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FORSTER AND THE EDWARDIANS: THE LITERATURE OF DOMESTIC
FAILURE

City University of New York

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FORSTER AND THE EDWARDIANS:
THE LITERATURE OF DOMESTIC FAILURE

by
ANNE B. SIMPSON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
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1985

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 26, 1985
date

David J. Gordon
Chairman of Examining Committee

6/27/85
date

Michael T. ...
Executive Officer

David J. Gordon

Irving Howe

Fred Kaplan
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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1. INTRODUCTION: FORSTER AND THE EDWARDIAN SCENE

. . . she had the uneasy feeling that the
whole of civilization was wrong. . . .
-- Arnold Bennett, Leonora

In many important respects, E.M. Forster was a writer of his time. Of his six completed novels, five were conceived between 1901 and 1914,¹ the dates which can be used in forming a loose definition of the Edwardian period. For 1901 saw the funeral of Queen Victoria, who had reigned for more than sixty years, and the widespread feeling among Englishmen was that for better or for worse a new age had begun; although her son, Edward, died in 1910, it was four years later that the First World War brought a clear and generally recognized close to the epoch.² Forster wrote most of his fiction from the vantage point of an Edwardian, as is apparent when his novels are placed against a background of contemporary thought and representative literature. The preoccupation with family life, in particular, which is a central aspect of his Edwardian work, reflects a concern that was prevalent in this period.

It is surprising, therefore, to realize that in the many studies of Forster's work little attention has been

given either to his Edwardianism or to his interest in the family. In the best book-length analyses of Forster, Frederick Crews and Lionel Trilling evaluate the relation between the novelist and a heritage of liberal, humanist ideals; George H. Thomson emphasizes the romance elements in Forster's fiction; Wilfred Stone concentrates on the author's attempt to synthesize opposites in his art. James McConkey applies the tenets of Forster's Aspects of the Novel to his fiction, and Alan Wilde examines the novelist's aestheticism versus his urge to respond fully to life. Although the Edwardian background is sometimes taken for granted in these studies, it is not discussed at length, and while John Colmer's book on Forster spends somewhat more time on the Edwardian context, it is not the sole focus of this analysis. Treatments of the literary period itself by John Batchelor, Richard Ellmann, Jefferson Hunter, and Samuel Hynes mention Forster's relation to his contemporaries. But in these cases Forster serves basically to illustrate points about Edwardianism; the stress is not on Forster, but on the era.

In regard to Forster's feelings about the family, again, little has been written; the standard critics on Forster often mention his presentation of domestic life in passing, but it is clearly not their primary interest. While a few isolated articles on the subject have

appeared in recent years, and Bonnie Finkelstein's full-length treatment of Forster's fictional women frequently touches on the family, this aspect of his work has not been given extensive attention. Yet Forster set great store by personal relations (as he asserts, for example, in the essay, "What I Believe" [Two Cheers 65-73]). Therefore a comprehensive study of his presentation of the family -- the prototype for all other human interactions -- would seem to be in order if we are to understand the concerns manifested in his fiction.³

As will be shown in this study, domesticity is both a vital and oppressive part of life in the works of Forster the Edwardian. While the novelist patently sees the family as a threat to the development of the individual, his fiction demonstrates an urge to make some kind of adaptation to the domestic unit. His first five novels show a continual struggle with the family, but the idea of maintaining domestic relations of a sort is never altogether abandoned. Forster's impulse, always, is to identify the best possible life for the individual in a world (and the family serves as metaphor for the world) that is often hostile to personal welfare. This impulse is offset by a prevailing sense that modern life is both mutable and uncertain. Forster's prescriptions for the improvement of the family and, thus, of the individual's lot, are generally untenable; this indicates that the

author's belief in his ability to create a better world was, at best, a tentative one. In this uncertainty of conviction, Forster reflected the uneasiness of the age.

One of the most salient points about the Edwardian world, especially in relation to the literature that described it, was that it was not, as is commonly believed, an idyll of gaiety and self-confidence. Barbara Tuchman, in her analysis of the era, explains that in the popular conception of Edwardianism

we have been misled by the people of the time themselves who, in looking back across the gulf of the War, see that earlier half of their lives misted over by a lovely sunset haze of peace and security. It did not seem so golden when they were in the midst of it. ("Foreword," Proud xiii)

This is evident in an examination of the prose commentaries of notable Edwardians. One of the best of contemporary analysts was the M.P. Charles Masterman, who in his 1909 study of the state of modern England remarked on an attitude of uncertainty which seemed dominant among the people of the nation and observed that "already gigantic and novel forces of mechanical invention, upheavals of people, social discontents, are exhibiting a society in the beginnings of change" (237).

For many Edwardians, change, upheaval, and uncertainty were the defining characteristics of the age. The

country-house weekend which delighted the upper strata and which has remained as the stereotype of the era was hardly available to the majority of Englishmen, and to those for whom it was an important part of life, it may very well have served, at least in part, as an opportunity for escape from general societal distress (Nowell-Smith 46-47).

It is significant that the period opened in the midst of the Boer War, a war that divided Liberals into "Limps" (Liberal Imperialists) and "Little Englanders" and caused anxiety to the many who believed it to be motivated by commercial greed. Further, it was a national embarrassment; at one point nearly half a million English proved unable to conquer scanty Boer forces of 65,000 men (Minney 15). Although the war ended in 1902, as the period progressed there was an increasing paranoia about international affairs and, specifically, about the German threat; this expressed itself in a virtual "invasion psychosis" among the general public (Tuchman 380) and gave rise to a literature to fan the flames. Probably the best-remembered today of the works of this genre was Erskine Childers' The Riddle of the Sands, which appeared just a year after the Boer War was over.

Edwardians also contended with disruptions of the established order. This was the great age of English Socialism and, most significantly, of the Labour Party;

the growth of Labour pointed to the beginnings of a shift in power from one class to another which was to cause "upheaval in the components of society," an upheaval that could already be felt (Tuchman 367). It was a period of militant trade unionism, for there were dock and railway strikes in 1911, coal strikes and the Port of London strike in 1912, and fervent discussion everywhere of "a civil war between labour and capital" (Nowell-Smith 97-98). Women, also, were employing militant tactics in a quest for female suffrage; the movement founded by Emmeline Pankhurst expressed its exasperation with the polite prevarications of the Liberal government by becoming increasingly agitated and violent (Nowell-Smith 98). In the course of the Edwardian suffragette campaign, windows were broken, houses and public buildings were set on fire, and mail in pillar boxes was burned (Hynes, Turn 353).

The economic situation was another source of concern to many. Between rich and poor the disparity was extreme, and this caused considerable worry to those Edwardian intellectuals who undertook investigations into rural and urban poverty. Masterman noted that "unnatural plentitude" at one end of the social scale had its correlative in "unnatural privation" at the other (150), and it was apparent that one-third of English citizens could not fulfill the most basic needs of existence (Tuchman 356).

It was a world of excessive waste in which, at country-house parties, a "simple breakfast" might include kidney omelets, baked eggs au gratin, cod, ham, potted game, veal cake, prunes and cream, scones, rolls, and toast. In contrast, a typical day's diet for those living below the poverty line consisted of "Breakfast: Brown and white bread, butter, tea. Dinner: Fish, bread, tea. Tea: Bread, butter, onions, tea. Supper: None" (Nowell-Smith 164-65; 175). While the wealthy spent weekends disporting in country domiciles of at least eight bedrooms, two bathrooms, stables, and a coach house, the urban poor might live seven in two rooms in a hovel where sleeping accommodations consisted of filthy bedding resting on a box and chairs (Nowell-Smith 149; 156). In some slum areas, twenty-five families shared one toilet, and it was not unusual to rent out a bed to serve three, with two people sleeping underneath, as well (Tuchman 354).

The minds of the conscientious ached with the knowledge of these conditions, and in consequence this was an age of important social reforms. William Beveridge and Winston Churchill organized labor exchanges where the unemployed could receive information about available work, and in time pensions for the aged were made larger while national insurance against ill health and unemployment were also established (Minney 189-91).

Other improvements of the age included the by-products of a strikingly rapid growth in technology: the typewriter and the telephone came into their own, as did the airplane and the automobile. In 1904 there were 11,000 licensed hansom cabs and only two motor taxis in London, but by 1910 the city was home to 6,300 motor taxis and not even 5,000 hansoms (Nowell-Smith 122). (Not all Englishmen were happy, however, about the triumph of the car; Masterman characterized motors as "wandering machines racing with incredible velocity and no apparent aim" [28] -- a popular view.) This was also an age which witnessed significant advances in the fields of physics and psychology: the relativity theory appeared during the Edwardian decade, while Freud's Interpretation of Dreams was translated into English in 1913.

The climate, therefore, was one of change, and this brought with it a growing insecurity about the old strongholds of English life: "The Edwardians inhabited what may be called a contracting moral universe, in which the received moral imperatives had lost their urgency" (Batchelor 3). People of this era questioned a number of the values that they had inherited from the Victorian world and found, to their dismay, that previous assumptions did not really fit into a tumultuous modern age. As Bernard Bergonzi points out, there was a veritable "crisis of confidence" among Englishmen of this period

("Preface," Century viii), and many conventions came to be seen as meaningless and, worse, oppressive. The response to this perception took various forms. Church-going, for example, fell into a marked decline, and to some it seemed that the idea that religion had died had become part of the Edwardian sensibility (Masterman 220).

Perhaps to substitute for religious values, a "mythologizing" of the country landscape was prevalent (Batchelor 197). In increasing numbers, Edwardians moved into the city to find work, while, due in large measure to improved public transportation, there was also a rapid development of the suburbs (Nowell-Smith 123). One reaction to the gradual eclipse of rural life was to idealize the countryside as a last refuge for meaning; this view was apparent in the poetry collected in Edward Marsh's Georgian Poetry, as well as in novels of the period. Another tendency, most evident in contemporary fiction, was to vilify the city as a lonely, inhuman place (Hunter 216) and to sneer at the inhabitants of suburbia.

Although Tuchman argues that Edwardians were more certain of their convictions than most people are now ("Foreword," Proud xiii), they felt that they were less so than previous ages had been. They tended to set themselves apart from their predecessors (especially the Victorians) and view characteristics of their world, including such negatives as the loss of beliefs, as

unique to their age. They were also apprehensive about the future and sometimes quite bleak about their society's chances of survival; George Bernard Shaw's play, "Heartbreak House," seems to assert that this feeling was entirely justified. Begun in 1913, the play was not completed by Shaw until some time after the Edwardian period had ended, but it purported to deal with "cultured, leisured Europe before the war" ("Preface" 31). This is a world in which fathers do not recognize their daughters, husbands and wives entice those to whom they are not married, the most dashing figure is an inveterate liar, and a seeming ingenue opts for an unromantic union with an old man. In the delightfully grim resolution, a number of the characters turn happily to face their impending destruction, for, as Shaw explains in his "Preface," this world "did not know how to live, at which point all that was left to it was the boast that at least it knew how to die" (11). The play indicts an entire culture at the same time that it voices the pessimism so often expressed in the Edwardian epoch.

It was not uncommon for the literature of the period to analyze the state of contemporary life, and a favorite object of both anxiety and attack was the English family. The family was usually viewed in one of two ways. A prevalent feeling was that the institution was on its way out, as so many other aspects of society seemed to be;

this was a perception that caused general uneasiness, as no one could be quite sure about what would take the place of domesticity. A reason for the fear that the family was dying was that the birth rate in England actually was falling; it declined by ten percent in this period, no doubt because of an increasingly widespread use of contraception, especially among the middle classes. This falling birth rate was regarded by many as a threat to a nation that needed a healthy population pool to draw on in stocking its army and manning its industries (Hynes, Turn 197). Distress over the security of the family unit was exacerbated by the suffragette movement as well as by the growth of opportunities, largely thanks to the typewriter and the telephone, for women to work outside the home. The new freedom of movement that females were experiencing appeared to threaten their traditional roles as homemakers and child-rearers.

In reality the family was not in a state of imminent danger; seen in a broad historical perspective, it was relatively hardy. Philippe Ariès persuasively argues this view in his study of the development of the European family, a study which merits brief discussion here. As Ariès points out, the concept of childhood, around which the family is organized, did not even exist in the Middle Ages; what the family meant then was lineal ties of blood, and not much more. By the seventeenth century, increasing

numbers of children were attending school and living at home for longer periods of time rather than leaving at an early age for other households, in which they had traditionally served as apprentices. Schools prolonged children's dependence on their parents and, in their stress on moral education, infected parents with a sense that they too had a certain responsibility for the moral welfare of their offspring. Children became an important part of ordinary life and parents concerned themselves more and more over their general well-being. The seventeenth century did not yet know the family as we identify it, however, for the homes, at least of the well-to-do, were still crowded with numerous inhabitants, both related and unrelated, including "servants, employees, clerics, clerks, shopkeepers . . ." (392). By the eighteenth century, a change occurred in the organization of households: more people were excluded, with a corresponding decrease in sociability between family and non-family members. The domestic situation of the time, which is recognizable as our modern one, "[cut] itself off from the world and oppose[d] to society the isolated group of parents and children" (404). Where the previous existence of widely different social orders coexisting in one house demanded a certain level of mutual toleration, an acceptance of differences, the rise of families as units living separated from one another

provided each way of life with a confined space in which it was understood that the dominant features should be respected, and that each person had to resemble a conventional model, an ideal type, and never depart from it under pain of excommunication. (415)

Thus, over time, the family grew increasingly distinct as an institution and increasingly rigid in its insistence on a uniformity of belief and behavior among its members.

This accounts for the second Edwardian feeling about domesticity, that one must break free of the family's traditions in order to express differentness and achieve personal well-being.⁴ A dominant view of the family in contemporary literature was that it was, unhappily, flourishing, and that it stood in direct opposition to the health of the individual.

One response to the restrictiveness of domestic life was the rebellion against parental authority which was so much a feature of the Edwardian world and its literature. This rebellion paralleled the period's wish to dissociate from all things Victorian; the tyrannical parent was just one illustration of the oppressiveness of the old order. For example, in an otherwise sunny memoir of the period, Edmund Blunden recalls that his father "menaced our liberty in a very Victorian and dogmatic manner" (Nowell-Smith 548).⁵ Perhaps the greatest spokesmen for this attitude were Samuel Butler, in his

posthumously published novel, The Way of All Flesh, and Edmund Gosse, in his autobiography, Father and Son.

In Butler's work, a wretched parental tyranny is shown being passed from one generation to the next, but no crisis occurs until the Victorian age, in a struggle between two hypocrites and their son. The protagonist, Ernest Pontifex, suffering at the hands of a mother who abuses his confidences and a father who forces on him a religious vocation, finally realizes that only in embracing his "true self" and shedding that "old husk" which is his father will he survive (129). Ernest ultimately achieves freedom when he cuts all family ties, for

it was not simply because he disliked his father and mother that he wanted to have no more to do with them; if it had been only this he would have put up with them; but a warning voice within told him distinctly enough that if he was clean cut away from them he might still have a chance of success, whereas if they had anything whatever to do with him, or even knew where he was, they would hamper him and in the end ruin him. Absolute independence he believed to be his only chance of very life itself.
(285-86)

Further, a twist of the plot conveniently allows Ernest to abdicate any direct involvement with his own children, and he chooses, with content, to find his home in assorted hotels and outside any semblance of family life.

Gosse offers a gentler and more poignant treatment of parent-child relations, but even though it is clear

that a deep love existed between the elder Gosse and his son, the psychic development of young Edmund hinged on a rejection of the religiosity of his father, an evangelicism which demanded a stringency of lifestyle, a denial of spontaneous impulses, and a closing off of intellect. "Here was perfect purity, perfect intrepidity, perfect abnegation [Gosse writes]; yet there was also narrowness, isolation, an absence of perspective, let it be boldly admitted, an absence of humanity" (15). Although it was not necessary for Edmund, like Ernest Pontifex, to deny all family ties, it is no coincidence that Gosse's individuation began after he left home and was outside the sphere of paternal influence. The struggle with the family in Father and Son is, as in The Way of All Flesh, the struggle with a repressive, Victorian, religious way of life, and some kind of break with the family is seen as imperative if one is to achieve personal well-being.

Another Edwardian work which dealt with family life, albeit in a very different way, was J.M. Barrie's "Peter Pan." This huge stage success of 1904 deserves mention here because it expresses a pointedly negative attitude toward modern domesticity, and its popularity indicates that this attitude was not without its appeal to Edwardian audiences. In Barrie's fantasy, the father in the Darling household, with which the play opens, is presented as a ludicrous figure whose interactions with his offspring

are characterized by his own childish behavior, on the one hand, and by bullying ill judgement, on the other. Mrs. Darling, who has "a sweet mocking mouth" and likes to tidy the children's minds "as if they were drawers" (29), is, nevertheless, depicted with more apparent affection on the author's part. Yet she allows herself to be called out to a dinner with her husband despite the fact that she senses that her offspring are in danger. Further, she does not stand in the way of Mr. Darling's petulant decision to send the children's protective nanny -- a dog, incidentally -- outside for the night. Thus when Peter Pan flies in at the window and persuades young Wendy, John, and Michael to join him in the Never Land, the audience has the distinct impression that the senior Darlings are getting exactly what they deserve.

A preoccupation with families and home life is apparent throughout the play: in its recurrent discussions of motherhood and what this entails; in the portrait of the villainous Captain Hook, who was traditionally played by the same actor who played Mr. Darling, and who must be killed off to ensure the safety of the children; and in the creative representation of a "better" kind of family in which the child, Wendy, acts as parent to the lost boys of Never Land. While this is an overly grave treatment of what is in fact a comic and delicately wrought play, in tracing a few of its underlying themes

it is apparent that the sense of the modern family as inadequate is central to "Peter Pan," as it was to many Edwardians.

In examining Forster's treatment of domestic life it is useful to begin by recognizing his affinities with his contemporaries, and particularly with novelists of the period. Perhaps the most representative Edwardian novelists, the ones who most clearly articulated widespread concerns of the age, were Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, and H.G. Wells. The three were perceived as a group in the 1920's and have been associated with one another ever since (Bellamy 213-14), but before mentioning their similarities it must be acknowledged that there were significant differences between them. Bennett was the most artistically successful; his fiction was the most consciously crafted, his observation of everyday life the most disciplined and effective. In imitation of the French naturalists he documented the "malady of existence" (Glimpse 26), which does not mean, however, that his work lacked humor; at times Bennett could be extremely funny. Galsworthy's novels tended to an intellectual fogginess, a good-hearted concern for individual welfare that was sometimes muddled by unclear thinking. His most frequent subject of criticism was the English divorce law, which represented, for him, all that was inhuman and

senseless about convention. It was Wells, though, who most zealously attacked a world that seemed "'a fractious, feverish invalid, gouty, greedy, ill nourished'" (Kipps 220). Of these novelists, Wells was the most assertive about his own views, the least capable of (or perhaps least interested in) suppressing his personality on behalf of a detached narrative style.

With this much said, a grouping of the three authors can, nevertheless, be justified, and the ways in which they are similar sheds light on Forster's fiction. Galsworthy, Wells, and Bennett shared a persistent anxiety over the state of an uncertain, unstable world; as Wells put it,

. . . men were never so jumbled, so crowded, so complicated, and stirred about as they are at the present time. Once I am told they had a sort of order, were sphered in religious beliefs, crystal clear, were arranged in a cosmogony that fitted them as hand fits glove, were separated by definite standards of right and wrong which presented life as planned in all its essential aspects from the cradle to the grave. Things are so no longer. That sphere is broken for most of us; even if it is tied about and mended again, it is burst like a seed case; things have fallen out and things have fallen in. . . . (Marriage 6)

Forster also held the view that the world was in a condition of upheaval and change; along with this went the sense that there were no "straight issues" left, as he

described the unpleasant realization facing the protagonist of his unfinished novel, Arctic Summer (Letters 1: 200).

Possibly as a response to the fear that their world was ceasing to make sense, Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells frequently attempted to describe the state of Englishness and ordinary life; Forster did this, too, in his presentation of characteristically British types (the many with "undeveloped hearts," for example, who appear in his fiction) and in his descriptions of the pettinesses of suburban living (in such a novel as Where Angels Fear to Tread). Often Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells employed a careful realism,⁶ an extensive detailing of the elements of everyday life to create the illusion of an ordered, knowable world. The clutter of objects in this fiction bespoke an underlying insecurity later dissected by D.H. Lawrence, in a passage of notable insight, when he described the person "obsessed with the idea of objectives or material assurance; he wants to insure himself, and perhaps everybody else: universal insurance. The impulse rests on fear" (541). While it would be reductive and misleading to describe Forster as a realist, he shared the Edwardian tendency to locate his characters in very specific and fully imagined places -- notably, in houses. Virginia Woolf recognized this when she remarked

that Forster saw his fictional people as intimately connected to their environments ("Novels" 163). This can be seen as an effort to get a grip on the increasingly chaotic Edwardian world.

