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E.M. FORSTER: CRITIC AND CREATOR

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English
at Massey University

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1981

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines E.M. Forster's criticism and novels in the light of his own literary interests.

As a critic Forster discussed and analysed writers not only in Aspects of the Novel (the title given to the series of Clark lectures Forster gave at Cambridge in 1927) but in essays collected in Abinger Harvest and Two Cheers for Democracy, and also in a series of regular weekly book reviews for the Listener and the Daily News over a forty year period. The aspects fundamental to good and satisfying literature Forster defined as plot, people, fantasy and prophecy, pattern and rhythm. But Forster, as an individual, reacted to much more in the works he examined beyond his lectures. He was much attracted by and sympathetic towards literary experimentation, social analysis, wit and humour, moral integrity and a general human curiosity that could be defined as "spirit of place." His antipathies were intellectual superiority, artistic deliberation and arrogance, aesthetic rigidity and mannerisms and what he called a "temperate heart."

These same interests and antipathies govern both the style and content of his novels. As a creator Forster uses, not necessarily consciously, the aspects of novel creation that he discusses in Aspects of the Novel. His interest is still people and place; his social analysis is witty and perceptive; his message is for connection and commitment and moral integrity; and his plots balance the truth of the individual to be himself against the demands of a socially conformist society. Generally he combines plot, characterization and message by a skillful balancing of technique and content. When he is less successful as a novelist it is usually because the "prophet" and his message have dominated at the expense of the plot. Forster's own use of pattern and rhythm, however, do not fail, and the subtle exploitation of the interior connection of shape in his novels adds both to the reader's pleasure and to the conviction of the novels as a whole.

Forster's interest in people, his humanism, his prophecy and his technical ability combine to produce a very individual critic and novelist.

Notes on the Editions Used

In the text that follows, I have used the following editions of Forster's works:

Aspects of the Novel. 1927; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963.

Howards End. 1910; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

The Longest Journey. 1907; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

A Passage to India. 1924; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

A Room with a View. 1908; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

Where Angels Fear to Tread. 1905; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

References:

In the first section, 'Critic', quotations taken from Aspects of the Novel are referred to by page number only.

In the second section, 'Creator', the title is abbreviated AN, followed by the page reference; page numbers alone refer to the novel under discussion.

In the footnotes to each section, Abinger Harvest and Two Cheers for Democracy are abbreviated to AH and TCD.

I CRITIC

In the Introductory lecture of Aspects of the Novel, E.M. Forster explains his intentions and inclinations for the lectures that follow:

Books have to be read..., it is the only way of discovering what they contain. A few savage tribes eat them, but reading is the only method of assimilation revealed to the West. The reader must sit down alone and struggle with the writer (p.21).

This remark contains the essence of Forster's approach to criticism - wit, simplicity, and the telling final phrase "struggle with the writer", for it is always the writer who fascinates Forster and in whom he is most interested. Any student of Forster's criticism, therefore, must examine his reaction not only to the novels but the novelists, to the creator as well as the creation, and in that creation to the characters in particular. It is not without significance that Forster devotes two chapters in Aspects of the Novel to people. Fortunately, the humour and simplicity of style make the examination less arduous, less of a struggle, than some of Forster's own efforts seem to have been for him.

Another point of interest in examining Forsterian criticism is the diversity of subject matter covered in Aspects of the Novel, certain of Forster's literary critical essays, and the regular criticisms he wrote over the years for the Daily News or The Listener. In his lectures Forster could use the greatest world novelists to illustrate his hypotheses; if he analysed, criticized or praised, he was using the best material available. In his ordinary, non-academic criticisms he was faced with matter as diverse as Aldous Huxley's Devils of Loudon, an early Margery Bowen on the Young Pretender, the memoirs of the Duke of Portland, or the reminiscences of Sir Wallis Budge. He also reviewed Virginia Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out, Andre Gide's Prometheus Ill-bound, and various

volumes of Chekhov and Dostoyevsky short stories. There was also the regular Books of the Week column in The Listener. What is intriguing for the student (and undoubtedly satisfying for the writers under consideration) is the constructive, gentle and gentlemanly criticism that Forster can apply to works that are not by the great literary geniuses of the Western World. His adverse criticism appears mainly reserved for those novelists of repute whose inclinations or constructive bias have distorted their creative ability, or whose reputation, Forster feels, is somewhat unwarranted.

Therefore in examining what, and who, Forster admires or dislikes in his role as critic and reader, the student must examine both the novels and novelists in Aspects of the Novel, the essays in Abinger Harvest and Two Cheers for Democracy and, where possible, the "ordinary" and regular book reviews.

A. Admiration

Forster believed, and stated quite simply that "No English novelist is as great as Tolstoy" (p.15). He admired the Russian's ability to provide a complete picture of "man's life both on its domestic and heroic side" (p.46) and also the success with which Tolstoy showed people getting old. Tolstoy succeeded in War and Peace where Arnold Bennett failed in The Old Wives' Tale because the Russian offered more than a survey of time, he offered a vision of space (and place) as well. To Forster, this sense of space is

exhilarating, and leaves behind it an effect like music... the possession of it ranks high in Tolstoy's divine equipment. Space is the lord of War and Peace, not time. (p.46-47)

Tolstoy can also shift the viewpoint of his story successfully - one of the few similarities he has with Dickens, in Forster's estimation; "we are bounced up and down Russia ... and at the end we have accepted it all" (p.88). Even his endings, - that end that Forster dreads as a critic and as a writer - offers rather "the rhythmic rise, fall, rise of the generations"¹, than the decay that Forster's other giant, Proust, leaves for his readers. Tolstoy's characters were carefully crafted, even their "contradictions are true to life"², and our sadness at their ultimate fate, that of growing old, is yet another proof of Tolstoy's ability to create believable people. Finally, in attempting to provide some illustration for the complex rhythm that he sees as the greatest achievement and ambition of novel creation, it is again to War and Peace that he turns, and he repeats a phrase he has used at the start of his lectures "great chords begin to sound" (p.170). If any novel has come close to the combined, overall effect of a great symphony it is, for Forster, War and Peace. After such praise, what chance have less brilliant novels, and less brilliant writers?

Forster's appreciation of Tolstoy is probably shared

by many readers. His advocacy of Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past as 'Our Second Greatest Novel' may well seem more questionable. Indeed, Forster did end the title of the essay he wrote in 1943, on Proust and his book, with a question-mark. The appeal of Proust was more personal, perhaps, but it was an appeal that Forster attempted on many occasions to share, and it is in his comments on Proust that many of Forster's personal interests become obvious. Not only is Proust seen as a successful exploiter of rhythm in the novel - his 'little phrase' is used in Aspects of the Novel as an example of simple, good rhythm construction - but Forster also wrote two articles: 'Proust' in 1929, on the publication of the Scott-Moncrieff translation of A la Recherche du temps perdu, and 'Our Second Greatest Noevel?' in 1943, exploring the construction of the seven-volume novel, its characters, and, inevitably, the character of the man who wrote it. The grandeur of Tolstoy's conception, the vigour of the creator who can manipulate his readers by sheer force of personality, the vastness of theatre and concept, are nowhere present in Proust. As Forster himself says of the "enormous novel", it "is not as warm-hearted or as heroic or as great as War and Peace".³ He admits that "the book is chaotic, ill-constructed: it has, and will have, no external shape" (p.168), and describes the writer as "sophisticated, soigné, rusé, maladif... pretentious culturally... a snobby Frenchman in the Fauberg St. Germain."⁴ And yet there is so much to be gained by the reader from Proust; Forster finds the man and his creation of immense interest. To present such an expose of his age, and at the same time to create believable characters - 'real people' - is a work of brilliance in itself. The technical construction of the long and subtly connected novel makes it also, to Forster, a work of art. There is much that he finds praiseworthy; in fact artistically he ranks it higher than War and Peace:

it is superior as an artistic achievement, it is full of echoes, exquisite reminders, intelligent parallels which delight the attentive reader... The book which seemed as we read it so rambling, has an architectural unity and preordained form. 5

Ten times as long as an ordinary novel!
 And as baffling as life itself.... As
 a contemporary document it is invaluable. 6

Concerning Forster's special interest, people, he says of those in Remembrances of Things Past and their creator:

He is masterly. We live with his people, we see them develop, they behave incredibly, and later one we see why. When they contradict themselves they only become more real. (Shades of Tolstoy's characters). It is an immense gallery of portraits ... even if people only appear for a few minutes, we know them, and hundreds of pages on we shall recognize them if they reappear. 7

More wittily, he adds in another essay

Most of Proust's people are odious, yet you cannot have the comfort of writing any of them off as bad. Given the circumstances, even the most odious of them all... can behave well. 8

Interested in the man behind the work Forster believes Proust to be motivated by social and artistic curiosity, but dominated by despair:

His despair is fundamental. It is not a theory in him, but an assumption, so that the wreckage of his creation evolves as naturally as the music of the spheres. 9

Despair underlies all his view of personal relationships.... Proust's general theory of human intercourse is that the fonder we are of people the less we understand them - the theory of the complete pessimist. 10

As a contemporary, Forster maintained this despair was more appropriate for the time in which it was written than the hope offered by Dante, product of an age of faith well past. Forster saw himself as "a child of unbelief" - as such Proust's pessimism had more appeal. Contemporary insight, pessimism, curiosity, technique, the ability to create characters, and finally an intellectual demand of the reader - all these Proust had.

He makes no concessions to stupidity....
 He expects a constant awareness, both
 from the mind and from the senses. 11

In the role of the prophet he places highest and admires most Melville, Dostoyevsky, and from his contemp-

oraries, D.H. Lawrence. In Aspects of the Novel he says of the true novelistic prophet

His theme is the universe, or something universal, but he is not necessarily going to 'say' anything about the universe. (p.129)

In fact, to Forster, what the prophet has to 'say', his message, is of little concern - "What matters is the accent of his voice, his song" (P.138). Indeed, it is only in the "accent" that any connection can be found between these prophets that Forster admires. In Dostoyevsky the appeal is obvious: his characters are real and alive and he can tell a good story. But he is also a great prophet, argues Forster, because

the characters and situations always stand for more than themselves; infinity attends them, though they remain individuals they expand to embrace it and summon it to embrace them (p.136),

and

to be merely a person in Dostoyevsky is to join up with all the other people far back... characters ask us to share something deeper than their experience (p.138).

Dostoyevsky writes, then, not just of individual Russians, but all Russians in all time. There is a link with Tolstoy whom Forster sees as writing of all Russia: all space with Tolstoy, all time with Dostoyevsky.

Melville, however, has a different approach; one which would, initially, appear antipathetic to Forster, for he admits "... human relationships mean little to Melville..."(p.143). He also adds "Nothing can be stated about Moby Dick except that it is a contest. The rest is song" (p.144). He believes the spiritual theme to be "a battle against evil conducted too long or in the wrong way" (p.14). He cannot understand the various connections of incidents, but believes the importance of Melville, both in this novel and Billy Bud, to be an absence of conscience, a conception of evil and a reach "... straight back into the universal" (p.146). If the student finds this analysis imprecise Forster would be the first to admit it. Melville's prophetic song "lies outside words" (p.141), but the appeal is the song, and presumably the

singer, but not the content of the song.

With Lawrence, whom he knew, the appeal is different. He sees him as

the only prophetic novelist writing today -
the only living novelist in whom the song
predominates, who has the rapt bardic
quality and whom it is idle to criticize...
his greatness lies far, far back, and
rests... upon something aesthetic. (pp.146-147)

But Lawrence is also more than a prophet - he is "...the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation,"¹² and he is also a preacher. As a preacher he "invites criticism"; and while Forster admires his ability of approach to nature, the demand that he makes of his readers for a new attitude and awareness, his offering "colour, gesture, and outline in people and things" (p.147) - something that Forster believes of primary importance whatever your message - there are minor reservations. He adds wittily

Humility is not easy with this irritable and irritating author, for the humbler we get, the crosser he gets.

Nothing is more disconcerting than to sit down so to speak, before your prophet, and then suddenly to receive his boot in the pit of your stomach. (pp.146-7)

Is the prophetic appeal, here, for the song alone, not the singer nor his tone? "The voice is Balder's voice, though the hands are the hands of Esau" (p.147). Lawrence, maintains Forster, nags! He calls it elsewhere, "vision and vituperation", and admits the message was not one he believed in - but he believed in Lawrence's greatness which transcended personal appeal or antipathy.

It is these five writers, then, whom Forster admires most, and uses both as examples for his Clark Lectures, and subject matter for various essays.

FootnotesI A. Admiration

1. 'Proust' (1929) in Abinger Harvest, p.112.
2. 'Julius Caesar (1942) in Two Cheers for Democracy, p.162.
3. 'Our Second Greatest Novel?' (1943) in TCD, p.227.
4. 'The Raison d'Etire of Criticism in the Arts' (1947) in TCD, p.119.
5. 'Our Second Greatest Novel?' (1943) in TCD, p.227.
6. 'Proust' (1929) in AH, p.110.
7. 'Our Second Greatest Novel?' (1943) in TCD, p.230.
8. 'English Prose between 1918 and 1939' (1944) in TCD, p.281.
9. 'Proust' (1929) in AH, p.111.
10. ibid., p.113.
11. 'Our Second Greatest Novel?' (1943) in TCD, p.230.
12. Letter to the Nation and Athenaeum, 29 March and 26 April, 1930.

B. Empathy

The genius and the variety of reasons Forster has for admiring Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Proust, Melville and D.H. Lawrence would seem to leave little room for other preferences. However, having paid deference to great genius where he recognizes it, and explained, where possible, the brilliance of their work, Forster is quite specific about the difference between what he admires and what he also loves and enjoys.

In the essay "A Book that Influenced Me" he amusingly acknowledges the 'great books':

I have no doubt which my three great books have been: Dante's Divine Comedy, Gibbon's Decline and Fall and Tolstoy's War and Peace. All three are great both in quality and in bulk. Bulk is not to be despised combined with quality, it gives a long book a pull over a short one, and permits us to call it monumental. 1

These books, however, have not practically influenced him. As a writer he feels that

When you feel that you could almost have written the book yourself - that's the moment when it is influencing you. 2

The book that did, he maintains, influence him, was Samuel Butler's Erewhon. He enjoyed the 'muddle', one of his favourite enjoyments that he repeats with pleasure in reading Tristram Shandy and Virginia Woolf's essay 'The Mark on the Wall'. He sees Butler as a "master of the oblique" - his opinions are "insidiously slipped in sidewise." It is the same approach that makes Cavafy's poems and attitude to life enjoyable for him. Butler, he maintains "wanted to write a serious book not too seriously".³ It is the lightness of the satire that appeals to Forster, and it is not too difficult to believe, as he does, that this lightness influenced the best of Forster's own work.

In an essay on his own library, written in 1949, he says

One's favourite book is as elusive as one's

favourite pudding, but there are certainly three writers whom I would like to have in every room, so that I can stretch out my hand for them at any moment. They are Shakespeare, Gibbon and Jane Austen... of course, I have some Tolstoy, but one scarcely wants Tolstoy in every room. 4

Of Shakespeare he has written little: he enjoyed a school performance of Julius Caesar on the grounds that "The plays the thing, I suggest", and adds cheerfully an individual view

Shakespeare is fun. There are murders and ghosts, jealousy, remorse, despair. There is Othello, there is Lear, there is even Timon of Athens - but - how shall I put it? Shakespeare never grumbles. He denounces life but he never complains of it; he presents even its tragedies for our enjoyment. 5

He might not have felt able to write the Decline and Fall, and therefore, it may be assumed, Gibbon did not influence Forster; but he was still a favourite writer, commended for

wit, shrewdness and the pardonable weightiness of a man who knows that he has genius and has used it properly. 6

It is the praise of a fellow craftsman, as is the remark that "Gibbon loved books, but was not dominated by them. He knew how to use them". 7 As a reader, Forster finds more to admire in Gibbon the man who

never fusses. He is an aristocrat. The underdog never unduly distresses him, and he never preaches the gospel of work because work to him was the same as amusement... he belonged to the eighteenth century, and he has all the statliness and the sanity of that limited but admirable age. 8

The inevitable interest in the man led to Forster's essay on 'Captain Edward Gibbon' and his sojourn in the South Hampshire Militia.

With his 1924 essay on the 'divine Jane' his wit, and his enthusiastic response, increase:

I am a Jane Austenite, and therefore slightly inbecile about Jane Austen. My fatuous expression, and airs of

personal immunity - how ill they sit on the face, say of a Stevensonian! But Jane Austen is so different. She is my favourite author! I read and re-read, the mouth open and the mind closed. Shut up in measureless content, I greet her by the name of most kind hostess, while criticism slumbers. The Jane Austenite possesses little of the brightness he ascribes so freely to his idol. 9

Forster's critical interest in Jane Austen plays havoc with his definition of a Jane Austenite! He comments on a new text of her works; points out the depressing repetitions of Sanditon (depressing because they indicate an exhausted and ill mind); examines the discrepancy between Jane Austen the novelist and Miss Austen the letter-writer - much to the latter's disadvantage; and most important of all, in Aspects of the Novel he analyses those aspects of her work which best illustrate his arguments. Here again is the dominant Forster interest in character. Jane Austen's characters are interdependent as opposed to Moll Flanders who stands alone. They interact one on the other:

They function all round, and even if her plot made greater demands on them than it does, they would still be adequate.... All Jane Austen characters are ready for an extended life, for a life which the scheme of her books seldom requires them to lead, and that is why they lead their actual lives so satisfactorily. (pp.82-83)

She appears to have, in Forster's eyes, the same ability as Proust: "the characters want to live, the author wants to write about them,"¹⁰ and like Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, her characters are round. Certainly Forster responded to the social insight of Jane Austen, as he had to that of Proust -

Jane Austen has, within her limits, a marvellous insight into the English mind. Her range is limited, her characters never attempt any of the more scarlet sins. But she has a merciless eye for questions of conduct. 11

Compare

how amazingly does Proust describe not only French Society, not only the working of his characters, but the personal equipment of the reader. 12

Like Proust, Jane Austen's canvas is limited - presumably great chords do not sound at the start and finish of her novels, the reader is not dominated by space, or time, or all Russians throughout history. She has no world-vision, nor has she a prophetic voice. She is not rambling, nor chaotic and her books are never ill-constructed. Forster's one complaint is that in the "domain of violent physical action" Jane Austen is "feeble and ladylike", "Everything violent has to take place off" (p.84). He calls her a miniaturist and takes up arms, in a gentlemanly manner, with Sir Walter Scott who "congratulated her for painting on a square of ivory" (p.82). The reader becomes confused - cannot a miniaturist paint on a square of ivory, and if so, does that necessarily mean that within such a restricted space character creation will be two-dimensional? It was Charlotte Bronte, not Sir Walter Scott, who complained of the limited canvas of Jane Austen's work. And it was Miss Austen, the letter-writer, who talked of her "little bit of ivory". Whatever the definition of her talent, Forster, like the ubiquitous Scott, enjoyed her "How Jane Austen can write!" (p.84).

It was a remark he might well have made of Virginia Woolf, a writer on whose career he wrote regularly and analytically. He reviewed The Voyage Out after its publication in 1915; he wrote 'The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf' in 1925; he used 'The Mark on the Wall' to illustrate, along with Sterne, the best use of fantasy, and his Rede lecture of 1941 was on Virginia Woolf, after her death. He looked at her as one writer to another, as he looked at Samuel Butler, and, interestingly, she looked to him for approval and criticism: "I always feel that nobody except perhaps Morgan Forster, lays hold of the thing I have done."¹³ But if Jane Austen does not "fit" with Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky and Gibbon, Virginia Woolf does not fit with them either, nor with Jane Austen. Forster says early in his final essay on her

She has all the aesthete's characteristics: selects and manipulates her impressions; is not a great creator of character; enforces patterns on her books; has no great cause at heart. 14

Certainly her lack of ability to create character he finds central to his criticism; his views on the distortion of pattern are stated in his attack on Henry James; if she has no cause, as well as no characters, she is also not a prophet, and only they sing without the message mattering. But he enjoys her - why? It is a question he answers himself:

She had a sense of humour, no doubt, but our answer must go a little deeper than that hoary nostrum. She escaped, I think, because she liked writing for fun. Her pen amused her, and in the midst of writing seriously this other delight would spurt through.

But in her writing, even in her light writing, central control entered. She was master of her complicated equipment, and though most of us like to write sometimes seriously and sometimes in fun, few of us can so manage the two impulses that they speed each other up, as hers did. 15

How Virginia Woolf can write! and Forster could watch her do it. He enjoyed the experiments of her essays, muddle and fantasy, after her early novels, but, feeling that English novelists are on a smaller scale than the Russians and therefore open to constructive, and gentlemanly, criticism, he could write of them

something more elusive than had yet been achieved in English. Lovely little things, but they seemed to lead nowhere, they were all tiny dots and coloured blobs, they were an inspired breathlessness, they were a beautiful droning or gasping which trusted to luck. They were perfect as far as they went, but that was not far. 16

As a description of literary pointillism it is somewhat deflating. Equally critical are his comments on her conventional novels. Of Night and Day, her second novel, he wrote:

Night and Day seems to me a deliberate exercise in classicism. It contains all that has characterized English fiction for good or evil during the last one hundred and fifty years... Even the style has been normalized, and though the machinery is modern, the resultant form is as traditional as Emma. Surely the writer is using tools that don't belong to her. 17

and of The Years "...another experiment in the realistic tradition. As in Night and Day she deserts poetry, and again she fails". 18 Virginia Woolf was not, and should not try to be, Jane Austen. What was right for his "favourite novelist" was not right for her. What he enjoyed in Virginia Woolf was her poetic experimentation. If she saw life not as

a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged;
but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent
envelope surrounding us from the beginning
of consciousness to the end. 19

he was pleased, and fascinated to watch her experiments. Gertrude Stein had attempted to experiment with the elimination of time in the novel. To Forster, she had failed because time was inherent, unfortunately, in a novel's construction - but it was a noble failure, he felt, and the experiment worth making:

There is nothing to ridicule in such an experiment as hers. It is much more important to play about like this than to rewrite the Waverley Novels. (p.49)

It was this ability, urge and determination to experiment with the novel form that Forster enjoyed in Virginia Woolf. Her essays might not have gone far enough, but her subsequent novels, except for moments of nostalgic aberration like The Years, explored with increasing success, the novel as written by a poet. He felt Jacob's Room to be an "uneven little book", but

The blobs of colour continue to drift past, but in their midst, interrupting their course like a closely sealed jar, stands the solid figure of a young man. The improbable has occurred; a method essentially poetic and apparently trifling has been applied to fiction. 20

Mrs Dalloway he judged "civilized" and "suffused with poetry and enclosed in it". To The Lighthouse was, to Forster, a successful balance of reality and pattern.

We have, when reading it, the rare pleasure of inhabiting two worlds at once, a pleasure only art can give. 21

His comments on The Waves, in view of his antipathy to pattern-dominated books, are unexpected:

Pattern here is supreme - indeed it is italicized.... an extraordinary achievement, an immense extension of the possibilities of 'Kew Gardens' and Jacob's Room. It is trembling on the edge. A little less - and it would lose its poetry. A little more - and it would be over into the abyss, and be dull and arty. It is her greatest book, though To The Lighthouse is my favourite. 22

Why? Because the people in the earlier book are still distinct entities? He seems in view of his witty attack on the arch pattern maker Henry James, as well as his complaints about two-dimensional characters, even in Proust, to be arguing a special case for Virginia Woolf.

Life on the page she could give; her characters never seem unreal, however slight or fantastic their lineaments, and they can be trusted to behave appropriately. Life eternal she could seldom give; she could seldom so portray a character that it was remembered afterwards on its own account. 23

In Aspects of the Novel Forster writes,

it is the function of the novelist to reveal the hidden life at its source.... people in a novel can be understood completely by the reader, if the novelist wishes; their inner as well as their outer life can be exposed. (pp.54-55)

In The Waves Virginia Woolf shows people entirely from within, with no outer life except as it reacts emotionally, but not physically, to the other "characters"; in Jacob's Room the "solid figure" of Jacob is shown from without, what other people think of him. But Forster's favourite novel is To the Lighthouse; a novel in sonata form, a balance between pattern and reality, the characters revealed from within and without. They are not "wraiths" as he sees "the wind sextet from The Waves" and Jacob away from Jacob's Room. (The concept of a "solid" "wraith" is somewhat confusing!)

What Forster did enjoy, despite Virginia Woolf's limitations, of which he was aware, was her enthusiasm, her poetic ability, her determination to experiment, her appeal to the senses and the intellect, and her social interest. Like Jane Austen, she stayed within her own social milieu when she wrote; like Sterne she could fantasise;

like Gertrude Stein she could experiment; there might even be a suggestion of link with Tolstoy after all, through the function of rhythm in the novel. Forster writes of Between The Acts that "The conception is poetic She takes us back in this exquisite final tribute, and she points us on."²⁴ This concept of Virginia Woolf's last novel could well be an example of Forster's hope, in 1927, that the best novels and novelists offer "Expansion Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out." (p.170) Initially, only War and Peace met this requirement; by 1941, Virginia Woolf could well have succeeded, too.

