaret's character. He sees the conflict though as shifting from Wilcox versus Schlegel to the Imperialist versus the Yeoman.

²⁶Cf. Thomas Churchill, "Place and Personality in Howards End," Critique, V (1962), p. 70: Even Thomas Churchill, who so abysmally misinterprets Howards End, notices, ". . . that Margaret can speak cleverly of ideas which Ruth can only feel, or express without color."

²⁷Don Austin, "The Problem of Continuity in Three Novels of E. M. Forster," Modern Fiction Studies, VII (1961), p. 221: Even though Ruth Wilcox's strong tie to place renders her inarticulate, it enables her to see that Margaret can develop a similar tie. Austin points out that Ruth Wilcox

. . . recognizes in Margaret the intellectually free woman, lacking, however, the quality of the traditional mother of the family. It is this quality that Margaret inherits when connection is finally established between Mrs. Wilcox and her. . . .

²⁸Cf. Beer, p. 11: "At a time when the loss of Wickham Place is making her conscious of the new imperialism abroad in the world, she values in Mrs. Wilcox the spirit that associates itself personally with a house."

²⁹Cf. Oliver, p. 50: "The old, seemingly half-witted family servant, Miss Avery, therefore actually identifies them (Margaret and Ruth Wilcox): to her--and to posterity--the difference between them is

completely unimportant; in fact irrelevant."

Cf. also Austin, (p. 222) like a great many other people, disagrees with Oliver's interpretation of Miss Avery simply as the person who identifies Margaret as Mrs. Wilcox. I suggest that Miss Avery is a kind of ancient seer who shares the clairvoyance Ruth Wilcox possessed. Austin states that the "transfer of power by Mrs. Wilcox to Margaret takes place with the help of Miss Avery"

Cf. also Gransden (p. 59) calls Miss Avery ". . . a somewhat 'Cold Comfort Farm' character--one almost expects her to say, and she almost does say, 'There must always be a Mrs. Wilcox at Howards End.'"

³⁰Cf. Gransden, p. 71: Gransden sees Helen and Leonard's child as ". . . an economic prophecy as well as a moral hope: the classes mix, the cruel structure breaks down," and he calls the baby ". . . the child of idealism and failure, the boy who is to be given the second chance his father never had."

³¹Gransden, p. 75.

³²Cf. Gransden, p. 76: Gransden clearly points out the values in place that Forster is pointing up through Ruth Wilcox. Gransden writes, ". . . Ruth teaches something more valuable than Henry's manly empiricism: she reminds us that places are values anchored and ideas made tangible; and that if places cannot confine the spirit they can define it; and that people matter, ultimately, for themselves and not for their 'relationships.'"

³³Austin, p. 217.

³⁴Gransden, p. 77.

³⁵Cf. Crews, p. 121: ". . . in conspicuous contrast to the Wilcoxes, Margaret can connect the human past with the present and future. Her sense of tradition, centering on Howards End, is indistinguishable from the quiet strength of her moral nature. And, finally, in "connecting" herself to Henry Wilcox through marriage, she not only bridges the perilous gap between male and female; but symbolically marries her civilizing force to the power of modern England."

³⁶Hoy, p. 128.

³⁷Austin, p. 221.

³⁸Cf. Crews, p. 111: "The real bequest of Mrs. Wilcox is her nearly superhuman tolerance and self-control, the fruits of her continuity with the traditions of Howards End. Margaret possesses those virtues in theory but has not had to exercise them. Though believing utterly in what Mrs. Wilcox stands for, she must endure a period of trial and growth in which she will be tempted to exclude from her sympathy those who directly threaten her dearest values, the other Wilcoxes. By the end of the novel she will have become the new Mrs. Wilcox both in fact and in spirit"

³⁹Crews, p. 38.

⁴⁰Cf. Trilling, p. 135: "It is not entirely a happy picture on which Forster concludes, this rather contrived scene of busyness and contentment in the hayfield; the male is too thoroughly gelded, and of the two women, Helen confesses that she cannot love a man; Margaret that she cannot love a child."

⁴¹Ibid., p. 115: "Trilling sees this regenerative function assigned to women in Howards End. Mrs. Avery, "cherishing the memory of Ruth Wilcox and identifying Margaret with her, has arranged the (Schlegel) furniture in the rooms and put the books on the shelves: thus, by the agency of woman, the best of traditional England is furnished with the stuff of the intellect."

⁴²Cf. Hoy, p. 131: "Hoy points out that Leonard Bast's and Ruth Wilcox's grandparents had been agricultural labourers, and ". . . it is clear by the end of the novel that her land will return to her kind . . . it will be inherited by Leonard Bast's son."

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