In the novels of Galsworthy, Wells, and Bennett, all sorts of thematic expectations and proprieties were overthrown. Their work displays a marked interest in money, for instance, and so does Forster's; one finds Margaret Schlegel of Howards End proclaiming that cash is "'the warp of civilization, whatever the woof may be'" (125). Startling phenomena of the new age -- automobiles, militant females, Socialists -- came under discussion in works by Forster and the triumvirate. As a rule, the novels celebrated "self-realization, self-fulfillment, and the discovery of a personal reality" (Colmer, E.M. Forster 59) at the same time, rather paradoxically, that these were offered as ideals for the improvement of humanity. The overriding concern of Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells is perhaps best described in William Bellamy's statement that

novels before Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy . . . make it a condition for the self that the self submits to "higher purposes" which only indirectly ensure individual well-being. . . . The measure of the heresy of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy in this respect is that the values inherent in the universes their characters attempt to synthesize are only those which tend directly to ensure the well-being of the self. (11)

Throughout Forster's fiction, too, "it is the personal center that is held sacred" (Bedient 236). In discussing what was best for the individual, he, like Bennett, Galsworthy and Wells, typically drew upon a "symbolic nucleus . . . a whole society being measured in terms of it" (Ellmann 200). Very often that symbolic nucleus was the family, as the following pages will show.

In the next five chapters of this study, the attitudes toward domesticity which appear in the works of Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells will be used as points of comparison and contrast for an analysis of Forster's Edwardian novels. After a chapter centering on the presentation of family life in the work of Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells, full attention will be given to Forster's fiction. It will be demonstrated that his movement as an Edwardian novelist is from a part-comic, part-despairing discussion of domesticity in Where Angels Fear to Tread to four novels (A Room with a View, Howards End, The Longest Journey, and Maurice) which propose imaginative although not necessarily plausible changes in the domestic realm. The chronology of Forster's publications will be slightly disrupted in order to stress thematic ties between his novels.

Before turning to the works of these Edwardians, however, it must ruefully be noted that Forster himself disliked the critical impulse to place authors in groups

(Gransden 77), and that forcing such a fate upon any writer hardly does justice to the unique strengths and weaknesses of his work. This study does not in any way suggest a single vision of Forster's art. Rather, it attempts to describe yet another aspect of a complex and compelling novelist.

Notes

¹ It could be argued that Maurice, which is one of the novels that will be discussed in this study, is not, strictly speaking, an Edwardian work. For although Forster completed the first version of it in 1914, he revised the last section of it in 1919 and again in 1932, and reworked the entire text in 1959-60 (Colmer, E.M. Forster 113). Nevertheless, Forster located the novel in the period of its inception, noting, later, that the book "dates" in a number of ways and that its action occurs before "the transformed England of the First World War" ("Terminal Note," Maurice 254). Given the author's own view of it, placing Maurice within the context of his Edwardian fiction seems to me appropriate.

² Virginia Woolf, of course, felt that "on or about December, 1910, human character changed" ("Mr. Bennett" 96). Aside from being the date of Edward's death, 1910 was the year of the first Post-Impressionist show in London, which, according to Samuel Hynes, "forced upon the English consciousness ideas that were at once modern and foreign . . ." (Turn 346). There was no significant difference, however, between the fiction produced in the first decade of the twentieth century and the novels written in the few years directly after 1910 and preceding World War One.

³ In this connection, Evelyn Hanquart asserts that

we should try to understand how [Forster's] work deals with parental [i.e. parent-child] relationships, if -- at a later stage -- we wish to get a more accurate focus on his conception of other, more general, human ones and of their value. (59)

⁴ The way in which the family could interfere with the full development of the individual was illustrated in the personal history of the King himself. Edward had spent his youth under a cloud of parental disapproval; his father loathed his amorous exploits and his mother found

him stupid. Moreover, "throughout his long heir-apparency, the longest in English history, Edward the Seventh had been denied by his mother both experience and information about State affairs" (Minney 6). Thus, in viewing her son as incompetent, Victoria had done all that she could to ensure that he would be. And yet after her death Edward emerged as a highly responsible and able monarch, which proved that it was possible to triumph if one were released from the bonds of one's family.

⁵ For other interesting recollections of family life in this era, see Thea Thompson's Edwardian Childhoods.

⁶ This realism in fiction had its counterpart on the Edwardian stage, where daily offerings at Drury Lane included such delights as actual barges, street traffic, and railway smashes (Nowell-Smith 383-84).

2. BENNETT, GALSWORTHY, AND WELLS:

THE INADEQUACIES OF DOMESTIC LIFE

The middle-class family, I am increasingly convinced, is a group in a state of tension.
-- H.G. Wells, Socialism and the Family

In examining concerns over the state of the family evident in the fiction of Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells, Wells' work may prove the best place to begin. For in the well-supported view of Patrick Parrinder, Wells "is a sociological novelist who relates the individual lives he presents to general patterns and classifications." Moreover, certain of Wells' Edwardian novels demonstrate "a tendency to create representative characters, achieving and articulating a comprehensive vision of life" (98). As a result of this tendency, Wells' "novels of discussion," which emphasize ideas over characterization, plot, and other conventions of fiction, have been accused of failing as novels (Ray 156). Yet it is for precisely this reason that the domestic problems presented in these books stand out in relief; they remain, for the most part, unobscured by such delights as sophisticated character development. (Wells' protagonists are frequently no more than voices doing battle with theories, and the

people in their orbits are often, simply, projections of the principal figures' obsessions.) Taken as a group, the discussion books point to a pervasive sense that the family in some way fails the individual. This perception reappears in contemporary fiction by Galsworthy and Bennett.

Wells' grim outlook on marriage is representative of the attitude of his fellow Edwardians. In the discussion fiction, wedded unions tend to be dull, or confining, or both. In The Passionate Friends, for example, the narrator-hero, Stephen Stratton, marries the presumably angelic but lifeless (or, at least, indistinctly drawn) Rachel. She is manifestly not his true love. Mary, the woman for whom he feels real passion, has insisted on a loveless but economically prudent wedding to the well-to-do Lord Justin, and her marriage will degenerate, by the novel's end, into mutual antipathy. As Stratton reviews his original motives for wanting to marry Mary himself, Wells offers a seeming indictment of the marital imprisonment of women:

Far more than Mary I was accepting the conventions of our time. It seemed to me not merely reasonable but necessary that because she loved me she should place her life in my youthful and inexpert keeping, share my struggles and the real hardships they would have meant to her, devote herself to my happiness, bear me children, be my inspiration in imaginative moments, my

squaw, helper and possession through the whole twenty-four hours of every day, and incidentally somehow rear whatever family we happened to produce. . . . (92)

There is an unintended irony here. Stratton, from the vantage point of a mature open-mindedness, and Wells, standing in apparent approval behind his hero, condemn such unfair expectations of marriage. But Stratton has, in the interim, wedded someone who actually answers to most of the demands of his youthful conception of wife-hood. This is how he describes the appeal that first draws him to her: "Rachel, I felt, had something for me that I needed profoundly. . . . She had the supreme gifts of belief and devotion . . ." (139). Poor Rachel Stratton is a woman with no autonomy at all; she seems to exist solely to meet her husband's needs. This paradox is a recurrent one in Wells' fiction, particularly when he tackles the issue of women's rights. One often finds the narrator protesting against conventions which deny wives individuality and freedom, at the same time as he tacitly endorses such conventions in the machinery of the plot.

This is certainly true of the situation presented in Marriage, possibly Wells' most interesting and unjustly forgotten novel of this period. Early on in the book, a potentially fulfilling union occurs between the lively Marjorie Pope and her dream-man Trafford, who literally falls out of the sky and rescues her from the prospect of

a disastrous marriage to someone else. But the Trafford marriage is almost ruined by Marjorie's materialism and Trafford's bitter decision to abandon his unremunerative but compelling career for meaningless pursuits that will help him to support his wife. Marjorie's need to acquire things, to pass her days in a flurry of shopping, is persuasively analyzed, by Wells, as the natural outcome of a lack of training in any other area or a well-developed sense of the importance of cultivating one's talents.¹ Yet when Trafford devises a plan for renewing the passion between himself and his wife, and together they journey to Labrador for a rigorous test of their love away from all possessions and social constraints, Marjorie, as Norman Nicholson points out, "gains a new conception of the vocation of wife: she is to be a helpmeet to the Wellsian cave-man, dreaming of his world state before the campfire" (72). In other words, she is to be no more than an extension of her husband. Marjorie is pictured "making the tea very deftly and listening to Trafford's every word" (Marriage 499), and the reader cannot help but wonder that the author offers this as a solution to marital confinement, failing to see that for the woman, at any rate, this is just another version of the same imprisoned state.²

The situation between the parents and children of Wells' discussion novels is similarly bleak. Prior to

her marriage, Marjorie chafes under her father's petty tyranny, but later, as a parent herself, she demonstrates minimal concern for the feelings of her offspring. In agreeing to join Trafford for the therapeutic trip to Labrador, she is surprised at the ease with which she decides to leave her children and muses to Trafford that "'it's strange how you grip me and they don't'" (431). In The New Machiavelli, Dick Remington's mother barely speaks to him after his father's death; she is primarily interested in religion, not her child, and if one concedes that actions do, in fact, speak louder than words, it little matters that in her diaries, which Dick finds after her death, her love is "abundantly expressed" (48). The protagonist of The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman, Lady Harman, feels almost no grief over a miscarriage and finds her children faintly repugnant in their carping resemblance to their father; she "trie[s] to believe that she love[s] them" (353), while it is patently clear that she does not. Similarly, Lady Mary Justin of The Passionate Friends has affection for her daughter (the by-product, it is hinted, of her affair with Stratton) but hardly cares at all for her son who, she claims, "'is too like his father for any fury of worship, a stolid little creature . . .'" (290). It is a fact that in this same novel love for his child motivates Stratton to write; presumably we would not have the book at all if it were

not for his anxiety to share the secrets of his past with his son. But Stratton assumes that such a narrative is necessary because "frozen silences must come at last" between him and his son (10); he fears that the history of his interaction with his own father, which, because of his parent's debilitating illness, devolved from intimacy into non-communication, will repeat itself. Thus for Wells, parent-child relationships not marked by parental indifference or bullying are in perpetual danger of being destroyed by external forces.

Like Wells, Galsworthy was preoccupied with the domestic scene, and this preoccupation underlies the situations presented in four of his Edwardian novels. As Dudley Barker has noted, Galsworthy wrote a number of novels during this period aimed at satirizing different aspects of contemporary life: in The Man of Property, The Country House, Fraternity, and The Patri-cian, Galsworthy scrutinizes the English upper middle class, the landed gentry, the intelligentsia, and the aristocracy, respectively (125).³ What these novels have in common, aside from their generally satiric thrust, is a rather depressed sense of the inadequacy of familial relations.

Running like a thread from one book to another is the notion of wedlock as enslavement, particularly for women. Yet surprisingly, for it appears that the author's

allegiance is with these put-upon wives, they are, by and large, remarkably unappealing characters. Helen Bellew of The Country House, Audrey Noel of The Patrician, and Irene Forsythe of The Man of Property share a certain remoteness and inscrutability which are, ultimately, alienating. On the one hand, we are asked to believe that the sympathetic male figures in each of these novels greatly admire such women, who are meant to live beyond the life-destroying dictates of social custom. On the other hand, Galsworthy subverts his own purpose by creating, in these female characters, distant and even, at times, repugnant personalities. A sampling of the narrators' descriptions of these women provides a picture of their furtive and indirect responses to intolerable situations: Audrey Noel left her husband by "creeping away"; at the introduction of Helen Bellew, she is seen responding to the bombast of her lover's father by giving him "a sidelong glance, and a little ironical smile peeped out on her full red lips" (Patrician 145; Country 9). Irene Forsythe, the archetypal Galsworthy woman, responds in this way to a remark made by her father-in-law, James:

Irene smiled; and in the curve of her lips was a strange provocation. She seemed to have lost her deference. Her breast rose and fell with secret anger. She drew her hands inwards from their rest on the arm of the chair until the tips of her fingers met, and her dark eyes looked unfathomably at James. (Property 82)

It could be argued that Irene's eventual romance with Bosinney, the fiancé of her closest friend, almost deserves D.H. Lawrence's venomous accusation that Irene is "a sneaking, creeping, spiteful sort of bitch" parasitically attached to the Forsytes even as she wrongs them (545).

Galsworthy is more successful at depicting unions in which one or both spouses have been severely disappointed and yet strive, at least for a time, to make adjustments to this disappointment. When least dramatic, the novelist can be most convincing and achieve his most resonant effects. Here, for instance, is the depressed marriage of Hilary and Bianca Dallison, of Fraternity:

There was the whole history of their married life in those two smiles. They meant so much: so many thousand hours of suppressed irritation, so many baffled longings and earnest efforts to bring their natures together. They were the supreme, quiet evidence of the divergence of two lives -- that slow divergence which had been far from being wilful, and was the more hopeless in that it had been so gradual and so gentle. They had never really had a quarrel, having enlightened views of marriage; but they had smiled. They had smiled so often through so many years that no two people in the world could very well be further from each other. Their smiles had banned the revelation even to themselves of the tragedy of their wedded state. (50-51)

In an equally restrained passage from The Country House, when Mr. Pencyce bends over his fainting wife,

almost stifling her, she feels at once the need for air and space and the compulsion to assure him of his importance to her. "In spite of his efforts the feeling of faintness passed," Galsworthy tells us, "and, taking his hand, she stroked it gratefully" (286).

Just as the spouses in Galsworthy's fiction frequently live together in an atmosphere of emotional dishonesty and confusion about each other's motives, parents and children are often shown as being bewildered by one another. In the central irony of Fraternity, the old philosopher, Mr. Stone, who is writing a book on Universal Brotherhood, is oblivious to the needs of other people and is baffled in the face of his daughter Bianca's emotional vulnerability. Lord and Lady Valleys, of The Patrician, simply cannot comprehend the attitude of their son Miltoun, who is willing to sacrifice a prestigious career out of love for a married woman, Audrey Noel. By the same token, siblings often fail to understand each other and are frequently described as being more unlike than similar. In The Patrician, the four Carádóc children are utterly different from each other, for Miltoun is "ascetic"; Agatha, "domestic"; Bertie, "shrewd"; and Barbara, "joyful" (69). Stephen and Hilary Dallison, the brothers of Fraternity, also are depicted in contrast rather than comparison: Hilary is contemplative and, finally, paralyzed by a welter of feeling, while Stephen,

a more active man, utterly denies emotion. Their wives, Bianca and Cecilia (who are sisters), are like their husbands and unlike each other insofar as they are, respectively, overwhelmed with feelings and terrified by them. In some way these relatives are not truly related; they may share the same blood, but they share none of the truly significant aspects of humanity.

On occasion Galsworthy presents a domestic relationship which approaches closeness despite the problem of mutual incomprehension. Yet here intimacy has the flavor of a forbidden fruit. In The Country House, Mrs. Pendyce displaces her romantic needs onto her son George, sending him a note of the type that one would write to a lover: "'Dearest George [runs the letter] . . . I have something very particular to tell you. Do come to me at Green's Hotel. Come soon, my dear. I shall be lonely and unhappy till I see you. Your loving Margery Pendyce'" (223). Even more provocative is the interaction between Barbara and her brother Miltoun, of The Patrician. At one point in the novel, filled with sympathy over Miltoun's agonized love for Audrey Noel, Barbara enters his bedroom in the hope of giving him comfort. She clumsily tries to embrace him and then strokes his arm; suddenly she is aware that he has pulled away. Leaving the room,

a sudden frightened longing for warmth, and light, and colour came to Barbara. She fled back to her room. But she could not sleep. That strange mute unseen vibration in the unlighted room -- like the noiseless licking of a flame at the air; the touch of Miltoun's hand, fiery hot against her cheek and neck; the whole tremulous dark episode, possessed her through and through. Thus had the wayward force of Love chosen to manifest itself to her in all its wistful violence. At this first sight of the red flower of passion her cheeks burned; up and down her, between the cool sheets, little hot cruel shivers ran; she lay, wide-eyed, staring at the ceiling. She thought of the woman whom he so loved, and wondered if she too were lying sleepless, flung down on a bare floor, trying to cool her forehead and lips against a cold wall.

Not for hours did she fall asleep, and then dreamed of running desperately through fields full of tall spiky asphodel-like flowers, and behind her was running herself. (169-70).

The incestuous overtones are hard to miss, especially as Barbara's heated response to Miltoun's touch and over-identification with his impassioned, frustrated lover culminate in a dream notable for its sexual imagery. The flowers both evoke Barbara's own sexual longings (in her waking life she consciously identifies flowers with passion) and suggest the alluring yet threatening phallus (the asphodel-like plants are long and erect, and Barbara is desperate as she runs through them; whether she is desperate for them or desperate out of fear of them, or has both feelings, is undetermined, but they certainly might hurt her, for they are spiky). Barbara's final

dream view of herself as split into two figures reflects her unconscious view of herself in relation to Milton. In her wishful fantasy she is Barbara the lover as well as Barbara the sister.

The overall impression created by Galsworthy's satiric novels is of a world in which familial disjunction prevails. Domestic interactions may approach closeness but become twisted; more often than not, they are characterized, simply, by a sad lack of understanding.

This is not far from the picture of domestic life presented in Bennett's fiction, where the family forms a web of symbiotic needs and mutual frustrations, and domestic relationships are, above all, ambivalent. As Georges Lafourcade has observed,

Bennett was first to proclaim in his novels that, especially among blood-relations, hate, contempt, or indifference were not only very common feelings, but their temporary existence was not incompatible with a permanent substratum of genuine affection and esteem. (132-33)

For example, the complexity of Bennett's view of the parental tyrant stands in sharp contrast to the one-dimensional presentation of similar types in Wells' Ann Veronica (where Mr. Stanley, Ann's father, is an overbearing dictator), and Marriage (in which Marjorie Pope's sense of being stifled in her family of origin is "a virtual parody of the Ann Veronica situation" [Parrinder

96], and, as befits a parody, her tyrannical father is correspondingly simplified). A number of critics have analyzed Bennett's remarkable achievement in picturing aggressive parents like Darius, of Clayhanger, as sympathetically as their children; in identifying the sources of their need to play domestic overlord, and in understanding -- as well as making the reader understand -- this need (Lucas 138; Lafourcade 125). In one of his essays, Bennett remarked: "that oppressors should be treated with less sympathy than oppressed is contrary to my notion of the ethics of creative art" (Author's 210), and he was consistent in this outlook. Darius Clayhanger is an impossible father, but we are able to see how his own rigorous childhood has determined the inflexibility of his personality and shaped his attitude toward his son, Edwin (Darius feels a confused mixture of pride in the boy's fine sensibilities and frustration at what seems to be his incompetence in practical affairs). With this characterization, Bennett's work achieves a vivid psychological realism, as it does in the portrait of John Stanway, of Leonora. Here is a man whose rigid, unthinking authority frequently paralyzes the family organism and prevents the efficient operation of that domestic machine which Leonora, his wife, manipulates so well. Nevertheless, Stanway has flashes of great tenderness. Arthur Twemlow, a friend of the family who is to fall in

love with Leonora, observes this scene between Stanway and one of the daughters:

"Don't be late to-night," said Stanway severely to Millicent.

"Now, grumbler," retorted the intrepid child, putting her gloved hand suddenly over her father's mouth; Stanway submitted. The picture of the two in this delicious momentary contact remained long in Twemlow's mind; and he thought that Stanway could not be such a brute after all. (99)

Despite such positive moments, the children in Bennett's fiction often seem to function as shields helping their parents to ward off their own unacceptable feelings. Leonora Stanway, for instance, seems to be using her daughters as a way of denying her deep guilt over the prospect of marrying Twemlow, the man she loves, following the suicide of Stanway. In the surface narrative, she convinces herself that she cannot wed her beloved as long as her children, who absolutely do not need her, remain unattached. The author gives her foggy motives, and of course he may be emphasizing her maternal feelings in order to prove that she is a "nice" woman even though she's been in love with someone other than her husband for some time. But, to give Bennett credit for more depth, one also can see in Leonora's solicitude for her children a very human response to a violent death in the family and the concurrent dangers posed by a new relationship. The protagonist may be turning to her

daughters as an excuse to remain entangled in her old existence, trying to work through any sense of responsibility she may feel for Stanway's demise. After all, those closest to suicides rarely feel completely blameless. In addition, the longer she is bound up with the memory of her husband, the longer she can put off the life of freedom and acceptance which Twemlow offers and which, for a myriad of reasons, she has avoided throughout her adulthood.

One can find more evidence earlier in the book for the view that Leonora habitually uses children, or the idea of them, as an obstacle to confronting her feelings. While still married, she is disappointed at not receiving promised letters from Twemlow but avoids her depression by creating an imaginary son who caters to her need for affection and with whom she can live, in fantasy, whenever the reality of her isolated state threatens to overwhelm her. Fantasies certainly form a part of each person's life, be she healthy or not, but what is significant here is that Leonora makes up a child -- rather than a lover -- to satisfy her deepest desires. She seems to feel least threatened by a maternal relationship in which she can believe that she has a measure of control.