Virginia Woolf had another appeal for Forster; not necessarily a creative appeal, rather part of her personality. He said of her that she was motivated by curiosity and honesty in her relationship with people and situations. Forster himself is curious; he wants to know not only about the people who write novels and the people in novels, but he also wants to know about real people - the real people that appear in travelogues and memoirs, as well as the national-character analyses of Proust, Dostoyevsky, Jane Austen or Tolstoy in his book reviews and essays, his enthusiasm for and appreciation of those books and writers who explore different countries, who observe carefully and with affection the real people they encounter, and who enjoy what they find, is marked. In Aspects of the Novel he wrote:

There are in the novel two forces: human beings and a bundle of various things not human beings, and it is the novelist's business to adjust these two forces and conciliate their claims. (p.111)

This same adjustment of two forces Forster sees as necessary for writers of books other than novels - though then the "things" are more practically things, rather than novelistic technique.

To begin at the historical beginning, in an essay on Marco Polo, written in 1931, he maintains that for him Herodotus was a greater historian than the well-travelled Venetian because

Herodotus was interested in both (novelties and human beings) and he is a greater traveller

in consequence. Marco Polo is only a little traveller... he could not differentiate between men and make them come alive.... He could manage men and conciliate them and outwit them, but they never fascinated him; 25

As a result, Forster sees him as "... a somewhat unpleasant character, shrewd, complacent, and mean." 26

Despite the "impression of vulgarity" left after reading Sir Wallis Budge's By Nile and Tigris, Forster prefers this "filibuster" to Marco Polo. Budge's activities may have been motivated by the sordid greed of the British Museum, which was not at all to Forster's moral taste, his reminiscences may be formless from a stylistic point of view, but Forster finds

it is the most fascinating travel-book that has appeared for years, for Sir Wallis has not only learning and vitality, but the sense of fun and the sense of beauty. 27

And he quotes the writer's description of Damascus on a bright afternoon.

To understand India and Indians he prefers the natives themselves: The Emperor Babur in his Memoirs is "A companion uncommon among the dead and amongst kings". Forster complains amusingly that

Old books are troublesome to read,... the awful Oriental names! They welter from start to finish... Geography is equally trying

but Babur is not complacent or mean, he does not manipulate

to his honesty, and energy, and sensitiveness, Babur added a warm heart,... he desired empire chiefly that he might advance his friends.

The hopes and "confidence" expressed in these Memoirs move Forster to unusual poetic lyricism "it is a mountain stream arched by the skies of early manhood". 28

W.G. Clark, after whom the Clark lectures were named, won academic honour as a Shakespeare scholar. For Forster his appeal lies, however, in two particular travelogues, one on Spain, one on Greece. Gaspacho, the book on Spain Forster sees as

a pleasant lively account of his holiday, Gaspacho being the name of a certain cold soup which he ate and appears to have enjoyed among the peasants of Andalusia: indeed he appears to have enjoyed everything. (p.11)

Peloponnesus, the book on Greece, is "a graver work and a duller" (p.11) mainly because Clark, as a person of some importance and with an important travelling companion could no longer enjoy cold soups, or mules, or fleas. But "what survives in the book... is its feeling for Greek countryside" (p.12). This would appear to be the fellow writer talking, for Forster travelled in Greece and Italy, as well as Northern Europe, Africa, America and India, and wrote, wittily as always, of what he had seen.

Closer to home he enjoys Defoe describing London, and Cockneys: "Moll Flanders is the apotheosis of the cockney; not criminal, not lawabiding, not respectable, warm-hearted"²⁹ and in Aspects of the Novel: "Defoe haunts London." (p.66) In an appreciation of London, or some of it, Forster actually advocates Dickens' view, rather than Blake's. Proof indeed, that accurate feeling for an environment was important to him, even over and above his literary, or moral preferences.

In 'Salute to the Orient' Forster praises the work of an English writer with the unbelievable novelistic value of Marmaduke Pickthall. Forster claims he

is the only contemporary English novelist who understands the nearer East.... He has written novels about England also and their badness is instructive: he appears to be one of those rare writers who only feel at home when they are abroad. 30

Forster's reasons for liking him are instructive and illustrative of his preferences:

He does not sentimentalize about the East, because he is part of it, and only incidentally does his passionate love shine out.... As soon as we open his cheerful pages, the western world vanishes without a malediction.... So completely does the writer capture the reader that it is the West not the East that has to be explained. 31

Pickthall's cheerfulness can admittedly lead to

frivolity, but when this is disciplined he can produce a book that is "solemn and beautiful". He is obviously one of Forster's favourites, for he offers insight, style and deep-felt appreciation.

To genius, creative ability, a sense of humour and social insight must also be added yet another aspect to which Forster the critic reacted - moral awareness and integrity. The morality of a writer would appear to have little relevance to his ability to create a good novel, and indeed in Aspects of the Novel this interest of Forster's is not evident. In his essays and criticisms, however, he makes frequent reference to the moral attitude of his subject, and indeed writers of the calibre of Matthew Arnold's brother William are forgiven literary shortcomings on the grounds of their integrity - together with that of their brother!

If it is priggish, it sticks to its guns; if it is ineffective, it is well-aware of its limitations. The characters are long winded and the action cumbrous. But it has the Arnold integrity. It is the work of a man whose brother was a genius, and who was akin to that brother morally. 32

Henrik Ibsen would appear, superficially, to hold no appeal for Forster: for a critic curious about people, Ibsen was a playwright who "found personal intercourse sordid";³³ for a man who enjoyed most the social interaction of a Jane Austen novel, the connection of Ibsen's characters was "worse than unfriendly, it is petty; moral ugliness trespasses into the aesthetic."³⁴ Ibsen's creative technique is wide open to criticism "Poetry might perhaps be achieved if Ibsen's indignation was of the straight hitting sort, like Dante's. But for all its sincerity there is something automatic about it."³⁵ Even the playwright as a person has little appeal "seldom can a great genius have had so large a dose of domestic irritability."³⁶ But it is this irritability, together with the same phrase used to define D.H. Lawrence's prophetic song, "the nagging quality", that help to explain how Forster sees Ibsen. One cannot "like" the prophets of genius in the accepted sense - Forster had personal experience of Lawrence and was well aware how he nagged - but if the prophetic song was poetic, and

prophecy and irritability of necessity interacted to produce poetry, then all was not only acceptable and explicable, but admirable. Even more so, perhaps, if the prophet was not a personal friend, and one's stomach was not in imminent danger of being kicked. Of D.H. Lawrence Forster wrote "He was both preacher and poet.... Yet I feel that without the preaching the poetry could not exist."³⁷ Of Ibsen:

This nagging quality, his habitual bitterness - they are essential to his creatures, because they beckon to the poetry in him.... To his impassioned vision dead and damaged things however contemptible socially, dwell for ever in the land of romance.... With Ibsen as with Beethoven the beauty comes not from the tunes but from the way they are used and are worked into the joints of the action. 38

Ibsen was an uncomfortable advocate of a strange personal integrity, but Forster could admire his genius, even at cost to himself.

The charm of the Dorset poet, William Barnes is more obvious. So obvious, in fact, that Forster mockingly attacks it:

There is no difficult or disturbing view of society, no crankiness, no harshness of diction or thought. He is truly, sweetly, affectionately, a Yes-man, and considering how many worthless Yes-men are being boosted today as national assets, it is surprising that he should have been left alone, he a clergyman, he a schoolmaster, he of the soil. 39

What Forster enjoys is Barnes' "poetic intelligence", the deliberate use of Dorset dialect because it was right for what he had to say, as well as his technical skill and poetic ability: the singer and the song. Forster responded to Barnes' own belief that he must write poetry, and he must do it in his own regional tongue:

'To write in what some may deem a fast outwearing speech-form may seem as idle as the writing of one's name in snow on a spring day. I cannot help it. It is my mother tongue, and it is to my mind the only true speech of the life that I draw.' 40

Barnes has a gentler integrity, but it is just as true and honest and determined as Ibsen.

With the French novelist Romain Rolland Forster is quite specific as to why he approves of him. Of his enormous ten-volume novel John Christopher, he wrote at the time of Rolland's death

The volumes were both civilized and inspiring, and how few books are both! They were intensely human, they had integrity, they possessed the culture of the past, yet they proclaimed that culture is not time-bound, or class-bound, it is a living spirit to be carried on. 41

Rolland had been much impressed by the newly emergent German nation:

He had an enormous admiration for German music and for much German literature, and he cherished a rather Teutonic cult for the great man. 42

as Forster puts it. The First World War shattered his illusions and he turned advocate for the League of Nations. His book turned with him towards a brotherhood of man. The mysticism did not appeal to Forster. Rolland had other literary faults as well

I don't think the work will live like another French panorama novel of the period - the novel of Proust. It is too episodic and diffuse, the conception sags, the satire is often journalistic and the style flat. But Romain Rolland was a far bigger person than Proust from the social and moral point of view; he cared about other people and tried to help them, he fought for a better world constantly and passionately. 43

It is this that Forster approves of in the political flexibility of Gide, as opposed to the rigidity of Stephan George: the integrity to admit mistakes and to turn towards the better even at great cost to one's self. It is the reason why he likes Voltaire:

He is not a great creative artist. But he is a great man with a powerful intellect and a warm heart, enlisted in the service of humanity. 44

Moral integrity and honesty would appear to have nothing to do with creative ability, but Forster saw these values as an integral part of the morality of the creator. To a critic for whom people were of paramount importance, all

influences matter.

Forster's interest in people and literary experimentation does on one occasion, however, lead to a decided discrepancy between theory and practice. Forster admired and praised enthusiastically the biographies of his friend Lytton Strachey. He called Queen Victoria

an achievement of genius, and it has revolutionized the art of biography..... He did what no biographer had done before: he managed to get inside the subject.... Lytton Strachey makes his people move; they are alive like characters in a novel: he constructs, or rather reconstructs them from within. 45

In Aspects of the Novel, defining the difference between the historian and the novelist he maintains

the historian deals with actions, and with the characters of men only so far as he can deduce them from their actions. He is quite as much concerned with character as the novelist, but he can only know of its existence when it shows on the surface.... it is the function of the novelist to reveal the hidden life at its source: to tell us more about Queen Victoria than could be known, and thus produce a character who is not the Queen Victoria of history. (p.53)

If Strachey is "reconstructing from within" his biographies, by this definition, have become novels - a conclusion that many of his Victorian-influenced contemporaries would have believed, anyway.

A novel is based on evidence + or - x, the unknown quantity being the temperament of the novelist, and the unknown quantity always modifies the effect of the evidence, and sometimes transforms it entirely. (pp.52-53)

For "novelist", read "biographer". However, not all biographer/historians are allowed to indulge such invention: reviewing Aldous Huxley's The Devils of Loudon, in 1952, Forster writes

There is one defect in the book to be noted - a defect common indeed to all readable histories. Every now and then the author invents and pads, in order to ease the jolting that comes from the unmitigated use of documents. 46

FootnotesI B. Empathy

1. 'A Book that Influenced Me' (1944) in TCD, p.222.
2. ibid., p.225.
3. ibid., p.225.
4. 'In my Library' (1949) in TCD, p.308.
5. 'Julius Caesar' (1942) in TCD, p.163.
6. 'Gibbon and his Autobiography' (1942) in TCD, p.170.
7. 'In my Library' (1949) in TCD, p.308.
8. 'Gibbon and his Autobiography' (1942) in TCD, p.168.
9. 'Jane Austen :l: The Six Novels' (1924) in AH, p.162.
10. 'Proust' (1929) in AH, p.111.
11. 'Notes on the English Character' (1920) in AH, p.22.
12. 'Anonymity: An Inquiry' (1925) in TCD, p.88.
13. Woolf, V. 14 June 1925. Nicolson, N. and Tantmann, J. eds. Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume 3. London: Hogarth Press, p.189.
14. 'Virginia Woolf' (1941) in TCD, p.252.
15. ibid., pp.252-3.
16. ibid., p.253.
17. 'The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf' (1925) in AH, pp.121-2.
18. 'Virginia Woolf' (1941) in TCD, p.255.
19. 'Modern Fiction' (1919) in her Collected Essays. London: Hogarth Press, 1966.
20. 'Virginia Woolf' (1941) in TCD, p.254.
21. ibid., pp. 254-255.
22. ibid., p. 255.
23. ibid., p.258.
24. ibid., p.255.
25. 'Marco Polo' (1931) in AH, p.318.
26. ibid., p.319.

27. 'For the Museum's Sake' (1920) in AH, p.324.
28. 'The Emperor Babur' (1921) in AH, p.322.
29. 'London is a Muddle' (1937) in TCD, p.359.
30. 'Salute to the Orient' (1923) in AH, p.279.
31. ibid., p.280.
32. 'William Arnold' (1944) in TCD, p.204.
33. 'Ibsen the Romantic' (1928) in AH, p.97.
34. ibid., p.97.
35. ibid., p.97.
36. ibid., p.98.
37. Letter to the Listener, 30 April, 1930.
38. 'Ibsen the Romantic' (1928), in AH, pp.98-100.
39. 'William Barnes' (1939) in TCD, p.208.
40. ibid., p.211.
41. 'Romain Rolland and the Hero' (1945) in TCD, p.237.
42. ibid., p.236
43. ibid., p.240
44. 'Voltaire and Frederick the Great' (1941) in TCD, p.172.
45. 'English Prose between 1918 and 1939' (1944) in TCD, p.285.
46. 'The Possessed', Listener, 9 October 1952, pp.595,597.

C. Reservation

Forster's reservations range over an equally wide canvas. He can object, or quibble, over the messages, technique, craftsmanship, or lack of all these, of writers of small or great statures. Even some geniuses, while acknowledged as a part of a reader's education are, usually politely, relegated to the necessary rather than the uplifting, or entertaining. Certain writers he dismisses briefly and effectively in his essay 'A Book that Influenced Me'. Reasonably and wittily he explains his antipathies, offers positive and personal alternatives and acknowledges that even antipathies can work constructively. Showing us what we do not want may help us to identify the opposite:

I have amused myself by putting down four books which have influenced me negatively. They are books by great writers, and I have appreciated them. But they are not my sort of book. I know that St. Augustine's Confessions is a 'good' book, and I want to be good. But not in St. Augustine's way. I don't want the goodness which entails an asceticism close to cruelty. I prefer the goodness of William Blake. And Machiavelli - he is clever - and unlike some of my compatriots I want to be clever. But not with Machiavelli's cold, inhuman cleverness. I prefer the cleverness of Voltaire. And indignation - Swift's indignation in Gulliver is too savage for me; I prefer Butler's in Erewhon. And strength - yes, I want to be strong, but not with the strength of Carlyle's dictator heroes, who foreshadow Hitler. I prefer the strength of Antigone. 1

It is an important declaration and necessary to quote in such length because it illuminates his beliefs in his own writing, as well as his inclinations in criticism.

With certain of his contemporaries, however, his reservations are more detailed. He can acknowledge that Arnold Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale is "a memorable book", but the very limits of the book appear to him unsatisfactory. The story of two sisters who are born at the beginning of the book, and die at the end, is insufficient. Forster argues

The story that is a story and sounded so healthy and stood no nonsense cannot sincerely lead to any conclusion but the grave. It is an unsatisfactory conclusion. Of course we grow old. But a great book must rest on something more than an 'of course', and The Old Wives' Tale is strong, sincere, sad, it misses greatness. (pp.45-46)

War and Peace, by contrast, offers space, not time, and it is a great work, but is it fair to put Bennett's portrayal of all the life of two provincial English women against the world's greatest novel? Usually Forster admires strength and sincerity, it is what he has praised in writers as disparate as T.E. Lawrence, William Arnold or D.H. Lawrence. He admits the novel is memorable, and novelistic experiment of the type of Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf he enjoys and praises. But Bennett's book misses greatness. In placing British novels in a world order, Forster, early in Aspects of the Novel, takes to task those English critics whose chauvenism has distorted their judgement. What he wishes to establish at the beginning of his examination, is that novels like Jane Eyre, Heart of Midlothian, or Cranford are "little mansions, not mighty edifices" like War and Peace. Within their limitations he enjoys, and loves, English novels and novelists as much as he admires War and Peace but Bennett is left confined to the Five Towns, and limited vision. Perhaps the reservations have something to do with the comment Forster made later of him:

All his life he was blessed - or possibly cursed - with the gift of holding unpopular opinions and yet not getting into trouble over them... he was a great artist. 2

Forster, and his friends among the Bloomsbury Group for many years held unpopular opinions - their dislike of their Victorian predecessors was clearly stated, they enjoyed 'debunking' the Establishment past and present, and many of them were fervent pacifists during the First War. They, unlike Bennett, constantly got into trouble for their opinions. Again, Forster's reluctance and grudging praise might be similar to Virginia Woolf's objections in her essay 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown': that Bennett did not get into his subject's head, the reader knew a great deal about Constance and Sophia, while not knowing them.

However, that is not what Forster says - he simply compares Bennett with Tolstoy and finds the Englishman wanting.

He compares George Eliot to Dostoyevsky and finds her wanting too. Using a scene from the early Adam Bede, and comparing it with one from The Brothers Karamazov he shows, not only Dostoyevsky's ability to encompass all Russia and all Russians at all times, but George Eliot's inability to alter her focus; "God and the tables and chairs are all in the same place" (p.136). He admits she "had vision", but she is obviously not a prophet although her religious beliefs were markedly similar to Dostoyevsky's. She also has "no nicety of style". She reconfirms his belief that English novelists are not superior to their continental counterparts. Only very briefly, and in passing, does he compare her work with her fellow countrymen, and then she has some merit - put a George Eliot character "even Mr Casaubon into a Henry James book, and the book will burn to ashes" (p.163). Obviously George Eliot can create real people - but only to point out the disabilities of the ubiquitous Mr James. The only other mention of people is of Hetty Sorrel, and Hetty is "quite adequate". Accepting the position of English novelists in the hierarchy, why has Forster nothing more to say on George Eliot? When he actively dislikes a writer he has no hesitation in saying so, and amusing and entertaining he is, but there are no critical essays on George Eliot, anymore than there are on Dickens. With Dickens Forster appears, more than anything, thoroughly exasperated. He links him, in Aspects of the Novel, with H.G. Wells, and all that gentleman was good for was pointing out Henry James' literary shortcomings. Of both novelists he writes that they were

humourists and visualisers who get an effect by cataloguing details and whisking the page over irritably. They are generous-minded; they hate shams and enjoy being indignant about them; they are valuable social reformers; they have no notion of confining books to a library shelf... a certain poorness of quality appears, and the face of the author draws rather too near to that of the reader. In other words, neither of them had much taste: the world of beauty was largely closed to Dickens and entirely closed to Wells. (p.24)

Add the fact that "Dickens people are nearly all flat", and the construction of Bleak House "is all to pieces", and Forster's reservations with respect to Dickens are quite clear. He cannot produce rounded characters like Moll Flanders, or Jane Austen's characters, or those of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, and he had no eye for beauty as Forster understood it - and with that attribute Forster would forgive even Wallis Budge. But an analysis of Forster's criticism, here, starts to show double standards. Virginia Woolf could not, in Forster's view, create characters that lived off the page, but that limitation was accepted; Wilfrid Blunt and Samuel Butler also disliked shams, and Forster enjoyed their indignation; Romain Rolland is specifically recommended, despite literary shortcomings, for his work for the brotherhood of man and the League of Nations; and Forster advocates constantly books that should be read, not remain "on a library shelf." What Forster did admit of Dickens was an immense personal vitality that made up for his lack of taste, education, background and artistic shortcomings. Indeed, his characters were flat, but because of their creator "Nearly every one can be summed up in a sentence, and yet there is this wonderful feeling of human depth" (p.70). He links him with Tolstoy, for once not an adverse comparison, in an ability to "bounce" his readers through the shifting viewpoint of a book or a situation with success, validity, and the acceptance of the reader. Even the much-loved Blake has not the time perception of London that Dickens has: Blake going too far in the prophetic vision, Forster feels, Dickens finding humanity, not horror. It is this humanity that makes Dickens acceptable to Forster, when technically he offers nothing, and must be summed up with grudging, almost reluctant, certainly exasperated respect:

Those who dislike Dickens have an excellent case. He ought to be bad. He is actually one of our big writers, and his immense success with types suggests that there may be more in flatness than the severer critics admit. (pp.78-79)

Even then, there is the use of the subjunctive, expressing doubt.

Forster was equally capable of expressing critical

doubt about writers with whom he was far more in accord, like Rabindranath Tagore. For Forster, Tagore was the other "great cultural figure of modern India" alongside the admirably uncompromising Iqbal, and Forster was both in sympathy with his philosophy and aware of his literary skill which included "beautiful writing... subtle metaphor and... noble outlook." But Tagore was neither "a seer or a thinker.... He is a good writer. All must assent to this minimum. But how good?"³ Of Tagore's book The Home and the World Forster voiced familiar doubts

Throughout the book one is puzzled by bad tastes that verge upon bad taste... a strain of vulgarity persists. It is external, not essential, but it is there; this writer has been experimenting with matter whose properties he does not quite understand. 4

One is reminded of the criticism of Virginia Woolf, who, Forster felt, ought not to use the traditional novel form. This is also an interesting contrast with Forster's reaction to Wallis Budge who also suffered from "an impression of vulgarity", but, who, despite being a "filibuster" was forgiven and enjoyed. The vulgarity insured Budge little sympathy, but admiration and mutual enjoyment. Obviously of "a great cultural figure" like Tagore, more is expected, less forgiven.

About Conrad and Hardy, too Forster has reservations. They are good writers, but their limitations hamper their successful creativity in a quite specific manner. And therefore their appeal for Forster is limited. Conrad is not a true prophetic novelist, he has "seen too much to see beyond cause and effect" (p.140). A valid criticism while Forster is attempting a precise analysis of prophecy in the novel. In an essay on Conrad written in 1920, Forster asks

Is there not ... a central obscurity, something noble, heroic, beautiful, inspiring half a dozen great books; but obscure, obscure? 5

He felt that Conrad fell between the two stools of personal experience and future vision - hence the obscurity.

If he lived only in his experience, never

lifting his eyes to what lies beyond them; or if, having seen what lies beyond, he would subordinate his experiences to it - then in either case he would be easier to read. But he is in neither case. 6

If Conrad's limitation was his central obscurity, Hardy's was the almost prophetic vision of causality. As a result his characters are constrained by the plot. Tess, Forster classes with his other real characters "she is greater than destiny", but Hardy's central vision of humanity as struggling ineffectually against a fate which they can neither control nor understand, Forster finds the central limitation to greatness:

The fate above us, not the fate working through us - that is what is eminent and memorable in the Wessex novels. (p.100)

He sees Hardy as a poet who

arranges events with the emphasis on causality. The ground plan is a plot, and the characters are ordered to acquiesce in its requirements. (p.100)

As a result, these characters "let their arms rise and fall in the air; they may parallel our sufferings but can never extend them..." (p.140). It does appear, however, that Hardy intended to portray his characters as puppets of fate, of the "President of the Immortals", just as Arnold Bennett had intended to portray the lives of two provincial English girls.

It is of interest to compare his criticism of Hardy with that of Emily Bronte, another writer with a vision of place and fate, but one whom Forster sees as a true prophet:

Wuthering Heights is filled with sound - storm and rushing wind - a sound more important than words and thoughts. Great as the novel is, one cannot afterwards remember anything in it but Heathcliffe and the elder Catherine.... Wuthering Heights has no mythology beyond what they provide: no great book is more cut off from the universal of Heaven and Hell. It is local, like the spirit it engenders. (pp.148-149)

Hardy has a mythology of dominant Fate - this dominance that he portrays Forster cannot accept as he can the natural

empathy of Emily Bronte, though both novelists have immense feeling for their own area. Superficially the universe of Russia, and the morality of Dostoyevsky, as Forster sees it, does not seem very dissimilar from Hardy, but the Russian allowed his people a personal response and the scope of action; Hardy saw, and offered, none.

It is morality that governs Forster's criticism of Virgil. Forster could never respond to national glory: it is the greed of the British Museum that coarsens Wallis Budge's memoirs; this same national exaltation led, in his eyes, to the abuse by National Socialism of the works of Stefan George; and it had led English critics to distort and falsify their criticism through advocating English novelists above their continental counterparts. Forster advocated individualism and internationalism, hence his trenchant remark

I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. 7

He praised, perhaps over-enthusiastically, William Arnold's expose of the British Raj; he enjoyed Wilfred Blunt as much for his charm, feeling and detachment as for 'the general ragging of Gog and Magog'; he loved Cavafy for his individualism as a Greek, his past, his history, and his complete lack of political affiliations; and he saw Rolland as a greater man morally than Proust because he looked outward. Obviously then, to Forster, Virgil's Aeneid had severe limitations - he believed the Georgics Virgil's greatest work - and he maintained that the core of the epic poem is that of

semi-content and half-expressed regrets of a generation that had escaped the republican storms and abandoned the risks of liberty. 8

Admittedly the Augustan peace had achieved, successfully, just that - peace, but poetic justification is not to Forster's taste; it leads to distortion and limitation. The Aeneid, then, is

concerned not with the glory of Aeneas, but

with the glory of Rome. The function of the hero is not so much to do and to feel as to originate. It was not necessary, or perhaps even desirable, that he should have marked characteristics, 9

always a sensitive point with Forster! But Virgil has an appeal for Forster that he cannot deny and that he enjoys and appreciates as much as he dislikes his political motivations: Virgil is a true poet, with a poet's eye for detail.

The things he really understands are not heroic - the dancing reflection of water on a ceiling, the whizz of tops in a courtyard, the departure of colours at nightfall, sea that trembles under the moon, the poor woman who must rise early, obscure deaths, the sufferings of animals and flowers - and these things contrast oddly with the conscientious robustness of their setting. The art of Virgil seems the wrong way up.... He loves most the things that profess to matter least. 10

That last analysis seems rather a personal indication of what Forster loves most, certainly in Virgil.

Footnotes

I C. Reservation

1. 'A Book that Influenced Me' (1944) in TCD, p.226.
2. 'Tales of Unrest, Listener, 14 December 1932, p.870.
3. 'Chitra (1914) in AH, p.349.
4. 'Two Books by Tagore' (1919) in AH, pp.351-2.
5. 'Joseph Conrad : A Note' (1920) in AH, p.152.
6. ibid., p.154.
7. 'What I Believe' (1939) in AH, p. 76,
8. 'Proust' (1929) in AH, p.110.
9. Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid (trans and annot. by Oakley, M.), London: Everyman Dent, 1957, viii.
10. ibid., ix.

D. Antipathy

In contrast to the array of novels and novelists about whom Forster is, largely, enthusiastic, his antipathies are markedly few. What is perhaps most obvious is both his trenchant objections as well as praise where he feels this justified. In fact, he frequently sounds more enthusiastic about certain aspects of writers he claims to dislike, than about those of whom he has reservations.

The general, public, appeal of Scott and Meredith Forster cannot understand - his attacks on both writers are reminiscent of Pope's

Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer.

Forster, in his lectures, had sighed

Yes - oh dear yes - the novel tells story.
... that is the highest factor common to
all novels, and I wish that it was not so. (p.34)

To him this is Scott's one ability - he can tell a story, and even then there appear loose ends, unfinished and lost characters, and the power is "primitive". As far as Forster can see it, his appeal is related to the pleasanter childhood experiences of his readers. Aware that he is treading on dangerous emotional, not analytical ground, Forster offers his own favourite, The Swiss Family Robinson, as a fair target in exchange, while he annihilates Scott critically:

He is seen to have a trivial mind and a heavy style. He cannot construct. He has neither artistic detachment nor passion. ... If he had passion he would be a great writer - no amount of clumsiness or artificiality would matter. But he only has a temperate heart and gentlemanly feeling, and an intelligent affection for the countryside: and this is not basis enough for great novels. And his integrity - that is worse than nothing for it was a purely moral and commercial integrity. (p.38)

Scott also has no critical perception either, for it has already been noted that it was he who commended Jane Austen

for painting on ivory - which is not the same as being a miniaturist.

Meredith's literary fame was on the wane when Forster analysed him. That it does not appear to have revived since might well be explained by that analysis, for what author could keep a vestige of literary reputation when he had been dismissed as "fluffy and lush", or "a suburban roarer", and compared, to his disadvantage, as a poet or a visualiser with Hardy, about whom Forster, as has been seen, has reservations. Forster does acknowledge that Meredith is "the finest contriver that English fiction has ever produced" (p.78), but despite his knowledge of the interrelationship between plot and character (something which Hardy lacked, in Forster's view), it is what Forster dislikes or finds wanting in Meredith, that is remembered: "When he gets serious and noble-minded there is a strident over-tone, a bullying that becomes distressing" (p.97). This "bullying" appears to be what happens to the "nagging" of Ibsen and D.H. Lawrence, without poetry or genius. Then comes the ultimate dismissal "I feel indeed that he was like Tennyson in one respect: through not taking himself quietly enough he strained his inside" (p.97). Two eminent Victorians with one stone, and Meredith is relegated to Surrey and a Box Hill that is definitely not that of Jane Austen.

Henry James, unlike Meredith, has obviously survived any criticism by Forster, as he survived the attack of H.G. Wells that afforded Forster such entertainment, and allowed Wells his only Forsterian accolade. James, like Samuel Richardson, has "a sort of tremulous nobility ... and oh how well they write! - not a word out of place in their copious flow" (pp.22-23). But it is that ability to keep the words in their place that Forster objects to: for with the words go the characters, both regulated by "pattern triumphant". What Forster remembers of a James book, is the shape - "the symmetry created is enduring" (p.155). While Forster praises the aesthetics he obviously does not approve, strange when one remembers his delight in Virginia Woolf's The Waves, despite the "wind sextet". Of The Ambassadors he writes:

The beauty that suffuses The Ambassadors is the reward due to a fine artist for hard work. James knew exactly what he wanted, he pursued the narrow path of aesthetic duty, and success to the full extent of his possibilities crowned him. (p.161)

It is obviously this deliberate, unimaginative, unspontaneous pursuit of art that Forster finds objectionable. He sees James as aware of his gifts and prepared to distort and "maim" even his "very short list of characters" to achieve a specific effect. To Forster, even the characters James does produce are

constructed on very stingy lines. They are incapable of fun, of rapid motion, of carnality, and of nine-tenths of heroism. Their clothes will not take off. (p.162)

What Virginia Woolf could do with pattern in 1932, Henry James is not allowed in 1927. Virginia Woolf was a poet, and fun - James a humourless aesthete. The reader is reminded of Forster's admiration for Virginia Woolf's aesthetic achievement in The Waves

It is trembling on the edge. A little less - and it would lose its poetry. A little more - and it would be over into the abyss, and be dull and arty. 1

Henry James, by Forster's definition, has gone "over the edge" in the call of duty. His "human life" has disappeared and pattern is triumphant. By 1941 Forster could suggest that Virginia Woolf, in Between the Acts, was close to the "expansion" of Beethoven and Tolstoy; Henry James, however, is rigidly dominated by pattern. Forster analyses James construction with care, and he acknowledges his literary contributions, but he cannot resist his final comment:

James' novels are a unique possession, and the reader who cannot accept his premises misses some valuable and exquisite sensations. But I do not want any more of his novels. (p.164)

However, objections to fluffy suburbanism or rigid aesthetics pale somewhat compared with Forster's comments on James Joyce's Ulysses. It is not Forster's acknowledgment of the book as a "curious masterpiece" or a "remarkable affair - perhaps the most interesting literary experiment of our day" (p.125), that is remembered. Rather

it is Forster's attack on the message and content of the book, that is remarkable. In language that seems an imitation of Joyce himself, Forster describes the book as

a superfetation of fantasies, a monstrous coupling of reminiscences.... smaller mythologies... swarm and pullulate like vermin between the scales of a poisonous snake. (pp.126-7)

In Forster's view it is Butler and Sterne with "a keen sense of the beauty of life" who succeed with humour, where Joyce's splenetic indignation fails - he is too close to the savagery of Swift. Joyce's attack on civilization seems rather "an inverted Victorianism... an epic of grubbiness and disillusion" (p.127). It is neither amusing nor enjoyable, but rather a deliberate

attempt to make crossness and dirt succeed where sweetness and light failed, a simplification of the human character in the interests of Hell. (p.126)

For the critic who enjoyed Jane Austen's social observations, Joyce's attacks had no appeal. Joyce's literary experimentation may well have been more impressive than that of Virginia Woolf, but Forster could not admire the deliberation, the verbal pyrotechnics, nor the spleen. His comment that "One always tends to overpraise a long book, because one has got through it"² certainly cannot be applied here!

Ironically, the portrayal of similar seedy characters is one of the initial attractions that T.S. Eliot offers Forster. Of the Prufrock poems which he read in Alexandria during the First War, Forster writes:

The poems were not epicurean: still they were innocent of public-spiritness: they sang of private disgust and diffidence, of people who seemed genuine because they were unattractive or weak. 3

Presumably they were not excessively unattractive or weak, and the structure of Eliot's work had a discipline that Joyce lacked. Forster's reaction to Eliot is somewhat ambiguous. In his instructive criticism and his plays he considered his language "lucid" and his manner "considerate".

He finds a sensitivity in Eliot equal, he feels, to that of Dostoyevsky or Blake. And while Eliot is not a mystic, he can be read for "the witty resentment followed by the pinch of glory".⁴ Eliot was an intellectual poet, and as a result, the reader/audience had to make an effort to understand and respond to the poet and the poetry. Where this worked, Forster praises it:

There is abundance of beauty and even of amusement awaiting us, there is all the treasure of a richly-stored and active mind, but we are expected to do our share.⁵

Particularly in the early poems Forster was prepared to do his "share" - he would puzzle out the message, as he had enjoyed the intellectual demands of Proust. By the late poems, however, Forster balked, particularly with regard to The Waste Land:

What is he trying to put across us here? ... Why, if he believes in it, can he not say it out straight and face the consequences? ... again and again we have the sense of being outwitted.... The verse always sounds beautiful, but often conveys nothing. 6

Forster believes that Eliot is working to an "inner rule" which he does not intend to explain in any way:

When there are difficulties, the fault is always ours. It is not an explanation under which I propose to sit down. 7

Forster saw Eliot as guilty of intellectual superiority and self-indulgence. Eliot played games with his reader without amusement and, just as bad, gave the impression of actively disliking "the layman" - "Mr Eliot does not want us in. He feels we shall increase the barrenness."⁸ Eliot, it seems, is a prophet who sings only for himself. Forster's reaction is interesting when it is remembered that he quite happily admits he cannot understand Melville's message, and adds that a prophet's message is not the most important part of his song. Obviously Eliot's deliberate intellectual obscurity has not the appeal of the mysticism of his compatriot. To underline the deliberate poetic isolation Forster advocates, in preference, Gerard Manley Hopkins:

a poet as difficult as Mr Eliot, and far more specialized ecclesiastically, yet however twisted his diction and pietistic his emotion, there is always a hint to the layman to come in if he can, and participate. 9

That Forster should prefer the God-driven Hopkins, that most Christian of poets, to Eliot's cold intellectualism is indication enough of his antipathy. It is ironic that Eliot's vision of *Hollow Men* should not appeal to the critic who rejected Dante's for Proust's vision, because he felt pessimism to be appropriate for his own era, rather than hope. To Forster, Eliot was also guilty of the same sin as Meredith and Scott, he had a "temperate heart". Even if he did not have a trivial mind and a heavy style he had "no trace of religious emotion." Forster believed that Eliot was seeking stability, he even implied that he was a snob - that his search was as much for social as literary tradition, and that Eliot wished to uphold the establishment and accepted institutions. Later, Forster qualified this view, as he had qualified his earlier enthusiasm, but whatever Eliot may have achieved as a poet and a critic, to Forster he was not a liberal, nor did he like his fellow man.

It is the same objection that he levels at Aldous Huxley, when he reviews The Devils of Loudon.

He is a humanist who dislikes humanity. Ordinary people bore him, extraordinary people impress him as wicked or unhappy or both. He has a typical humanist's equipment - integrity, intelligence, sensitiveness, curiosity, erudition, tolerance, - but he is denied the humanist's reward of earthly warmth.... Mr Huxley may sometimes enjoy himself, but he loathes his self. 10

The book may be the "product of a fearless and a fertile mind", but the lack of humanity is not to Forster's taste. He could well have applied to both Huxley and Eliot, Goethe's description of melancholy, in 'Harzreise im Winter', which "feeds secretly on his own worth in unsatisfying egotism."

The humanist's equipment that Forster defined with regard to Huxley, plus earthly warmth, are vitally necessary

to Forster the critic. He dislikes the aesthetic rigidity of Henry James who disciplined his characters but not himself, as much as he dislikes the intellectual arrogance of Eliot, especially when governed by a "temperate heart". He prefers to be nagged into social and emotional awareness' by Lawrence or Ibsen than left in ignorant melancholy and despair by Eliot. From a technical standpoint he finds the plodding creativity of Scott as intolerable as the stylistic pyrotechnics of Joyce. Crossness, dirt, disillusion and grubbiness are as unnecessary to him as warmth, humour, wit and an appreciation of beauty were vital.

FootnotesI D. Antipathy

1. 'Virginia Woolf' (1941) in TCD, p.258.
2. 'T.E. Lawrence' (1935) in AH, p.157.
3. 'T.S. Eliot' (1928) in AH, p.102.
4. ibid., p.103.
5. ibid., p.103-104.
6. ibid., p.104.
7. ibid., p.107.
8. ibid., p.109.
9. ibid., p.108.
10. 'The Possessed', Listener, 9 October 1952, pp.595-7.

E. Conclusion

In analysing the necessary equipment of a critic in Aspects of the Novel Forster writes:

A critic has no right to the narrowness which is the frequent prerogative of the creative artist. He has to have a wide outlook or he has not anything at all. (p.15)

Examining Forster's reactions to the creative artists he mentions, the width of his outlook is evident. He admires the prophet in Dostoyevsky and Lawrence, the modern social analyst in Proust, and the overall greatness of Tolstoy. He enjoys literary experimentation; moral integrity; a sense of fun; personal and social insight; and he is eternally curious. What he cannot accept is splenetic satire; temperateness; creative and moral rigidity; intellectual superiority, and despair:

The people I respect most behave as if they were immortal and as if society was eternal. Both assumptions are false: both of them must be accepted as true if we are to go on eating and working and loving, and are to keep open a few breathing holes for the human spirit. 1

By the time this statement was written in 1939 Forster could also call for an aristocracy of the "sensitive, the considerate and the plucky",² to face both the immediate problem of Hitler and the Third Reich, and the long term problem of world despair or cynicism. His previous literary comment would confirm such a faith.

In explaining his theories, and in his individual essays, Forster ranges over much of the literature of the world, and many of his contemporaries. There is very little "narrowness", but there appear to be a few gaps: in the width of his outlook he sometimes appears to overlook certain aspects, or even certain writers.

While discussing Gertrude Stein's admirable if unsuccessful attempt to eliminate time from the novel Forster pursues the logical consequences of her move, and why it cannot work,

She cannot do it without abolishing the sequence between the sentences. But this

is not effective unless the order of the words in the sentences is also abolished, which in its turn entails the abolition of the order of the letters or sounds in the words. (p.49)

It is one of the very rare occasions when Forster actually comments on "the order of the words" and the "sequence between the sentences." Construction technique absorbs his attention in most novel criticisms; message and lucidity in those poets he mentions. Virginia Woolf is one of the few writers whose prose he actually examines, when he uses her 'Mark on the Wall', as an example of fantasy or deliberate muddle. Ironically, it is Virginia Woolf herself who complains of Aspects of the Novel "almost nothing is said about words".³ A brief comment on the Cavafy poem 'One of Their Gods'

how admirable is its construction! Only
two sentences, and the second one descending
and descending until the final abrupt ascent 4

is slipped in between praise of the poems as "learned, sensuous, ironic, civilized, sensitive, witty."⁵ It could almost be claimed that to Forster style, technique and construction were so interrelated that he did not feel it necessary to separate them, or even see them as separate. That is, until his brilliant analysis-by-imitation of a Proust sentence in his commentary on the Scott-Moncrieff translation. Quite deliberately, Forster observes that the translation is almost too like the original, particularly in style:

A sentence begins quite simply, then it undulates and expands, parentheses intervene like quickset hedges, the flowers of comparison bloom, and three fields off, like a wounded partridge, crouches the principal verb, making one wonder as one picks it up, poor little thing, whether after all it was worth such a tramp, so many guns, and such expensive dogs, and what, after all is its relation to the main subject, potted so gaily half a page back, and proving finally to have been in the accusative case. 6

It is a tour de force that leaves the reader wishing for much more, and speculating on what a similar analysis would be of Joyce, or Scott, or the superior Mr Eliot.

It is also the enjoyment of Forster's wit, ability and enthusiasm that make the reader aware of those writers Forster does not criticise at all, or only very briefly. Dickens and George Eliot have already been mentioned - if he had actively disliked them he would surely have criticized them, whatever their public appeal, witness his attacks on Scott or Henry James. If he has reservations they were obviously not worth an essay, and the reader is the loser. But what is particularly intriguing, in view of his knowledge of and interest in his French contemporaries, Proust, Gide, Rolland, and Anatole France, is the complete lack of comment on Balzac, Victor Hugo, Zola, du Maupassant, Stendhal or Dumas père and fils. Zola wrote as an advocate of human rights and social awareness, for the betterment of man; the Dumas family were surely fair game for a Scott-type analysis of plot versus story; and Balzac's La Comédie humaine could be seen as a nineteenth century examination of contemporary consciousness and social hypocrisy. Apart from brief praise of Emma Bovary as a Moll Flanders-type character, Flaubert sinks without a trace. There is a vast gap from Voltaire to Proust, and enjoying Forster's analyses of his fellow writers on the continent, the reader feels deprived. The twin Russian giants, with Chekhov and Ibsen at their heels, dominate the nineteenth century. This absence cannot be due simply to the fact that in Forster's eyes no other novelist can compare among their contemporaries, for, having once established Russian supremacy in Aspects of the Novel, Forster is not hindered from discussing writers as diverse as Norman Matson, Herman Melville or Scherezade. If the French writers were not necessary for this theoretical analysis, that does not necessarily exclude them as the subjects for essays. The dislike that he shared with his Bloomsbury friends of the patron saints of the English nineteenth century writers might explain certain gaps on the other side of the Channel, however. He doesn't much admire Browning, he links Carlyle with facism, Tennyson, he maintains, overstrained his inside and Robert Louis Stevenson suffered from "mannerisms", "self-consciousness", "sentimentality" and "quaintness".⁷ In the year before he was due to give the Clark Lectures Forster wrote to

Virginia Woolf asking her advice on what books to read, in order to prepare his lecture course. At that stage of 1926, he claimed he had only just read Tristram Shandy and Moll Flanders.⁸ By the time he came to give his lectures, his knowledge of English literature had expanded somewhat. Even this candid admission does not fully answer the problem, however, for in the summer of 1899, while still at Cambridge, he presented an essay entitled 'The Novelists of the Eighteenth Century and their Influences on those of the Nineteenth Century.'⁹ A certain basic knowledge of some novelists from both periods would have been necessary. His silence, for whatever reasons, is disappointing.

In 1925, two years before the Clark lectures, Forster wrote 'Anonymity: An Enquiry'. The essay argued that knowledge about the creator of a work added nothing to its appeal or its message: that a poem or prose work stands on its own merits. As one poetic example Forster used 'The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens', as prose he moves amusingly between an imaginary news report and various public notices. These stand on their own. Ironically, he uses as a more powerful poetic example of poetry in and for itself 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'; ironic because it is Forster himself who has written the witty essay on "Trooper Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke", as he has written others on 'Captain Edward Gibbon', 'Mr and Mrs Abbey's Difficulties', as well as three on Voltaire, all non-literary. Pursuing his argument he maintains that

Literature tries to be unsigned.¹⁰

It does not matter much who wrote
Julius Caesar and Tom Jones, 11

that to examine the writer is an event of secondary importance to the creative experience of writing, and reading. The trouble with "fellows" like Charles Lamb and Stevenson, for example, is that they get in the way, their faces are too close to the reader, when it is the literature that matters most. The argument, as Forster puts it, is most persuasive. It falls somewhat flat, however, when the reader remembers that for Forster the critic it always seems to matter who wrote it, not only as the creator but

as a person. It is interesting that the examples he uses to substantiate his argument should be a play and a book whose titles are the names of their central characters! He adds in his essay

what is wonderful about great literature is that it transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of the man who wrote it, and brings to birth in us also, the creative impulse. 12

Even here there are at least two people positively involved; the creator and his reader - Forster's definition of the wonderful in literature is presented in purely human terms, and, as in his criticism, his analysis is personal. Despite his remark in Aspects of the Novel that

the intensely, stifflingly human quality of the novel is not to be avoided; the novel is sogged with humanity; there is no escaping the uplift or the downpour, nor can they be kept out of criticism (p.31)

he responds to the character of the writer, the characters he creates, or the message that the writer wishes to share. It is not too improbable to imagine him creating, in one of his humourous essays, a creator for 'The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens.'

In 1937 Julian Bell wrote his Apologia 'War and Peace' explaining why he, as the younger generation of Bloomsbury, felt he could not turn his back on the new menace of facism as his parents and their friends had so successfully managed with nationalism, twenty years earlier. He addressed himself, deliberately, to E.M. Forster. He chose Forster, Bell explained, because, to him, the older man had

tolerance, reasonableness, charity; a clear and deep conviction of the value of certain states of mind; a readiness to listen to opponents and a sympathy for the young. 13

It is a definition remarkably similar to Forster's definition of a humanist: it is certainly the attitude that governs Forster's criticism, both in what he seeks, and how he seeks it. Fortunately for the reader this humanism is never humourless: Forster deliberately inclines more towards the wit of Sterne than the earnestness of Ibsen,

and our stomachs are safe, even if our preconceptions have been jolted.

FootnotesI E. Conclusion

1. 'What I Believe' (1939) in TCD, p.79.
2. ibid., p.81.
3. Colmer, J. E.M. Forster: The Personal Voice. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1975, p.175.
4. 'The Complete Poems of C.P. Cavafy' (1951) in TCD, pp. 247-8.
5. ibid., p.244.
6. 'Proust' (1929) in AH, pp. 109-110.
7. 'Anonymity: An Inquiry' (1925) in AH, p.99.
8. Furbank, P.N. E.M. Forster: A Life. Vol.II. Polycrates' Ring. London: Secker and Warburg, 1978, p.143.
9. Colmer, J. E.M. Forster: The Personal Voice. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1975, p.175.
10. 'Anonymity: An Inquiry' (1925) in AH, p.92.
11. ibid., p.89.
12. ibid., p.92.
13. Bell, C. ed Julian Bell: Essays, Poems and Letters. London: Hogarth Press, 1938, p.336.

II CREATOR

An examination of E.M. Forster's novels in the light of his own criticism must proceed from two major points. Firstly that his critical interests extend further than those incorporated in Aspects of the Novel and include, as the first part of this examination showed, reaction to moral integrity, social awareness, curiosity and literary experimentation. Secondly that his novels were written well before the Clark lectures were presented - A Passage to India was published in 1924 - and therefore the attitudes and analyses he presents in the lectures may be conclusions arrived at through his own creativity, as well as his reading, but not the other way round: he did not write his novels to fit any preconceived formula or notion of what constituted "good", satisfying, stimulating or successful literature.

Forster's definitions of what he admires in three writers who are clearly favourites, certainly throw light on his own creative inclinations. Forster saw Samuel Butler as

a rebel but not a reformer. He believed in the conventions provided they are observed humanely. Grace and graciousness, good-temper, good looks, good health and good sense; tolerance, intelligence, and willingness to abandon any moral standard at a pinch. That is what he admired. 1

Forster was hardly a rebel, and he believed in reform, a moral reform towards awareness and tolerance; but what Butler admired, Forster admired, and of Butler's attempts to expose through wit the hollow sham of social convention Forster thoroughly approved. Jane Austen, neither a reformer nor a rebel merely looked, recorded and laughed, but what she saw she saw clearly and exposed almost without comment, with elegant amusement, "she has a merciless eye for questions of conduct."² So has Forster himself. Proust's social despair Forster found perhaps too emphatic and too pessimistic, but Proust's social curiosity and observations and his "masterly" delineation of

character, as well as his deliberate artistic construction roused Forster's admiration. Social analysis and observation, wit and intelligence - these components are certainly Forster at his best as a novelist, and link him with his "influences", but distinctively, Forster had a message, or at least a belief. He also differed from his influences in that he examined his own society by comparing and contrasting it with another and different one. Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View balance England with Italy, A Passage to India, England in India. And in the two novels set exclusively in England, the contrast comes between Sawston and Cambridge/Wiltshire in The Longest Journey, and between town and country, business and aestheticism in Howards End.

The individuality of the writer Forster himself defended in his essay 'The Art of Fiction', written in 1944:

The novel, in my view, has not any rules, and there is no such thing as the art of fiction. There is only the particular art that each novelist employs in the execution of his particular book. 3

There may be aspects, then, but no rules, only individual art for each individual book. It is in the light of such influences and specifications then, that Forster's novels are examined, in published order.

FootnotesII Introduction

1. 'A Book that Influenced Me' (1944) in TCD, p.225.
2. 'Notes on the English Character' (1920) in AH, p.22.
3. 'The Art of Fiction', 24 November 1944 quoted in Colmer, J. E.M. Forster: The Personal Voice, p.177.