Another instance of this use of the child to protect against emotion can be found in Bennett's Whom God Hath Joined. Alma Fearn learns that her husband has been

unfaithful to her in their own house. Although for years she has known, in a dim way, of her spouse's carryings-on, it takes a report brought from her daughter, Annunciata, to spur her to action, and she intends to use the girl as a mouthpiece in her divorce suit. It is Annunciata, not her mother, who must prove Charles Fearn's infidelity, and who must submit to the ordeal of declaring his guilt in court. Ostensibly, Annunciata must do this because it was she who stumbled upon the affair. But Alma's insensitivity, right up to the time of the trial, to the terrible bind her daughter is in, seems most peculiar. It suggests that Alma lacks the courage, at this point, to face her husband with what must be the accumulated wrath of years, and that unconsciously she has planned to let Annunciata do it for her. Annunciata ultimately cannot condemn her father publicly, and Alma (quite belatedly) sympathizes -- even, when she is more emotionally contained, forgiving her husband herself, and reconciling with him -- but all this is almost irrelevant as far as Annunciata is concerned. The damage has been done. The family tacitly determines that she will never see her father again, that she will time her visits home to avoid him, and he for his part refuses to speak of her. The child has been offered as a sacrifice to the mother's unacknowledged, or, at any rate, unexpressed feelings of rage and betrayal.

Not that Annunciata is without anger of her own. Charles Fearn's affair has a special significance for her. Prior to the discovery of her father's indiscretion, Annunciata is the apple of his eye. When her mother is away, Annunciata feels that she has "to be more than a daughter to her father . . . more like her mother to him" (121). In other words, she constructs for herself, in the safe setting of her mother's absence, a dream marriage between herself and her father. She prudishly dislikes the enticing French governess living in their midst, and she is more than outraged at the discovery of Fearn's indiscretion with this woman. Annunciata's response to her father's sexual waywardness is intensely personal, the horror of the negated. Her feelings, presumably overwhelming ones, are then transformed into an extreme empathy with her mother, toward whom (until the divorce trial) all her allegiance veers. But it is worth noting the unrealistic nature of Annunciata's new view of her parents:

She had taken her mother's part with passionate enthusiasm. Her mother had become an angel and her father had become a devil. She had deliberately encouraged in herself a righteous and relentless animosity against her father. Whenever she thought of him she thought of him with bitterness; she forced herself to think of him with bitterness. She had developed a holy fanaticism. (366-67)

Why this great need to renounce her father? To some extent, Annunciata's behavior certainly can be attributed, as the narrator suggests, to the normal response of an inexperienced girl to any indication of fallibility in either parent. Yet on some level this is not enough of an explanation for the extremity of Annunciata's reaction. She is too involved in the family romance for her own good.

In an essay, Bennett notes ironically that children come to the average man "not in order that they might be jolly little creatures, but as extensions of the father's individuality" (Married 30); of a piece with this reasoning is the fact that Bennett's Edwardian fiction contains numerous portraits of children trapped by their families, unable to realize their autonomy. Many of them have failed to form their own emotional lives, and have become living monuments to their parents' psychic needs. One theme of Clayhanger is the force exerted by parents on their offspring; this is manifest in Edwin's almost un-failing submission to his father, at least until Darius begins to weaken with brain disease. Darius himself is so tied up, psychologically, with the benefactor and idealized father figure of his childhood, that he goes into the physical decline which will finally kill him directly after learning that this man, Shushions, has died.

The sacrifice of one's life in an over-involvement with symbolic or actual parents reappears in the picture of the Clayhangers' neighbor, Janet Orgreave, who seems to possess every charm and attraction and lives in a contrastingly happy, affectionate family. Yet ultimately this is our view of her: "She sat there rather straight and rather prim between her parents, sticking to them, smoothing creases for them, bearing their weight, living for them" (486-87). Janet is wedged between her parents in a lifelong condition of self-denial. She has clearly failed to separate from her family, which may explain, in part, why Edwin likes and admires her, but cannot love her; why he turns, instead, to the fiercely individual Hilda Lessways. Hilda has had her own problems with her mother, with whom she lived in a torture of closeness and contempt leading to an almost debilitating grief at Mrs. Lessways' death, but Edwin knows nothing of this at the time that he falls in love with Hilda (as, indeed, we know nothing of it until we read the sequel to Clayhanger, Hilda Lessways). In the first stages of passion between Edwin and Hilda, she appears to be proudly unconventional and unfettered: everything that Janet Orgreave is not and that Edwin himself would like to be.

Hilda is also an intensely feeling person. The real sin in Bennett's fictional world is to exist without recognizing one's emotions, and lives cut off from inner

truth are the expressions, by and large, of unworkable family situations. Thus in The Price of Love, the "price" the protagonist Rachel must pay for her passion is a deliberate blindness to the reality of her husband's nature. Like Alma Fearn, who spends most of her marriage minimizing her spouse's infidelities, Rachel Fores, confronted with her husband, Louis', petty thievery, briefly and agonizingly faces it and then, with relief, closes her eyes. In a passage worth quoting in full for its revelation of Rachel's psychology, she tells herself that

if he had faults -- and he had -- she preferred them (proudly and passionately) to the faults of scores of other women's husbands. He was not a brute, nor even a boor nor a savage -- thousands of savages ranged free and terror-striking in the Five Towns. Even when vexed and furious he could control himself. It was possible to share his daily life and see him in all his social moods without being humiliated. He was not a clodhopper; watch him from the bow-window of a morning as he walked down the street! He did not drink; he was not a beast. He was not mean. He might scatter money, but he was not mean. In fact, except that one sinister streak in his nature, she could detect no fault. (428)

Because Louis is "not a clodhopper," Rachel resigns herself to a life of constant vigil against "that one sinister streak" -- a streak of overweening egotism, a self-interest bordering on the amoral, which has proved, throughout the novel, to be Louis' only consistent character trait. Rachel will deny the importance of this

tendency in order to preserve their union, and this is too great a compromise of her inner self.

In general, the marriages in Bennett's serious prewar novels hobble along in just this way, basically enduring yet wretchedly dishonest. As Judith Pearson comments, wedlocks in these books are frequently established on a base of deception and maintained at the cost of denying what one needs emotionally (2143A). If Bennett's fiction suggests that many families would not survive the expression of feelings, particularly disappointed and angry ones, a wilful ignorance of the truth seems a terrible burden to bear on behalf of domestic life.

It is apparent that characterization and plot serve to convey a certain outlook on family life in the novels of Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells, but less obvious, and less frequently recognized by critics, are the ways in which a carefully thought-out symbolism underscores the thematic elements in these works. James Hepburn ably proves this to be true of Bennett, for Hepburn's study, The Art of Arnold Bennett, is a persuasively documented analysis of the novelist as extremely effective in his use of symbols. And both Wells and Galsworthy display a similar interest in using images as well as narrative to convey their perceptions to the reader.

The symbol which appears time and again in the work of the triumvirate, which highlights their literary

resemblance to one another and testifies to their anxiety over family life, is the symbol of the house.⁴ For these writers the house could mean different things in different contexts, but it always did mean something. It did not function merely to provide atmosphere for the novel, although this was one of the things it did. Thus Virginia Woolf's famous attack on the Edwardians in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" perfectly misses the entire point of this interest in the house. She complains that Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells

have laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things. They have given us a house in the hope that we may be able to deduce the human beings who live in it. . . . But if you hold that novels are in the first place about people, and only in the second about the houses they live in, that is the wrong way to set about it. (112-23)⁵

What Woolf and subsequent generations failed to realize in this indictment was that in depicting "the fabric of things" the Edwardians were striving to express truths about the human make-up; that in the presentation of houses, in particular, these novelists offered metaphors for psychological states. It certainly can be argued that this way of describing personalities was as viable as Woolf's own methods.⁶

In "The Author's Craft," Arnold Bennett puts the matter most succinctly. "Every street," he asserts, "is

a mirror, an illustration, an exposition, an exploration, of the human beings who live in it" (11). He fails to accept that any aspect of the physical world can exist independently of another; that we can examine human conduct, for example, without looking at its empirical causes and effects. It was important for Bennett and the other Edwardians to find correspondences among various aspects of existence, for this countered their underlying fear that the world was increasingly chaotic and unfathomable. If one examines the uses of the house in the fiction of Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy, it is apparent that the symbol works to amplify and in some instances offer hope for the families described therein.

Often, in this fiction, the protagonist's feelings about his or her house tell us what is wrong with the family living in it. In Wells' Marriage, Marjorie becomes increasingly obsessed with furnishing and decorating her house, and her growing materialism demands that Trafford earn more and more money to afford the luxuries with which she is filling the place. As a result, he must move away from his research to pursue more lucrative but uninvolved endeavors. For Trafford, the house seems "wonderfully arranged into one dignified harmony," as indeed, on the surface, does his marriage, but he has the uneasy sense that "at a touch of social earthquake, with mere momentary lapse towards disorder, it would degenerate

altogether into litter" (402). There is no real stability in this union with Marjorie, for it is built upon the wrong foundations.

With Trafford's decision to go to Labrador to escape the claustrophobia of his London existence, he is attempting to find himself again, unhampered by the debris of his daily life. In Marjorie's agreement to accompany him, there is, apparently, hope for a reworking of their marriage, for an intimacy that may be established away from the clutter and distraction of their house. Going to "Lonely Hut" in the frozen wild represents going toward a life isolated from the social pressures to acquire luxuries and put property before all else. But it is significant that although Trafford, at the novel's conclusion, shows some movement toward change (he has discovered a spiritual life within himself), Marjorie is still very thing-oriented, however much she consciously fights the tendency. She envisions the new Trafford at home in his study and mentally furnishes the room in detail, wondering where she will buy the curtains for it. Even though she refuses the temptation to bring a fur for herself back from Labrador, she muses over the paperweight that she will place on her husband's desk. The fact that Marjorie is slowly succumbing, again, to the lure of the house bodes ill for the Trafford marriage and counters the superficially optimistic note on which

the book ends. Marjorie's reawakened interest in their house suggests that the problems inherent in her union with Trafford really have not been solved.

For Galsworthy, also, the house and its environs may represent all that is stifling and anti-feeling in family life. Margery Pencyce, of The Country House, is horrified to learn that her husband's concern for property takes precedence over paternal love. Horace Pencyce firmly intends to renounce their son for his gambling and an involvement with a married woman, and Pencyce's phrasing on this subject is telling. "'I'll have no gambler and profligate for my son!'" he declares. "'I'll not risk the estate'" (209).

To Margery it is incredible that an estate should be weighed against her child and found more valuable. In this equation she finds all that is wrong with the squirearchy, with the system that encourages precisely the kind of uselessness which has contributed to her son George's undoing. Uncharacteristically, she flares up against her husband: "'What do I care about the estate? I wish it were sold! D'you think I like living here? D'you think I've ever liked it?'" (210). Margery threatens to leave the squire and his house and go join her child if Pencyce will not relent in his attitude; as he will not, she does leave him (although their separation will prove a temporary one) for what Galsworthy terms an "odyssey." She

makes the journey to London to see her son, but, more important, she journeys in the direction her heart leads after years of self-denial. Unfortunately, Margery's voyage comes too late; in the city she feels ancient and realizes that the Pendyce way of life surrounds her wherever she goes. There is really no escaping the passionless existence which she has accepted for so long that it has become a part of who she is. She will inevitably return to her husband and his estate, to the realization that, save for a slight increase in his tenderness toward her, nothing has changed. She is trapped within the house.

It is possible, however, for people to escape such prisons. This is especially clear in Bennett's Leonora, wherein the heroine's feelings about her house function as a running commentary on her psychic development. It is notable that the opening chapter of the novel is titled "The Household at Hillport," while the closing one is labelled "In London." This geographic shift parallels Leonora's growth from a psychically paralyzed condition within the house to a state of liberation outside it. At the beginning of the book, Leonora is described as a consummate housekeeper: "The house was her domain. Hers was the supreme intelligence brooding over it . . ."

(13). Her initial attachment to her house is an attachment to the bad marriage to which she has clung for years

although the love between herself and John Stanway has dwindled into "incessant familiarity" characterized, for her, by basic distrust (303). When Stanway proposes that they sell this house to help him out of his financial difficulties, she opposes him adamantly, thus indicating that she cannot let go of the marriage yet. And for months after his suicide Leonora still clings to the house and her death-in-life within it. Her inability to break out is symbolic of the emotional bind of her marriage; her self-imposed imprisonment in the house reflects the deep ambivalence of her feelings for John Stanway both before and after his death.

When she is finally able to leave the Hillport house for a life of sensuality and feeling with Arthur Twemlow, Leonora demonstrates that she has freed herself, finally, from her marriage. It is interesting to observe, however, that her favorite daughter, Ethel (the child with whom she most identifies) and Ethel's husband, Fred Ryley, are now to take over at Hillport. The uninspired Fred and languorous Ethel form a striking tableau in contrast to the recently liberated Leonora. They suggest that stolidity and, eventually, incessant familiarity will again reign at Hillport. Those who live in this house are of a piece with it.

Set against the picture of the house as descriptive of domestic troubles is another Edwardian convention, the

house as symbol of hope, as salvation for the family. One of the best illustrations of this can be seen in Galsworthy's The Man of Property where, in four chapters entitled, respectively, "Projection of the House," "Plans of the House," "Progress of the House," and "Perfection of the House," the narrator describes the place that is to offer, for Soames Forsyte, the last chance for his failing marriage to Irene.

Soames first conceives the plan of building Robin Hill out of a growing dissatisfaction with the marriage within his London house. Thinking of Irene inside, "manifestly waiting for him to go out," as she always does, he notes that the place wants "doing up" (58; 59). But rather than attempt a refurbishing of the city dwelling, he decides to start anew, to build a house elsewhere and begin his marriage on a fresh footing there. It is characteristic of this man of property that he must convince himself that the new house will be a good investment before he can bring himself to undertake its construction. His view of the house as investment points out to the reader the affinity that exists, in Soames' mind, between the house and Irene herself, whom he also regards (much to the detriment of their marriage) as an investment. The link between his wife and his house is made even more obvious a few pages later when, at the idyllic building site -- a site which, in its natural charm and serenity,

offers a vision of peace for his marriage -- Soames responds to the scene:

In spite of himself, something swelled in his breast. To live here in sight of all this, to be able to point it out to his friends, to talk of it, to possess it! His cheeks flushed. The warmth, the radiance, the glow were sinking into his senses as, four years before, Irene's beauty had sunk into his senses and made him long for her.
(67)

Very quickly, however, the ideal embodied by Robin Hill begins to fade. Bosinney, the architect who is in love with Irene, repeatedly exceeds Soames' limits for expenditure, and for Soames this is a cardinal sin. But Bosinney is absolutely not a man of property and has no concept of the significance of cash. He is of the type who live "surrounded by circumstance, property, acquaintances, and wives that do not belong to them" (92).

For the architect, as for Soames, Robin Hill forms a metaphor for Irene. Into it he pours the fury of his creative individuality and finds lush equivalences to Irene's mystique. That he is doing this is no mystery either to himself or to Soames, as the following dialogue indicates:

"I'm ordering the purple leather curtains for the doorway of this court [Bosinney stated]; and if you distemper the drawing-room ivory cream over paper, you'll get an elusive look. You want to aim all through decorations at what I call -- charm."

Soames said: "You mean that my wife has charm!"

Bosinney evaded the question. (114)

The paleness of the drawing-room and the rich purple of the curtains suggest the pallor mingled with sensual appeal that is Irene, that combine in her "elusive look." At the beginning of The Man of Property, she is presented with the following description:

There was warmth, but little color, in her cheeks; her large, dark eyes were soft. But it was at her lips . . . that men looked; they were sensitive lips, sensuous and sweet, and through them seemed to come warmth and perfume like the warmth and perfume of a flower. (17)

Bosinney sees in the house, as in his beloved, a priceless wonder, and this sets him up in direct antithesis to Soames, with his obsessive calculations.

Irene's attitude toward the new house, which she senses as Soames' attempt to ensnare her further, is indicative of the potential for this marriage. She finds the house "'hateful'" (228), and Soames' final decision to sue Bosinney for the extra costs incurred in building Robin Hill widens the gulf between her and her husband. Paradoxically, Soames' one hope for a cure for his marital ills -- Robin Hill -- has led to an even greater estrangement between himself and Irene. The house functions as a vehicle of hope for just a brief length of time.

The Robin Hill project ends in disaster. Irene and Soames will never live there, their marriage is unsalvageable, and our last vision of them is as pent up once more in their London house. Young Jolyon, Soames' cousin, stops by at their old place and sees Irene in the hallway: "her eyes were wild and eager, her lips were parted, her hands outstretched" (314). But it is not Bosinney, at this point dead, who has come to rescue her, and as she stands "like stone," locking her feelings out of sight, Soames slams the door on Jolyon with the words: "'This is my house. . . . I manage my own affairs. I've told you once -- I tell you again; we are not at home'" (314). Soames' parting declaration establishes that he has not changed; he is still obsessed with ownership ("'This is my house'") and control ("'I manage my own affairs'") and, in his claim that he and Irene are "'not at home,'" he has put his finger on their overwhelming problem. So long as the two of them live together, they will exist in a state of warfare; as a family, they have failed, and therefore they can never be at home together. For home, with its connotations of warmth and security, does not exist around a marriage such as theirs.

It should be evident that implicit in Edwardian criticisms of the modern family are solutions to its problems. In fact, more often than not these solutions are in some way described or pictured in the text of a

given work. Taken as a whole, the fiction of Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells encourages the self-realization of each individual within the domestic circle. (That the narratives of Wells and Galsworthy show some confusion about the role of women in family life should not obscure the fact that consciously, at least, they championed the emancipation of wives from restricting and/or loveless unions.) Although autonomy is important, all members of a family also need to find common points of interest with which to connect. An ideal of this fiction is that families work together to shape a shared value system and promote an atmosphere in which the free expression of all kinds of feelings is welcomed.

And the Edwardians found other platforms from which to propose changes in the domestic realm. In his "pocket philosophy," Married Life, Bennett suggests that the average man needs to use his imagination in countering the inevitable monotony of wedlock. He has to put himself in his wife's shoes and realize that it is not unreasonable for her to crave luxuries, nor should he criticize her management of the house, given the magnitude of the task. He ought to make the same allowances for her that he makes for himself, and express rather than silently nurture his feelings. When at home, he would do well to waive the preoccupations of his business life so that he can give qualitative attention to his family.

But he should also share some of his work-related anxieties with his wife and prepare his children for the outside world by guiding them toward suitable careers; it is his duty to provide for those in his family by giving them some knowledge of practical affairs so that they could, if necessary, survive without him. Thus Bennett is proposing a life of shared responsibilities, articulated feelings, and a developed ability to empathize.

In two of Wells' domestic tracts, Socialism and the Family and "The Endowment of Motherhood" (Englishman 229-34), he finds that the basic problem in the typical English family is that men feel that they own their wives while women, concurrently, are becoming more and more educated and so able to argue their own rights. This sets up a tension within the household that seems irresolvable without government intervention. Were the State to pay mothers (mothers, he qualifies, with robust offspring) for raising their children, wives would be financially liberated from their subordinate position in the home. At the same time, governmental support would prevent women from neglecting their child-rearing role in the quest to gain economic independence outside the house. Wells posits the State as an "Over-Parent" and rather chillingly describes it as financing "children born legitimately in the marriage it will sanction" (Socialism 62). In the treatise "Divorce," he takes this a step

further and advises that the government develop a test to determine whether or not parents are fit to continue parenting. If not, many unhappy families would benefit from outside interference, from the separation of children from such parents; there is no particular point to limiting divorce to spouses. One solution to the ailments of the private family is to allow for its dissolution; then the benevolent and right-thinking State would be free to rear healthy, well-adjusted citizens in a grand and rather Utopic domesticity (Englishman 207-17).

Clearly, the welfare of the family was a very real and ongoing concern for Edwardian writers. Although their fiction conveys a sense of the difficulty and ultimate disappointment -- the undernourished relationships and cracked dreams -- that define family life, they also planted within their works the seeds of positive change. This tendency to active reform caused Virginia Woolf to gripe that she never finished one of their novels without feeling that she had to write a check ("Mr. Bennett" 105). But Galsworthy, Wells, and Bennett were representative of an age which characteristically expressed the hope that social problems could be solved. After a doubtful start, this hope was also to appear in the Edwardian fiction of their fellow novelist, E.M. Forster.

Notes

¹ A discussion of the ways in which this dilemma affects the women in Wells' fiction can be found in Doris Jeanne Schwalbe's "H.G. Wells and the Superfluous Woman."