A. Where Angels Fear to Tread

The "aspects" most specifically related to Where Angels Fear to Tread, would obviously be plot (and story) and people. There is no fantasy; and Forster's own requirements for prophecy "humility and the suspension of the sense of humour" (AN p.130) automatically exclude this novel. There is, however, pattern, if pattern, as Forster claims "causes us to see the book as a whole" (AN p.152) and with it, the overall construction. There is also easy rhythm - "repetition plus variation" (AN p. 168. But as well as these aspects that amalgamate to form the novel as a whole, the book contains Forster's message - "only connect", the hope that through his social expose of English suburbia at home and abroad, readers will learn to make an effort, to reach out to the world and the people around them. Admittedly, it is only in Howards End that Forster actually finds a phrase for his message, but the intention is as inherent in all the novels as Hardy's belief in causality. Forster's inclinations towards social irony and comedy, particularly in this novel, insure at least a successful creative balance between content-message and technique.

It can be accepted of this early novel that it shows Forster as certainly an effective story-teller. Because of his ability to create character and explore situation, the reader's curiosity is certainly aroused sufficiently for "and then... and then...": the early eagerness to know how Mrs Herriton, and Sawston, will react to an Italian dentist's son when it is appalled by Italian "nobility", is paralleled by the urge, later, to find out who will keep the baby: Philip, unlikely, Caroline, maybe, Gino, perhaps. That Harriet should kidnap it is the unexpected bonus of a master story-teller, as good as Scott or Scheherazade! The extra twist of the ending, that ending so dreaded by Forster, which leaves the story still suspended, with no tidy finishes, must surely mark Forster as a modern novelist, more in the tradition of Henry James. His characters do not live

happily ever after, nor in this novel, is the stage, Hamlet-like, littered with corpses. By his own definition, then "if it were not for death and marriage I do not know how the average novelist would conclude" (AN p.102) Forster seems determined to ignore "average", conventional endings.

But because of Forster's handling of people and plot, more than the reader's curiosity is aroused. As has already been seen in Forster's criticism, his interest lies in people, what actually motivates them and what, he feels, ought to motivate them. His novels are comedies of manners, and it is because of his people that we say both "... and then", and "why?" In Aspects of the Novel Forster has written

It is only round people who are fit to perform tragically for any length of time and can move us to any feelings except humour and appropriateness. (p.81)

The type of novel Forster aimed to write was not tragic - though tragedy, like the death of the Carella baby happens - and yet the reader would hesitate to say that all Forster's characters, therefore, must be flat.

Caroline Abbott, reacting impulsively to freedom in Italy, and then reacting to her reaction, is thoroughly convincing. Her admission, on the London-bound train, of her dislike of suburban England, despite her apparent conformity, may surprise Philip, but seems in character, to the reader: it is the "why" for her previous actions with regard to Lilia and Gino. Her enjoyment of the opera, her subsequent determination to rescue the baby, and her growing awareness of Gino and his son as a real family, with real, though different feelings, is quite convincing. Her falling in love with Gino is almost inevitable; Forster has with light touches, like Gino thinking Caroline "sympatica", led up to a feeling of esteem on Gino's part that will make him respond well to Caroline. And Caroline has only to move away from Sawston, perhaps only as far as the London train, to find the ability and energy to connect with other people.

Where Caroline does fail, or perhaps where Forster

is less successful, is at the end. Is it necessary for Caroline to find the physical attraction crude, and that the only remedy is heavy mockery and cynicism on Philip's part? Furthermore, for one whom Philip and Gino esteem so highly, and who has been shown, in Santa Deodata, so admirably and accurately defining Philip's character and defects, it seems unlikely that she could be so impervious to Philip's own feelings. She has been shown as perceptive and sensitive up to the very moment of her confession, then she simply twists the emotional knife in Philip's wound leaving him, like Dante, worshipping the loved untouchable from afar.

Philip, too, seems at the climax to be somewhat heavily manipulated by the author; all the more obvious because, like Caroline, his gradual development and ability to "connect" have been convincingly shown with skill and verisimilitude. Philip's early outraged aestheticism at the disclosure of Gino's social standing is one of the wittiest passages in the book.

Philip gave a cry of personal disgust and pain. He shuddered all over, and edged away from his companion. A dentist! A dentist in Monteriano! A dentist in fairy land! False teeth and laughing-gas and the tilting chair at a place which knew the Etruscan League, and the Pax Romana, and Alaric himself, and the Countess Matilda, and the Middle Ages, all fighting and holiness, and the Renaissance, all fighting and beauty! He thought of Lilia no longer. He was anxious for himself: he feared that Romance might die. (p.37)

Both Mrs Herriton, and Forster, have made it clear that Philip's artistic responses are quite permissible in Italy, but that Sawston will tolerate only the verbal: "Let Philip say what he likes, and he will let us do what we like" (p.27). Mrs Herriton is both perceptive and formidable. Sawston is no easy foe. Philip's Italian connection withers quietly. Forster is quite specific:

In a short time it was over. Nothing had happened either in Sawston or within himself. He had shocked half a dozen people, squabbled with his sister,

bickered with his mother. He concluded that nothing could happen. (p.71)

It is Philip's second and full awakening, also "all over in a short time", that constitutes a fair part of the plot. Like Caroline his response to Italy is quick - even, with the tiresome Harriet in tow one evening in Monteriano and his reality is restored. His enjoyment of the theatricals, both on and off the stage is complete - he can hurl bouquets with the best, get hauled into boxes and even, earlier in the day, stand alone in the street shouting and gesticulating at the facade of his hotel. In England Philip only shouted in the privacy of his mother's home! Like Caroline, though without her detailed perceptions, he concludes that the baby "had better stop where it was loved." He parts with pleasure, and affection and friendship from Gino, and then has to face the awful crisis of Harriet's abduction of the baby. That Philip is growing more emotionally aware is obvious - his instinctive reaction is to worry about the baby who is crying silently, a sign he remembers Gino telling him was dangerous. The crash escalates the crisis: Philip fainting from the pain of his broken arm crawls through the mud looking for the child; he has to light matches by holding the packet in his teeth; and when he finds the tiny bundle ("tiny" at seven months?) his attention and feeling are increased:

His arm, he supposed, was broken, but he could still move it a little, and for the moment he forgot all pain.... He shook the bundle; he breathed into it; he opened his coat and pressed it against him. (p.145)

So much for the fastidious Englishman! And as if to underline Philip's ability to care, and care deeply, Forster has him, arm still uncared for, go himself and immediately to tell Gino. He feels responsible for the death, if anything must happen the blame is his. But what does happen, in the light of the whole book, is totally incongruous. In a letter to R.C. Trevelyan, Forster states "The object of the book is the improvement of Philip,"¹ very true, and very convincingly, up to now, explored. Trevelyan however, had balked at the fight with Gino: it appeared to him that

this must be the crisis of the book, and if so, what about the death of the baby? Forster's answer, while assuring Trevelyan that the death of the baby "is the real crisis", adds

Philip is a person who has scarcely ever felt the physical forces that are banging about in the world, and he couldn't get good and understand by spiritual suffering alone. Bodily punishment, however unjust superficially, was necessary too. 2

But Philip has already been thrown out of a coach, broken his elbow and spent some time in considerable pain while he had sought Gino! Forster's description of the actual fight is two and a half pages long; Lilia's death is contained in one short sentence; the death of the baby - the acknowledged crisis - is just over one paragraph. Gino, having indulged in some healthy sadism, ends the scene sobbing on Caroline's breast, Philip, his face "covered with dust and foam" lies on the couch, (the one presumably that has antimacassars full of fleas) demanding that Caroline kill Gino for him. A less traumatic connection is established between the two men over a glass of milk - "Blanco come neve" - Caroline, it is to be noticed, does not care for milk and has none. Is this a hint from Forster that Caroline will not connect with either men? The anti-climax is comedy quite in keeping with the night at the opera, Mrs Herriton and Harriet in the vegetable garden, or Harriet and Philip's arrival at the hotel in Monteriano.

In the light of Philip's behaviour and response to the actual crisis, which Forster shows successfully as true feeling and connection, the emphasis then placed on the fight is excessive and unconvincing and totally out of place in the novel Forster has written. Forster complains of Jane Austen that "Everything violent has to take place 'off' -" (AN p.84). It is his only complaint. When he deals with crises of this nature we can only agree on the superiority of Jane Austen's technique.

With regard to Gino and Lilia, Harriet and Mrs Herriton, however, Forster's handling is surer. Even though they come closer to flat characters, almost 'types',

they are completely convincing. The impulsive Lilia, falling off bicycles, sprawling, like the vulgar, garish but confident theatre at Monteriano, out of railway compartments, laughingly triumphant over Philip, is excellent. Her stature increases, and with it the sympathy of the reader, as her exuberance fades in the light of a society even more restrictive than suburban England. Her inability to cope with Italy and an Italian husband is portrayed with sympathy and understanding. Her death in the first half of the novel, forms the crisis that is balanced by the baby's death in the second, but she is dispatched almost out-of-hand. After the analysis and commentary on her growing awareness of her situation as well as her pathos and solitude, the dismissal seems callous in the extreme. Like Philip's history, but on a smaller scale, Lilia's seems unbalanced.

Gino, portraying the vitality of Italy, is a fine creation. There is little doubt that having tried to murder Philip, in his distress, he would then take immense care of him and attempt out of genuine friendship to make something of Philip's tame life. It is the same volatile contradiction of character that makes him laugh off discovered infidelity while becoming offended at the accusation of living-off Lilia's money. His charm and instinctive manners cause much confusion to the English visitors constantly finding a sarcasm he does not possess, and the confrontations make entertaining reading. His life with Lilia, in all its misunderstandings and petty pride Forster shows lightly and realistically. Only occasionally does a comment of the author's obscure the clarity. Of the impasse between husband and wife Forster writes

No one realized that more than personalities were engaged; that the struggle was national; that generations of ancestors, good, bad or indifferent, forbade the Latin man to be chivalrous to the northern woman, the northern woman to forgive the Latin man. (p.67)

Is the reader expected to deduce from this remark, that Latin men are only chivalrous to Latin women, that northern women only forgive northern men, or that northern women

forgive nobody, and Latin men are never chivalrous? It is an unnecessary and unspecific generalization. Forster himself is not overkeen, in Aspects of the Novel, about "confidences about the individual people" (p.89): he feels these confidences break the illusion of the plot, that the conviction of the novel and the convincing portrayal of the characters is lessened. As this particular plot stands, no more than the personalities of Lilia and Gino need be engaged; national generalizations are irrelevant. Fortunately Forster does not indulge much - any generalizations are given, more appropriately, to the characters themselves, for it is they who have to realize the individual behind the stereotype.

Almost fifty years after the publication of Where Angels Fear to Tread Forster is quoted as saying "In no book have I got down more than the people I like, the person I think I am, and the people who irritate me."³ Harriet Herriton and her mother would irritate anyone, but Forster's sketches entertain, as well. Harriet the bony prophetess with her Low Church inclinations, her "unfortunate" feet, and her ability to deliver "a platitude as if it were an epigram" is incredibly funny, between the pages of a book. Like old Mr Woodhouse, she would be appalling in real life. But Forster's real dislike is reserved for her mother, for it is Harriet who confronts Philip, on the way to Monteriano, with the basics of his situation.

'what about the baby, pray? You've said a lot of smart things and whittled away morality and religion and I don't know what; but what about the baby?... I've been noticing you all today, and you haven't mentioned the baby once. You haven't thought about it, even. You don't care'... She was a straight, brave woman, as well as a peevish one. (p.93)

The last comment is indeed Forster - Harriet must not be allowed too much sympathy. But Harriet, like Caroline, can see Philip's faults, and can act for what she believes is right. The surprise of Harriet's kidnapping of the baby is no less convincing for its being unexpected, and her hysterics and temporary collapse afterwards seem

equally realistic. That it should be Harriet and her smuts that dominate the final scene of the return to Sawston when "all the wonderful things have happened" (p.160) seems perfectly appropriate. Whatever Philip or Caroline thought or did or experienced, Harriet, easy in her convictions and her definition of right or wrong, can still see her way clearly. She is as uncomplicated as Gino: secure in her environment, certain of her position, in Sawston.

Mrs Herriton, however, is a far more devious character, more successful, more insidious. She embodies what Forster disliked most in conventional, English, middle-class suburban morality - what Caroline Abbott sees as "petty unselfishness". If she fails to get the baby, she deliberately sets in motion events that destroy it, as she had deliberately set about destroying all connection between Lilia and her daughter. The only way Mrs Herriton can be checked is by a system that has no comprehension of her own and is as confident in its security as she is in hers. Where Forster is especially successful, however, is in leaving Mrs Herriton unscathed in Sawston. Unlike Gino she has not suffered and recovered, aware that life and happiness will come again - she maintains her 'life' by ignoring Life. She connects with no one. She will, as Philip realises, deceive herself successfully for her own society - she admits her motives not even to those she knows are aware of them - and while she stays within that society she is secure and successful. After all, she does not go herself to Italy; it is Philip and Caroline, and even Harriet, who are confused and forced to reassess their values.

Forster's pattern for Where Angels Fear to Tread is simple but unobtrusive. The plot, enclosed by railway journeys and connections, is balanced in two parts. The first half includes Lilia and Caroline's journey to Italy and Lilia's marriage; Philip's journey, a foregone failure, though he does not know it; his confrontation with Gino; and his return to England accompanied by Caroline. The second part contains Philip's second

journey to Monteriano, occasioned by the family decision to adopt the baby - another failure, for reasons not easy to foresee; this time he is accompanied by Harriet and again meets Caroline unexpectedly; there is another, physical, confrontation with Gino; and he returns to England accompanied by Harriet and Caroline, but with no baby, as on the first trip he had no Lilia. On either side of these sections stretch links, backwards and forwards. Philip sends off Lilia and Caroline with advice of his own previous trip to Italy, and, at the close of the novel he talks of a planned visit the following year, to make more Italian contact. Described thus the pattern appears stark, but the novel itself provides an excellent balance of similarity and distance, progression and retraction. At no time is the pattern so rigid that the characters or their actions appear distorted, to enable them to fit the aesthetics of the book. If an incident such as the fight appears unnecessary, its inclusion is due rather to the message as Forster saw it, than the pattern, and the pessimism of the end is due more to the personal beliefs of the author than any rigidity such as Forster described in Henry James.

To show personal and emotional reassessment (or in Harriet's case, reaffirmation!) Forster balances Italy against England constantly. Being an early work the technique is not as subtle as in A Passage to India, but the patterning of the novel is still successful. The one dominant physical connection between the two ways of life is the railway. It is the closest Mrs Herriton ever comes to Italy, apart from letters and postcards - the "telegrams and anger" of Howards End. Because this communication is practical and ordered Sawston attempts, often successfully, to dominate it: Harriet in the train, and Mrs Herriton and Harriet's reaction to letters and postcards. Again it is Italy and Italians who have the ability to disorganise Sawston order by connecting, uninvited, on various social levels: the sons of Italian dentists send letters and postcards, and Italian opera singers complain of the heat; even Italian smuts contribute to confuse the issue. But Philip and Caroline, as fugitives from suburbia, cannot succeed, it must be noticed, without

help from the opposition.

To connect with Italy, however, is not merely a matter of a train journey - extra effort must be made, for the railway line does not go directly to Monteriano, but past it. To make contact, as Mrs Herriton discovers from Baedeker, the traveller "must take what is suitably termed a legno - a piece of wood -- and drive up eight miles of excellent road into the Middle Ages" (p.33). In Italy much happens in the legno between the station and the town: first Philip's illusions are destroyed, and then the baby. An added irony here, part of the rhythm, while legno can mean a diligence or a piece of wood in Italian, the word 'wood' is repeated, significantly throughout the novel. There is the beautifully described small wood through which Philip passes on his first trip, the leafless tress awash in violets, a sight so exquisite that despite his annoyance Philip remembers the beauty in Sawston, the following year. At the awful first meal Gino airs his patriotism and his erudition by quoting the opening to Dante's Inferno with "una selva oscura". On Philip's second trip there are no violets in the wood, only "withered trees", and it is in this darkened wood that the two legni collide, killing the baby and almost swallowing the small bundle in one of the deep cart ruts.

Philip, Caroline and Lilia are prepared to make the connection between the railway station and the town. Harriet, Sawston-abroad, objects. Bored and well-fed she might have been in Switzerland, but secure. Once she has gone through the Saint Gotthard tunnel she moves, it would appear, into her own Inferno, literally, as the heat is almost insupportable. Forster's descriptions of the English tourist abroad are hilarious- mad dogs and Englishmen: the insular rigidity that sees nothing good if it is not a mirror image of the familiar. But, again, Forster is never rigid in his use of leit-motifs, there are always variations. If Charing Cross is a point of departure from conformity or security towards Italy, it is also a local station too, and it is on the train from Sawston to Charing Cross that Philip and Caroline Abbott first truly connect. In Italy as well, the train moves

locals as well as foreigners, and, being Italian, inevitably contributes to art and culture and kindness. The exhaustedly-sleeping Philip is put off at the correct station by

fellow passengers (who) had the usual Italian gift of divination, and when Monteriano came they knew he wanted to go there, and dropped him out. (p.33)

(A successful kindness that contrasts neatly with poor Mr Kingcroft, too late with his footwarmers!) The hot sweaty lady who irritates Harriet, first by sweating and then by courtesy, is the visiting soprano who, whatever the state of her glands in the afternoon, has a voice of beauty and a more than adequate technique of coloratura by the evening. Inevitably it is Harriet who demands to know what has happened to Scott (that most English of story tellers) by the time Italy and Donizetti have finished with him. Is it, incidentally, only coincidence that the opera is Lucia di Lammermoor, the story of a girl driven to despair, madness, murder and death by the demands of family honour over love, and whose brother's name is Henry? It is a small extra emphasis, a passing allusion for those who can notice the reference. Knowing Forster's complaints of Eliot in The Waste Land with its "scrapheap of quotations" the reader is amused.

Indeed, most of Forster's motifs ripple outward from the first chapter. As well as the departure at the station, there is the Herriton vegetable garden; order, domesticity, forethought and planning personified, until overthrown by news from the other world. The carefully-sown expensive pea beds, complete with string to keep the lines straight, are destroyed first by torn letter fragments, then by sparrows, no respectors of order and decency: and this Mrs Herriton minds most. This disordered order, the only natural scene shown of Sawston, contrasts immediately with the violet wood at Monteriano - nature abundant and natural, expansive rather than expensive.

When the atlas shows only a name in small print, Mrs Herriton turns to Byron for information on Monteriano;

English literature providing no clues she moves, finally and successfully to Baedeker. The information is precise, clear and informative - what one would expect from an organised Protestant German - and as a parody of the real thing, the Forster "entry" is brilliant. All the references are echoed, and amplified throughout the book. The ironies abound here: Byron and Childe Harold give no information, but Dante has a commentary, in The Purgatorio, of course, and Dante is quoted in the next chapter by Gino; the quotation is one of the links with woods, and Philip's fate. The irony of Mrs Herriton checking that pillar of Romanticism and love, Byron, English by birth but European by inclination, before using, as a last resort, the practical Baedeker, is delightful. Nationalism can muddle commonsense.

On his last afternoon in Monteriano Philip stands in the middle of the piazza:

The Piazza with its three great attractions - the Palazzo Pubblico, the Collegiate Church and the Caffé Garibaldi: the intellect, the soul and the body - had never looked more charming. (p.130)

As Forster presents him, Philip in the centre has to make not only a choice but an amalgamation: he must learn to connect with the intellect, the soul and the body, and unify all three. It is a manifestation of Forster's humanism, again. However, even in Italy this balance is not always achieved, nor is it permanent. In the early Baedeker entry, the "three great attractions" are mentioned, but for two palazzi, and one caffè, there are four churches. However, Santa Deodata has frescoes, a marriage of art and religion, and it also has dust and a smell of garlic! Harriet's St. James, the 'Back Kitchen' of Sawston, has none of these. But the dominance of soul over the other 'attractions', in Italy, can be as rigid as that of intellect in Sawston. Wilfrid Stone, in The Cave and the Mountain,⁴ sees the Santa Deodata of Forster's description as hostile to her mother, as well as inert, and therefore an echo of Philip's family feelings. It seems just as feasible that Forster made her a medieval echo of the Herriton women, looking after

the good of their souls or their social position, no matter what the cost in suffering to their family. To Deodata her mother's injuries are activities of the Devil - she will connect only with God, not with love or people. Mrs Heriton is concerned only with her position in the eyes of Sawston society, and Harriet with the baby's soul not his body. Gino, more body than intellect, and "soul" only in moments of crisis, manoeuvres Lilia into submission by using the church as one of his restrictions. Fairyland, like suburbia, can have conventions, one needs inner strength to cope and connect successfully.

That Baedeker-Forster entry has other echoes of importance: "a walk around the Walls should on no account be omitted" (p.29). It must be omitted if you are an Englishwoman married to an Italian dentist's unemployed son with nothing but his pride to maintain. The result of Lilia's walk on the walls was her confrontation with Gino and the stripping of both their illusions. It is on the Walls that Caroline sees Gino on her second trip to Monteriano and begins, more honestly, to face her emotional situation. When Philip approaches the walls in Spring, they are full of people; they are empty in the blazing August heat, when he arrives with Harriet. There is also that final entry: "The inhabitants are still noted for their agreeable manners"! (p.29)

Another point of difference is made, subtly, first in the Baedeker and expanded throughout the novel: it is that to connect one must go out and look. A walk and view are recommended, the Caffè Garibaldi is starred, the frescoes need to be "inspected". Life in Italy, even when classified by a German Guide book, is lived outwardly and openly, at least for men like Philip and Gino, and women like Caroline.

In Sawston, Philip takes tea with the Abbotts, inside; in Monteriano he has coffee with Gino at the Caffè. Gino is shown living half in and half out of his house, when he isn't in the caffè or the pharmacy. The drawing room, filled with Lilia-momentos is dusty and shut, used only when Caroline visits; the loggia with its timeless

view provides a permanent backdrop for Gino's life as well as Philip's Madonna and Child with Donor (inevitably there is an identical view in the Santa Deodata fresco!) Harriet's lists of virtuous, self-improving pursuits taken under the aegis of the Back Kitchen contrast with the Italian night at the opera where, greedily and happily, the population of Monteriano enjoy their music and their social life as well. Even bad taste and vulgarity, in the light of Italy, are admirable. In Sawston, when Mrs Herriton reacts to Caroline's interference, that reaction is behind her own closed doors. She shouts, she swears, "her face was red, she panted for breath" (p.87), she "pains" Philip and he shouts back - but in private. In Italy, faced with Harriet in an equally alarming state of temper and hysteria inside the hotel, Stella d'Italia, Philip escapes and shouts and gesticulates his frustration in public:

Such people as observed him were interested, but did not conclude that he was mad. This aftermath of conversation is not unknown in Italy. (p.97)

It is a comment worthy of Jane Austen in its quiet amusement. As is the remark that Caroline is going to London to "buy petticoats for the corpulent poor", when in Monteriano the local idiot is a viable member of the community, as able to judge his worth and independence as his English contemporaries: though he acts to rectify what he thinks is too much; they, presumably, to insure they don't have too little.

It is Forster's interest in and response to foreign countries as well as his own that make these national and personal contrasts so successful. The critic who enjoyed Marmaduke Pickthall, the Emperor Babur, and William Clark's Gaspacho, or who dislike Marco Polo because he understood things but not people, responds, in his own works, to a nation of warmth and beauty. Two descriptions among many of Italy, one Forster's, the other Philip/Forster's, will prove examples. Even Lilia, that most unaesthetic of women, is reduced to tears by the beauty of the walls of Monteriano at sunset (Baedeker is right). The strange contradiction of Italy as an historical landscape, however,

she cannot understand:

The country, that would be stranger still - vast slopes of olives and vineyards, with chalk-white farms, and in the distance other slopes, with more olives and more farms, and more little towns outlined against the cloudless sky.... There was scarcely a touch of wildness in it - some of those slopes had been under cultivation for two thousand years. But it was terrible and mysterious all the same. (p.160)

It is, of course, a landscape with people, a landscape that has been peopled for two thousand years. It is the same land that Philip sees, not only as despoiled of its Pax Romana and Renaissance by a dentist's son, but glowing with a present and eternal life that had not necessarily much to do with history. Immediately before the hilarious description of Harriet in Italy comes the Herriton's train journey to Verona.

They travelled for thirteen hours down hill, whilst the streams broadened and the mountains shrank, and the vegetation changed, and the people ceased being ugly and drinking beer, and began instead to drink wine and to be beautiful. And the train which had picked them up at sunrise out of a waste of glaciers and hotels was waltzing at sunset round the walls of Verona. (p.90)

Again it is the people, their habits and their towns that have the appeal.

To analyse each part of Where Angels Fear to Tread separately, to pursue Forster's easy rhythm or his patterning and balancing of Sawston and Italy, makes for a heaviness that is not at all present in the novel as a whole. Correctly placed the references are light, witty and subtle and the reader is not conscious of Forster playing superior intellectual games. Forster as Philip is convincing, his fight towards connection, tolerance and humanism is handled with care and delicacy. Perhaps it is Forster's very ability to analyse his own reactions while clothing Philip in them, that makes the final solution jar somewhat. With one exception, the mood has been social comedy, the central characters are sympathetic, or convincing, or both, and the message is one of such

importance that the implied pessimism of the end is almost too dark a note on which to close.

FootnotesII A. Where Angels Fear to Tread

1. Letter to R.C. Trevelyan, 28 October 1905, quoted WAFT, p.161.
2. ibid., p.162.
3. Interview with P.N. Furbank and F.J.H. Haskell. The Paris Review 1957 quoted in Olive, H.J., The Art of E.M. Forster. Parkville: Melbourne University Press, 1960, p.37.
4. Stone, W. The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966.

B. The Longest Journey

It is people and places and connection that prove of major importance in The Longest Journey, as well, but the mood here continues the final darkness of the first book, rather than its lightness. It is almost as if moving away from the "terrific blue sky" of Italy has dimmed the wit and sharpness. The message is still one of connection, there are again characters who have to make choices between real life and social convention, there is still Forster's ability to evoke the spirit of place, but the ending that might be seen as not completely satisfactory for Where Angels Fear to Tread seems far more depressing now, and pessimism seems to have destroyed much of the humour.

Whatever mood strikes the reader, Forster himself has been quoted as saying that The Longest Journey was the novel he was "most glad to have written".¹ Certainly Rickie, with his fey creativity, his belief in fantasy, and his love of Cambridge appears a fictional Forster - "the person I am" - even more than Philip Herriton. And perhaps here lies part of the reader's problem and, unintentionally, part of Forster's. The gentle, charming Rickie, with his hopes and fears, his yearning for friendship and art and creation and warmth is a fully convincing person. His faults and failings are entirely in character: having idealized his mother it is inevitable that he should romantically distort Agnes - and his disillusion is inevitable too. His sinking into the cultural and individual abyss of Sawston and its public school is shown as incomplete. With the help of Stephen and Ansell he struggles to break free. His depression over Stephen's drunkenness does not seem unreasonable, nor does it appear totally devastating. Forster shows a real character with flaws, depressions and hopes, moving towards an individual life - except that he isn't allowed to! Is a gloom that appears, from the text, temporary and transient, really punishable by death? Unlike the

character, the punishment does not convince. Either Rickie's reaction must be shown as far more despairing, or Stephen's failure to live up to Rickie's expectations must be greater. Rickie's gloom and Stephen's drunkenness are coloured for the reader by their last scene together with the floating paper lights - a scene of great beauty, far more striking and effective than Rickie's subsequent sadness. Is it Rickie himself who really feels he has failed, or is it Forster's own judgement? In Aspects of the Novel Forster defines plot as "a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality" (p.93). Here the causality appears to fall on the characters. Forster's judgement appears to be made not on the character we are shown in the book, but an unspecific cipher whom Forster as author, intended to show destroyed because he was tainted by weakness, and lack of trust. If Forster intended his warning to be of import - the need for awareness of the destructive nature of social convention - then perhaps he should have rather created characters like Hardy's, who "let their arms rise and fall in the air" (AN p.140). As it is, Rickie, totally convincing and sympathetic, appears to have the universe loaded against him by his creator. Stephen is given the ultimate comment on Rickie "The spirit had fled, in agony and loneliness, never to know that it bequeathed him salvation" (p.288). Stephen's salvation seems dearly bought; as Rickie's salvation from Sawston seems thrown away in the light of what Forster does with him subsequently. It is the unique individuality of Rickie that Ansell thinks is worth saving, and if Rickie himself has the strength, at the crisis, to take his chance at freedom and attempt to face his own personal reality, his death for being himself appears creatively illogical.

The ambiguity of Rickie's position in the novel is not helped, of course, by the ambiguity of Stephen as a creation. Again, as himself, Stephen is entirely valid. But if he is an embodiment of the "aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky"² that Forster hoped would inherit the earth, he fails. He is neither sensitive, nor considerate - Rickie is those, and they

destroy him. Where Stephen succeeds is in exposing the hypocrisy of English conventionality - as a social bull in a china shop. At his best, exposing Herbert or Agnes, Stephen seems rather an English version of Gino without the inherent charm or grace. At his worst, the reader, like Agnes, can see the resemblance to Gerald. Stephen as the son, the love-child of the charming, gentle Mrs Elliot and the delightful Robert is incongruous. Before he briskly drowned him, Forster had described Robert as more than a farmer: he was socially competent, astute, patient, and possessed a sense of humour. He could talk of Byron, and manure. One does not doubt Stephen's ability to cope with manure - Forster makes great play, however, of his offensive doggeral verses about his aunt! Stephen riding and arguing with the soldier; Stephen drunk; Stephen fighting Ansell among the lobelias; sleeping in the rifle-butts; leaving manuscripts on the roof; throwing bricks, or chalk; and, most enjoyable of all, Stephen finally turning on Herbert Pembroke, is entirely convincing. But Stephen as the valid alternative, the chosen instrument in preference to Rickie, to carry on the family line does not convince at all:

The dead who had evoked him, the unborn
whom he would evoke - he governed the
path between them. By whose authority? (p.288)

Forster's authority, presumably! The reader is reminded of a comment of Forster's in Aspects of the Novel:

The characters arrive when evoked, but full of the spirit of mutiny. For they have these numerous parallels with people like ourselves, they try to live their own lives and are consequently often engaged in treason against the main scheme of the book. They 'run away', they 'get out of hand': they are creations inside a creation, and often inharmonious towards it; if they are given complete freedom they kick the book to pieces, and if they are kept too sternly in check, they revenge themselves by dying and destroy it by intestinal decay. (p.74)

With the other characters in the book, especially those he dislikes, Forster does not fail. Herbert and Agnes Pembroke are excellent. With his "air of being on the verge" of holy orders, with clothes and features and

mind of a clerical cut, and whose "conscience permitted him to enter the Church whenever his profession which was the scholastic should demand it" (p.15) Herbert is vastly entertaining. He is, with his ordered spiritual and social life, a male version of the Herriton ladies. Inevitably, the only really human instinct Herbert shows is provoked by an hour's "intellectual" combat with Stephen. The description of Herbert battering down the urge to put a knife in Stephen's back is highly amusing. But Agnes is not funny: "a kindly Medea, a Cleopatra with a sense of duty" (p.53) is how Rickie sees her initially. Beautiful, efficient, dabbling in conventional unconventionality Agnes' only moment of glory is her genuine love for Gerald. And Gerald, like Rickie's father, is one of the people whose death, if not totally convincing is at least satisfying for the reader. It is in connection with Agnes, however, that two points may be raised on the subject of character creation. Firstly, whatever limitations Agnes has in her intellectual ability to understand Rickie's stories, or his philosophy, whatever social surfaces she will maintain in the face of unsavoury truths, however little emotional involvement she has with Rickie, she always appears efficient, organised, enjoying large-scale domestic organization. It appears improbable, therefore, that either she or Rickie (who has suffered in the past on this specific subject), would leave a window open to enable their small daughter to die quickly and painlessly. If the irony of associating sudden chills and death with the two females Rickie loves most - his daughter and his mother - is intentional, it is extremely heavy-handed. In his lectures Forster maintained that a real character has the ability to surprise convincingly: there is a difference, however, between being unpredictable and unconvincing. The second point is raised by the social awareness Agnes is shown to have concerning Rickie's abandonment of Sawston and her.

People asked, 'Why did her husband leave her?' and the answer came, 'Oh nothing particular; he only couldn't stand her; she lied and taught him to lie; she kept him from work that suited him, from his friends, from his brother - in a word,

she tried to run him, which a man won't pardon.' (p.258)

This appears rather the judgement of Ansell, or Forster. Agnes still lies, even to herself, like Mrs Herriton, so she would be far more likely, as Forster then suggests, to hate the people concerned.

The characters of Rickie's father and aunt are brilliantly done. Mr Elliot is a cold, hard, trivial aesthete, his nickname for Rickie is callous and vicious, as is sending him to boarding school, and the likes of Gerald, when the joke palls. Forster's judgement on Mr Elliot's death is worthy of Herbert, and sounds in tone remarkably like that gentleman's last thoughts on Rickie:

God alone knows how far we are in the grip of our bodies. He alone can judge how far the cruelty of Mr Elliot was the outcome of extenuating circumstances. (p.31)

Rickie's aunt is as nasty as her brother and she lives longer: "She had the same affliction, the same heartlessness, the same habit of taking life with a laugh - as if life is a pill!" (p.105). She laughs without love or tolerance, Stephen's incoherent anger, or Rickie's depressed anguish are infinitely preferable. Like Mrs Herriton, however, she is no fool; she plays her role within society, despite her idiosyncracies, and to her are given some of the astute comments on convention and respectability:

'We are conventional people, and conventions - if you will but see it - are majestic in their way, and will claim us in the end. We do not live for great passions or for great memories or for anything great'.... 'The important things in life are little things, and that people are not important at all.' (p.274)

Conventions are not only majestic but monolithic, and what they cannot claim, they destroy.

In a book that demands connection so insistently it is part of Forster's construction to provide for Rickie and Stephen a forebear of both spiritual and practical use in the shape of Mr Failing, Rickie's uncle and Stephen's guardian. Where connection is seen as

imperative not only between man and man, but between man and nature, the connection between man and the generations that go before and after will help to achieve a fitting wholeness. These attempts are watched over by three benign spirits, dead before the book begins: Robert, Mrs Elliot and Mr Failing. These spirits, must be part of Forster's own mythology, for they function best in Wiltshire; they are invoked, as he said in Aspects of the Novel, by place: "...all beings who inhabit the lower air, the shallow water, and the smaller hills, all Fauns and Dryads" (p.115), they seem quite appropriate for the Rickie who writes stories. There is an added irony that Mr Failing should be seen as just that - a failure - by his wife, and yet provide the most practical help, both actual and philosophical. He may seem a failed farmer and failed philosopher, judged by conventional standards, but he practically helps Rickie's mother in her crisis, educates Stephen into a most uncompromising practical socialism, and provides for Rickie and Ansell, an insight into the necessity of the fellowship of man, and the distinction between coarseness and vulgarity.

The laughter and wit in this novel appear confined rather to Mrs Failing and her bitter mockery. Forster's evocation of Cambridge and Wiltshire has much beauty and happiness, but the dissections of Sawston School have an acidity stronger than anything Forster had used in his earlier novel. But there, Forster had shown that the English abroad are indeed funny, and in Where Angels Fear to Tread the social conventions of Sawston can be destroyed in an older and different society. Sawston at home, has the strength of geographical security. Sawston at school, has the added weight of an academic snobbishness allied to patriotism and brutality. The society within a society which is the public school breeds men like Gerald, or Vardon. The criteria are conformity and success, Herbert Pembroke's gods.

Forster had divided the novel into the three parts of Cambridge, Sawston and Wiltshire, as he shows Rickie's journey towards connection and humanity. The motifs recur

and balance one against the other, or rather, two against one as Cambridge and Wiltshire need to combine to outwit Sawston. The three benign spirits can equally be taken as representing, in the old order, what is best in the three societies, Mr Failing as the intellectual, Mrs Elliot as the suburban mother, Robert as the farmer. Whatever the verdict of convention - and all three were aware of the power of middle-class morality - these made, at personal cost, continued efforts to reach out across their particular environments, to people elsewhere. In the younger generation, they are repeated by Ansell, Rickie and Stephen. But these wise and experienced spirits cannot provide secure and steadfast happiness and strength, nor can the ordinary world be shut out for ever: Herbert is also a product of Cambridge, Mrs Failing lives in Wiltshire, and Agnes moves between all three environments and controls them very successfully.

With an irony worthy of Butler or Sterne Forster turns the domestic cow into a philosophical symbol, and then asks: "Do they exist only when there is someone to look at them? or have they a real existence of their own?" (p.7) Cambridge debates the question, unable to make up its mind: Sawston appears to live by the first belief; Wiltshire and Stephen, accept, practically, the second. Like the cow, convention and Sawston are everywhere. Ansell refuses to allow the cow an existence if he cannot see it - he says the same of Agnes, and has to move from philosophy into action. Stephen, prosaically, stays with the practical - a cow is a useful animal. Like Rickie's stories, handled properly it will produce money. For Rickie, the cow multiplies, becomes part of a scene, part of a world order of cows, because Rickie colours the abstract and individualises the general, and then loses the point of the argument.

Christianity, like philosophy, becomes a Forsterian link in a unique and individual way, but it is a Christianity that believes in more than narrow regional confines: it answers the call for brotherhood and general connection. Stephen, the deliberate atheist, has an emotional response to the spire of Salisbury Cathedral that

is almost surprising in one so deliberate. But the cathedral is so much part of the country he loves that he cannot accept completion unless it is there. It is for him a visual component that makes up a complete and satisfying physical whole. The Roman Catholic Church in Cambridge is another landmark, confusing to those who do not know the city, but in that centre of civil war puritanism the spiritual emblem of the opposition is accepted, like everything else - it has a geographical and also a theological place. In Sawston, however, the school has no chapel. It has rules, houses, too expensive racquet courts, a library, but no chapel.

At the start of the novel Rickie looks out at a warm summer evening with stars, the same evening that Stephen watches at the close. Rickie's dell glows with light and nature, even with Agnes in it. And light seems dominant in the Cadbury Rings, even when Mrs Failing enters it, but the remembered mood in Sawston is an enveloping and stifling fog, the cold that kills Rickie's daughter. Rickie wants everyone - the vulgar herd, the 'profani' included, - to share the beauty of his dell; Stephen looks forward and plans practically for his children and his neighbours children - the level crossing is bridged so that speed and progress and superficial connection cannot destroy any more country dwellers. In Sawston, however, lobelias grow in ordered rows, hedges hide people, and the smells are not of earth, sky, autumn leaves or sweet peas, but roast beef. Ansell sits in the garden of Dunwood House the phrase "procul este, profani" is repeated in Mr Failing's essay - an echo of the Cambridge aesthete who would keep ordinary mortals away from beauty. For convention and Sawston, Stephen and Ansell are the uninitiate, the "abnormal" as Agnes says of Stephen, and as such they must be kept out, for their truth, the truth of coarseness rather than vulgarity, would reveal too much. Convention can only be vulgar, "the shoddy reticence that prevents man opening his heart to man, the power that makes against equality" (p.211).

The interaction of vulgarity or coarseness, the subjective interpretation of who is initiate, who profane,

is echoed in the interaction of squares and circles in The Longest Journey. On the night of Agnes' first visit to Cambridge Ansell is discovered prophetically drawing squares within circles, within squares: only "the one in the middle of everything" is real, but whether that is a circle or a square Ansell does not say. Mrs Failing's exposure in the Cadbury Rings gives Rickie a vision of hell, the hell of his father's square room, as the trees and the rings spin around his fainting figure. The square constrictions of Sawston that claim him after that vision have to be broken before Rickie can be saved and know that "the earth is round". In the final confrontation between Herbert as a successful representative of Sawston and Stephen as Rickie's spiritual heir, Stephen forces Herbert to look out, beyond the confines of Stephen's sitting room, over the sweet peas, to the real world outside and the river running to the sea, part of a large circle. Inevitably, for that night, Stephen rejects the confines of his home, and spends the night on the hillside, close to the Rings: Rickie's magic dell has given place to an older, more solid magic. Even the musical reference here, with Wagner as the dominant composer, connect the 'motifs' - for on Agnes' entry into Rickie's rooms someone is playing the prelude to Rhinegold the story of the theft of the Rine maidens lump of magic gold which is forged by Alberich the Nibelung into a ring that guaranteed worldly success and riches - and destruction.

Forster's greatest success in this novel, however, may be his ability to create place. People live and learn best in communication with one another, and it is in his descriptions of Salisbury on Market Day or Cambridge as a new term begins, that Forster seems most assured:

Cambridge, according to her custom, welcomed her sons with open drains. Petty curry was up, so was Trinity Street, and navvies peeped out of Kings Parade. Here it was gas, there electric light, but everywhere something and always a smell. It was also the day that the wheels fell off the station tram. (p.60)

It was Virginia Woolf's ability to describe food

that Forster admired "when Virginia Woolf mentions nice things they get right into our mouths, so far as the edibility of the print permits."³ His own ability to describe life and movement and interiors, is equally satisfying: the deliberate usefulness of Dunwood House, the loving chaos of Rickie's rooms at Cambridge, the cold perfection of Cadover House, the comfortable open freedom of the Ansell's, the "strip of brown holland" in the Pembroke Hall. There is a neat satisfaction for the reader in Stephen hurling lumps of chalk through Cadover's windows, but a brick through Dunwood's.

But the amusement of such details is one of the few light moments in the novel. The future which Forster hints at, even for Stephen, is not one of total security: the railway crossing may be bridged, but like the earth and the sky, and the cow, the train is there at the end of the book, and so is Herbert. If the true heirs of Rickie and his daughter are to be Stephen and his children, Agnes, too, has had a son, and the spiritual heirs of Herbert at Sawston, are legion.

What Forster felt important in this book was the need to see the dangers of conformity, for whatever reasons, and with whatever excuses. But as Forster presents it, Rickie's journey through the various consequences of his personal choices leads to his inevitable death. Stephen succeeds by being entirely himself, he gains nothing from Cambridge except Ansell as an ally. If the first section of the book is irrelevant and impractical, why, like Rickie, is it so appealing? Each section, in itself, is excellently realised, the people are entirely convincing, but the book as a whole does not hang together. As Forster himself says "the inherent defect of novels (is) they go off at the end" (AN p.103). Using Forster's own imagery against him, his characters are too round to fit into the square pegs of symbolism and message - either the characters, or the symbolism, should have been lighter.

FootnotesII B. The Longest Journey

1. Cowley, M. Writer at Work. Series II. Listener,
1 January 1959.
2. 'What I Believe' (1939) in TCD, p.81.
3. 'Virginia Woolf' (1941) in TCD, p.258.

C. A Room with a View

In A Room with a View Forster's mood lightens as he returns to Italy and the sun. The plot is similar to his previous novels: the necessity for connection and the making of the right choice in personal relationships. The irony is light and brilliant, and the social setting is again the English abroad and at home, but conscious aestheticism, as well as convention, comes in for exposure. Lucy Honeychurch as the central protagonist is delightfully convincing, his creation of "the people who irritate me" is masterly, but in the portraits of the Emersons Forster appears to have allowed their message to dominate their right to personality - particularly George. A decided innovation for Forster, and the reader, however, is the happy ending - the honeymoon of the successfully united Lucy and George is, in the light of the previous novels, unexpected.

Along with his pessimistic ending, Forster here has dispensed even with Baedeker, instead Forster has enlarged on Philip Herriton's advice to his sister-in-law to see Italians as well as Italy. But Forster's ability to write a mock-Baedeker is brilliantly expanded in this book when he contrasts the real Italy of people, life and natural beauty that Lucy sees, with the Italys of Miss Lavish and the Reverend Mr Eager, and in doing so expose the personalities of each individual. What Lucy sees are Italians:

Over the river men were at work with spades and sieves on the sandy foreshore, and on the river was a boat, also diligently employed for some mysterious end. An electric tram came rushing underneath the window. No one was inside it, except one tourist; but its platforms were overflowing with Italians, who preferred to stand. Children tried to hang on behind, and the conductor, with no malice, spat in their faces to make them let go. Then soldiers appeared - good-looking, undersized men - wearing each a knapsack covered with mangy fur, and a greatcoat which had been cut for some larger soldier. Beside them walked officers, looking foolish and fierce, and before them went little boys. (p.35)

There are, as well, bullocks and buttonhook sellers and more small boys, and, as Forster states:

the traveller 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. (pp.35-36)

Here the ubiquitous cousin Charlotte interrupts Lucy's contemplations, and entrusts her first tour of Florence to Miss Lavish. Forster's wit takes over:

How delightfully warm. But a wind down the side streets that cut like a knife, didn't it? Ponte alle Grazie - particularly interesting, mentioned by Dante. San Miniato - beautiful as well as interesting; the crucifix that kissed a murderer - Miss Honeychurch would remember the story. The men on the river were fishing (untrue; but then so is most information). Then Miss Lavish darted under the archway of the white bullocks, and she stopped, and she cried: 'A smell! A true Florentine smell!...' (p.37)

It is a masterpiece reminiscent of Miss Bates, or Mrs Elton, minus her caro sposo, in the strawberry picking scene. The Italians the reader may assume, see the bullocks as bullocks, like Stephen's reaction to practical cows, in The Longest Journey.

Mr Eager is first introduced in Sante Croce, along with the he-babies and the she-baby, extolling faith over tactile values as a better method of judging Giotto. His lecture on the cogniscenti of the English colony at Florence of whom he is, of course, an intimate, is excellently done:

'it is of considerable size, though, of course not all equally - a few are here for trade, for example. But the greater part are students. Lady Helen Laverstock is at present busy over Fra Angelico. I mention her name because we are passing her villa on the left. No, you can only see it if you stand - no, do not stand; you will fall. She is very proud of that thick hedge. Inside, perfect seclusion...' on the right lived Mr Someone Something an American of the best type - so rare! - and that the Somebody else was further down the hill. 'Doubtless you know her monographs in the

series of "Medieval Byways"? He is working at "Gemistus Pletho" (!) Sometimes as I take tea in their beautiful grounds I hear, over the wall, the electric tram squealing up the new road with its load of hot, dusty, unintelligent tourists who are go to "do" Fiesole in order that they may say they have been there, and I think - I think - I think how little they think what lies so near them.' (pp.81-82)

"Procul este, profani" indeed! The reader can only echo Forster's comment on Jane Austen - how E.M. Forster can write. It is, of course, Lucy, who sees and becomes part of a natural view that is strongly reminiscent of the wood of Where Angels Fear to Tread.

The ground sloped sharply into the view, and violets ran down in rivulets and streams and cataracts, irrigating the hillside with blue, eddying round the tree stems, collecting into pools in the hollows, covering the grass with spots of azure foam. But never again were they in such profusion; this terrace was the well-head, the primal source whence beauty gushed out to water the earth. (p.89)

It is, of course, Charlotte who breaks the spell of that view, too, but not before George has had a brief moment to make the magic more than visual.

It is Mr Beebe, in his earlier more pleasant aspect, who admits that he makes almost a study of maiden ladies - so, too, does Forster. There are Charlotte, and Miss Lavish, and the two gently delightful Miss Alans - better spoken, better-mannered, more tolerant versions of Miss Lavish. In fact celibacy seems to dominate in the novel, for until George and Lucy marry there are no other married couples: Mrs Honeychurch and Mrs Vyse are widows, Mr Emerson is a widower - an integral part of the plot -, Mr Eager and Mr Beebe are not married at all, although Mr Beebe possesses, we are told, an elderly mother. The only allies that George and Lucy have, it would seem, are Phaethon, the carriage-driver, and his Persephone - but these two are effective demolishers of the sterile asceticism of the Middle Ages.

Charlotte Bartlett appears a kinder version of

Harriet Herriton, more capable of tolerating foreigners abroad and with, unexpectedly, a better dress-sense, but her ability to become muddled by the British railway system, a recalcitrant boiler or the spontaneous warm-hearted unconventionality of the Emersons is entirely feasible, as is the portrait of Charlotte demolishing the view above Fiesole with a cough and a mackintosh square. What is difficult to accept, however, is George's happy hypothesis at the end of the novel that it was Charlotte who had subconsciously engineered Lucy's meeting with Mr Emerson in the Summer Street rectory. In Aspects of the Novel Forster sums up the difference between real people (convincing people) in a book, and people in actual life - as always, for him, the difference lies in connection and understanding:

We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly, ... we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life. (p.70)

Perhaps it is Forster's ability to put people from real life into his books, complete with their inexplicable motivations, along with "real" book-people like Lucy, that causes the reader to question Charlotte's role.

With his attention and irony turned more towards the conscious aesthetes, Forster's treatment of people living within the conventional framework of society is, generally, pleasant, tolerant, and hopeful. Not all society is self-deceiving all the time - the Honeychurches as a family are a delight. The scene of Mrs Honeychurch writing a letter to Mrs Vyse about Cecil and Lucy while Freddy attempts to make some sense of "the human frame fearfully made" is very funny and very clever, and the wit is not at all hostile. Very few novelists could successfully have repeated Mrs Honeychurch's epistolary attempts four or five times and still left the reader wondering, amusedly, what she finally said. Freddy with his tennis, his bumble-puppy, his swimming, his attempt to be fair to cousin Charlotte when he doesn't like eggs,

and his antipathy to Cecil, is absolutely real. His good-nature and family fondness make it inevitable that it should be he who maintains contact with the newly-weds; it seems equally inevitable that the sorely-tried Mrs. Honeychurch should not. The full extent of the emotional damage that Charlotte's demand for secrecy creates in the already confused Lucy is particularly obvious when her normal relationship with her mother is described. Kindness, love, tolerance, a belief in the pleasanter comforts of life like good food and a well-run house matter to Mrs Honeychurch, and people matter too. She is as angry with Freddy's rudeness to Cecil - "you're so holy and truthful, but really it's only abominable conceit" (p.103) - as she is with Cecil's superior boredom about her neighbours and her house:

If high ideals make a young man rude, the sooner he gets rid of them, the better.... No doubt I am neither artistic nor literary nor intellectual nor musical, but I cannot help the drawing-room furniture: your father bought it and we must put up with it, will Cecil kindly remember. (p.155)

Having made an effort for Cecil, then for the Miss Alans, then for Lucy's trip to Greece, all with the hurtful belief that Lucy did not want to stay at home, the final revelation that Lucy was, and always had been in love with George must have been shattering. Old Mr Emerson gives Lucy the courage to tell her mother, with his belief "there is Truth. Truth counts, Truth does count" (p.225). It is equally true for Mrs Honeychurch: "They were disgusted at her past hypocrisy; she had alienated Windy Corner" (p.228).