² In "H.G. Wells and Marriage," Patrick Braybrooke satirizes the entire idea of the trip to Labrador. After describing Wells' suggestion that a journey to a rigorous climate can save a troubled union, Braybrooke comments:

And of course it may be perfectly true that what Mr. Wells advises is very excellent. I have an idea that the bank clerk in Golder's Green who has violent wishes to love the wife of his neighbor next door may find that the climate of Greenland induces him to find his own wife quite worth making love too [sic] after all. I also can conceive that the purveyor of flaked rice may grow tired of his virtuous wife in Surbiton and long for the delights that Regent Street offers, yet I can conceive this purveyor of flaked rice, madly in love with his own wife, if there be no other white woman within fifty miles! (97-98)

³ D.H. Lawrence, in his essay on Galsworthy, finds another way to characterize these novels:

As far as I can see, there is nothing but Forsyte in Galsworthy's books: Forsyte positive or Forsyte negative, Forsyte successful or Forsyte manqué. That is, every single character is determined by money: either the getting it, or the having it, or the wanting it, or the utter lacking it. Getting it are the Forsytes as such; having it are the Pencyces and patricians and

Hilarys and Biancas and all that lot; wanting it are the Irenees and Bosinneys and young Jolyons; and utterly lacking it are all the charwomen and squalid poor. . . .
(544)

⁴ Jefferson Hunter, in his chapter, "The Backward Hunt for the Homely," Edwardian 189-214, offers an interesting although sometimes debatable discussion of the presentation of houses in Edwardian novels.

⁵ For a lively exposure of Woolf's rather unscrupulous critical methods, see Irving Kreutz; for a history of the long-standing feud between Woolf and Bennett, see Samuel Hynes, Occasions 24-38.

⁶ Richard Lynn Handelsman very skillfully demonstrates this to be the case with Bennett in his "Spatial Metaphors in Arnold Bennett."

3. WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD:

THE VICIOUS FAMILY CIRCLE

Mrs Herriton did not believe in romance, nor in transfiguration, nor in parallels from history, nor in anything else that may disturb domestic life.

-- E.M. Forster, Where Angels Fear to Tread

As has often been noted, Forster's first published novel, Where Angels Fear to Tread, has clear structural and thematic ties to James' The Ambassadors (Trilling 58; Crews 80). In both books a protagonist escapes the stranglehold of convention by travelling to a foreign country and achieving a growth of awareness. But the extent to which Forster's Philip becomes, as the author intended, improved (Letters 1: 83) is open to question. A comparison of this novel, which points to the importance of shedding parental authority, with another such novel of the Edwardian period, Bennett's Clayhanger, offers a useful point of departure for an analysis of Philip's achievement.

Both Edwin Clayhanger and Philip Herriton first appear as weak characters in thrall to dominating parents whose psychology, as a rule, eludes their children's understanding. Darius Clayhanger is treated fairly and

compassionately by Bennett; nevertheless, we see that he negates Edwin's autonomy at every turn. As the narrator explains,

Darius never showed any interest in his son as an independent human being with a developing personality, though he might have felt such an interest; and Edwin was never conscious of a desire to share any of his ideas or ideals with his father, whom he was content to accept as a creature of inscrutable motives. (246)

A similar gulf lies between Mrs. Herriton and her son, Philip. Although at times she seems happy to admit him into her confidence, by the middle of Where Angels Fear to Tread it is perfectly clear to us and the central figure that his mother is close to him only when it suits her purpose. At other moments she freely excludes him from her private schemes, as this passage from the novel demonstrates: "In one moment an impenetrable barrier had been erected between them. They were no longer in smiling confidence. Mrs Herriton was off on tactics of her own -- tactics which might be beyond or beneath him" (68).

Perhaps as a symptom of their feeble responses to the robust tyranny of their parents, both Edwin and Philip are very slender. Both are presented as having appealing, sympathetic faces. But where Bennett emphasizes Edwin's youthful innocence, sentimentalizing "this naïve, simple creature, with his straightforward and friendly eyes so

eager to believe appearances" (16), Forster stresses the confusion in Philip's face, which has "a curious mixture in it of good and bad" (54). Philip is not so certainly the object for admiration that Edwin is, and his future is as ambiguous as his countenance. Early on, the narrator balances an appreciation of Philip's powers of observation with an objective description of his overall asceticism and frailty.

Edwin's rebellion is in every way a successful and satisfying one. He spends his youth feeling apologetic for having been born, but gradually does come into his own. One of the most striking incidents in the book is a scene in which it becomes apparent, for the first time, that Edwin is moving towards inner strength and independence. Darius is suspicious of the ornately bound books that Edwin, without his knowledge, has bought with money invested in a savings club, and he imagines that his son has been stealing from him. For Edwin the insult is unbearable, and in a vivid moment he flares up at his father:

"You starve me for money, until I haven't got sixpence to bless myself with. You couldn't get a man to do what I do for twice what you pay me. And then you call me a thief. And then you jump down my throat because I spend a bit of money of my own." He snorted. He knew that he was quite mad, but there was a strange drunken pleasure in this madness.

"Hold yer tongue, lad!" said Darius, as stiffly as he could. But Darius, having been unprepared, was intimidated. Darius vaguely comprehended that a new and disturbing factor had come into his life. "Make a less row!" he went on more strongly. "D'ye want all th' street to hear ye?" "I won't make a less row. You make as much noise as you want, and I'll make as much noise as I want!" Edwin cried louder and louder. And then in bitter scorn, "Thief, indeed!" (252)

This is the signal for Edwin's conscious revolt, which is later made easier when Darius is undermined by brain disease to the point of being unable to remember how to use a knife and fork. Edwin now gains ascendancy over his weakened parent, assumes control of the household, and acquires, by the end of the novel, that sense of self so essential to achieving intimacy with another person -- in this case, Hilda Lessways, with whom he is to create his own family.

For Philip Herriton, the conflict between his strivings after a clear self-definition and a need to remain the frustrated victim of his mother will not be resolved so happily. Although his author takes him to Italy and back to escape the clutches of a repressive domestic life, our final vision is of a man paralyzed and sexless.

The source of Philip's problems can be found in the suburban Sawston of Where Angels Fear to Tread. His mother is a malevolent creature who manipulates everyone

around her in a ceaseless quest for power and control. Her activities are directed at a variety of people over whom she has an alarming influence. But it is her daughter-in-law, Lilia, the high-spirited and silly widow of her stuffy son, Charles, who is the primary target for Mrs. Herriton's reforms. At every turn she quashes Lilia's gaiety and pushes her further into the Sawstonian cell. In this undertaking, Mrs. Herriton enlists the aid of her daughter, Harriet, an unimaginative and rigid spinster, and her younger son, Philip. (Notably, the triad of Charles, Harriet, and Philip foreshadows another triad of parent-dominated children in Forster's fiction: the conventional Charles, limited Evie, and malleable Paul Wilcox of Howards End. This suggests Forster's notion of what must inevitably happen to the offspring of powerful mothers and fathers. The fluttery Lilia has much in common, also, with Dolly Wilcox, Charles' wife; obviously, the sons of strong, self-involved parents, if they are sexual at all, choose unthreatening mates over whom they can exercise control.) Mrs. Herriton and company see it as their duty to improve Lilia as much as possible, for her hilarity and lack of self-discipline grate on their sense of propriety. The novelist makes no attempt to create, in the Lilia of Sawston, an admirable woman victimized by these narrow-minded snobs; as John Colmer reports, the manuscript version of Where Angels

Fear to Tread describes Lilia "peeping" out of her carriage in the opening vignette, but this was later changed to "sprawling" in order to stress Lilia's hopeless lack of refinement (E.M. Forster 56-57).¹ One sympathizes with Lilia, but it is impossible to overlook the fact that she is quite truly irritating.

Part of Mrs. Herriton's domination of Lilia involves taking over the rearing of her daughter, Irma. Lilia is packed off, with a companion, for an improving trip to Italy, and the machinations begin; Mrs. Herriton succinctly expresses her philosophy of child raising when she declares,

"All a child's life depends on the ideal it has of its parents. Destroy that and everything goes -- morals, behaviour, everything. Absolute trust in someone else is the essence of education. That is why I have been so careful about talking of Poor Lilia before [Irma]." (56)

The irony here is that Mrs. Herriton herself, the arbiter of Irma's fate, proves herself utterly untrustworthy. Apparently the rules that apply in enhancing a child's image of its parents are irrelevant where the actions of grandparents are concerned. Mrs. Herriton is dishonest, correcting and even hiding Lilia's letters home, and is really without morals insofar as she wrests a young girl from her mother's influence while stamping out the image of that mother in the child's mind. A kind of ethically

clouded, self-centered reasoning is characteristic of Mrs. Herriton.

In relation to her own offspring, she is equally insidious. Harriet, who for all intents and purposes echoes her mother's world view, lacks the older woman's smoothness and is therefore a continuing aggravation to both her brother and parent. She, like Philip, lives to serve her mother's needs, and can be moved about (emotionally and physically) at Mrs. Herriton's will. At one point, for example, when Harriet has become unbearably self-righteous, she is packed off to the Tirol. Philip later meets her there and finds her "in a dense cloud five thousand feet above the sea, chilled to the bone" (74) -- an appropriate metaphor for the generally frozen state of her own feelings and abilities.

Mrs. Herriton manages Philip with more tact, as befits a child with greater sensitivity and insight. But manage him she does, and managing people is a certain evil in Forster's fiction. To confirm this one has only to look at his short story, "The Road from Colonus," wherein the protagonist's daughter, Ethel, manages her father out of a crucial revelatory moment and into a state of unhappy, continuous dependence on his hated sister. "Mrs. Forman . . . called Mr. Graham's attention to the excellent way in which Ethel managed her father," the narrator icily informs us (134-35). Mrs. Herriton is

similarly adept at handling Philip. She deliberately gives the impression of having a great deal of faith in her son and of trusting implicitly in his judgement. She flatters Philip that he possesses the subtlety that Harriet lacks, and she leads him on to the extent that he seriously believes in his influence with her to set things right when need be. Philip so wants to be his mother's pet that he readily abandons his own reactions to people and events in favor of hers, contentedly sharing in her connivings if, in Mrs. Herriton's view, the situation demands it. He is all too willing to give up his own moral sense when under the sway of his mother at Sawston. Thus James Hall's assertion, that "Philip's relation with his mother has . . . the value of a permissive regard" because basically he can do as he pleases (13) is clearly refuted by the text of the novel. Mrs. Herriton overwhelms her son out of any power to act, on his own behalf and/or against his mother's wishes.

Philip, for his part, is uncomfortably conscious of this at times and feels, in those moments, humiliated and repelled by her. Yet he sees no hope of escape from the bind he is in:

Her ability frightened him. All his life he had been her puppet. She had let him worship Italy, and reform Sawston -- just as she had let Harriet be Low Church. She had let him talk as much as he liked. But

when she wanted a thing she always got it. . . . Now that his mother had wounded his vanity he could criticize her thus. But he could not rebel. To the end of his days he would probably go on doing what she wanted. (68-69)

The veracity of this despairing final comment is confirmed by Philip's hope, when he is abroad, that he will find a way to change, and by his ultimate failure to do so.

In Italy, the theme of destructive family relationships is fully developed. Lilia, despite everyone's sage intentions for her, has married the son of an Italian dentist and settled down into what at first appears to be a romantic and blissful life in Monteriano. But in fact she and her husband are engaged in a power struggle from the outset. Lilia begins by babying Gino (perhaps in lieu of Irma, whom she more or less ceases to worry about until near her own death). Quite soon after this, however, Lilia is forced to submit to Gino's will and accept a life in which he misunderstands and avoids her, isolates her from any community with others, forbids her small steps towards independence (she is not even allowed to walk out alone), and finally makes it clear that he has married her for her money.

Gino himself is not unaffected by his difficult marriage. From the start he and Lilia are unable to comprehend each other's backgrounds and values, and,

largely through his wife's influence, Gino moves from a pleasant and close relationship with his own family to a state where they become "plaintive and disagreeable" (32). Out of this emotionally barren situation he discovers the one source of true joy and fulfillment available to him and invests what goodness he possesses, and all of his love, in his baby. Gino sees his own immortality in this child, a fact that the narrator emphasizes as overmastering even the passion of sexual love. It is paradoxical that the start of new life and promise for the future brings with it death; even as Gino symbolically reaches for immortality, Lilia actually achieves it, for she dies in childbirth.

For Philip, Italy offers the chance to discover a purposeful existence. Early in the book we are informed that he had fallen in love with the country on a first visit, and when he returns to it as his mother's ambassador, discharged with finding out about and dissolving the connection between Lilia and Gino, he is full of a sense of mission, as "it was the first time he had had anything to do" (14). His approach to Monteriano is heralded by his leaving "the realms of common sense"; as the narrator adds, Philip has simply fallen asleep on the journey toward the town, but the phrase has other unavoidable associations with the shedding of practicality and convention, the abandonment of Sawstonian pragmatism for a

world of spontaneous, if short-sighted, emotion. Philip's arrival at Monteriano is touched with the fantastic; the other passengers on his train, who have "the usual Italian gift of divination," know when it is time for him to get off, and "in a dream" Philip watches his train pull out of the station. Caroline Abbott, Lilia's travelling companion, has come to meet him and, as she approaches, Philip notes that she is "holding starfish fashion onto anything she [can] touch" (15). For Philip, Italy has become a place of magic where anything -- even his transformation into a useful, effective person -- can be accomplished. Thus Gino's coarseness and refusal to give up Lilia, as Sawston demands, send Philip scurrying back to England in a frenzy of ill-temper and embarrassment.

Important things happen between this visit and Philip's next journey abroad. Because Caroline Abbott has demonstrated a concern for Lilia and Gino's now-motherless baby and has decided to take responsibility for it, Mrs. Herriton is goaded into expressing an even stronger commitment to the child (for whom, in fact, she cares not at all). To this end, she sends Philip, this time in the company of Harriet, to Monteriano; their goal is to bargain Gino out of the care of his offspring before Miss Abbott has the chance to do so. Philip is now aware of his mother's motives. He is unable to delude himself that he is travelling with some important purpose; he

realizes that he is little more than a pawn in Mrs. Herriton's pointless and petty manipulations. Nevertheless, he goes, for he is still under her control. His third journey to Italy is characterized, significantly, by hellish weather, by a heat that strikes at him and Harriet "like a hand laid over the mouth" (75). This corresponds to similes elsewhere in Forster's fiction, for example in A Passage to India, wherein Mrs. Moore, upon entering a Marabar cave, feels "some vile naked thing [striking] her face and [settling] on her mouth like a pad" (138). Mrs. Moore's experience will bring about the loss of all her comfortable values and assurances, effectively silencing her from putting things right with the people around her (hence her sense, in the cave, that her mouth is being covered). In Philip's case, he also will be silenced from the perpetration of conventional hypocrisies; his goal as his mother's mouth-piece will be thwarted by the force of Italy. Interestingly, Mrs. Moore later discovers that "the naked pad was a poor little baby" (Passage 139), and it is the death of a baby that will make a mockery of Philip and Harriet's mission. In both of these novels, infants are possessed of a superhuman function: they are the heralds of truth, even though that truth is a negative one; it is the awareness that none of one's convictions or aims is, finally, significant.

Despite the unpleasantness of their approach to Monteriano and Philip's generally jaded outlook, he again feels the enchantment at work; perhaps the country offers a promise, after all, for his transfiguration. It is noteworthy, however, that the magic has taken on a sinister aspect; he is aware of it "in the whitened plain which grip[s] life tighter than a frost, in the exhausted reaches of the Arno, in the ruins of brown castles which [stand] quivering upon the hills" (Angels 76-77). The very vitality that Monteriano represents for him has in it the power to choke, to enervate, and to destroy. This may underscore Philip's ambivalence over embracing a life of activity versus resigning himself to the familiar role of slave to his mother's whims. His perception of the town may also involve a projection of other feelings he is having as he approaches it -- rage at being his mother's puppet, and a thirst for revenge.

These emotions come into play in the subject of the thoughts he has as he and Harriet drive up to their hotel. He muses on Santa Deodata, the patron saint of Monteriano, who lay all her life, stupified by goodness, in her mother's house. Moreover, she refused the temptations of the devil to the degree that she remained unmoved when he threw her parent down the stairs. As commentators on the novel have observed, the passivity and repressed anger underlying the saint's relation with her

mother have clear affinities with Philip's feelings about Mrs. Herriton (Stone 178; Finkelstein 19). It may be just this kind of destruction of his mother (or, at least, of her power over him) that Philip now hopes to accomplish, in his final trip to the land of unleashed feeling.

One way in which Philip subverts his mother's intentions for him is by discovering and enjoying his fraternity with Gino, the so-called enemy. From the first night back in Monteriano, when Philip, Harriet, and Caroline go to the opera and Philip sees Gino there, he becomes aware of his close bond with the Italian. Gino hails "'Fra Filippo'" and Philip is at once under the sway of his charm; later, this connection between the two will be reinforced.

In the meantime, Philip has still to attend to his mother's assignment -- that he persuade Gino to give up his child. When it becomes apparent, first to Caroline and then to Philip himself, that Gino has no wish to do so, Harriet takes it upon herself to run off with the baby. As J.B. Beer has shown, Philip's passive compliance in this scheme indicates a moral loss on his part (76), although one needs to remember that Philip doesn't know from the first that Harriet has taken the child without Gino's consent. Yet Philip accepts the fact that Harriet is bringing the baby back to Sawston in the face of his

awareness that no one there cares about it. His tacit approval, therefore, signifies a frightening lack of concern for the child's well-being and suggests that despite the enchantment Italy offers, Philip cannot or will not accept it in the fullest sense. He remains an agent of Sawston.

We are warned that Philip will not make significant strides away from his psychic enslavement by a curious incident that prefaces Harriet's kidnapping of the baby. At this point Philip, waiting for his mysteriously absent sister so that they can leave Monteriano, has accepted the fact that he cannot barter Gino out of the child. Suddenly, Philip is approached by a messenger bearing a note from Harriet. The man is a "ghastly creature" whose noises are incomprehensible and who, as the landlady of the hotel informs Philip, "'understands everything but . . . can explain nothing.'" Like Philip himself, he is an insightful observer without the capacity for action. When, a moment later, a cab driver provides the information that this repellent person "'has visions of the saints'" (126), just as Philip, at least in his daydreams, does, the parallel between this uncanny messenger and Mrs. Herriton's messenger is confirmed. Because Philip overpays him, the messenger hurries to return the extra change; "it [is] part of the idiot's malady only to receive what [is] just for his services" (127). Philip has

also been, in some sense, an idiot, or at any rate a fool rushing in where angels fear to tread, and the narrator's remark about the eerie messenger implies that Philip's reward for his missions to Italy will be as limited as the idiot's payment for his services. Philip will not achieve full transfiguration, for he does not deserve it absolutely; his moral regeneration, such as it is, comes much too late. Harriet appears with the baby, Philip fails to impede her movements, their carriage overturns, and the baby dies. Philip then displays an awakening of a genuine sense of responsibility in his subsequent decision that he, and he alone, must tell Gino about the accident. But in the interim a tragedy has occurred and, as Alan Wilde puts it, "nothing that follows quite cancels the effects of that event" (Art 20). So much for the Sawstonian impulse to manage the world.

As I.A. Richards observes, Forster's fiction displays a recurring interest in the preservation of types from one age into the next (18). So surely the death of Gino's baby bodes ill for any chance of continuance (Wilde, Art 20). The child's death may be a sad comment on the potential for a lasting bond between Sawston and Monteriano, a covert declaration that any mingling of English common sense and the Italian life of feeling is, finally, impossible. But it may also be Philip's fantasy

of continuance that dies with this child. The protagonist articulates this sense of loss when he perceives that at the baby's funeral Gino reacts as though Philip, not himself, has lost a son. Philip and his kind will not survive; like Kuno, the central figure in Forster's story "The Machine Stops," Philip is not one of those whom society wants to perpetuate. This is unfortunate, as both Philip and Kuno possess attributes that seem to be missing from the world around them; Kuno has energy and imagination, while Philip is sympathetic and basically clear-sighted. Kuno's civilization will end in cataclysm, while the chances are that Philip's Italy will, at best, continue via the breeding of warm-blooded but brutal and selfish types like Gino; his Sawston, if it outlives the sterile Herritons,² promises little more than the same kind of death-in-life for future generations. Philip has attributes that would be invaluable both in England and in Italy, but his paralysis prevents him from putting up a fight and passing them on; thus, he allows Harriet to run off with his symbolic heir and cause its death.

After the death of the baby, there is nothing for Philip to do but break the news to Gino and return to England. But rather than end the book on this note of complete defeat, the author allows Philip a moment of transcendence. He has a vision of the good, pure mother, the consoling ideal, in the guise of Caroline Abbott. It

is she who comes between him and Gino when Gino, having just learned of the terrible accident, attempts to murder Philip. Caroline intervenes and offers the two men milk; they drink and, in this act, are able to retrieve their sense of fraternity while she, as Finkelstein points out, is elevated to the role of beneficent mother-goddess (26). What Philip has gained from his Italian trips is not complete transfiguration into an active, well-rounded man; he has been too damaged by his domestic life with Mrs. Herriton to achieve dramatic change. But he has gained the image of a better woman or, more specifically, a better mother.