And Lucy, hypocrisy and muddle included, is a delightful heroine. Whether she is mouthing social platitudes, falling in love with della Robia cherubs, or George, attempting to talk Italian, or playing Beethoven or Schumann or bumble-puppy, she is equally convincing. She looks well in white, plain in red, doesn't mind coffee stains, has a healthy appetite, darns socks and knits ties; she loves her mother and her brother, and can reconcile Beethoven and comic songs. It is not difficult to see why George falls in love with her, why

her family is disappointed when she does not keep faith with them, and why even Cecil is interested enough to propose three times. Even Forster cares for her,¹ and what happens to Lucy in Italy is important, to her and to him:

Her senses expanded; she felt that there was no one whom she might not get to like, that social barriers were irremovable, doubtless, but not particularly high. You jump over them.... A rebel she was,... - a rebel who desired not a wider dwelling-room, but equality beside the man she loved. (p.130)

It is this new view of Lucy's that Charlotte and the muddled complications of convention so very nearly destroy. Taking fright into an engagement with Cecil, Lucy is jolted out of it by being kissed again by George. Her answer is to dispense with George and Cecil, and very nearly join forever "the vast armies of the benighted" (p.194) yielding to the "enemy within". Fortunately there is enough red blood and youth in Lucy that another kiss, this one from old Mr Emerson, sets her right. The reader is delighted, by the last chapter, to have Lucy active and committed enough to do some kissing herself.

Ironically, it is in kissing Lucy that Cecil (or his pince-nez) err, too. Cecil is undoubtedly the most likeable of all the people that irritate Forster - for he has insight. He is cursed with a refined nature, but he can see that a kiss should be spontaneous and passionate. His irritation with the conventional necessities of a Home Counties engagement is not unreasonable, and despite his propensity to snore, Forster gives him an excellent departure scene. Cecil may get irritated with the interests of the family at Windy Corner, and be rebuked for being so, but in The Longest Journey Stephen's irritation is seen, by Ansell at least, as a healthy sign. His perception of himself as "viewless" anticipates even Lucy's own analysis of him. And the Vyse dinner party,

The food was poor, but the talk had a witty weariness.... One was tired of everything, it seemed. One launched into enthusiasms

only to collapse gracefully, and pick
oneself up amid sympathetic laughter (p.141)

is balanced by the description of Mrs Vyse, weary but nice, comforting Lucy after a nightmare. Forster's laughter, too, is sympathetic.

It is not only the characters in the book who have problems with the Emersons. Forster and the reader do, too. Old Mr Emerson may not be bald, but he is definitely a prophet, and like all prophets his beliefs are never tactfully presented. Unlike D.H. Lawrence or Ibsen, however, he is kind as well as truthful, and his message of love one another appears, as Forster undoubtedly meant, far more Christian than the Old Testament morality of Mr Eager, or the Pauline austerity of Mr Beebe that loses interest in people when they marry. A prophet has to deliver his message, however, and Mr Emerson's speeches appear, at times, heavy and almost ponderous. His use of the Butler quotation about life being a "public performance on the violin, in which you must learn the instrument as you go along" (p.222), like his kissing Lucy to help her be brave, appear of far more impact than his important demand for truth and honesty: "'Ah! the misery that would be saved if we confessed that! Ah for a little directness to liberate the soul! Your soul, dear Lucy!'" (p.223) For a journalist, Mr Emerson's style is shockingly florid. When he tells Lucy to go on loving the della Robia cherubs, or turns, unafraid, on Mr Eager with "'It is not victory. It is defeat. You have parted two people who were happy'" (p.84), he is convincing. When he stands more for Truth than the truth of creation, his personality appears lost in his role.

With George the situation is different. His introduction to the reader and Lucy is excellent. He smiles at her, and with a shock it is realised how few people, in polite society, actually do that. Instead they bow rigidly, like Lucy. George throwing Lucy's postcards into the Arno because they were bloodstained and he didn't quite know what to do with them, is equally real; as is George making noises in the 'Sacred Lake' or George wanting to win at tennis, or George and Lucy in

Florence together "they sank upon their knees invisible from the road, they hoped, and began to whisper one another's names" (p.228). Where George becomes less believable is as the living embodiment of his father's philosophy. His father seems basically a happy man; George is brought up to value truth over superficiality, but he does not seem to find happiness - truth is obviously not its own reward. One is reminded of Forster's comment (in Aspects of the Novel) on prophecy, "The prophetic aspect demands two qualities: humility and the suspension of the sense of humour" (p.130). Living with his father as prophet appears to have suspended George's sense of humour permanently.

The sudden revelation of Mr Beebe, witty and delightful, tolerant and with a sense of humour, as an ascetic, believing more in celibacy than matrimony may well be part of Forster's belief in the unpredictability of human nature - but even Forster finds it necessary to explain the situation to the reader:

The feeling was very subtle and quite undogmatic, and he never imparted it to any other of the characters in this entanglement. Yet it existed, and it alone explains his action subsequently. (p.207)

He has become "inhuman" and dispensed with - had Forster not meant to have a "human" clergyman, then?

The patterning and rhythm of A Room with a View involves not only place, but people. Forster shows not only the contrast between Italy, Summer Street and London, but, in his variety of middle-aged and elderly spinsters the choice of deadened futures open to Lucy as one of the benighted.

Deliberately and convincingly Forster frames the plot within the room with a view in Florence. It is from this room that Lucy first sees the real Italy, and it seems only natural that she and George should come back on their honeymoon, to the place where they first met. Even on a purely practical level, as Mr Emerson admits "women like looking at a view", and the view had been specifically requested. To emphasise the alliance of

Windy Corner and Italy, the Honeychurch house has a view, too: "Lucy ... seemed on the edge of a green magic carpet which hovered in the air above the tremulous world" (p.105). To emphasise the need to look out and not be enclosed, Lucy is shown at the landing window, after a confrontation with her mother:

It faced north, so there was little view, and no view of the sky. Now, as in the winter, the pine trees hung close to her eyes. One connected the landing window with depression. (p.155)

Cecil defines the difference of attitude between himself and Lucy as visualizing her connected with "a certain type of view" and himself with a viewless drawing room. In the natural differences between convention and Italy, there are echoes of Forster's previous novels: the violets from the little wood in Where Angels Fear to Tread not only spill down the hillside above Fiesole, but the carriage driver picks "some great blue violets" for Lucy, and she is as pleased as are the Miss Alans with the bunches the Emersons picked for them - "So ungentlemanly and yet so beautiful" (p.134). It is Mr Beebe who tells the story of the Miss Alans and the violets, "these very Miss Alans who have failed to come to Cissie Villa" (p.134) and it is in the neat ordered garden of Albert Villa that those representatives of ordered convention, lobelias, are grown - an echo, this time of The Longest Journey and the lobelia beds of Dunwood House.

The fate that lies in store for Lucy alone, is also visualized through natural motifs. While Mrs Honeychurch openly prophesises that Lucy will become another Charlotte, neurotic, pedantic and eternally worrying, it seems unlikely that Lucy will become another Miss Lavish, though her thoughts towards flat-sharing seem to her mother to be messing with latch-keys and typewriters. But Forster deliberately evokes similar images in connection with Miss Catherine Alan and Lucy. Miss Catherine is

always being charitable against her better judgement. A delicate pathos perfumed her disconnected remarks, giving them unexpected beauty, just as

in the decaying autumn woods there
sometimes rise odours reminiscent of
spring. (p.56)

Having, with the aid of Charlotte, despatched the hapless
George, Lucy is about to break her engagement with Cecil:

she was aware of autumn. Summer was
ending, and the evening brought the
odours of decay, the more pathetic
because they were reminiscent of spring. (p.188)

It is right that the novel should end describing the
spring of hope, truth and love for George and Lucy: "They
heard the river, bearing down the snows of Winter into
the Mediterranean" (p.230).

Easy rhythm, exists elsewhere in the book, always
with the intention of contrasting the positive and the
negative choice of life. In examining Proust's use of
the "little phrase" in À La Recherche du Temps Perdu
Forster says "The little phrase does more than anything
else -... - to make us feel that we are in a homogenous
world" (AN p.166). It is this homogeneous world of
similar experiences that Forster creates to point out the
radical difference between the life offered to Lucy by
Cecil, and the life she will lead with George, in conjuc-
tion with Summer Street. Forster uses the visual art
that Lucy, Cecil and the Emersons see in Italy to
clarify his argument. It all seems entirely rational -
even Mr Beebe says so:

You naturally seek out things Italian,
and so do we and our friends. This
narrows the field immeasurably, and we
meet again in it. (p.147)

Lucy, well primed by Charlotte, and Baedeker, examines
Sante Croce for the Giotto frescoes - it is there she
finds the Emersons, and Mr Eager. She is forced to admit
she prefers the "divine babies" in the Piazza d'Annunziata,
products of the Renaissance, not the end of the Middle
Ages. She watches George Emerson:

For a young man his face was rugged, and -
until the shadow fell on 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. (p.45)

It is in Rome, having fled George and his father, that Lucy meets Cecil again. And Cecil, Forster writes,

is medieval. Like a Gothic statue. 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. (p.106)

But for all his medieval asceticism, Cecil finds Lucy very attractive and interesting.

She was like a woman of Leonardo da Vinci's, whom we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us. (p.107)

His second proposal, in the Alps, is a combination of art and view:

She reminded him of a Leonardo more than ever; her sunburnt features were shadowed by fantastic rocks; at his words she had turned and stood between him and the light with immeasurable plains behind her. (p.108)

Heavily influenced both by Lucy and his time in Rome, Cecil continues to think in deliberate artistic images. Lucy's outburst against Mr Eager is, to Cecil, "incongruous", out of keeping with the Lucy he had created - "It was as if one should see the Leonardo on the ceiling of the Sistine" (p.118). The image is entirely Cecil's, but the subtle union of Lucy and George as Renaissance representatives is excellent. Cecil, is at his best when Lucy rejects him, he stops thinking of her as a Leonardo and realises, too late, that she is a woman, but he remains himself, "For all his culture, Cecil was an ascetic at heart, and nothing in his love became him like the leaving of it" (p.193). And it is, ironically, part of Lucy's reason for breaking her engagement, that she wished to choose for herself, to find truth for herself at first hand, that proves her part of the new rebirth, the new enlightenment. It is doubly ironic, of course, that while using this argument, Lucy is deliberately hiding the true state of her heart from herself. However the rhythm is not exclusively artistic, it extends to a witty irony of social comment and situation. Mr Beebe, who undoubtedly has some of the best social

comedy in the book, is teasing Miss Alan about the un-English nature of Italians:

The Italians are a most unpleasant people. They pry everywhere, they see everything, and they know what we want before we know it ourselves. We are at their mercy. They read our thoughts, they foretell our desires. From the cab-driver down to - to Giotto they turn us inside out, and I resent it. (p.54)

Lucy has already been disconcerted by her own reaction to Giotto - the prescience of the cab-driver is yet to come. Again, unknowingly talking to the no-longer engaged Cecil about the Miss Alans and their proposed trip to Greece, Mr Beebe defines the limits of the "suburban focus". Greece, he argues, is godlike or devilish;

if our poor little Cockney lives must have a background, let it be Italian. Big enough in all conscience. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel for me (p.198)

and George, and Lucy.

Even the Italian language, the beauty and style of which had contrasted so much to the disadvantage of English in Where Angels Fear to Tread, links Lucy's two emotional entanglements. Cecil, full of elegant literary allusions, announces Lucy's acceptance of his (third) proposal with the words "I promessi sposi". He confuses the Honeychurches, and they become conscious, as Philip Herriton and Caroline Abbott before them, of the limitations of their own tongue, in saying things well, and with feeling. In the final chapter, Lucy deals gently with the importunate, if all-knowing cab-driver. She and George do not need to go for a drive she explains, "Siamo sposati". The Italians, who know the way to places and people, have succeeded. No wonder "the cab-man drove away singing."

Even colour is used as a visual motif. Italy has blue skies and violets, velvet nights and Lucy in white; Summer Street has greens, and blues, and again Lucy in light coloured clothes. But the images that go wrong, or startle, or jar, even on a small scale, seem inevitably

red. It is as if the blood from the murdered man that stained Lucy's postcards stood for everything wrong. At times, with Forster's humour, the offence is ironic - the Pension Bertolini has a tomato-coloured chair in which Charlotte sits, and a letter from Mrs Honeychurch tells of "crocuses which had been bought for yellow were coming up puce" (p.77). Charlotte, withered and faded in everything is "brown against the view" as she invades George and Lucy's first kiss. Miss Lavish's book Under a Loggia is red, though in the autumn sun its colour will become as pale as Lucy in "a new cerise dress", with a garnet brooch and a ruby ring - the dress as much a failure as the engagement. When Mr Beebe arrives at Windy Corner after the engagement has been broken off, he moves from Lucy singing a song that makes even the thought of marriage wrong

From the red gold keep they finger;
Vacant heart, and hand, and eye,
Easy live and quiet die (p.205)

towards Mrs Honeychurch battling to tie up her red and orange dalihias, destroyed by autumn gales.

As always with Forster the rhythms and motifs are naturally done, and not obtrusive, the reader does not fall over them like "Galsworthy's spaniel John, or whatever it is" (AN p.168).

Forster's ability with comic irony and social observation is more likely to be remembered, than his rhythmic technique. Lucy's first dinner at the Pension, is highly entertaining, from the critical description of

two rows of English people who were sitting at the table; at the row of white bottles of water and red bottles of wine that ran between the English people, at the portraits of the late Queen and the late Poet Laureate that hung behind the English people, heavily framed; (p.23)

to the English people themselves and the consternation caused by the Emersons, so obviously English, and so obviously not behaving in a befitting national manner! The scene with Mrs Honeychurch and Freddy, combining anatomy books, spare bones and letters, has already been

mentioned, as has Charlotte and Eleanor Lavish above Fiesole. But one of the most satisfying incidents must surely be the return of Mr Beebe and Charlotte from the Beehive Tavern. Mr Beebe, with insight,

conversed on indifferent topics: the Emersons' need of a house-keeper; servants; Italian servants; novels about Italy; novels with a purpose; could literature influence life? (p.207)

The irony of the importance of these "indifferent topics" is highly enjoyable - a just discomfort for Charlotte, aware of her own role, an ironic judgement on Mr Beebe who prides himself on his social acumen.

Throughout the construction of A Room with a View, Forster had worried that the book was "slight, unambitious and uninteresting... toshy, but one trusts inoffensive,... bilge"² though the last opinion coincided with a cold. Certainly that happy ending is almost suspiciously out of character. Perhaps Forster believed that happy, truthful people who attempt to live honestly with love and without cant, may succeed against culture and conscious aesthetics, as opposed to the numbing restrictions of convention, if only because the aesthetes are smaller in number than the ranks of the conventional.

if it were not for death and marriage
I do not know how the average novelist
would conclude. (AN, p.102)

Forster had tried death, emotional and actual, to end his previous novels, it was obviously, and appropriately, the turn of marriage. Mr Beebe might disapprove, Forster might have his doubts, the reader, having found the novel and the characters enjoyable, like cousin Charlotte, "has always hoped."

FootnotesII C. A Room with a View

1. Commonplace Book, May 1958, quoted Stalleybrass, O. Introduction to Where Angels Fear to Tread, p.15.
2. Stalleybrass, O. Introduction to WAFT.

D. Howards End

Only connect the prose and the passion,
and both will be exalted, and human
love will be seen at its highest. Live
in fragments no longer. Only connect. (p.188)

It seems necessary to begin any examination of Howards End with this quotation because the novel is the message. Being Forster, however, his characters are necessary to express this message of connection. And his characters explore more than this, for through them Forster writes of the position of money in society, the increasing urbanization of England, and, inevitably, the moral clash of the intellectual and aesthetic with the world of business and social conformity. The threads of comment interweave, one with the other, as his characters interact, but while Forster's belief in connection with people, with aesthetics and with the natural heritage is stated with clarity, the ultimate success of the novel, both as social commentary and plot, is limited. As has been the case previously, the limitation seems to lie with Forster's characters: some appear to have run away and "kicked the book to pieces", others appear to have died. The creations that have, to quote Forster's own words, "got out of hand" are, unfortunately, the Schlegel sisters in one sense, the Wilcoxes in another manner. They are brilliantly created as real people, in true Forsterian style, where they do not behave as when they are expected to be symbols. In defining what makes a 'real' character in a book Forster writes in Aspects of the Novel:

It is real when the novelist knows everything about it. He may not choose to tell us all he knows - many of the facts, even of the kind we call obvious, may be hidden. But he will give us the feeling that though the character has not been explained, it is explicable, and we get from this a reality of a kind we can never get in daily life. (p.70)

The ultimate emotional actions of Margaret and Helen Schlegel Forster does choose to tell us, repeatedly, as if

neither he nor the reader will fully believe or understand their motives, but, although explained, the characters are not explicable: the need for the message tends to distort the fictional reality. The characters that appear to have died under the strain of symbolism are, ironically the two whom Forster actually does kill off in the novel - the first Mrs Wilcox and Leonard Bast. Mrs Wilcox functions very well on the pleasant-mother level, and the reader does not doubt her love for Howards End, but as a symbol of the importance of maintaining natural roots she is unconvincing. Leonard, whom even the Schlegel sisters turn into a symbol doesn't have a chance - he seems almost as hypothetical to Forster as to Margaret's Chelsea friends, and the reader knows him only from the outside - he is flat and stays that way, a symbol of the rootless, moneyless, third-generation town dweller.

As Margaret and Helen connect and come in contact with the Wilcoxes, all Forster's concerns are exposed and, generally speaking, it is the Wilcox beliefs that are found wanting. As representatives of the cosmopolitanism that Charles Wilcox so distrusts the sisters are quite convincing. They live by their father's maxims, one of which is:

It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile, and that a million square miles are almost the same as heaven. (p.43)

It is this sense of proportion that Margaret maintains in her love for the small and, to the Wilcoxes, inconvenient farmhouse of Howards End - quality counts, not quantity. It is the quality of Oniton, too, that Margaret appreciates, not its rank in the county pecking-order. A Forsterian point: both Howards End and Oniton have views that are as satisfying and necessary to the people who appreciate them as any collaboration of house and countryside in Forster's preceding novels.

Margaret's stand on money matters is both practical and emancipated - two views that collide constantly with Henry and the Wilcoxes. Her ability to talk in specific

figures of the income she doesn't earn, is in clear and ironic contrast to Henry's evasive attitude to the money he expends a great deal of effort earning. Margaret actually states her belief that it is only through financial independence that man can acquire ideals - "he would not gain his soul until he had gained a little of the world" (p.134). She cannot help Leonard, who also believes that culture is only possible with financial security, but she makes practical provision for Leonard's son, and is grateful that she is and always has been in a position to do so:

She only fixed her eyes on a few human beings, to see how, under present conditions, they could be made happier. Doing good to humanity was useless: the many-coloured efforts thereto spreading over the vast area like films and resulting in a universal gray. To do good to one, or, as in this case, to a few, was the utmost she dare hope for. (p.134)

It is this moral, spiritual and financial independence that confuses the Wilcoxes; the independence that can discuss money and walk over the Appenines, and can ask stray clerks to tea. It is the independence that can make the emotional choice to support the pregnant Helen with a disregard for the restrictions of convention, but an awareness of the harm they cause and the limitations they impose. As well as all this Margaret is intellectually curious, appreciative of art, and perceptive. She has the balanced personality that Helen lacks. She is the culmination of people like Cecil Vyse and Lucy and Philip Herriton.

Helen is Margaret taken to excess. She loves or loathes - books, concert-halls and people. Her emotional response to Paul is as vigorous as her subsequent dislike of him; her championing of the Bast-cause as positive and excessive as her total withdrawal from everything during her pregnancy. Forster writes of her encounter with Paul, that

To Helen, at all events, her life was to bring nothing more intense than the embrace of this boy who played no part in it. (p.39)

Like Philip and Caroline, like Agnes with Gerald, like the future foretold for Lucy, the best had already happened. Her momentary affair with Leonard is part-sympathy, part temper: she is as carried away by emotion when she takes his peace of mind as when she takes his umbrella in an excess of Beethoven. She maintains, when Margaret attempts to analyse her own feelings for Henry Wilcox, that "personal relations are the important things for ever and ever, and not this outer life of telegrams and anger" (p.176), but she refuses any close emotional contact for herself, claiming that "unreality and mystery begin as soon as one touches the body" (p.195), and that she wants only her real, unmysterious relationship with her sister. Ironically her suspicion of physicality is very similar to Henry Wilcox's, who cannot manage a kiss with feeling or style, because physical emotion needs to be kept in check. Her admission of her lack of feeling for his memory kills Leonard far more successfully than Charles and Herr Schlegel's sword. Her attempts to use her money to salve her conscience without commitment are also excessive - cruel though unconscious, totally self-oriented, and with a callousness of feeling similar to the Wilcoxes. Margaret attempts to connect person to person; Helen responds to the universal man with vigour - he is safer collectively. Her final choice is her son and a life of seclusion at Howards End, with no husband and no emotional expansion. Margaret, who sees clearly, believes

Helen forgot people. They were husks that had enclosed her emotion. She could pity, or sacrifice herself, or have instincts, but had she ever loved in the noblest way, where man and woman, having lost themselves in sex, desire to lose sex itself in comradeship? (.303)

There is no union here, for either sister, as there had been for Lucy and George.

The Wilcoxes, as individuals, are acceptably convincing, though there are both round and flat characters. As representatives of the Empire builders and the business world, the world of telegrams and anger that covers panic and emptiness, they are excellent foils for Margaret and

Helen. They stand, in the tolerant Margaret's eyes, for neatness, decision and obedience, "virtues of the second rate" (p.112) which she believes form character and civilization. For Helen, this civilization contains "the respectable, the petty, the adequate" as opposed to "the good, the beautiful and the true", which is the best of the Continent. What the reader sees is an efficiency and order that borders on the "ruthless", the callous and the dictatorial, particularly with Charles Wilcox. Paul is a boor and Dolly and Evie are lightly, but cleverly drawn types - deliberately flat, but more than adequate. Fluffy, stupid Evie seems merely a luckier version of Jackie Bast. The family's most sympathetic moment - their reaction to the death of their mother - Forster handles with skill and conviction. Henry, Charles and Evie each react to a grief and loss they feel deeply within themselves, even if the stiff British upper-lip is outwardly visible. They avoid too great a "personal note in life" because they know they have nothing - panic and emptiness - on which to build emotionally, but "they were not callous, and they left the breakfast table with aching hearts" (p.102). Their sorrow emphasises their normal attitudes, for their aggression and suspicion of what they cannot know or control are attempts to bring order to spontaneity by subordinating it to convention. Henry Wilcox is the most developed in this aspect. As a captain of industry, or an Imperial British businessman Henry is excellent. He has a heart of oak, and sees life so steadily as to be quite rigid. His understanding of other people's emotions, particularly women's, runs in chauvenistic clichés: witness his views of his newly dead wife; or Margaret after the cat-accident at Oniton Lodge; the lunch at Simpsons, where fish pie and Gruyere give way to saddle of mutton, cider and Stilton is clever and very funny. Henry's physical and emotional collapse after Charles' trial is inevitable when panic and emptiness are all that is left and "goblin footfalls" cover Henry's universe. Earlier, Margaret has been provoked into analysing Henry's moral limitations with devastating clarity -

Stupid, hypocritical, cruel - oh, contemptible! - a man who insults his wife when she's alive, and cants with her memory when she's dead. A man who ruins a woman for his pleasure, and casts her off to ruin other men. And gives bad financial advice, and then says he's not responsible. These men are you. You can't recognize them, because you cannot connect.... No one has ever told you what you are - muddled, criminally muddled. (p.300)

It is inevitable that Henry cannot see the validity of these comments, for they speak of an equality of morality that he does not acknowledge. What does make Henry notice is Charles being held responsible for Leonard's death. As Forster cynically says "It was against all reason that he should be punished, but the law, being made in his image, sentenced him" (p.325). The Wilcoxes are judged guilty by their own morality - even Henry can understand goblins in his own image. By the end of the novel Henry and Helen have "learned to understand one another and to forgive" (p.328). As Forster shows us, Margaret's limited ambition to help a few people has succeeded. The difficulty for the reader, however, is to believe that the Henry Forster describes before his salvation was worth saving; that he learnt through Margaret's efforts, rather than the judgement of his peers, and to find the reason for Margaret's persistent and reiterated love for him. Margaret maintains to Helen that her love for Henry will be a positive act, positively begun. Her "prose" love-making is

well considered, well thought out... I know all Mr Wilcox's faults. He's afraid of emotion. He cares too much about success, too little about the past. His sympathy lacks poetry, so isn't sympathy, really. I'd even say ... that, spiritually, he's not as honest as I am. (p.177)

Helen speaks for the reader as well as herself in her answer "It makes me feel worse and worse. You must be mad" (p.177). Henry rides rough-shod over the feelings of Margaret's relatives, and shows a subjective view of property advantages or disadvantages that is entertaining to the reader until his importance in the emotional plot

is remembered. His interpretation of truth, is also subjective, and this does not seem an asset, especially when the call for truth in A Room with a View is remembered. But Margaret, at times, laughs; at other times, like the accident at Oniton, she is prepared to compromise her own honesty. After their confrontation with the Basts, and Margaret and Henry's own marriage, Forster describes Margaret's position

To have no illusions and yet to love -
 what stronger surety can a woman find?
 she had seen her husband's past as well
 as his heart. She knew her own heart. (p.253)

In the same chapter Forster describes Henry's view of the marriage

His affection for his present wife grew steadily. Her cleverness gave him no trouble, and, indeed, he liked to see her reading poetry or something about social questions; it distinguished her from the wives of other men. He had only to call, and she clapped the book up and was ready to do what he wished. Then they would argue so jollily, and once or twice she had him in quite a tight corner, but as soon as he grew really serious she gave in. (p.255)

Forster's ability to expose Henry's mind is unerring, he reveals the "hidden life at its source"; what he does not expose is Margaret's motive. Forster provides no adequate emotional reasoning for Margaret's love. Earlier, he had described Helen actually enjoying being brow-beaten out of her ideals by Henry on her first stay at Howards End - again it seems inexplicable. There is reputed to be an attraction on the part of the Schlegels for the Wilcoxes: it is a part of the plot that Forster does not convincingly maintain in the light of his brilliant and devastating expose of the Wilcoxes for what they are. Margaret's ultimate fate appears not so much a connection of prose and passion that exalts both, but a contented, almost smug, sinking into a rural life that abandons passion for emotional inertia, with the Wilcoxes merely vehicles.

The portrait of Mrs Wilcox and her position in the book is even more ambiguous. Helen and Margaret respond

with admiration for her, and her family obviously love her dearly - the scene at King's Cross is excellent and completely believable. So is Mrs Wilcox's love for her home. As the wife and mother of Wilcoxes she is justly out of place at Margaret's lunch party. But Margaret and Helen credit her with an intuitive understanding that transcends death

I feel that you and I and Henry are only fragments of that woman's mind. She knows everything. She is everything. She is the house, and the tree that leans over it.... She knew about realities. (pp.305-306)

Forster has made Mrs Wilcox a real-life Demeter of Cnidus, an earth mother at one with her own countryside

She was not intellectual, nor even alert, and it was odd that, all the same, she should give the idea of greatness. Margaret ... was conscious of a personality that transcended their own and dwarfed their activities. (p.80)

She does not, as Forster describes her, give any idea of greatness. She cannot pass on her love for Howards End to her children, they cannot even understand it, let alone respond to it. If they love her, and they do, it is for her maternal, normal, non-great qualities. To the reader, with no evidence to the contrary, her being "out of focus" with daily life could, more practically, be due to her terminal illness. Even her reasons for leaving Howards End to Margaret are not explained, and that the house does eventually become Margaret's abiding love seems just as much due to Margaret's response to the countryside after the flux of London, as any extra-terrestrial action on Mrs Wilcox's part - Margaret had been just as willing to offer her love to Oniton. Mrs Wilcox has been too much described from without, too little from within - the reader is reminded of the "wraith" of Jacob Flanders in Jacob's Room, who was also described only by other people, and Forster had his doubts about the validity even of that charming creation of Virginia Woolf's. As for Mrs Wilcox's wisp of hay, it comes too often, and one is again reminded of Forster's irritation, or "exasperation" over ubiquitous spaniels, or cherry trees or yachts in the

works of Meredith or Galsworthy.

With Leonard and Jacky Bast the situation is different again. Mrs Wilcox did not convince as a symbol; as a charming and loving woman she had undoubted appeal. But Leonard, whom Helen turns into a cause, and Margaret a hypothetical "case", is never allowed a free movement of his own, nor any charm of appeal. He is like an unattractive Rickie Elliot against whom a Forsterian fate is waging ceaseless war, and neither the reader nor Leonard know why. Forster has admitted that he never knew anyone in the financial or social situation of Leonard, and as a result he seems to vary between dissecting him like a sociological "case" or mocking both his cultural efforts and his physical appearance.

He knew that he was poor, and would admit it; he would have died sooner than confess any inferiority to the rich. This may be splendid of him. But he 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 loveable. (p.58)

It was during the First War that Forster read with such pleasure, the early poems of T.S. Eliot, enjoying the poetry because it spoke of "people who seemed genuine because they were unattractive or weak."¹ Presumably, then, Leonard is genuine! Certainly Leonard is not the corpulent poor - who appear again, demanding their rights - but the shabby genteel; the person who suffers if his umbrella is stolen, for he has little money to spare. But Forster piles on the shabbiness and the inferiority. Leonard aspires to culture and to explore nature, he does actually walk all night through the Surrey countryside and has an admirable clarity of definition and acceptance, he does marry his Jacky, he returns all of Helen's money, and he is haunted by the remorse of the evening with Helen. It seems somewhat excessive, then, to have him read the kind of books that bring groans from the Schlegels, however gentle. The admiration the reader is presumably expected to feel for Leonard's efforts, or the sympathy extended to his situation fail in the face of Forster's almost flippant tone:

He put his hat on. It was too big; his head disappeared like a pudding into a basin, the ears bending outwards at the touch of the curly brim. He wore it a little backwards, and its effect was greatly to elongate the face.... No one felt uneasy as he tittuped along the pavements. (p.131)

No one except the reader, who is not allowed to find anything but petulance and squalor in the man whose son is to inherit the sacred gift of Howards End! Leonard's death, in this book, is well signposted from the beginning, but his social degradation seems excessive, if as Forster writes, his remorse has purified him. Would a better Leonard have been reduced to begging letters, social blackmail and a deliberate rejection of work when it is offered him? Forster blames Jacky.

Unmarried, Leonard would never have begged; he would have flickered out and died. But the whole of life is mixed. He had to provide for Jacky, and went down dirty paths that she might have a few feathers and the dishes of food that suited her. (p.310)

Forster's and the Schlegel's treatment of Jacky is as cruel in its wit and mockery as anything the Wilcoxes can do. At funniest she is "Mrs Lanoline", usually she is "an old bore", "bestially stupid" and an "extravagant imbecile". Forster himself goes even further, in writing of her photograph:

It represented a young lady cally Jacky, and had been taken at the time when young ladies called Jacky were often photographed with their mouths open. Teeth of dazzling white were extended along either of Jacky's jaws and positively weighed her head sideways, so large were they, and so numerous. Take my word for it, that smile was simply stunning, and it is only you and I who will be fastidious, and complain that true joy begins in the eyes, and that the eyes of Jacky did not accord with her smile, but were anxious and hungry. (pp.60-61)

Yet natural stupidity apart, Jacky's sin is no worse than Helen's - Helen being motivated by sympathy, Jacky, presumably, by economics. Jacky is abandoned at the end of the book, while Helen achieves a tranquil moneyed contentment within Howards End. Tolerance and equality

then, appear only possible among the financially compatible.

With Tibby and Mrs Munt, as with Evie and Dolly, Forster is on sure ground - they are flat characters, successfully rounded when necessary. Mrs Munt's complacent ability to rearrange the history of events to her best advantage is reminiscent of a pleasanter Harriet Herriton. Her nationalism, warring perpetually with Cousin Frieda's, is an entertainment in Forster's best social manner, as well as an indictment, effective by hindsight, on the inevitability of an Anglo-German war. Tibby is enjoyable - particularly his ability to score off the Wilcoxes by having hay-fever even in London. He is indeed "moderately a dear" and his outburst at Helen's financial plans is so reasonable that his feeling for Oxford bricks and mortar over people seems admirably sane under the circumstances. His emotional repression is in balance to Helen's excesses: the younger Schlegels appear as the two halves of Margaret's personality separated and exaggerated.

Where Forster succeeds brilliantly in Howards End is in his evocation of place, his love for rural England and his ability to show his characters' personalities through their connection with and response to the places they live in. Margaret's response to Oniton, Howards End, and a legendary England that she visualises on the Purbeck Hills, is an echo of Mrs Wilcox's own love for Howards End. Helen responds both to Howards End and the countryside of Pomerania with genuine delight, and Tibby, too, falls in love with the "colour scheme" of Oxford.

Forster's intention in the pattern of the book, framed as it is by the Schlegel's growing awareness of all that Howards End is, appears to be the movement of Margaret, as the spiritual and actual heir to Mrs Wilcox towards her destiny. Even the Wilcoxes ultimately promote Margaret's inheritance:

There was something uncanny in her triumph. She, who had never expected to conquer anyone, had charged straight through these Wilcoxes, and broken up their lives. (p.331)

Of all the characters, only Margaret can say, of the crises

of the plot, with a devastating conviction, "Nothing has been done wrong" (p.331).

As in Where Angels Fear to Tread, Helen's letters describing Howards End and the family, that open the novel, contain the motifs that thread their way through the book: the wych elm, the vine, the stairs behind the door, hay-fever and hay, Mrs Wilcox's tiredness, Mr Wilcox saying "horrid things" "so nicely", dog roses, the neighbouring cow, and a car-trip that shows "a tomb with trees in it, a hermit's house, a wonderful road that was made by the kings of Mercia" (pp.19-21). The details, deliberate in a letter describing an unknown scene to an interested reader, are convincingly introduced, for Helen, as a Schlegel, responds always to places (her love for Howards End is one of her few constancies) and it is as natural that she should describe in such detail as that Margaret should respond to the actual house when at last she does see it for herself.

As before in his novels, Forster uses transport both as a practical means of connection, and as symbols of the right/Schlegelian and the wrong/Wilcox way of communication. It is Charles, in his "throbbing stinking motor car" who precipitates the first angry confrontation with Aunt Julie at the Schlegel representative, in the same car that had taken Helen for her country drives. It is, fittingly, Charles who drives his car to Howards End on that morning when he has his final, fatal confrontation with the sisters and Leonard. Appropriately, he passes Leonard, who approaches the house on foot, walking from the Hilton Station past the church and the tomb, along Helen's "wonderful road", as Margaret had done earlier. Like her, the walk turns his remorse and depression to something close to happiness. The temporary defeat of the Wilcox car terminate very successfully Margaret's first intended visit with Mrs Wilcox to Howards End, and on the day that Margaret and Helen are finally united Henry, through the use of his car, twice attempts to manipulate his sisters' meeting. It seems a reasonable indication of Henry's ability to change and improve that he should walk to the police station for news

about Leonard's death and that this action should appear totally incomprehensible to Charles. Even when motionless, the motor-car is a symbol of change: the only mention of dissension between Henry and his first wife is over the use he intends to make of her meadow as a garage for his first car. At this stage, Henry wins. Margaret, however, finally triumphs over Henry's need for motion - but at a cost that leaves Henry a shadow of his former self, albeit a happier, more observant shadow.

The use of trains, together with an ability to walk and see, is the Schlegel method, and obviously Forster's. Taking the reader into his confidence, with an unnecessary archness, he writes of Margaret, "To Margaret - I hope that it will not set the reader against her - the station of King's Cross had always suggested infinity" (p.27). King's Cross is the station for Howards End. Both Margaret and Leonard leave London by it when they make their journeys alone, towards death and natural connection. Margaret goes by train to Oniton too, and enjoys the countryside and Tibby's Oxford. Margaret's love for Oniton has echoes of the infinity that is promised at Howards End and King's Cross, for while the house itself is not special "the prospect from it would be an eternal joy" (p.216). The station for Oniton, however, is Paddington, through which the West and Wales are reached, but not infinity. Forster has said of Dostoyevsky's characters, in Aspects of the Novel, "infinity attends them, though they remain individuals they expand to embrace it and summon it to embrace them" (p.136). Forster's characters have to fight for infinity, and the extent of their success, and its validity to the reader, emphasises the difference between the prophet and the social commentator. It is a train trip, culminating in a dog-cart ride with Tibby and a tea-basket, that takes Margaret back to Swanage and the Purbeck hills, after Henry's proposal. As Howards End unites Margaret and Helen at the end of the book, it is the concept of all England, above Poole, that calms the emotional rupture between the two sisters. The little mythologies of the English countryside that Forster defines as fantasy have their place here. One is reminded

of his pleasure in William Barnes' ability to use the right language for his Dorset poems: again there is a feeling for place and spirit. It is surely no accident that Margaret's first visits to Howards End are made alone with no car and no Wilcoxes except the benevolent shade of her spiritual benefactor and the mysterious Miss Avery who, as a natural part of the countryside is far more effective as a guardian spirit.

To walk alone across the Appenines is as incomprehensible to Henry as Leonard's night walk would be to Jacky. Inevitably Henry and Evie cannot believe Leonard's story, while the Schlegels understand all parts, even the disappointment of a grey dawn "'Just a gray evening turned upside down. I know.'" (p.126) Presumably Leonard's pleasure and rising spirits during his final walk to Howards End verify Margaret's epitaph for him - that he had had an adventure and, for him, it might have been sufficient. Certainly his walks gave him time for connection with the countryside from which he originally sprung. At the end of the novel Helen and Leonard's son is carried into the field to play with the hay, with specific instructions that he must not be made to move too fast in any way. There is the memory of Mrs Wilcox, watching the poppies come out, or waiting for the grass to sweeten.

Ever realistic however, perhaps with the pessimism he recognizes in Proust and espouses as part of the modern age, Forster cannot see this peaceful infinity as eternal. The motor car that Margaret temporarily defeats enables whole generations of Wilcoxes to endanger the lives of child, chicken or cat, to move restlessly over the countryside, never belonging, but constantly attempting change. Distance does not lend Oniton safety - "They have swept into the valley and swept out of it, leaving a little dust and a little money behind" (p.246). Like Helen's goblins they can always come back because they are always there. The Schlegel house in Wickham Place is destroyed to make way for the flats of a muddy metropolis, flats in which people like the Wilcoxes live, owned by men with motor cars. Henry uses his motorcars to rush from Ducie

Street to Howards End to Oniton to the "immense establishment" in Sussex. He is stopped only by physical and psychological collapse. Even Howards End is threatened by the creeping "red rust" of London as it expands through Surrey and Hampshire: Sawston rampant. On this subject Forster offers no solution, easy or difficult, just the suggestion "only connect".

For all Forster's belief in connection, his call, through Margaret, for—"tolerance, temperance", and the sexual equality that is achieved on a modest scale by the end of the novel, there is an air of sadness and pessimism in Howards End. However often the goblins are defeated they can return. The Wilcoxes are making the modern world, as well as the law, in their own image, and it can, through its obtuseness, destroy them as it destroys Leonard and Jacky. (Whatever happened to Jacky? Did Forster, like everyone else, forget her?) People like Margaret, Helen, Henry and Tibby can save themselves only if they can afford to; if the changing world does not change too fast. Henry and Margaret plan financial security for their heirs. But as well as the expansion of suburbia and its values over rural England, Forster prophesies war and uses the Schlegels' British and German relations to visualise it. The country that produced Beethoven, with his splendour and heroism and his awareness of "panic and emptiness" can also produce the rampant nationalism that forced Papa Schlegel to leave his fatherland for England. The relatives that Helen sees as intuitive, kind, artistic, all the things the Wilcoxes are not, are just as destructive when distorted by unreasoning nationalism.

Forster's love for the quiet beauty of the English countryside, so endangered by the speed of the "nomadic hordes", is beautifully visualized. His conviction that modern man's only hope for emotional survival lies in the very country he is attempting to destroy is convincing. What is not quite so successful in this novel are the personal relationships themselves. The convincing connections appear rather the ones between people and place, where the passion and the prose amalgamate to various degrees. But in the relationships of his characters Forster

disappoints. The reason may lie in Forster's own comment on the novel:

Howards End is my best novel and approaching a good novel. Very elaborate and all pervading plot that is seldom tiresome and forced, range of characters, social sense, wit, wisdom, colour. Have only just discovered why I don't care for it: not a single character in it for whom I care. 2

FootnotesII D. Howards End

1. 'T.S. Eliot' (1923) in AH, p.102.
2. Commonplace Book, May 1958, quoted in Stalleybrass, O. Introduction to Howards End, p.16.

E. A Passage to India

With A Passage to India there appear no such reservations, at least on the part of the reader. With the return to the sun and light, even in unfathomable India, Forster's irony and wit return as they were in Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View. But this novel far surpasses his previous works in the skill with which the various aspects - people, pattern, social commentary, spirit of place, motifs - are so interwoven that it is virtually impossible to examine each separately. People, both as individuals or social groups react not only on each other but to their geographical and physical situations. Inanimate India is as much an integral and active part of the plot as any animate object, sometimes more so.

It is Adela who says, at the start of the novel "'I want to see the real India'" (p.25), so it is perhaps best to look first at this real India that acts as a framework both for the whole novel, and the individual sections as well. Though in doing so, any analysis of place will be guilty of Adela's own fault of not seeing Indians! In attempting to define real India the reader has as much difficulty as the characters themselves - which is the real India? Forster offers many views of myriad-voiced India, and even then confines the area to Chandrapore and its district; the view from the Bombay-bound train; and the hills around Mau, westward of Chandrapore. The India of Chandrapore, Anglo-India at its most indifferent, opens the novel, and the first section. Beneath the dominant sky, Indian and English co-exist side by side. The Chandrapore of the Indian is indifferent indeed - even "the Ganges happens not to be holy here" - the wooden houses disintegrate and wash away like mud, rubbish into the river. The inhabitants are "of mud moving": mud first, life second. English Chandrapore claims what view there is, usually of tree-tops that hide the mean reality below. Only the sky, the

moon and the sun are common to both communities, and they are common to all India.

No mountains infringe on the curve (of the sky). League after league the earth lies flat, heaves a little, is flat again. Only in the south, where a group of fists and fingers are thrust up through the soil, is the endless expanse interrupted. These fists and fingers are the Marabar Hills, containing the extraordinary caves. (pp.10-11)

The beginning of the first section already promises the second. From the Club verandah and gardens, and from Fielding's garden these hills are the only view. Rejecting the reality of Anglo-India Mrs Moore and Adela look towards them for the real India. But this India of 'Caves' is prehistoric. It relates geologically to no other area of the subcontinent, as it relates to no particular people and no particular religion.

They are older than anything in the world. No water has ever covered them, and the sun who has watched them for countless aeons may still discern in their outlines forms that were his before our globe was torn from his bosom.... There is something unspeakable in these outposts. They are like nothing else in the world,... They rise abruptly, insanely, without the proportion that is kept by the wildest hills elsewhere, they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen. (p.123)

They are uncanny and incomprehensible, but even they are not all of India for travelling from Chandrapore to Bombay Mrs Moore passes through different landscapes bleached by the sun, but not as she was used to. She sees the fortress of Asirgarh and the cliffs above Bombay, but realises that she has left so much unseen, a musical litany of incredible variation; that she will never visit

Delhi nor Agra, nor the Rajputana cities not Kashmir, nor the obscurer marvels that had sometimes shone through men's speech: the bilingual rock of Girnar, the statue of Shri Belgola, the ruins of Mandu and Hampi, temples of Khajraha, gardens of Shalimar. (p.204)

As a result of the incident at the Marabar caves more people than Mrs Moore alone leave Chandrapore, and in the third section the final meeting of Aziz and Fielding takes

place at Mau. Mau, from a physical point of view, is neither depressing nor uncanny, instead it is healthy and, almost, English in appearance:

The ground opened in full sunlight and they saw a grassy slope bright with butterflies, also a cobra, which crawled across doing nothing in particular, and disappeared among some custard apple trees. There were round white clouds in the sky, and white pools on the earth; the hills in the distance were purple. The scene was as park-like as England, but did not cease being queer. (p.312)

This, then, is the physical, natural aspect of Forster's India, as diverse and unconnected as the whole world: the world in a subcontinent.

Against and within these three backgrounds that make up the framework of the novel Forster places his people and events, but the section divisions also divide at various levels into cool weather, hot weather, and the rains; into Moslem, English and Hindu; even into sensual, rational and spiritual.

In Aspects of the Novel Forster writes:

Human intercourse, as soon as we look at it for its own sake and not as a social adjunct, is seen to be haunted by a spectre. We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly... we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life. (p.70)

For the reader, the characters in A Passage to India are indeed perfectly known; even Godbole's mysteries appear mysterious only to Englishmen and Moslems, Forster seems able to explain even him (if necessary). For the people in the novel, however, the dimness is pervasive, light and clarity exist only in the indifferent sky and sun. It seems impossible, in India, that anyone should understand anyone else, for they cannot understand life either. Aziz mourns the lost glories of Moslem splendour, and those glories were won in Persia and Cordova. Fielding comes aesthetically and spiritually alive in Venice and

England. The reader is reminded of Mr Beebe's comment on the dangers of moving further east than Italy and still appreciating beauty and form. Even the nearer East cannot cope with the East in India. It is Adela, that disliker of muddle and mystery, ever eager for a "good talk", who most clearly defines the position of the rational Englishman, or woman, in India:

'inertia - one has nothing to do, one belongs nowhere and becomes a public nuisance without realizing it.... I speak only of India. I am not astray in England. I fit in there - no, don't think I shall do harm in England... I have... heaps of friends of my own type. I shall be quite alright.' (p.255)

It is through the successful and sympathetic creation of his characters, therefore, that Forster examines the dimness of social intimacy that makes connection so difficult, so precarious and so fleeting. It is to the credit of Forster's maturity that his characters remain as rounded, totally convincing individuals within such a structured pattern.

It is Adela, again, who admits that her honesty does her no good: it is an admission that draws from Fielding, the only other rational person in the novel, sympathy and understanding. He points out her inherent error, the error that makes her completely unattractive to the Oriental - she cannot relate to people emotionally, she sees India, but no Indians. This lack of connection, together with her physical unattractiveness, leave her at odds with any Indian she does meet. Her withdrawal of her accusation, in Oriental eyes, is useless: she retracts from the head, not the heart. There is an excellent touch of Forsterian irony in the portrait of Adela: her totally asexual, approach to mankind allows her, as a European and a woman, the unprecedented opportunity of sitting, smoking in equal companionship with a Moslem and a Hindu at Fielding's tea party, basically because Aziz cannot see Adela as a sexual being at all, and therefore treats her rather as a person than a woman. The irony is taken further and becomes bitter in the central section, for part of the personal horror of the accusation for Aziz, on top

of the English legal and Moslem social implications, is that Adela's unattractiveness makes the sexual implications an appalling insult.

The irony of Adela's efforts to see India or/and Indians goes further than the Indian accusation of lack of emotion, for the English dislike her for wanting to see Indians at all. To quote that bastion of Anglo-Indianism, Mrs Turton, "she wasn't pukka", and had better marry Mr Fielding who wasn't pukka either. Extra irony upon irony, as this is exactly the situation that Mahmoud Ali allows Aziz to believe does finally happen - it is the only way the devious Moslem mind can interpret Fielding's very British magnanimity. Bridge parties cannot work, for the people who attempt them deliberately, like Mrs Moore or Adela, or naturally, like Fielding, are usually individuals who socially, and perhaps morally, hunt with no pack, and because they are not "pukka" cannot be classified or categorized or carefully slotted into a social place. Anglo-India attacks Adela's individual honesty, but the Marabar Caves attack and overthrow her very logic and rationalism. She who has disliked muddles, who has been determined to unravel all minor mysteries from naming birds to identifying causes of accidents, to talking out social misunderstandings, is left making irrational accusations in a state of such hysteria that it is only the trial itself that rights the situation. It seems fitting that her vision, when she has it, is clear in a negative sense. When she is "of it and not of it at the same time" (p.221), (surely the situation of everyone in the novel, at various levels) she sees with a clarity certainly not present on the actual day of the picnic, but she only sees what does not happen - that Aziz did not follow her into the cave. It is the revenge of India on the independent rationalist Westerner when Adela's own suggestion for what happened at the caves is hallucinations - mysteries with no substance, that cannot be talked out. The dimness, for Adela, remains.