As in other Edwardian novels, Where Angels Fear to Tread relies on the image of the house to make a number of significant points. In Italy, particularly, the house is a place in which one is bound to feel trapped. Lilia insists upon buying the place in Monteriano where she had first spied Gino; as in Galsworthy's The Man of Property, the house is associated with a loved one. But it is also descriptive of Lilia herself. It faces away from the town just as she is kept away from all society, and the Carellas live in its central region, which is compared to the heart in a dying body and hints at what is happening to Lilia within the marriage. She attempts to escape her misery when, impulsively, she travels through the unused upper portions of the house and outside to freedom:

The stairs up to the attic -- the stairs no one ever used -- opened out of the living-room, and by unlocking the door at the top one might slip out onto the square terrace above the house, and thus for ten minutes walk in freedom and peace.

The key was in the pocket of Gino's best suit. . . . The stairs creaked and the keyhole screamed. . . . (48)

If one recalls Freud's assertion that in dreams different parts of a house may represent the parts of a body (85), Lilia's journey up to the attic and out onto the terrace above the house suggests a symbolic, dream-like journey away from the heart -- her devastating feelings -- and toward the relative freedom of the life of the head, or intellect. That the house protests loudly, creaking and screaming as she attempts her escape from feeling, is a measure of its hold upon her and of the ultimate futility of running from one's emotions. Like Philip, she cannot win. It is a final irony of Lilia's plight that after her death Gino consecrates a hideous room to her memory; she will be remembered forever via the house that was the ruin of her life.

Given all this, it is not surprising that even Gino seems to shun the place, at least for as long as Lilia is stifling within it. He seeks friendly companionship in the "open air" and revels in the culture of the Italian male, which ensures that friends never have to enter each other's homes (36). Only after Lilia's death is he seen

throwing his things about the house as he likes and enjoying intimate moments with his beloved baby in the messy room that, as Caroline Abbott notes, "comes of life, not of desolation." Gino's room compares favorably with the "charnel-chamber" reserved for Lilia's memory (102), and he is not pictured expressing joy within the house until he has a child rather than a caged wife on whom to shower love.

Accompanying the house imagery in this book is the recurring appearance of circles. Perhaps the best description of the way in which circles are used here can be found in the author's discussion of "easy rhythm" in Aspects of the Novel. For Forster, this rhythm is "repetition plus variation," the "lovely waxing and waning" of a phrase or an image. Rhythm is a kind of internal stitchwork; it may mean a great deal or it may mean very little, but in any case it contributes to a sense of the book as a whole made up of interrelated parts (113-16). In Where Angels Fear to Tread, circles appear at different points and signify a number of ideas; their continual use helps to weave together the elements of the novel.

The circle shows up in the very first pages of the book, as Lilia leaves Sawston in a "whirl" amidst the hue and cry of the family and Philip's descriptions of what she will see when Italy gathers "thick around her" (1; 2). Once abroad, Philip himself is forever coming up

against circles. Initially they seem to exert a benign influence. This is evident when he approaches Monteriano on his first ambassadorial mission, and it holds out a wonderful promise:

The hazy green of the olives rose up to its walls, and it seemed to float in isolation between trees and sky, like some fantastic ship city of a dream. Its colour was brown, and it revealed not a single house -- nothing but the narrow circle of the walls, and behind them seventeen towers. . . . Some were only stumps, some were inclining stiffly to their fall, some were still erect, piercing like masts into the blue.
(20)

Here again is the magical city, presented, this time, as encircled by slender walls that flank towers. It is interesting to note that the house-prisons are nowhere in sight in this idyllic picture. Although all the towers have not survived intact, those that have push up into the sky and must give the illusion, from a distance, of penetrating through the circle around them. It is a fusion of masculine and feminine images, suggesting the kind of sexual union that Philip, presumably, has never known and, perhaps, offering hope for his own growth into a complete emotional and sexual being. However, as Caroline Abbott later tells Philip, one's life is where one lives -- in both their cases, Sawston and not Monteriano. After this remark, the circle becomes, most clearly, an image of destruction.³

Upon learning that Harriet has stolen Gino's baby, "'God help me!' said Philip. A cold circle came round his mouth, and he fainted" (131). Soon after this the narrator comments, "Round the Italian baby who had died in the mud there centred deep passions and high hopes" (133). Most certainly it is this circle of passions and hopes that has contributed directly to the baby's death, for without Miss Abbott's passion to take care of Lilia's child and Mrs. Herriton's subsequent need to prove herself more righteous than Caroline, the baby and its father would have been left in peace. Philip later notes to Caroline that the "'family circle need be vexed no more'" (142), as indeed it need not be, now that the child is gone. Preserving calm in the family circle seems to have necessitated this death. Philip shows his awareness that the domestic round is anti-life, for he regrets that his future relations with Caroline will be thwarted when they will meet "'in the old horrible way, each with a dozen relatives round us'" (143). The eternal return of the circle upon itself, its lack of a visible beginning or end, forms an interesting comment on Philip's inevitable returns to a passionless existence. It must be added that Philip does not, in the end, go back to Sawston (he has made some progress) but plans a life of "London and work." Yet although he sees the value of such a life, he also feels "what a very little way" it will go (142).

Circles have one other important meaning for Philip. They reflect his inability to tackle the world head on, to deal directly with his emotions and confront his needs face to face. He prefers, overall, to look around life; to remain an observer. This is almost the last thing we are told about him as he muses both on Caroline's love for Gino and on his own now-frustrated love for her: "For the thing was even greater than she imagined. Nobody but himself would ever see round it now. And to see round it he was standing at a great distance" (147).⁴

It is precisely this kind of evasiveness that seals Philip's fate and persuades the reader that he has not grown as much as he needed to, after all. Thus one must qualify Forster's own statement that Philip finally becomes "large enough to appreciate Miss Abbott, and in the final scene he exceeds her" (Letters 1: 83), for appreciation signifies a certain measure of detachment; if Philip does go beyond Caroline in understanding, he cannot begin to approach her level of emotional expression. He still cannot act, even to the extent of stating how he feels. He is his mother's captive to the end. His last view of himself in the novel is of a person with a drawn face and shoulders stooped over with the weight of the sling he wears. It is an unhappy, almost lifeless portrait. It would seem that the family has triumphed

over the individual, successfully destroying his chances of becoming a complete, developed person.

In this respect, Philip's plight is similar to that of Sophia Baines, one of the central figures in Arnold Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale. While our opening discussion of Bennett's Clayhanger offered a point of contrast in assessing Philip's growth, a brief comparison of Where Angels Fear to Tread and The Old Wives' Tale may serve to underscore their shared sense of the tragedy of disappointed lives.

Both the Baines and Herriton households are dominated by self-involved mothers who check their children's autonomy and development. Although John, the Baines father, is nominally alive in the first part of Bennett's novel, he has degenerated into an enfeebled mass lying as a permanent invalid in bed. (John is Darius Clayhanger with brain disease, but, unlike Darius, he seems to live on and on.) Mrs. Baines firmly and successfully rules the family; that is, until one of her two daughters, Sophia, expresses the need for independence and a life away from the provincial Five Towns. Mrs. Baines secretly condescends to her daughters, thinking them inferior to herself in some respects, and when crossed by the wilful Sophia she makes every effort "to behave with diplomatic smoothness" (41) in a way that Mrs. Herriton would

applaud. Further, she elicits the sympathy and confidence of her other daughter, Constance, when she finds herself in troubled waters with Sophia; she sets up the very same system of household alliances that Mrs. Herriton employs to support her in her questionable activities. Sophia is finally compelled to leave home in the effort to assert her autonomy; in the company of a young man, she stealthily departs for Paris, which holds out, like Monteriano, the promise of freedom.

Although her marriage ultimately sours, Sophia finds a livelihood which convinces her of her self-sufficiency and is, in its way, satisfying. But she has been saddened as well as hardened by her personal life and, much like Philip Herriton, she grows incapable of sexual expression. She decides that she would like to find love, but it must be "somewhat above the plane of whims, moods, caresses, and all mere fleshly contacts. . . . What she wanted was a love that was too proud, too independent, to exhibit frankly either its joy or its pain" (429).

Unable to find such a love, she is left lonely and unhappy in the pension which she manages. Eventually the need for a close relation of some kind overtakes her, and she returns to live with her widowed sister in the Five Towns. Like Philip Herriton, Sophia is drawn back, finally, to her family; there is simply nothing else for her to do, for she is too emotionally stunted to reach for an

intimate connection in the outside world. But she lives in a state of amicable warfare with Constance and feels stifled in the old Baines house to which her sister clings. (It is noteworthy that Sophia can achieve success in the management of a hotel, such an impersonal structure, but bitterly resents being trapped once again within a house, that family organism.) When she dies, both Constance and the narrator seem to share a sense of the futility of Sophia's life. As Constance muses, "Headstrong Sophia had deceived her mother, and for the deception had paid with thirty years of melancholy and the entire frustration of her proper destiny" (584).

Although Sophia is a stronger personality than Philip Herriton, and her response to her mother is much more overt, in the end their destinies are not dissimilar. Both have lost a full capacity for love and are, accordingly, diminished.

The Old Wives' Tale and Where Angels Fear to Tread show the darkest side of the Edwardian vision of the family. The obvious answer to the question of how lives like Sophia's and Philip's might be saved is that their mothers should allow them freedom and growth. But given how thoroughly the authors depict the repressiveness of these parents, such a solution seems, in these cases, highly unrealizable. Constance Baines' retreat into

marriage with a querulous husband and her eventual domination by an egocentric son, and Caroline Abbott's return to a sterile existence with her irritating father certainly are not compelling options for family life. Rather than imagining and then presenting, either subtly or obviously, better family situations, both Bennett and Forster use comedy to counter the despair informing these novels. The comedy appears in a variety of guises. It is particularly apparent, however, in the approaches to characterization, plot, and tone used by the writers.

Forster and Bennett take as their starting point that quality which Plato identified as the ultimate source of the ridiculous: a lack of self-knowledge (7-8). Not surprisingly, then, the degree to which their characters reveal this trait is the degree to which the reader perceives them as ludicrous. Aside from the misguided overhauling of Lilia, Mrs. Herriton's need to educate Irma into gentility, coupled with her sense that she is doing this for the child's good, is a case in point. Even more absurd is Harriet's pious attempt to keep Irma from the knowledge that somewhere in Italy she has a baby brother. This is not to suggest that Mrs. Herriton and Harriet are purely comic characters; one can hardly feel this to be true in observing the former's manipulation of Philip or the latter's dismay at the anguish in Lilia's final letter

home. But the quality of their self-assessment is certainly rich in humorous effect.

Equally comic are Mrs. Baines' efforts, in The Old Wives' Tale, to cope with the rebelliousness of Sophia. She decides, for instance, that castor oil is the perfect antidote to her daughter's dissatisfaction, as if conquering an imaginary physical ailment could conquer emotional upset as well. In her inability to acknowledge her own part in Sophia's revolt and the inflexibility of her attitude regarding Sophia's future, Mrs. Baines betrays the extent of her limitations. She also indicates that any understanding between herself and Sophia will be prevented by her own rigidity. Nevertheless, her attempts to deal with her child's unexpected rebellion are, largely, comic ones.

As has been demonstrated above, both Where Angels Fear to Tread and The Old Wives' Tale offer other worlds to which their protagonists can flee in the attempt to resolve family-based conflicts. This flight to places where feelings can be released and problems solved is reminiscent of the Shakespearean comedy which, in Northrop Frye's analysis, begins the action in a normal realm, shifts into a "green world" where some level of transformation can be achieved, and then closes on a setting in the normal world again (456). Forster's Italy is not simply pastoral, of course (Wyatt-Brown 1751A), and

Sophia's Paris is not pastoral at all; further, their achievements are at most very partial ones. The requisite working through of identified problems has not been accomplished. But in each instance a freer world is held out as hope for countering the social bondage of daily life. The protagonists' movements from one setting to another seem indebted to a comic convention.

The two books share, in addition, their largely comic tone, which is characterized by impersonality; more often than not, especially in Forster's novel, the tone is determined by a disinterested and witty narrator. This is evident in a description of Harriet's condition after an argument with her brother: "her eyes glowed with anger and resolution. For she was a straight, brave woman, as well as a peevish one" (79). A similar kind of detachment typifies Bennett at his most effective, as a statement from The Old Wives' Tale demonstrates:

Sophia was not a good child, and she obstinately denied in her heart the cardinal principle of family life, namely, that the parent has conferred on the offspring a supreme favour by bringing it into the world. (40)

The authors differ, however, in the consistency with which they employ this tone and refrain from weighty intrusions at inopportune moments. Although Forster can

lapse into an uncomfortable sentimentality in his descriptions of Philip, his presentation of comic incidents cannot be faulted. When he remarks, for instance, that Harriet is "stupid" for boxing Irma's ears, it is clear that he is offering the viewpoint of the calculating Mrs. Herriton who, as we have already been informed, cares less for kindness than for subtlety in one's manipulations. The comedy is heightened by this allusion to Mrs. Herriton's peculiar value system; a serious comment on Harriet's actual ignorance has not been given. Thus the scene in which she boxes Irma's ears is very funny. Bennett, on the other hand, is apt to destroy the illusion of a detached narrator by breaking in at the least appropriate moment with a maudlin aside. After a thoroughly comic picture of Mrs. Baines' failure to bring Sophia round to her own point of view, the narrator remarks on how misplaced the mother's concern really is. "Heart," he most uncomically laments, "how absurd of you to bleed!" (69).

Although these novels end pessimistically, with the constraints of family life left more or less intact and destructive, in both cases humor dilutes the gloom. Nevertheless, the outlook on domesticity is a bleak one. Parents seem bound to overwhelm their children and treat them as mere objects in meeting their own needs. Their

offspring, in turn, are doomed to lives that are frustrated at best and thwarted at worst.

With its effective balance of despair and comedy, Where Angels Fear to Tread occupies a unique position in Forster's depictions of Edwardian family life. In his later novels of the period the therapeutic impulse is more apparent, and although each succeeding work is certainly comic in part (in large part, in the case of A Room with a View), the overall strategy for coping with domestic problems is to turn back to the conventions of contemporary fiction, attempting to find remedies for social ills. But in this first novel it might be said of the author, as of Philip Herriton, that "if he could not reform the world, he could at all events laugh at it, thus attaining at least an intellectual superiority" (Angels 55).

Notes

¹ And, as Lionel Trilling wryly comments,

A lesser novelistic intelligence than Forster's would have made her dashing or sensitive so that the Herritons would seem more culpable, but they are quite culpable enough in their domineering superiority, as unpleasant a family as one can imagine. (60)

² James McConkey convincingly suggests that an inability to confront the truth has resulted in the sterility of the Herritons (104).

³ That is, with one important exception. Caroline Abbott has a startling experience with a wreath of smoke from Gino's cigar that she ultimately associates with the awakening of her sexual feelings for him, as Bonnie Finkelstein points out (27). Any display of sexuality in a novel riddled with neutered characters must surely be taken as a sign for the good. Yet, as Finkelstein also notes, Miss Abbott is terrified by Gino's smoke ring, which "extended its pale blue coils towards her. She lost self-control. It enveloped her. As if it was a breath from the pit, she screamed" (Angels 103). Therefore, this circle cannot be viewed as an altogether positive force.

⁴ John Colmer also remarks on the unsettling detachment which characterizes Philip's responses to Caroline in the book's final pages (E.M. Forster 62).

4. A ROOM WITH A VIEW: THE FAMILY OF CHILDREN

She frowns a little -- not in anger, but as a brave child frowns when he is trying not to cry.

-- E.M. Forster, A Room with a View

A Room with a View, Forster's second Italian novel to be published, was actually begun before Where Angels Fear to Tread and took the author six years to complete.¹ In the interim he worked on drafts variously referred to as "Old Lucy" and "New Lucy"; these bear only passing resemblances to the final work in their events and characterizations. Nevertheless, the earlier versions share a number of the concerns of the finished novel and in some instances deal fairly obviously with the same preoccupations that appear in A Room with a View. Forster was unwilling to let go of the book even after it was done, and fifty years later produced an article, "A View without a Room," in which the subsequent lives of the central characters are documented. Yet for all this apparent effort, the novelist was apt to disparage his early work, referring to it, for example, as "a slight sketch of bourgeois life in an Italian Pension and at home in Surrey" (Letters 1: 117). In fact, A Room with a View is

anything but slight; if it is relatively simple in theme and rather programmatic in its plotting, it achieves considerable resonance through the subtle interplay of rhythmical elements. It offers, moreover, an appealing if somewhat wistful alternative to the restrictive conventions of family life.

At the opening of the novel, the naïve Lucy Honeychurch and her jaded spinster cousin, Charlotte Bartlett, arrive at the Pension Bertolini in Florence and discover that they have been given rooms without views. Their disappointed reaction to this news is overheard by another hotel guest, Mr. Emerson, who insists that he and his melancholy son, George, vacate their rooms with views for the benefit of the ladies. The rest of the action of the book is a set of variations upon the idea of getting metaphorical views and losing them and then getting them again. Lucy has spent her life amid the influences of a stale Victorianism and must learn to shed the constraints of her society in favor of her own instinctive responses; in other words, she needs to acquire a better view. In this not-always conscious pursuit she is aided by the clear-sighted Emersons, and after being kissed on two occasions by young George, she finally comes to realize her love for him and embrace a life of trusting in her own feelings. In the meantime, of course, numerous obstacles to her growth present themselves: one is the

repressed Miss Bartlett, who persuades Lucy to feel ashamed of George's first kiss and flee from him to Rome; another is the stuffy Cecil Vyse, whom Lucy spends time with during this visit to Rome and who becomes engaged to her in the second half of the novel. It is awhile before Lucy, now back in England and at home with her mother and brother, realizes how much Cecil lacks and breaks off her involvement with him. Even then, her first thought is that she must run to Greece with two maiden ladies, the Misses Alan, whom she knows from Florence, and it is only through a seemingly accidental meeting with the elder Mr. Emerson that Lucy comes to see and to accept her love for George. The novel closes on a scene in the Pension Bertolini, where George and Lucy, over her family's objections to the wedlock, have come again for their honeymoon. Forster's heroine is now aware of the true nature of her feelings, she has achieved the right kind of view, and love, it seems, has triumphed.²

In many ways, Lucy's development clearly parallels Philip Herriton's. Both protagonists are first shown in a state of self-deception, and gradually their eyes open to the world around them and their place within it. In each book these central characters are concerned with making a break with their families (Hall 11). But A Room with a View is a sunnier novel, and it appears that Lucy, in achieving a sexual union with George, has reached a

fuller measure of achievement than Philip has. At least, this is the outlook of most critics, who find in the conclusion of A Room with a View "an unreserved note of happiness" (McConkey 60; see also Beer 66 and Crews 87). Yet this happiness is won at great cost, and the author does not attempt to minimize the effects of paying so much for one's freedom.

Lucy's need to grow stems, like Philip's need, from the restrictiveness of family life. Mrs. Honeychurch, who was modelled on Forster's grandmother (Furbank and Haskell 32), seems, at first, an affectionate and lively woman, refreshingly open and loving in contrast to that demon of artifice and control, Mrs. Herriton. And at a glance Mrs. Honeychurch's interactions both with her son, Freddy, and with Lucy seem engagingly spontaneous. But the Honeychurches do not quite have the "excellent family relationship" that has been claimed for them, and Mrs. Honeychurch does not "[stand] for all that is good and free about 'family'" (Finkelstein 86; Stone 233). Although Lucy is delighted by her mother's letters to her in Florence and, according to both Lucy and Mrs. Honeychurch, she usually tells her parent everything, her home represents a life where "she [is] allowed to do everything, and where nothing ever happen[s] to her" (56). It is a measure of Lucy's strength that she is finally able to accept a life in which things do, indeed, happen. In

this respect she is clearly more healthy than the passive Philip. But Lucy develops in spite of Mrs. Honeychurch, who is, as Bonnie Finkelstein points out, anti-feminist and conventional in her views of a woman's role (87). It is thus inevitable that she will disapprove of Lucy's alliance with George, who stands apart from the proprieties of her limited society.

Mrs. Honeychurch also can be harshly disapproving with her son; the Reverend Beebe, who gets to know Lucy in Florence and, like a number of her pension acquaintances, somehow ends up in the Honeychurches' English suburb, notes that "'No one but his mother can remember the faults of Freddy'" (92). Her fault-finding is illustrated as she reacts to Freddy's report that in answer to a question from Cecil he has said no, he is not enthusiastic about the engagement to Lucy:

"Ridiculous child!" cried his mother. "You think you're so holy and truthful, but really it's only abominable conceit. Do you suppose that a man like Cecil would take the slightest notice of anything you say? I hope he boxed your ears. How dare you say no?"

"Oh, do keep quiet, mother! I had to say no when I couldn't say yes. . . . Oh, do keep quiet, though, and let a man do some work."