Forster's portrait of Aziz is excellent and full of vigour. He starts the novel on a falling bicycle and ends it on a rearing horse; he is sick, plays polo,

organizes picnics, walks with his children, falls in love with Mrs Moore and Fielding, writes poems, capsises in the Mau dam, all with an immense and enjoyable vitality. Only at the trial does he appear totally passive - "the prisoner", whose one action is to faint at his reprieve. As Adela has briefly related to the vision of the Marabar Caves, has connected with nature where she has never before connected, so Aziz, for the only time in the novel is still and quiet. But while Adela normally operates beyond the Anglo-Indian community, only becoming a passive member during the crisis before the trial, Aziz functions fully within the security of the Moslem community. This security, as Forster ironically points out, has as many problems as the Anglo-Indian community: the group-voice and the group-suspicion, as well as the group-friendship all influence Aziz much more than Adela, for he has emotional as well as family ties. It is sadly inevitable that Aziz's Moslem temperament that makes him write poetry, and love the Moores, would sooner or later destroy the very friendship he builds up so quickly with Fielding. Even Aziz, when he is thoughtful, finds his emotional response to Mrs Moore "puzzling"; an example of the "dimness" of reality and personal understanding:

What did this eternal goodness of Mrs Moore amount to? To nothing, if brought to the test of thoughts. She had not borne witness in his favour, nor visited him in the prison, yet she had stolen to the depths of his heart, and he always adored her. (p.307)

It is well for Aziz and Mrs Moore, that the old lady chose to die when she did - one of Forster's more successful deaths. The cruder side of Aziz's nature merely provides a rounded picture of his character - rather like the necessity of the untouchable band at the Hindu ceremony at Mau. But as far as connection is concerned, Aziz has not the perception of the Westerner, or the tolerance needed to help his love and partisanship continue. It is to him, after all, that the deputy magistrate makes his plea "Excuse my mistakes, realise my limitations. Life is not easy as we know it on earth" (p.201). But Aziz can only unite with his Hindu compatriots against the English. Two years later connection is no nearer, or clearer.

It is useless discussing Hindus with me.
 Living with them teaches me no more.
 When I think I annoy them I do not. When
 I think I don't annoy them, I do. Perhaps
 they will sack me for tumbling on to their
 dolls' house, on the other hand, perhaps
 they will double my salary. Time will
 prove. (p.315)

Meanwhile, political unity is purely for argument, only the bulbuls and the roses are real, and Aziz himself. The reader is reminded of Forster's praise of the Emperor Babur who had sensitiveness, a warm heart, and a desire to advance his friends when he claimed his Empire. Aziz is a true Moslem, and heir to his heroes.

Fielding, too, is a fully drawn character and it is interesting to link him not only with Aziz but with Hamidullah - charming and perceptive. Both are educated men, approaching middle age, both have a tolerance based on previous experience. Their reaction to Mrs Moore's death is beautifully described - sincere regret with no emotional involvement, and Hamidullah's acceptance of Fielding's support during the trial is entirely convincing; for once the Oriental suspicion is doused. Hamiduallah's final appearance at the end of the central section is actually echoed by Fielding's own comments at the end of the novel - both realise the need for sexual equality before political equality in India - an irony, this, in the light of Forster's analysis of English women in India, whom even the collector blames for much of the tension, and doubly ironic in the view of Aziz's reaction to Adela. The links with Hamidullah are not pursued into the third section, however, for Forster is concerned with Fielding and Aziz. Their friendship is as much due to Fielding's friendliness and tolerance, his ability to see people, especially Indians, behind the colour of their skins as to Aziz's instinctive desire for friendship. There is a depressing realism in the final situation where Fielding has to admit a degree of failure in his relationship with his wife. Unlike Adela and Aziz, Fielding's character does not change during the crisis of the central section - human nature being what it is, this, too, is an error. To ask rational questions, to look for clarity in the emotional dimness is no recommendation.

He had not gone mad at the phrase 'an English girl fresh from England', he had not rallied to the banner of race. He was still after facts, though the herd had decided on emotion. Nothing enrages Anglo-India more than the lantern of reason if it is exhibited for one moment after its extinction is decreed.... Pity, wrath, heroism, filled them, but the power of putting two and two together was annihilated. (p.102)

It is Ronny Heaslop's ability to think and speak fairly at the trial that provides an added edge to the scene and underlines, again, the ability of India to distort the usual personality of those who come in contact with her. Ronny as a stuffed shirt Imperialist in the making is an excellent portrait - flat or round where necessary, seeming almost a caricature in his lack of depths of personality, but really himself, for he is one of those Englishmen whom Forster sees as deliberately choosing flatness because it is emotionally and socially safer. There is a lovely irony in his confrontation with his mother who sees his pompous official attitude as god-like. To Ronny's smug "India likes gods" the old lady replies: "And Englishmen like posing as gods" (p.49). But they don't like their women being turned into gods. Ronny's embarrassment at his mother's spiritual transformation is acute. Truly, Englishwomen in India make life difficult for their men! By the third section Ronny has reverted back to type, obsessed with the World Zionist conspiracy and everyone "coming into line". Where Forster succeeds in lifting Ronny out of a skilful caricature, however, is not only his praise of Das at the trial, but by describing the legal and ethnic muddle that Ronny as magistrate attempts to discipline. English law and order are irrelevant in an India that is impervious to them, but Ronnie officially is trying to find the same truth that Adela and Fielding stand for. The difficulty lies in the fact that law, of its very nature, is non-emotional.

Mrs Moore in her roles as successful connector or friend in the first section and withdrawn crotchety old woman of the central section who becomes an instant goddess is absolutely convincing. Here is no Mrs Wilcox labouring and dying, in a literary sense, under the weight of symbolism.

She has the astuteness and perception of Mrs Failing as well as her own initial kindness. Whatever happens to her seems entirely convincing and reasonable. She comes to India too old to be caught by convention, here she is like Fielding. It is fitting that the Marabar Caves which destroy Adela's clarity should seize on Mrs Moore's religious questings and distort them into futile noises. Even her death is well prepared - too much sun, an alien climate, distress and age. Her dying inconveniences Lady Mellanby, and her "Indianization" upsets Ronny. She is as independent in spirit as she was in life. But the good effect she has on Adela and Aziz appears just as much the good influence of a kind and loving memory as any spiritualization. Her transformation in the consciousness of the ignorant Indian crowd into "Esmiess Esmoor" seems an entirely valid result of primitive mob psychology, for in Mau the crowd are never aware of the exact moment of Krishna's birth, nor what exactly the festival procession celebrates, even though the festival is annual. Therefore, in the tension surrounding both the trial and Murreidin, such a belief seems feasible. If Ronny cannot accept it, McBryde and the reader do. And certainly the memory of her that Godbole recreates for his religious purposes seems reasonable, as does the effect of Ralph Moore's instinctive knowledge of cruelty or kindness on Aziz's better nature, being such a strong echo of his mother. As a beneficent memory Mrs Moore works.

Forster's social irony extends beyond his main characters - his 'flat' people, the Turtons, the McBrydes, Miss Derek, Callender, the young subaltern, all provide witty portraits of Sawston abroad. The preconceived ideas of wogs and wops, or red-nosed boys, are pessimistically dominant. The furious reaction to real criticism of "Cousin Kate" because hospitality is more important than theatrical veracity is surpassed by the performance of the trial in the central section, where legal veracity is also supposed to subordinate itself to social mores. The trial scene is brilliant and hilarious from Mrs Turton subsiding, overheated into a lemon-squash, muttering "weak, weak", through the game of musical chairs, to the

final debacle which, from her performance, could reasonably be considered the event for which Mrs Turton had, all those years, been "saving" herself. There is an exquisite irony in the moments of genuine self-examination and insight, followed by determined efforts to behave with more kindness, that Adela's "experience" provoke in the English. Their momentary awareness is uncomfortably accurate and their intentions and actions are not just for national honour but for the goodwill and tolerance towards their own kind for which Das asks Aziz - and all based on a totally false and inaccurate assumption. Only India could produce such a devastating muddle from the sensible English.

But the answer, social truth and harmony, does not lie exclusively with the Moslem or Hindu community, as Forster is careful to show. The misinterpreting of one social mind by another is shown initially at the dinner party at Hamidullah's: uncaring thoughtlessness on the part of the British at large outweighs the kindness of individual people. The health rumours that escalate at Aziz's sick bed are like a rash. Mrs Turton's outburst in the court is no worse than Mahmoud Ali's (and, like Ronny, Amatrao rises above the personal). The reputed attack on Adela is echoed in the hideous injuries the English are rumoured to have inflicted on Bahadur's obnoxious nephew, whom incidentally Aziz dislikes almost as much as he had disliked Adela. Panna Lal's obsequious clowning, the Hindu quisling grovelling to the Moslems, is as unpleasant as any action of Aziz's to Ronny at Fielding's tea-party. And the final indictment must surely be the deliberate refusal on the part of the Moslem clique to clarify Fielding's marital situation to Aziz, because they felt the Englishman knew too much of them. It is this withholding of information, this refusal to clarify even that small part of social intercourse that it is possible to make clear, that eliminates Godbole and the Hindus, too. Godbole as a Brahmin achieves a connection with natural life and an acceptance of the mysteries of religion that is truly admirable when placed next to Islam and Christianity. As a socially involved being, he

is a menace. He achieves his own spiritual connection and brief clarity only at the expense of all social connection - he is a Hindu version of Santa Deodata. He does not impart the knowledge he has of the Marabar Caves, his misjudgement of his morning prayer make him, and Fielding, miss the train to the Caves, and he knows both of Fielding's marriage to Stella and their impending visit to Mau, but sees no reason to communicate that information. As a result the reader is left wondering whether he has some hidden proof of Aziz's innocence which he also feels it unnecessary to communicate, but which accounts for his belief. Certainly connection, truth and friendship are not reliant on the rational, the emotional or the spiritual separately. The balanced combination that Forster advocated in Where Angels Fear to Tread is still his formula in A Passage to India.

Forster's use of rhythm in this novel is far more complex and interwoven than in the earlier novels, for the motifs interweave with one another, as well as recurring in all three sections of the book with subtle expansions and inversions. As before the concept of travel is present: to connect, to make a journey, men and women must move, somehow, towards one another. As before, trains and train journeys are acceptable. Aziz organises the train to the Marabar Caves, and though the preliminary ramifications of organization show India, and Anglo India, at its most muddled, involved and hilarious, the journey itself is fine - even purdah becomes a charming game. It is on her own journey away from Chandrapore that Mrs Moore first learns of the many-faceted nature of India, an India she will never see.

When Adela longs to see the real India, Mrs Moore replies "It'll end in an elephant ride, it always does" (p. 25). The elephant ride, and real India, come, for Adela in the central section, and the elephant ride appears to take the place of the "legno" of Where Angels Fear to Tread, or walking in Howards End. But the elephant ride leads Adela towards her experience in the cave, and her visit to real India does indeed end there. It is singularly appropriate that during the religious festival at Mau the

howdahs of the state elephants should be deliberately empty: no form of transport, or connection, is possible or necessary - this is Hindu India. Miss Derek, like the Wilcoxes before her, rushes everywhere by motor, she expropriates her rajah's car as she expropriates her friend's husband - because she doesn't care and it's all such fun. Adela and Ronny become engaged in her car, definitely a wrong action, just as she helps Adela interpret her cave-happening wrongly: all in the name of goodwill. Even in the hands of Moslems, however, cars, like the first motor owned by Bahadur, are destructive.

Ironically, while Ronny consigns Adela, and walks, and Grasmere to his callow days, it is through walking, though with difficulty and in the wrong shoes, that Aziz meets Mrs Moore, and in Mau, walking with his children, he meets Fielding and Ralph Moore. More appropriately, however, contact is made here on horseback: from the temporary Anglo-Indian friendship initiated during the game of polo on the Maidan, to the final ride of Aziz and Fielding that ends the book. Appropriately, both moments of contact are shown as impermanent, doomed to end swiftly. The first ride is referred to, ironically, in the central section as an example of successful "contact" with the right kind of Indian, again an opinion based on what is, as the situation appears, a misconception. On another level, of course, the opinion is quite true. The second ride, while a ride of true friends, is also doomed to end; the riders are divided by everything in the natural view before them - for every object has reference to India itself, or the positions of Aziz and Fielding in their social, historical, or political milieu:

The horses didn't want it - they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which the riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House didn't want it. (p.317)

With trips across water however, the situation is more ambiguous. Mrs Moore dies on her way back to England, and dies in a state of spiritual and emotional withdrawal.

But while Adela's trip ends her hopes of marriage in India, it also leaves her with a positive view of her future life. Fielding moves from his emotional independence in India, to his involvement and subsequent marriage to Stella Moore; and even Aziz's small trip on the Mau dam means the end of his bitterness towards Fielding, and a new tolerance towards Adela and Mrs Moore's children.

Those final and physical emblems of all that Anglo-Indian involvement has to contend with are not all that hinders the friendship between east and west. There are also "ghosts" and gods, Forster's fantasies. The superficial trappings of civilization have to battle not only with the alien physical, but with spiritual dimness and supernatural beings that frequently triumph. Adela and Ronny decide, rationally, that the "ghost" that rams Bahadur's car is a hyena, the Nawab and Mrs Moore are not convinced, and the young couples' previous inability to identify a perfectly visible bird throws some doubt on their decision. Not all ghosts, being India, are malign - Aziz believes Mrs Moore to be a ghost when he first sees her in the Mosque, and in her Indian transformation she is certainly a benign figure for good, ironic when her final cynical withdrawal from life is remembered. As a ghost or supernatural being the goodness of Mrs Moore appear perfectly acceptable in a country where the position of God in each community bears no relation to the other. The English confine their God to defending the king and upholding the police, He is relegated to His position before breakfast, and His missionaries live out beyond the slaughter-house, any talk of religion is embarrassing, or a sign of sickness. English religion, like their club, is exclusive - wasps, at a stretch, but no bacteria. Inevitably, in the inversion of 'Caves', Mrs Moore abandons such an ineffective Jehovah, and Adela, rationalism at bay, has "resumed her morning kneel to Christianity: (p.206). The difference between English Christianity and Mohammedanism in India is fundamental, far more than would appear theologically possible, for Aziz looks on Allah as his friend, and the Mosque

was Islam, his own country, more than a Faith, more than a battle cry, more, much more... Islam, an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable. (p.20)

The only point of contact with Christianity comes in a companionable lack of understanding of the God of Hinduism who may be a silver mannikin or a red silk napkin. With the usual muddle of India, one of the signs for the birth of Krishna reads "God si love". But which God, where? The lore surrounding the birth of Krishna festival is similar to the Nativity, but the differences are stronger than the similarities, especially when a god is unidentifiable even to his devotees. Even Adela and Fielding, garlanded after the trial, seem half-god half-guy. If "God is love", the very difficulty of identifying him in a land as complex and irrational as India, where birds, and ghosts and hyenas and snakes and logs are all themselves and not themselves, but dependent for identification on good-manners, kindness and courtesy, rather than facts, emphasises the difficulties of love itself.

Love on a family level also runs through the book, changed, contorted and expanded by the circumstances of the plot. One of the initial points of contact between Aziz and Mrs Moore in 'Mosque', is their having three children. Aziz, in true friendship, shows Fielding the photograph of his wife, and finds the Englishman's ability to "travel light" emotionally inexplicable. In the distortion of passions in the central section Mrs Moore's emotional withdrawal extends even to her much loved, though absent, younger children, while McBryde, with his own questionable moral position soon to be exposed, makes unpleasant innuendoes about Aziz's photograph. These individual reactions are dominated by the herd reaction of the English - "the women and children" mentality, that brings out the bravery and the cruelty of the Imperialists when the natives appear restless. In 'Temple', Aziz is restored to his family and has even acquired a wife, almost! But it is Fielding who has taken Mrs Moore's place, and now cares for her children. His inevitable emotional and practical commitments mean that he no longer "travels light".

In the end it is he who examines the extent of love and friendship between husband and wife, as Aziz has done initially. Aziz, in losing his wife, had lost a friend as well; Fielding now has a wife, he is still searching for that point of contact that ensures friendship - and his success is not assured.

The difficulties of love, like the gods, however, appear man-made. Above English fussiness, Moslem emotionalism and Hindu spiritual passivity remain the sky, the sun, the moon and an inexplicable natural life, of "mud. moving". To a western mind even the seasons are inverted. The sun, which in the North brings warmth, growth, and summer, here brings destruction and distortion, people aestivate for self-protection. The cool weather, the Indian winter, is the time for connection, and Godbole achieves his spiritual success in the cold and grey of a pouring wet morning, standing in the mud.

As part of the mystery of life uncomprehending but accepting, come the three silent figures of Indians in each section. When Godbole sings his milkmaid song the nameless man, gathering water chestnuts in the tank listens, naked and delighted - as a Hindu he understands what the others cannot. The second Hindu is a fine physical specimen, a fitting porter for the Mau festival, and recalls the punkah wallah of the central section, the male fate as Adela sees him, who sits, superb and ignorant throughout the entire trial - like the first man he is almost naked, like the third he is "splendidly formed". He is an untouchable, socially as low as the mud itself, part of the dust and the garbage heaps but, like the street sweepers in Mau he is an integral part of India, "the spot of filth without which the spirit cannot cohere" (P.301). It is this filth that has undone Mrs Moore spiritually at Marabar: "Pathos, pity, courage, they exist, but are identical and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value (p.147). Everything that the Western mind, even the Moslem mind, believes of value, becomes distorted in an alien environment. Godbole spiritually accepts the first assertion, Mrs Moore is defeated by the second. Somewhere in between, the rest of the characters,

and the rest of humanity, muddle along, connecting dimly, and briefly, their friendships forever distorted by interior and exterior influences.

After such a conclusion the final mood of the novel should be pessimistic, for there is not even the temporary achievement of peace offered in Howards End, but Forster does not seem to accept defeat, even a defeat he has visualised and explored so brilliantly himself. The last comment is not "never", but "no, not yet", and "no, not there". The very irrationality of Aziz, the curiosity of Adela, the friendliness of Fielding, the goodwill and kindness of Mrs Moore do not allow for total defeat. It is the Forsterian answer to Hardy's all dominant causality, and brings him, in his conception of people, closer to Dostoyevsky, whose people move within infinity, but move by personal choice, which Forster prefers. In writing of India, and in encompassing the general world of man, Forster achieves, it seems, what he believes War and Peace offers - the idea of expansion:

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

Being Forster, the chords are not "great", but the ideas move onward. The hope or pessimism is not portrayed like Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky, because there is also the wit of Jane Austen, the cool understatement of a very English writer who enjoyed, in his exposure of the Imperial-Occupation-machine, "the general ragging of Gog and Magog" that had made him appreciate Wilfrid Blunt. Of Samuel Butler, Forster wrote

I like the idea of fantasy, of muddling up the actual and the impossible until the reader isn't sure which is which, and I have sometimes tried to do it when writing myself. 1

Forster's own individual success, in A Passage to India, lies in his ability to make the reader believe that he and Forster do in fact know the actual from the impossible, but that the characters do not: fantasy and muddle have here

become an integral part of the plot, as well as symbols of Forster's message.

FootnotesII E. A Passage to India

1. 'A Book that Influenced Me' (1944) in TCD, p.226.

III. Conclusion

In conclusion, is it possible to define the particular aspects that combine to make Forster the critic and creator? In Forster and his message, the reader sees Forster the prophet - but the definition of prophetic fiction that Forster provides in Aspects of the Novel cannot include his own:

We are not concerned with the prophet's message, or rather ... we are concerned with it as little as possible. What matters is the accent of his voice, his song.... Prophetic fiction, then, seems to have definite characteristics. It demands humility and the absence of the sense of humour. (pp.138-140)

Forster as "prophet" is very concerned with his song, and intends that his reader shall be so too. The reader and the prophet must connect first; from that literary connection, Forster hopes, will come other connections. As for demanding humility and an absence of the sense of humour from his readers, Forster asks quite the opposite. Rather he makes an alliance with his reader: listen to the message, but enjoy the physical beauty that the novelist enjoys and laugh with the novelist at the absurdity of social posturings. The reader's stomach is not in danger from this "prophet".

By his own definition, then, Forster is not a prophet - but he has a message, and it is interesting that in recognising the prophet in Forster's writing Virginia Woolf likens him to Ibsen. In her essay 'The Novels of E.M. Forster', Virginia Woolf attempts to analyse and define what message it is that Forster hopes to put over in his novels. She believes "it is the soul that matters" to Forster, and that in his combination of "realism and mysticism", of messages enclosed in ordinary life, he is close to Ibsen. She also believes, significantly, that, unlike Ibsen, he does not succeed:

He fails, one is tempted to think, chiefly because that admirable gift of his for observation has served him too well. 1

Forster's very individual spirit of place, combined with his social observation and wit, make him a prophet who can fit neither his own, nor Virginia Woolf's definition. For the reader, however, his message is not lost in these other abilities, but is simply presented in a distinctly individual way. Christopher Isherwood, part of the younger generation in whom Forster took an interest, believed Forster's approach more successful than that of his own contemporaries:

Our frightful mistake was that we believed in tragedy: the point is, tragedy's quite impossible nowadays....the whole of Forster's technique is based on the tea-table: instead of trying to screw all his senses up to the highest possible pitch, he tones them down until they sound like mothers'-meeting gossip. 2

What is the message, then? Forster believes that the strength he admired in Antigone, the cleverness of Voltaire, the goodness of Blake and the mockery of Samuel Butler must combine in the wisdom of the individual to recognize the limitations of the society in which he must function; to expose and fight that society where he can, not to destroy it, but in an attempt to improve it, on however small a scale. Stephen and his children, Lucy and George, Margaret, Helen and her baby, and Henry Wilcox, are small oases, as Forster shows them, in a desert of social convention and hypocrisy. Friendship and connection are temporary victories, but the battle must go on. The critic who allied himself more with Proust's pessimism than Dante's hope still believes at the end of his novels, that twentieth-century man can connect somewhere, if only for a while.

The qualities of the humanist - "integrity, intelligence, sensitiveness, curiosity, erudition, tolerance... earthly warmth"³ - that Forster shows and responds to in his criticism, are equally present in his novels. They interweave with the more technical "aspects" as subtly as any of Forster's own rhythms, and have, to the pleasure of the reader, the added advantage of a very individual wit.

In moving from Forster the prophet with his message,

and Forster the critic with his personal interests and idiosyncracies, to Forster the creator of people, the reader is reminded of Forster's reluctant acceptance, in Aspects of the Novel, of the necessity for novels to contain people:

We hate humanity, but if it is exorcised
or even purified the novel wilts, little
is left but a bunch of words. (p.31)

If Forster hates humanity, he has in his novels, as in his criticism, an excellent way of hiding it. His novels are not soggy or stifling because of their "human quality", and the enjoyment he gets from exploring the characters he creates is again communicated to his ally, the reader: the vitality of Aziz or Gino, the charm of Lucy Honeychurch and her mother, the nastiness of Mrs Herriton or Mrs Failing, the "stifling" (?) efficiency of the Wilcoxes, the idiosyncracies of Mr Eager and Cecil, of Lilia, of Mrs Munt and Tibby and the Pembrokes are excellently presented. Flat and round characters, they live on and off the page. There is an amusing irony here, in that Forster's flat characters, his clergymen, aunts, spinsters and widows, have the vigour, when necessary, to bounce through the novel convincingly and enjoyably. They are not the "wind sextet" from The Waves, nor Jacob Flanders, the solid "wraith", they lead a life of their own. The affinity here, is rather with the ubiquitous Dickens, than with Virginia Woolf. In Forster's hands, there is obviously "more in flatness than the severer critics admit"! (AN p.79) True, when Forster the prophet unwittingly imitates Hardy or James, his characters tend to wilt and become cardboard puppets, in "a bunch of words". Stephen, Mrs Wilcox and Leonard Bast get lost in the prophecy, and indeed their failure seems doubly obvious in proximity with Forster's successful creations. On the other hand, the successful characters can, at times, become too successful and run away with Forster's intended plot. Rickie Eliot and the Wilcoxes, by the very virtue of their convincing portrayal "kick the book to pieces" (AN p.74). Forster's interest in people can, at times, become a creative disadvantage.

Forster's inevitably individual approach has cer-

tainly caused problems of definition for his critics - witness this comment of Virginia Woolf's. She divides writers

into the preachers and the teachers, headed by Tolstoy and Dickens, on the one hand, and the pure artists, headed by Jane Austen and Turgenev, on the other. Mr. Forster, it seems, has a strong impulse to belong to both camps at once. 4

Mr Forster also enjoys both camps at once. When the very catholic nature of his literary interests is combined with his humanism, wit and individual technique - "the particular art that each novelist employs in the execution of his particular book"⁵ - the reader is reminded of Forster's definition of the Alexandrian poet, Cavafy, standing, unafraid, "at a slight angle" to the world.

Forster is a teacher and preacher and artist in his novels, as in his criticism. But he is primarily interested in people, as literary subjects, as travellers, as objects for social analyses or social prophecy, as individuals - and as readers. As humanist and prophet, he calls for human connection and awareness through the devices which he labelled pattern, rhythm, fantasy and prophecy. But it is his mastery of the basic, novelistic techniques of plot and character which holds the interest and affection of the reader, while the message is conveyed. It is Forster's connection of the passion of the message with the prose of the novelist that creates his very individual art.

FootnotesConclusion

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