"No," said Mrs. Honeychurch, with the air of one who had considered the subject, "I shall not keep quiet. You know all that has passed between them in Rome; you know why he is down here, and yet you deliberately insult him, and try to turn him out of my house." (84)

Freddy, of course, is hardly turning Cecil out of the house, and in her wilful exaggeration Mrs. Honeychurch is refusing to credit her son's honesty. Later we learn that she herself looks "dissatisfied" when listing Cecil's attributes (85), and later still she will rebuke Lucy for her fiancé's bad manners. Yet she cannot bear to have Freddy depart from the conventions that require the family to express unalloyed joy at the prospect of a sensible union between an eligible bachelor and a marriagable young woman. It is significant that Freddy's responses to his mother, like Lucy's, are overt and robust, for this argues the relative good health of the Honeychurch household. Nevertheless, a mother who opposes her daughter's love match and decries her son's candor cannot be seen as altogether admirable.

Balanced against the depiction of Mrs. Honeychurch and her offspring is the relation between Mrs. Vyse and her son, Cecil. Cecil we know to be bloodless and unathletic, in many ways a Philip Herriton figure (Furbank and Haskell 33). His condition may be attributable to the passionless, wearily sophisticated life he leads in London; he seems at his worst after a trip to the city, and this could well be the effect not only of his pretentious friends but of an unloving parent. Mrs. Vyse, the narrator observes, is "mechanical" with Cecil, acting "as if he was not one son, but, so to speak, a filial crowd"

(122). Cecil's general aloofness, his air of being better off "detached," as Mr. Beebe suggests (85), may be an outgrowth of this frigid family situation. Incidentally, the fastidious Mr. Beebe identifies himself with Cecil and betrays his own mother-fixation at the end of the novel (Meyers 188). After spending a certain amount of time with his parent, Mr. Beebe suddenly ceases to be the sympathetic figure he has seemed throughout the book, and, in response to the news that Lucy is in love, he becomes "inhuman. A long black column . . ." (203).³

The one positive parent-child relationship that does appear here is that of the Emersons. The father takes real pride in what George says and is ultimately his spokesman, helping Lucy to become aware of her love for the younger man. George, for his part, is tender toward his father and clearly supports him in his beliefs, although, as Alan Wilde convincingly demonstrates, George is less established in his world view and asks more questions throughout the book than Mr. Emerson has need to (Art 48-49). Despite their close bond, however, it is notable that George, who tells his father virtually everything, does not mention that he kissed Lucy in Italy. Lucy, as mentioned earlier, also tells her parent everything, and yet she withholds the knowledge of this kiss from her mother. Thus the coming together of Lucy and George necessitates some break with their families; even

when a parent is as expansive and open-minded as Mr. Emerson, it seems necessary to keep back certain information when forming a close connection with someone else. And for all his seeming fondness for his father, George is curiously uncertain about intimate relations. When, at the novel's conclusion, Lucy hopes for an eventual reunion with her family, George has a surprisingly tentative response. "If we act the truth," Lucy muses, "the people who really love us are sure to come back to us in the long run." To which George replies, "Perhaps." Then he [says] more gently: "Well, I acted the truth -- the only thing I did do -- and you came back to me. So possibly you know" (207). His answer is missing the ring of conviction, and one cannot help but wonder that such an apparently happy relation between father and son should result, in George, in so much doubt about the nature of love. Possibly this betrays an inherent skepticism of the author's about the good to be offered up by even the best of families.

Lucy, in any case, has clear cause for doubt, and her conflict between accepting the dictates of the family and forging a new relationship outside convention is articulated throughout the novel in a number of ways. At various points the images of drawing-rooms and furniture recur, and both Windy Corner, the Honeychurch house, and

Cissie Villa, which the Emersons occupy, become important symbols.

Opposing the life of instinct that the Emersons represent is the life of drawing-rooms and drawing-room people. Miss Bartlett, who exemplifies the world of rigid formalities, is also the first to recognize the danger that arises in drawing-rooms. She worries that the news that George has kissed Lucy in Italy will spread to drawing-room people, for she knows that "real menace belongs to the drawing-room" (70). Lucy associates Cecil with a room, a drawing-room, in fact, and he comes to stand for all the muddle and deadness of drawing-room people in general.

It makes perfect sense, therefore, that the Emersons do not inhabit stuffy rooms; when they move into Cissie Villa, near the Honeychurches' home, their house is seen in a state of upheaval, and their sitting-room is inaccessible, for it is "blocked with books" (124). Their attitude toward drawing-rooms is made quite clear when Mr. Emerson responds sharply to Freddy's attempt at etiquette by dismissing it as "'drawing-room twaddle'" (127).

Forster himself does not take such a light view of drawing-rooms and what they can do to the people trapped within them. They pose a serious threat to Lucy as she hesitates between the life of George and feeling and her family's narrow existence. And the appeal of the

drawing-room is not to be underrated, for if it were not attractive Lucy would not be engaged so arduously in the struggles which consume her for most of the novel. That the drawing-room can exert a very strong and destructive influence is made most obvious in the "Old Lucy" manuscript, where it reduces people to vicious pettiness, to a small-minded cruelty which the Lucy of that book must escape at all costs. In one scene from this early version of A Room with a View, Lucy and a Mrs. Flint Carew are shown rehearsing at the piano for a forthcoming concert. They are in the drawing-room of an Italian pension, and suddenly an old lady, Mrs. Lasenby, appears. She is distressed to find the room occupied and cold and the performers ignoring her:

"I've been here for fifteen winters," Mrs Lasenby [said], "and I've never been so treated before."

"Mrs Lasenby, that does not give you a monopoly of the drawing room, nor of the armchairs," said Mrs Flint Carew.

"Armchairs are to sit on. The drawing room is not meant for a parrot cage."

"Signora Bertolini has given us leave to practise, if that is what you mean."

"It's not your drawing room."

"It's not your drawing room."

"It's our drawing room!" said Lucy, with a dying attempt at sprightliness, which Mrs Lasenby misunderstood.

"Your drawing room is it, you impudent snippet."

"Mrs Lasenby, please to talk civilly," said Mrs Flint Carew. "It's not your drawing room."

"Mah! mah! mah!" said the old lady, making a face.

"Come none of that!" said Mrs Flint Carew, a horrible raucous element suddenly appearing in her voice & words. "You've never had a drawing room at all. No. And this drawing room's not yours."

"Oh go to pot in your drawing room," the old lady shrieked. And crying with ill health and ill temper she departed from it. (Lucy 51-52)

The passage is worth quoting in full for the light it sheds on the significance of the drawing-room for Forster and on his sense of its not inconsiderable power. It reduces women to shrews and grotesques in an atmosphere which breeds misunderstanding. No wonder that Lucy feels "sick and faint" after this scene within it (52).

The drawing-room type, with its obscured vision, appears in different guises throughout A Room with a View: in the assorted maiden ladies with their neurotic prudishness and in the repeated references to prominent Victorians, who presumably lived in a period of restraints in contrast to the freer forces of a new age that are embodied by the Emersons. The references to bees which occur a number of times in the novel are also disguised allusions to the drawing-room type. James McConkey remarks on this "bee-motif" in the book (58), but doesn't develop his discussion of it; Jeffrey Meyers, who does examine it at length, focuses on the ways in which Lucy Honeychurch's name connects her to the Reverend Beebe and stresses their shared ambivalence over embracing life

versus running from it (187). But nowhere in these commentaries is the apparently obvious point made that bees represent a highly organized form of social life, and that it is this very established social organization that Lucy leaves behind her as she abandons her family's name in favor of George's.

Abandoning her family's name is also a way of abandoning her family. And for all their imperfections, the Honeychurches are a strong link with the past; severing this link is not easy. We know that the Honeychurches stand for a certain kind of tradition, for a connection with a bygone world, because throughout the novel the family clings to its furniture, which, like the house that contains it, comes to represent the past. For Lucy's mother, the furniture is a reminder of her own marriage and the dead Mr. Honeychurch, who purchased it. One of her most bitter complaints about Cecil, eventually, is that he disparages this furniture and, by extension, the sentiment attaching to it. This is not surprising, as Cecil in his medieval asceticism is essentially anti-sentiment, but it is interesting that for the reader Cecil's snobbish criticism of the furniture counts as one more strike against him, and at the same time it moves one to share Mrs. Honeychurch's affection for her furniture. Cecil despises, additionally, the family's tendency to keep the curtains closed "to save the furniture" (86),

but it is clear that the Honeychurches preserve themselves and their heritage by preventing too much light (or self-knowledge) from getting in, and Cecil certainly does not have a better way of life to offer them.

The Emersons, of course, are also opposed to the comfortable Honeychurch darkness, and their feeling about their own furniture is illustrative of their disregard of convention -- and the past. When Mr. Beebe and Freddy go to visit the Emersons, who are just moving into Cissie Villa, Freddy is appalled to find that their wardrobe has been defaced by a painted inscription. As any true Honeychurch would, Freddy dislikes this casual treatment of the furniture. On the same visit, Freddy notes that George's face is dirty and impulsively suggests that they go for a bath in a nearby pond; George "bow[s] his head, dusty and sombre, exhaling the peculiar smell of one who has handled furniture" (127). Furniture handling is plainly a task that suits George not at all.

In the ecstatic outdoor bathing scene that follows, he, Freddy, and even Mr. Beebe shed their clothes and the other trappings of civilized life to frolic in a delighted fraternity. All of the men seem improved and invigorated away from furniture and drawing-rooms, but only one of the three -- George -- will remain in the sunlight. When the startled Mrs. Honeychurch, Lucy, and Cecil come across the bathers, Mr. Beebe jumps into the water, Freddy runs

to hide himself in the bracken, and only George, after first dashing away, returns to confront the forces of civilized life directly, "barefoot, bare-chested, radiant and personable" (133). He is clearly relieved to find himself in the role of uninhibited child of nature rather than dusty mover of furniture. George's paganism is even more apparent in "New Lucy," where he shows a proclivity for sleeping in the woods and where, according to Forster's notes, he "takes his fun riotously, going mad & breaking the furniture" (Lucy 92). It is apparent both here and in A Room with a View that what George has to offer Lucy is not a family in the Honeychurch/drawing-room/furniture sense of the word, but something very different.

In living with George, Lucy will have to leave not only the furniture and drawing-room, but the house that encloses them, behind. While the author sees all of this as necessary for Lucy, the loss of Windy Corner is a painful one. The house has its own "'dear view,'" but it is the wrong one for Lucy, which we sense when Mr. Beebe, who has revealed himself as a champion of celibacy, sees it "as a beacon in the roaring tides of darkness" (193; 189). A house that appears thus to such a man cannot be recommended as a dwelling for Lucy. And when she claims a need for independence, her mother immediately feels that she is not only leaving her family but despising the

home built by her father and, we infer, her own heritage. Thus the leaving of the house represents a dramatic break with the past, and it may be a break that cannot be mended, as Lucy fears after her marriage to George, when she reflects that "she ha[s] alienated Windy Corner, perhaps for ever" (207). She can remember her past, to be sure, but it has not been integrated into her present. In "A View without a Room," we learn that Windy Corner finally vanishes, as does the Honeychurch name, and that the George Emersons and their children eventually find themselves without any home at all. They have "no resting place," for "civilization [is] not moving that way" ("Appendix," Room 211), and when, after the Second World War, George returns to Florence, he is not even able to find the Pension Bertolini among many remodelled buildings. Although the view remains, he cannot locate the room where he and Lucy stayed. The author dryly remarks that having a view is, after all, something, and that George and Lucy have now settled down with it to wait for World War III. This is not a cheerful statement, and says something about Forster's feelings regarding homelessness.

Even at the end of A Room with a View, George and Lucy are pictured in a hotel room and not a home. This is not a complete shock, for George never does seem to belong inside a house, and neither, for that matter, does his father. When they do choose a temporary house to

live in, it is the hideously ugly Cissie Villa; as Lionel Trilling avers, "Forster is on the side of ugly houses" (105), and this one does seem appropriate for those who turn away from convention and are correspondingly indifferent to aesthetic standards. Nevertheless, George and Mr. Emerson live at Cissie Villa just long enough to cause an upheaval in Lucy's plans for a wedding to Cecil (for George kisses her a second time, and directly afterwards she breaks off with her fiancé); after the engagement has ended, the Emersons decide to leave their dwelling. It little matters that they are unaware of the broken engagement, for they operate as agents of change, and when they have accomplished an important task, whether they have done so knowingly or not, they have no more use for their house. Basically, it means nothing to them. Before the Emersons arrived on the scene, the Misses Alan were intended for Cissie Villa, and the ladies, with their proudly Victorian ways, would be more suited to permanent house-living. The Emersons belong outside tradition, but in this novel, unfortunately, this also means that they belong outside a house.

If they have no house to offer Lucy, what do they present her with? It is clearly a view, a view in which the honest acceptance of one's feelings is essential. And, to be more specific, it is the view available to an idealized child. If the reader has been watching closely,

it will have become apparent that throughout the novel Forster has been endowing all of his most sympathetic characters with childlike attributes, and in this way has been dropping hints about the state of childhood and its appeal. Mr. Emerson has "something childish" in his eyes, which "[glow] with a child's courage," and he even "thump[s] with his fists like a naughty child" at times (3; 196; 4). The charming if ultimately misguided Freddy Honeychurch is "'my dear baby'" to his sister, and the Italians, who seem endowed with unusual properties of insight, seem, to Lucy, "'rather childish'" (106; 43).

It naturally follows that childhood will become a central concern for the novel's principal characters. In Italy, for example, Lucy is much taken with the Della Robbia babies which appear in teracotta in the Square of the Annunziata; "their shining limbs bursting from the garments of charity, and their strong white arms extended against circlets of heaven" enrapture Lucy at the same time that they cause her companion, the conventionally unconventional Miss Lavish, to utter "a shriek of dismay" (18). These babies are referred to a number of times as if to emphasize their significance and suggest Lucy's attraction to the figure of the child; in fact, she prefers them to the works of Giotto, celebrated for their "'tactile values'" (25). She sees the Giotto frescoes in the church of Santa Croce, where, significantly, she also

comes upon two living "he-babies and a she-baby" attempting religious rites (20). As Lucy rushes to prevent the disaster of one of them falling over, she runs into Mr. Emerson, and this is an important early meeting between them. It helps to establish an underlying connection between characters who seemed, in the opening pages of the book, to have very little in common. In the church Mr. Emerson gives the same advice to Lucy that he gives the Italian "he-baby," both of whom he directs toward the sunshine and, by implication, to clear-sightedness as against befuddled thinking, as Don Austin notes (219). (When children are in church, their strengths, which we will see later, seem to fail them; "'what else can you expect from a church?'" Mr. Emerson asks [20].) In linking Lucy with a child, Mr. Emerson causes the reader to make this association, as well.

Lucy herself feels like a child on several occasions, but for a long time she does not interpret this feeling correctly and even belittles it. Her piano playing, which is supremely important to her and through which she expresses her inherent passion for life, becomes intensely threatening at certain moments in the book: once after she has first been kissed by George, and again when she feels torn between her duty to Cecil and attraction to George. In each instance, she turns

away from music because it is, she thinks, "the employment of a child" (73; 156). Taken to its logical conclusion, this statement suggests that Lucy at her most passionate is Lucy at her most childlike. Therefore, childhood allows for a direct connection with deep feeling and is thus a state worth preserving or, if lost, recapturing. That the narrator sees a condition of childhood rather than adulthood as central to Lucy's well-being is apparent when Mr. Beebe feels that in her misbegotten engagement to Cecil Lucy's childhood has ended, and when we find that her mother calls her "old lady" when Lucy is most upset (138; 194).

Childhood is important, also, to George, and this is one of the ways in which he and Lucy are intimately connected. In Florence, Mr. Beebe feels that George "'hasn't learned to talk yet,'" and Mr. Emerson tells Lucy that "'a baby is worth a dozen saints. And my baby's worth the whole of Paradise'" (8; 25). But George, at the beginning of A Room with a View, is a melancholy child; where Lucy's task will be to accept a condition of childhood, his will be to enjoy it. Mr. Emerson associates George, like Lucy, with the little Italian boy in Santa Croce; he wishes that his son would allow himself to revel in life just as he wishes that the "he-baby" would go out into the sunshine rather than stumble about over tombstones. By connecting George with the Italian child,

Mr. Emerson also connects him to Lucy and thus implies that a relationship between them is inevitable.

And, in fact, Lucy and George experience their first moment of closeness at the same time that Lucy sees, on her own, the child in George. In one of the novel's more heightened moments, they both witness the murder of a man in the Piazza Signoria. They have come to the spot separately; Lucy, wandering alone, has bought some pictures and is musing that nothing ever happens to her when she sees two men arguing, and one of them strikes at the other's chest. As the man who has been hit leans toward her, he begins to bleed and falls. Lucy herself faints, and opens her eyes to find that George, rather fantastically, is there. Later he throws her pictures, stained with the dead man's blood, into a stream; it is then that Lucy suddenly perceives that he is like "an anxious boy" (43). This is her first conscious pull toward him.

She is not yet ready to acknowledge this, however, and, rather conventionally, she is quick to associate growing awareness with growing up, as when she notes that George "verge[s] into a man" with his claim that something of extreme importance has happened following the death of the Italian (43). Two pages later, she tells herself that "it was not exactly that a man had died; something had happened to the living; they had come to a situation where character tells, and where Childhood

enters upon the branching paths of Youth" (45). But Lucy is making an unnecessary distinction here between childhood and youth, when actually a happy youth partakes of the wisdom of a child. The narrator can see this, and so can we, as at last Lucy and George are married and are pictured in the Pension Bertolini:

He knelt on the tiled floor, and laid his face in her lap.

"George, you baby, get up."

"Why shouldn't I be a baby?" murmured George.

Unable to answer this question, she put down his sock, which she was trying to mend, and gazed out through the window.
(205)

Soon after this we are informed that "Youth enwrapped them; the song of Phaethon announced passion requited, love attained" (209). There is no significant division here between the conditions of childhood and youth.

One actual child in the novel, the Reverend Beebe's niece, Minnie, can see what someone like Charlotte Bartlett cannot, and this underlines the notion that childhood, ideally, is characterized by clear vision. This is illustrated when Miss Bartlett comes to stay with the Honeychurches and is talked out of her unctuous demand to pay her own cab fare by the verbal acrobatics of Freddy, his friend, and Cecil. Miss Bartlett is confused by their calculations but ultimately allows herself to believe what they are telling her, whereas Minnie, who

has listened to the entire bewildering conversation, maintains, quite rightly, that none of it makes sense. Minnie again appears as the possessor of vision after Lucy has ended her engagement to Cecil. Lucy plans a trip to Greece, and Mr. Beebe and Miss Bartlett join forces in supporting this venture, which would in fact remove Lucy from the influence of George and of life itself. Miss Bartlett and the Reverend have Minnie with them as they plot at the Beehive Tavern, and, significantly,

that amiable hostelry possesses a veranda, in which the young and the unwise do dearly love to sit, while guests of more mature years seek a pleasant sanded room, and have tea at a table comfortably. Mr Beebe saw that Miss Bartlett would be cold if she sat out, and that Minnie would be dull if she sat in, so he proposed a division of forces. They would hand the child her food through the window. (184)

Here once more is the antithesis: the anti-life people inside a room (moreover, inside the Beehive Tavern, with its suggestion of a highly ordered existence), too engrossed in their machinations to look out, and the image of vitality -- a child, here -- established in full command of a view.

The message attaching to all of this could not be more explicit. Achieving vision calls for a recapturing of the happy child's view of the world, and this seems

crucial to a fully lived life. Forster's faith in the powers of childhood is again demonstrated in a letter in which he states that "children and the way they put things restore one's sense of reality in an extraordinary way" (1: 256). A Room with a View contains an almost Wordsworthian celebration of the child, and it also echoes the sanctification of childhood to be found in the poems of Forster's contemporary, de la Mare. In "Dreams," for instance, the speaker idealizes childhood thus:

Be gentle, O hands of a child;
Be true: like a shadowy sea
In the starry darkness of night
Are your eyes to me.

But words are shallow, and soon
Dreams fade that the heart once knew;
And youth fades out in the mind,
In the dark eyes too.

What can a tired heart say,
Which the wise of the world have made dumb?
Save to the lonely dreams of a child,
'Return again, come!' (113)

Unlike both de la Mare and Wordsworth, however, Forster betrays no sorry conviction in A Room with a View that everyone must ultimately lose the clear vision of the child. George and Lucy are both in possession of a child's view at the end of the novel, and, better yet, they are able to share this vision. But it must not be forgotten that if they have established a new kind of family with each other, a family of children, as it were,

they are without a house and its attendant connection with the past. There is hope for George and Lucy's future, as the closing image of the novel, with the river taking away the winter snows, suggests (Finkelstein 88), but it is a future in an unfamiliar, house-less world. Thus certain qualifications must be made to the widespread critical opinion that A Room with a View ends on a purely happy chord. The loss of the family as we know it, however unsatisfactory it may be, is edged with pathos.

In working out the theme of the emancipation of a protagonist from her family, Forster's book has a clear place within the Edwardian framework. And it has a sister novel in Wells' Ann Veronica, which was published a year after A Room with a View. The relationship between these works is striking, yet, with the exception of very brief comments by Alan Wilde (Art 47) and Howard N. Doughty (Gardner 362), it has not been discussed. This is surprising, for examining the books together certainly serves to illuminate both.

In Wells' work, Ann Veronica Stanley's conscious efforts revolve around leaving the convention-bound world of her father and achieving her idea of independence from him. Where Lucy Honeychurch resists the narrow view of her mother, Ann Veronica rebels against the stuffiness of her father, a man who is given to reading novels like The

Blue Lagoon (which have nothing to do with life as he knows it), and who is intent on having as little trouble as possible with his daughter. At the beginning of the book, we are told that Ann Veronica, like Lucy, has been taught to ignore her instincts; they are, by and large, considered unladylike. As Wells' narrator ironically puts it, "The art of ignoring is one of the accomplishments of every well-bred girl, so carefully instilled that at last she can even ignore her own thoughts and her own knowledge" (77).

As a seeming alternative to the overbearing strictures of her father is the rest of the world surrounding Ann Veronica; it is, like Lucy's world, peopled by spinsters offering her the avenues of behavior available to women who remain without men (in other words, unmarried).⁴ None of these options is at all appealing. Forster's Miss Bartlett has been divided into two figures here: Miss Stanley, Ann Veronica's aunt, who is basically a double of Mr. Stanley in her rigid beliefs and notions of the delicacy of young womanhood; and Miss Miniver, the champion of Votes for Women, who has a morbid dislike of men and a disheartening world view very much like Miss Bartlett's. The latter presents to Lucy

the complete picture of a cheerless, loveless world in which the young rush to destruction until they learn better -- a shamefaced world of precautions and barriers

which may avert evil, but which do not seem to bring good, if we may judge from those who have used them most. (Room 78-79)

In the same vein, Miss Miniver's sense of life, as articulated to Ann Veronica, "presented itself in the likeness of a great, grey, dull world, a brutal, superstitious, confused, and wrong-headed world, that hurt people and limited people unaccountably" (Ann 100). The other spinsters who circle unattractively around Wells' heroine are her fellow-students in the University Biology class; two are duplicates of Miss Miniver, another a colorless woman whose name Ann Veronica always forgets, and the last a Miss Garvice, who does little more than move beautifully.

Against these nightmares of the unmarried state are opposed the men in Ann Veronica's life who take a romantic interest in her and thus seem to offer other paths out of her father's world. By and large, they are wolves in sheep's clothing. Ramage, a neighbor from the Stanleys' suburb, fosters Ann Veronica's financial dependence on him when she runs away from home to London but finds herself unqualified for almost any kind of work. Ramage persuades her to take a loan from him, and ultimately reveals himself as lecher incarnate; it becomes apparent that for all his seeming liberality, he actually shares Mr. Stanley's perception that women are either very good

or very bad. Manning, who persistently woos Ann Veronica, is a creature of artifice and poses who writes embarrassingly sentimental poetry for her and endorses the chivalric view of women that so appeals to Cecil Vyse in A Room with a View. Notably, Ann Veronica, like Lucy, is momentarily lured into the world of knights and ladies and becomes engaged, briefly, to Manning. When she breaks off with him in relief, the narrator observes that "she [has] done for ever with the Age of Chivalry," much as Lucy's full emancipation from Cecil and her family is referred to as "The End of the Middle Ages" (Ann 207; Room 205).

The third important suitor in Ann Veronica's life is the biologist Capes, with whom she falls in love. Her situation with Capes is complicated by the fact that he is married and, although separated from his wife, undivorced, but she has no doubt about her passion for him and is actually the architect of their love affair. She knows that her father will never approve the union, and hence runs off surreptitiously with Capes. In the novel's last chapter, four years have passed and somehow she and her beloved have been able to marry; they have invited Mr. and Miss Stanley to their flat and, although the Stanleys politely agree to come, Ann Veronica sees that her father is truly indifferent to her. Thus her freedom is tinged with disappointment, as is Lucy's, for neither

of their families can accept what is essentially a happy but unconventional union. If it cannot control a daughter's life, the family can, at least, withhold approval of it.

A significant difference between Wells' and Forster's treatments of emancipation from the convention-bound family lies in their differing definitions of what this emancipation involves. While Wells details the practical steps Ann Veronica takes in looking for work, Forster is interested in the larger issue of widening Lucy's sensibilities. Initially it seems that Ann Veronica, like Lucy, is in search of a view, but Wells' sense of what this means is very restricted, and on close analysis it does not actually depart radically from the view of the world around her that he seems to be disparaging. In Chapter Two of the novel, for instance, a chapter entitled "Ann Veronica Gathers Points of View," what the protagonist gathers is, simply, two marriage proposals. Her identity, from beginning to end, hinges on her relations with men, and basically her rebellion is not the life-or-death affair that we sense Lucy's is. This has something to do with the rather condescending humor Wells levels at Ann Veronica, and also with his concluding picture of what true freedom for a woman is. It is the freedom to lie prone beside Capes as he sits in the attitude of an idol and to revel in obedience to him, for Ann Veronica

"love[s] to be told to do things" (238). And in a later reference to her in Marriage (like other Edwardian writers, including Forster, Wells liked to mention his characters in subsequent novels), the narrator provides the rather startling information that Mrs. Capes has become the

quiet-mannered wife of the dramatist, a woman of impulsive speech and long silences, who [has] subsided from an early romance (Capes [was] divorced for her while she was still a mere girl) into a markedly correct and exclusive mother of daughters. (417)

In Ann Veronica, the protagonist's break with her family is certainly painful for her, but she might never have made the break at all. With Capes she recreates the same pattern of interaction that she had with her father; it is a pattern that demands that one family member be dominant and the other subservient. Wells, for all his apparent open-mindedness, really has not challenged Mr. Stanley's view of family life.

To be fair, the concluding scene of the novel suggests that Wells was not entirely happy with his version of wedded bliss. Ann Veronica does have a moment of sheer despair in the face of her supposedly idyllic union with Capes. She seems suddenly to question the life they've constructed together, and expresses her doubt, interestingly, with an image of Forster's: "'We're hedged

about with discretions -- and all this furniture . . .'" she complains. But this surprisingly bleak outlook is countered in the book's final passage as Capes, the perfect husband, clasps his wife to him and reassuringly asserts, "'I know. I understand'" (252). It is this sense that they are in a Wellsian ideal of the empathic marriage that remains in one's mind after the novel has been put down.

Forster, on the other hand, creates a new kind of relation for Lucy and George which is based on a shared state of childlikeness. Therefore, the difference between his book and Wells' is more than "the difference between a good sociological novel and a bad one" (Gardner 362) -- if A Room with a View can be considered a sociological novel at all. It is the difference between the imaginative powers of two authors who were both searching for a solution to the problems of family life.

In A Room with a View, this solution is only available at a great sacrifice, with the loss of one's home. It makes sense, then, that in his next novel, Howards End, Forster would turn his full attention to this issue. His task now was to find a way to hold onto the house in order that a new breed of family might live there.

Notes

¹ For a full discussion of the novel's history, see Oliver Stallybrass' "Editor's Introduction," Room vii-ix.

² George H. Thomson, in a detailed and fascinating analysis of the plot of the book, notes that

its central development is a series of contrasts. In Part I, Lucy moves toward light and the fulfillment of her nature, but at the last moment she is overcome by darkness -- and flees. In Part II she moves towards darkness and the denial of her nature, but at the last moment she sees the light. (110)

³ In an interview with Angus Wilson, Forster offered this mild comment on Mr. Beebe: "'Yes, he was disappointing, wasn't he?'" (57).

⁴ In this connection, Bonnie Finkelstein remarks that the spinsters in A Room with a View present Lucy with the varieties of female celibacy (72).

5. HOWARDS END: THE FAMILY WITHOUT PASSION

"It all turns on affection now," said Margaret. "Affection. Don't you see?" Resuming her usual methods, she wrote the word on the house with her finger.

-- E.M. Forster, Howards End

Howards End has been described as "pre-eminently the representative Edwardian novel" (Colmer, E.M. Forster 107). This claim seems to be born out by a close study of some of the views put forth in the book: the idealizing vision of rural life, for instance, which is coupled with and probably caused by a very evident fear that this world is fast vanishing. The novel reflects a sense that change is occurring everywhere and rendering both the present and the future uncertain, insecure; as we have seen, this perception is characteristic of the age. Most pertinent to this study, Howards End gives full attention to the ills of the modern family as a way of describing the ills of modern England. In its proposal of a cure for the ailments it has identified, the work further demonstrates its affinities with contemporary literature.

Briefly, the narrative of Howards End proceeds as follows. The orphaned Margaret Schlegel, her sister, Helen, and their brother, Tibby, live in London in the

world of well-heeled intellectuals. Helen falls in love with Paul Wilcox, the son of a successful businessman, but his family opposes the involvement and Helen gives it up. Subsequently Margaret becomes friendly with Ruth Wilcox, mother to Paul and wife to Henry, and at her death she leaves her country house, Howards End, to Margaret. Although the Wilcoxes dispose of all evidence attesting to Margaret's rights to the property, eventually Henry marries Margaret and wills the house to her. Helen has an illegitimate child after a brief liaison with the lower-middle-class Leonard Bast; although Henry is at first appalled, later, after his eldest son inadvertently causes Leonard's death, Henry is broken and more capable of tolerance. He, Margaret, Helen, and her baby live together, finally, at Howards End, and we are informed that Margaret will ultimately leave the estate to Helen's child.

If the theme of Howards End is, as Lionel Trilling asserts, the theme of "England's fate" (118), it is clear that neither the intellectuals, the industrialists, nor the lower middle classes on their own are equipped to take on the new needs of modern man. Only through the union of all three can a workable society be effected; only in the joining of the Schlegels and Leonard's child and Henry at Howards End does the novel find its resolution. The house becomes a dominant symbol because a

society which is caught up in change and concurrently losing touch with its own past is, basically, adrift; it is homeless. If the family can find a home, perhaps the country can, and when harmony is possible in the domestic realm, it also may be possible in the world at large.

Each family presented at the opening of the novel displays significant defects and thus highlights the need for a new kind of domestic group to inherit England. First to be shown at length are the parentless Schlegels. They live in a city that is "intelligent without purpose," characterized "as a spirit that has altered before it can be chronicled" (Howards 106), and so it would appear that their enlightened values are in peril from the forces of mindless, insistent change. Margaret and Helen have adopted many of the views of their father, a German idealist and soldier who left his native country with the onset of its strident materialism, although it must be added that Margaret, at least, has a healthy respect for money. Their mother, a sketchily rendered figure, was English; she died in giving birth to Tibby, and Ernst Schlegel died five years later. So at a young age Margaret, the oldest child, became parent to her siblings; indeed, as Bonnie Finkelstein points out, from the beginning of the story we see Margaret in the role of mother to a sickly Tibby (93).

The household is not without other surrogate mothers, however; the women who circle around the Schlegel children are their aunt Juley Munt, the sister of Mrs. Schlegel, and Frieda Mosebach, from the German side of the family. Both in their own ways are concerned with the welfare of the Schlegels, but their attempts to help out are largely misplaced. As is usual in Forster's fiction, these older maternal types exercise poor judgement and therefore cannot offer the right kind of guidance to the family. Mrs. Munt, worrying herself over financial matters, urges Helen and Margaret into making bad investments. Frieda Mosebach, who is anxious about affairs of the heart, persists in efforts to marry Helen off to an eligible German friend, despite the fact that it becomes increasingly obvious that Helen is incapable of a sustained sexual relationship and uses people as mere receptacles for her feelings.

In this inability to have close relationships (apart from her one supremely important connection with Margaret), Helen is, as Alan Wilde has commented, a great deal like her brother (Art 109). Perhaps it is owing to this similarity that Tibby, a lethargic and emotionally stunted young man, has particular difficulty in getting on with Helen. The youngest Schlegel simply has no interest in people, even though he is capable of doing the right thing on their behalf when pressed, and he is

clearly related to Forster's Philip Herriton and Cecil Vyse. (In fact, Margaret, when lecturing Tibby, refers to a certain Cecil Vyse as the model of how not to live one's life.)

When around their brother, both Helen and Margaret tend to quell their natural enthusiasm. They are most themselves when they are alone together, and the central relationship in the Schlegel family is the relationship of the sisters. Although there is much to be said for a connection based on obvious sympathy and mutual understanding, there are shades of the sinister in the Margaret-Helen relation. This is a home in which the man is kept away from the heart of warmth and closeness and, whether as cause or consequence, he is devoid of life. Tibby is "frigid," but, significantly, this is "through no fault of his own . . ." (276). His sisters choose, in most instances, to exclude him from their confidences; the war between men and women, which will later become most apparent to Margaret, is anticipated in her domestic alliance with Helen.

Although Margaret and Helen, similar as children, have become quite different as adults, they share the deep conviction that a personal response to life is of utmost importance and have their one serious falling-out when Margaret is lured toward a different set of values. As Laurence Brander notes, it seems that this sibling

relationship must be tested by the world outside their family (137); the sisters' basic commitment to each other will become most apparent in their reunion after a serious altercation and their ability to find a way to live in harmony once more.

The world which threatens this relation and causes its temporary upset is represented by the Wilcox family. They are not really a happy group, despite appearances to the contrary: "though presenting a firm front to outsiders, no Wilcox could live near, or near the possessions of, any other Wilcox" (201). Worse still, they eschew the personal. Having made his money through the exploitation of Greek and African natives, Henry Wilcox is the quintessential Imperialist, the man who must put emotion aside in order to support an essentially immoral way of life. His oldest son, Charles, is like him in having no use for the inner springs of existence; as the narrator ironically puts it,

Charles and his father sometimes disagreed. But they always parted with an increased regard for one another, and each desired no doughtier comrade when it was necessary to voyage for a little past the emotions. So the sailors of Ulysses voyaged past the Sirens, having first stopped one another's ears with wool. (99)

The relationship between Charles and his father, is, however, tinged with some competitiveness; Mr. Wilcox

dislikes his son's tendency to be "dictatorial" (98) and, as if to prove his supremacy, he is intent on keeping Charles as well as his other children financially dependent on him. Charles is no match for Henry, for he lacks his father's subtlety and charm; like Harriet Herriton, of Where Angels Fear to Tread, the child is a caricature of the parent's worst qualities and thus alerts us to the wrong-mindedness of the older person.

The two other Wilcox children also point to the limitations of Wilcoxism. Evie, a creature of calisthenics and rock gardens, reflects the blustery heartiness and restricted imagination of her family, while Paul, the youngest son, displays its streak of sexual hypocrisy. When we first see him he has, in a burst of spontaneity, kissed Helen Schlegel; immediately after this, he turns into someone "'mad with terror'" over the possible reaction of his parents to the news of his involvement with Helen (23). In his conventionality Paul is another caricature of his father, whose sexual furtiveness will be revealed in the course of the novel.

Presiding over this domestic scene is Mrs. Wilcox, the remote but compelling figure who intuits all; for example, she divines when it is necessary to part those who may hurt each other and knows as if by psychic transmission when two young people have fallen in love. Yet

Ruth Wilcox's responses to her children are of the indulgent, emotionally detached kind; when Charles is upset, she smiles "with tenderness, and without saying a word turn[s] away from him towards her flowers" (20). Forster presents her in the company of her family just twice, in vignettes totalling no more than two pages; this is in striking contrast to the lengthy development accorded her growing relationship with Margaret. Thus Mrs. Wilcox, although ostensibly committed to the members of her family, does not seem very much involved with them.

Ruth is less a real person than an essence, and her role is defined by the fact that she springs from yeoman stock and has a profound love of the earth which the Wilcoxes, with their "throbbing, stinking" motor cars (20), know nothing of. Commentators on the novel have described her in various ways: as "virtually a patron deity" for Margaret, an "Earth-Mother figure," "almost a myth-like" being, and "the brooding ghost of the story" (Crews 111; Thomson 171; Stone 247; Trilling 121). Even before her sudden death Ruth is more insubstantial than real; in her first intimate conversation with Margaret, the light casts "a quivering halo round her hands," giving her "a strange atmosphere of dissolution" (65). In fact, this meeting with Margaret has been brought about by supernatural elements. When Margaret learns that the Wilcoxes have taken a London flat across from Wickham

Place, the Schlegel domicile, she fears that Paul and Helen may again meet, and sends a note to Paul's mother to prevent this from happening. Prompting her to do this, it appears, is an other-worldly presence, for first the fog "presse[s] against the windows like an excluded ghost" and then Margaret writes her letter (63). Her note is answered by one from an offended Mrs. Wilcox, informing her that Paul has gone away. In an effort to repair her poor manners, Margaret goes to visit Ruth. Therefore, a ghost begins their friendship, and it is as a ghost that Ruth is to have so much significance for Margaret.

Mrs. Wilcox is an element of the supernatural which must be accepted, according to Forster's own comment, if one is to make it through Howards End without undue difficulty (Letters 1: 119). The book is, at least in part, fantastic; as explained in Aspects of the Novel, this means that

it asks us to pay something extra. . . .
The other novelists say, "Here is something that might occur in your lives," the fantasist: "Here is something that could not occur. I must ask you first to accept my book as a whole, and secondly to accept certain things in my book." (75)

And it is altogether possible that Forster was striving, in Howards End, to create a prophetic figure as well as a fantastic one in Ruth Wilcox. She certainly

"reaches back" to something beyond herself as, in Aspects of the Novel, Forster claims that the prophetic does (94). Like other prophetic characters, she "only becomes real through what [she] implies. . . . Taken by [herself she] seems distorted out of drawing, intermittent . . ."

(92). On the other hand, the response that is required of the reader of prophetic fiction -- a response that demands the suspension of humor and the donning of humility (Aspects 87) -- is often almost impossible to make in the case of Mrs. Wilcox, who is shown, for instance, demolishing a London luncheon party through sheer boringness. We are told that "she was not intellectual, nor even alert, and it was odd that, all the same, she should give the idea of greatness" (73). But the idea of greatness is offset by the picture of a matron whose only responses to the clever talk around her take the form of such comments as "'I sometimes think that it is wiser to leave action and discussion to men,'" which causes, predictably, "a little silence" (74). Even as the extraordinary is presented, here, it is undercut by another strain in the narrative which brings our attention back to the everyday. Thus we are offered a double vision that encompasses both the mystical and the banal. Our response to this is necessarily a complex one -- we may be impressed as well as amused -- but we do not quite experience the awe felt by the reader of prophetic prose.

Further, by turning Mrs. Wilcox into so obvious a ghost, even before her death, the author betrays uneasiness about her ability to carry too much significant meaning on her own human shoulders. She really belongs more to the fantastic than the prophetic realm.

The hints at the supernatural form an interesting link between Mrs. Wilcox and the third family depicted in Howards End, the one comprised of the pathetic Leonard and Jacky Bast. Early on, Leonard makes a connection with the Schlegels, who are his neighbors at a concert and who invite him back to Wickham Place afterwards. But his connection with the Wilcoxes is first established, for us, more subtly; it is heralded when we see him greeting Jacky as she enters their squalid flat: "'What ho!' said Leonard, greeting the apparition with much spirit, and helping it off with its boa" (48; emphasis added). These punning references to the unseen world signal some affinity between the Bast and Wilcox families, an affinity which is clarified later, when we learn that Leonard's ancestors, like Ruth's, were farmers. Leonard also connects with Mr. Wilcox, for Leonard's grandfather hailed from Shropshire, where Oniton Grange, a house that Henry buys after Ruth's death, is located. And, as John Colmer notes, Leonard has certain Wilcox tendencies that co-exist with his Schlegel traits: he

resembles the Wilcoxes in his desire for quick returns, though what he wishes to acquire is culture not cash. He thus exemplifies how difficult it is in a materialistic age for the newly educated to avoid the values of an acquisitive society. (E.M. Forster 95)

The bedraggled Jacky, like Leonard, has a connection with the Wilcoxes, for eventually it is revealed that Henry once had an affair with her.

The fact that Henry reduced Jacky to a "fallen woman" helps to explain her relationship with Leonard, which is characterized by his pressing sense that she needs looking after. Jacky is first presented to us via a photograph that emphasizes her teeth; it is a grotesque image, suggesting that in her needy disreputability she is really devouring Leonard: "Teeth of dazzling whiteness extended along either of Jacky's jaws, and positively weighed her head sideways, so large were they and so numerous" (46). In reality Jacky's teeth are not as prominent as the picture suggests, but our initial view of her in the photo remains a significant comment on her relation to Leonard. Further, in living with Jacky, first out of wedlock and then in marriage, Leonard has alienated his own family; for a long time he even withholds full information about his relationship with Jacky for fear that his brother will put a stop to it (much as Charles Wilcox

attempts to put a stop to what he sees as an inappropriate relationship between Paul and Helen). Later Leonard will be reduced to begging for money from his family on Jacky's account, a degrading experience that takes him "down dirty paths" (316).

In view of all this, it is not surprising that Leonard drops Jacky's photo, smashing the glass, and then cuts himself on it, for their relationship is literally bleeding him. The picture and its frame, incidentally, are rhythmical elements that appear throughout Howards End. Later Margaret, in her first intimate conversation with Mrs. Wilcox, picks up a photograph frame containing a likeness of Dolly, the silly wife of Charles whom everyone in the Wilcox family either teases or more or less ignores. Margaret drops the picture and, like Leonard, cuts herself on the glass. It has been suggested that this action unites Leonard and Margaret in a quest to break away from inadequate relationships and enter into more meaningful ones (Hoy 130); the broken photos certainly describe the very real dangers inherent in bad unions. This is emphasized again after Helen and Leonard have a brief, ill-begotten affair; she flees without saying good-bye, and he feels "as if some work of art had been broken by him, some picture in the National Gallery slashed out of its frame" (314). It is this relationship with Helen that will lead to his untimely death, for he

becomes overwhelmed with remorse for what he feels that he has done to her and goes to confess his wrong-doing to Margaret, at Howards End; there he is confronted with the irate Charles Wilcox, who beats Leonard mercilessly and brings on his fatal heart attack.

In a happier moment, Leonard likens the strangers in whom he can confide more easily than those closest to him to "pictures that must not walk out of their frames" (120) and, in one of the novel's most pleasant scenes, when Helen and Margaret have been reunited at Howards End after their long absence from one another, they open the windows of the house so that it fills with spring breezes and the "picture frames [tap] cheerfully" but, significantly, do not smash (297). Good things remain within their frames, while bad ones break out of them.

By the same token, all members of society should be aware of their place in relation to both past and future -- they should acknowledge their chronological frame -- rather than display, like Mr. Wilcox, no interest in the past or express, as Mrs. Munt does, an indifference to past and future alike. The importance of connecting with the past, in particular, is evident here (as elsewhere in Forster's canon) in the house symbolism used throughout the novel. Houses come to represent continuity between different periods of time, generations of a family, and

the natural and man-made worlds. Yet Margaret, the protagonist of the novel and thus the figure whose search most clearly illustrates the book's central concern, must inhabit a number of dwellings, each of which offers her some of what she needs, before she comes to live in the one house that brings everything together for her.

The number of houses mentioned in Howards End is remarkable, and this, along with the title of the novel, makes it clear that the idea of the house is of paramount importance here. At one point Helen attempts a catalogue of the Wilcox properties and comes up with:

". . . one, Ducie Street; two, Howards End, where my great rumpus was; three, a country seat in Shropshire; four, Charles has a house in Hilton; and five, another near Epsom; and six, Evie will have a house when she marries, and probably a pied-à-terre in the country -- which makes seven. Oh yes, and Paul a hut in Africa makes eight." (167)

Add to this references to Mrs. Munt's "hospitable house" (273); the house of a German admirer of Helen's, which she actually prefers to him; the country farmhouse near Howards End; the Schlegels' London home at Wickham Place; and the recurrent uses of the expression "safe as houses" (e.g. 38).

But not all houses are, in fact, safe, as Margaret finds to her dismay when Wickham Place goes into its decline. She has lived there almost all her life, and it

is a strong connection with both the natural world and her beloved father. Although a city dwelling, Wickham Place is described through nature imagery; here "one had the sense of a backwater, or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea, and ebbed into profound silence while the waves without were still beating" (5). The house is also the heart of the family's past; the furniture at Wickham Place, like the furniture at Windy Corner in A Room with a View, represents "a faint piety to the dead" (Howards 146). The house, as Helen comments, is a "'grave'" (297), a grave for their father's memory, for, in the spirit of Ernst Schlegel, it "ha[s] not mistaken culture for an end." And as it begins its slow death Margaret is forced to begin a new life that takes her away from what her father represents. Wickham Place starts to die in the spring, causing both Helen and Margaret "to accost unfamiliar regions" (254); it is in the spring that Margaret and Henry begin the romance that will lead to their marriage, pulling Margaret away from Schlegel values and into the Wilcox world.

In the late summer, Margaret goes up to Oniton Grange, in Shropshire, with Henry. He has just bought the house and it is here that Evie Wilcox's wedding will be held. Margaret immediately falls in love with Oniton; it is her hope for a new life, yet it also reaches deep

into the nation's past. The castle on its grounds connects it to England's history, providing a sense of continuity in the face of the disordered Wilcox existence. Further, Margaret has an immediate love of the land on which Oniton stands; at one point she is moved to bend down and stroke the ground. Charles Wilcox, who observes her doing this, has no understanding of her feeling; like all the Wilcoxes but Ruth, he lacks both imagination and an appreciation of either history or the natural world, and for him the ground is simply damp. Henry is equally obtuse about the glories of Oniton and its land, and takes the first opportunity to sell the place. Despite the positive aspects of this house, Margaret's new family cannot live in it. Thus her search for a home is temporarily thwarted.

The house for her and, ultimately, her sister and her husband, is, of course, Howards End. This is the home which combines the values of the past and the beauties of nature with the possibility of a future for the family. In this synthesis may lie some hope for permanence in an uncertain world.¹

Margaret's first view of Howards End is touched with mystery; she arrives with Henry, but he goes off at once to find a key to the front door and, almost immediately, Margaret discovers that it is not locked, after all. She enters, and the door slams behind her in true haunted

house fashion.² Howards End actually reverberates with what seems to be a heartbeat and, adding to the densely supernatural atmosphere, Miss Avery, the old caretaker, appears and momentarily mistakes Margaret for Ruth. It is an instant of transformation in which two spirits -- Mrs. Wilcox's and Margaret's -- very briefly merge. As R.N. Parkinson comments, "the house is a spiritual as well as a material inheritance" (59), but Margaret has still to earn her place within it.

Howards End seems meant for women; a feminine symbol (Stone 238), it embraces the female and spurns the male. Toward the end of the novel, when the pregnant Helen has been lured to the house by Margaret and the facts of Helen's condition (up until now a mystery that she has hidden away with her on the Continent) have come clear, Margaret feels not only a strong bond with her sister but an insistent sense that men have no place at Howards End. She is suddenly aware that men and women are at war; "she [is] fighting for women against men" (287). Preventing the interference of her husband and a local doctor, Margaret successfully wards them away so that she and Helen can have the reunion of spirit that is so necessary to the protagonist's content. Howards End "'kills what is dreadful and makes what is beautiful live'" (297) just as months of silence preceded by turmoil now give way to intimacy between the siblings. They decide that

they would like to spend the night together at the house, and Margaret asks Henry for permission to do so. When he prudishly refuses to allow it on the grounds that Helen's condition insults the memory of Ruth Wilcox, Margaret releases a tide of anger and disgust at his hypocrisy. Her meeting with Helen at Howards End forces her to confront Henry, finally, with what he is; it re-establishes old familial ties (it is no accident that the house is now filled with Schlegel furniture, artfully arranged by Miss Avery) and it pushes Margaret to connect, at last, with her true feelings about Henry's behavior. Thus Howards End promotes the ultimate connection, the connection with oneself. "At such moments," the narrator comments, "the soul retires within, to float upon the bosom of a deeper stream, and has communion with the dead, and sees the world's glory not diminished, but different in kind to what she has supposed" (329). For Margaret a connection with herself also means a connection with the ghosts that are a part of herself, Mrs. Wilcox and Ernst Schlegel, and with the values that they represent.

The kind of inner connection that Margaret achieves here is the kind described by Matthew Arnold and conveyed in very similar imagery in his poem, "The Buried Life." For Arnold's speaker, however, man can become conscious of "the buried stream" of life through communion with his beloved; then "the eye sinks inward, and the heart lies

plain, /And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know" (114-15). Margaret, in contrast, achieves inner truth in contact with the dead, a contact that is made possible by a haunted house. Henry has no place in all of this. Although after Leonard's death and Charles' imprisonment for manslaughter an enfeebled Henry shuffles up to Margaret and she becomes nursemaid to him, their relationship is now, if anything, less honest than ever. Margaret is able to make demands of her husband (she persuades him to allow his children financial independence, for instance), but she buries her strongest feelings. This is illustrated in the novel's final pages, when Mr. Wilcox finally confesses to having hidden Ruth's written request that Margaret inherit Howards End. Although at this point his manner is thoroughly docile, his moral outlook has not changed. He feels that Ruth's last desire was no more than a whim, and he sees nothing wrong with having denied her request. In reaction to this news, "Margaret was silent. Something shook her life in its inmost recesses, and she shivered" (340). Yet a moment later she is reassuring Henry that he has done nothing wrong. Therefore, Margaret's ability to connect with her own inner life contributes nothing to her marriage; the virtues of the union are most questionable, given the fact that her feelings must be kept private. On the other hand, there is no suggestion here that the

marriage will face new dangers. For Margaret has worked out a way to remain with Henry.

The price that she pays for this is the price of a humanity that embraces intimacy. In order to live with someone who cannot be trusted, either self-deception or emotional detachment seems necessary, and at this point the former course is impossible for Margaret. One cannot help but be reminded, in her ultimate reaction to Henry's insensitivity, of Forster's short story, "Other Kingdom." The heroine, Miss Beaumont, is presented as a free spirit engaged to the boorish and limited Harcourt Worters (who shares his initials as well as his anti-life tendencies with Henry Wilcox). She eventually does escape from him, but not without turning into a tree first. Here the author offers a crude version of what happens to Margaret when confronted with the fact that her husband cannot begin to understand her. She prevents any possibility of closeness, and so becomes inhuman.

This is not altogether surprising, for it seems that she has been distancing herself from him from the beginning of their relationship. Colmer attributes her attraction to Henry to the fact that she admires the work ethic he represents (E.M. Forster 102); both Hall and Finkelstein suggest that his age and generally paternal outlook serve to make him seem a possible father substitute (18; 104). Nonetheless, Margaret displays a marked

sexual aversion to him which bespeaks an emotional antipathy. As described through Margaret's eyes, Henry's sudden, furtive advances are almost revolting: "She was startled, and nearly screamed, but recovered herself at once, and kissed with genuine love the lips that were pressed against her own" (180). To kiss "with genuine love" is hardly the same as responding with passion, and the image of Henry's unforseen advance, his lips pushing against hers, is combative rather than amatory. This suggests that from the start of the relationship Margaret unconsciously feels that she and Henry are opposed. One way to respond is to freeze her sexual feelings and, later, her emotional responses.

Margaret comes, in fact, to care much more for a place than for any of the people around her. Unlike Lucy and George Emerson, Margaret and her family have been able to find a house to inhabit and have thus achieved a sense of continuity with the past. But where Lucy traded on a home in a passionate relationship with George, Margaret trades on passion and turns to the house to fulfill her needs. She has no love for Helen's child, and it is debatable whether she is even very much involved with Helen by the end of the book; although they can talk openly to each other, her responses to her sister have become sage and slightly emotionless. Margaret seems to

be one of those people who "'move outside humanity altogether'" (335).³

This strategy for coping with extreme stress is eventually employed by the other two adults in Margaret's family, as well. It may have been dawning on Helen ever since the abortive scene with Paul Wilcox that she is incapable of sustained relationships with men, and after her affair with Leonard this is made manifest. Following the liaison, she goes to see Tibby at Oxford and charges him with sending her guilt money to the Basts; when her brother unexpectedly asks why she was with them in Shropshire, where the affair transpired, she is taken aback and "her eyes, the hand laid on the mouth, quite haunted him, until they were absorbed into the figure of St Mary the Virgin, before whom he paused for a moment on the walk home" (252). The object laid over the mouth is an image that we have encountered elsewhere in Forster; here, as in Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Passage to India, it heralds the end of a way of life or, more specifically, a kind of outlook; it also associates, as always, with a baby. Helen is pregnant with Leonard's child, and that she will be a mother with no need for a husband, that her interest in men is now quite dead, is hinted at as Tibby gazes at the Virgin Mary.⁴ By the close of the novel, Henry Wilcox also has become sexless or "gelded," to use Trilling's word (135), and he seems

too exhausted for any feeling beyond plaintive gratitude; he is "'not ill,'" but "'eternally tired'" (Howards 334).

It is as necessary for Helen and Henry to become less than human as it is for Margaret to do so, for otherwise it is hard to imagine how the novel's "only connect" theme could be served. Henry and Helen have such extremely different value systems that they could not possibly co-exist in the same house unless one or both gave up something. Thus at the conclusion of Howards End family feeling either takes the form of a cool affection, as in Margaret's case, a weak compliance, as in Henry's, or a saintly mother-love, as in Helen's.⁵ Where the solution to the problems of family life, as offered in A Room with a View, was to create a new type of family in a family of children, here the means to domestic harmony involves robbing all family members of an important aspect of human feeling: its potential for passion. And the hope for a better future raises a number of questions, for Helen's child doesn't even have a name; he is simply "baby," in seeming acknowledgement that he can work as a symbol but not as a person in a story that has left humanity behind.

The problem with the closing vignette in Howards End is that it is not completely clear what Forster's opinion of it really is. He presents us with too much contradictory information. While we are given a number of

indications that Margaret's personality has been damaged, for example, the plot suggests that in her domesticity with Henry, Helen, and the child all the problems of a fractured society have been resolved. Helen says to her sister, "'I see you loving Henry, and understanding him better daily, and I know that death wouldn't part you in the least'" (335), a statement which is curiously at odds with the actual picture of the marriage that is given in this last chapter. Yet it seems that we are supposed to believe Helen, for there is no hint that she is an unreliable observer; in fact, she has grown sadder but wiser. Thus we are being compelled to disavow all the evidence and accept that Margaret is in fine shape and that her relation with Henry is a good one. The difficulty here stems from the imposition of a rigid pattern on the novel, a pattern designed to serve the needs of the plot at the expense of credibility. The arrangement of this plot exerts the kind of tyranny that Forster was quick to recognize, elsewhere, as an artistic failure. In describing the faults of a rigid pattern in Aspects of the Novel, he states that "it may externalize the atmosphere, spring naturally from the plot, but it shuts the doors on life and leaves the novelist doing exercises, generally in the drawing-room" (112). (As usual in Forster's writing, the drawing-room has nothing good to offer.) A

pattern like this detracts from the psychological reality of a work in an effort to achieve aesthetic wholeness.

Throughout Howards End, the Schlegel and Wilcox families repeatedly cross, separate, and recross. What seems to be a side-step into the Leonard Bast business clearly becomes yet another way into the Wilcox-Schlegel connection when the old relation between Henry and Jacky is exposed, when Charles more or less murders Leonard, and when Leonard's child is ultimately pictured in a domestic setting with Henry, Margaret, and Helen. Thus the pattern in this novel takes the form of a chain made up of interlocking relationships. If the plot is to have any point other than to illustrate various connections, if any progress is to be demonstrated, it is essential that the final link in this chain be forged from the materials of all three families. And the pattern is a rigid one because it does not allow for the possibility of breaking away from the chain altogether and finding a resolution of some kind outside the Wilcox-Schlegel-Bast environment. It is difficult to imagine characters surviving the dictates of such a pattern, and the novelist later reflected that he did not really care for any of the people in Howards End, a feeling that can be attributed, perhaps, to what he himself identified as the "all pervading plot" (Furbank 1: 190). However, he also thought the plot a good one (Wilson 56), which suggests

that he was not overly concerned with the fact that it works against a realistic atmosphere. In truth, the plot sometimes undermines the novel as a whole. For instance, in the contrived affair between Helen and Leonard, the incident, as many commentators have complained, suffers from a general lack of plausibility and so the important point it illustrates -- that basically we all do long for connection -- is weakened. As Peter Widdowson acutely observes, "moral pattern has been achieved at the expense of a substantial world. It is striking how the intrusion of a fictional device can destroy the illusion of realism; and how the moral vision itself is then called into question" (105).⁶

Howards End is not, therefore, an altogether satisfying novel. In comparing it to a contemporary work by Galsworthy, one is struck both by the inadequacy of Forster's treatment of similar concerns and by the ways in which he was the more ambitious, more compelling author.

That there was an affinity between Howards End and the work of Galsworthy, Wells, and Bennett was noted as early as 1910, in an unsigned review for World in which Forster was criticized for sharing a popular tendency to malign the Wilcox way of life (Gardner 155). Not all of the Edwardians could have been pleased with being compared to Forster, as is indicated by Arnold Bennett's

scathingly condescending assessment of Howards End in New Age:

If he [Forster] continues to write one book a year regularly, to be discreet and mysterious, to refrain absolutely from certain themes, and to avoid a too marked tendency to humour, he will be the most fashionable novelist in England in ten years time. His worldly prospects are very brilliant indeed. If, on the other hand, he writes solely to please himself, forgetting utterly the existence of the élite, he may produce some first-class literature. The responsibilities lying upon him at this crisis of his career are terrific. And he so young too! (Gardner 156)

But there were clear points of similarity between Forster's latest work and the fiction of the realists, although he sometimes suffered in the comparison; a New York Times reviewer ranked Galsworthy as a novelist of "greater vigor and discrimination" in handling the same themes that appeared in Howards End (Gardner 158). Later David Garnett, in a memoir comparing Forster and Galsworthy, claimed that they both dealt with a dated social propaganda (103), while in subsequent analyses of Howards End by Brander, Widdowson, and Colmer, the novel has been compared, briefly, to Galsworthy's play, "The Silver Box," and his novels, The Island Pharisees and Fraternity, respectively (145; 68; E.M. Forster 88).

The parallels between Fraternity and Forster's novel are most apparent, for both authors are interested in

whether or not connections can be made between seemingly unconnected people. But Galsworthy's conclusion seems to be that such unions are not possible after all; not between parents and children, siblings, or spouses. The one connection that is almost realized, between the model, Ivy, and the philanthropist, Hilary, is ultimately unsuccessful; the sexual potential of the relationship seems to terrify and even revolt Hilary, and he finally goes off alone, leaving his wife as well as the model behind.

The most interesting contrast between Forster and Galsworthy, however, appears in an examination of Galsworthy's novel, The Country House, which describes different types of country families and attempts to determine which will inherit England. The author's sympathies are apparent from the outset. Living at the rural estate of Worsted Skeynes is the Pendyce couple: Horace, who in his moral muddles and obstinacy is reminiscent of Henry Wilcox, and Margery, his wife. They are the bearers of two distinctly different strains, for she "had been a Totteridge," as we are repeatedly reminded; she is a born lady with a "gentle soul, unused to action, shrinking from violence." She carries within her the core of truly civilized life, its "gentleness, balance" (216). Horace Pendyce is vilified by the novelist for an

unquestioning belief in his ancestry that is as reprehensible as the Wilcoxes' complete lack of any interest in the past. For to Mr. Pendyce, one's heritage is a blind creed which asserts:

"I believe in my father, and his father, and his father's father, the makers and keepers of my estate; and I believe in myself and my son and my son's son. And I believe that we have made the country, and shall keep the country what it is. And I believe in the Public Schools, and especially the Public School that I was at. And I believe in my social equals and the country house and in things as they are, for ever and ever. Amen." (174)

Furthermore, a place has come to mean more to Horace than human relationships do; he will eventually renounce his own son for fear that his carryings-on may harm the estate. Thus he shares Margaret's limitation at the close of Howards End. Galsworthy, unlike Forster, is very clear on the fact that this is a limitation, for it will not be required that Pendyce contribute to the resolution of the problems presented in this novel.

The schism between Horace and his wife lies in the difference between something stolid and foul and something fine and precious. As an extreme example of the perils awaiting one of Margery's gentleness is her cousin Gregory Vigil, who is, to his detriment, idealistically in love with Mrs. Helen Bellew and whose life is being destroyed by an inability to see things or people as they

are. That the world view represented by Margery and Gregory is ultimately to perish seems a foregone conclusion in a society of Horace Pendyces and Helen Bellevs, people who simply take from others and sap their energies. Although at the end of the novel Margery has achieved a brief victory (through her influence Helen's husband has agreed not to name Margery's son as co-respondent in a divorce action), the overriding message is that Margery is part of a dying line. This is reflected in her aged Skye terrier, Roy, whose impending death points to the destruction of his mistress and her kind.

The symbolism in The Country House suggests the possible victors in this struggle for rights to England; Horace Pendyce's spaniel, a creature who lives in adoring subjugation to his master, demonstrates the appalling potency of what one character identifies as "Pendycitis."⁷ Horace bullies those around him into submission and is loved or, at the very least, tolerated for it. Nevertheless, the fact that Horace is unable to ward off the possible disaster brought about by his son's love affair implies that the Pendyce type has its own, perhaps fatal, inadequacies.

Rather than attempt to outline a better future within this family group, perhaps too unrealistic a possibility to be offered here, Galsworthy introduces Pendyce's tenant, Peacock, as a hope for an improved world. Peacock

shares the heritage of Ruth Wilcox, a heritage of admirable individualism and a full, personal commitment to the earth. Unfortunately, there is some danger that Peacock will fall into the servility of the others who live under jurisdiction of the Squire. This is illustrated when Peacock's stable catches fire and he must enlist Pendyce's aid to put it out; he briefly fears that he will be overcome by a sense of gratitude to Horace. But eventually the old enmity is restored, and he again feels the "sacred doubts inherited from his fathers rising every hour within him" (278). This slight triumph suggests the potential for larger victories and, finally, a future in which people connect, as Peacock does, with the yeoman past. This is a tenuous hope, however; Peacock is a very small figure in the scheme of the novel. Therefore, as in Howards End, the solution posed to the problem of Edwardian life is not without problems of its own.

A major difference between Galsworthy's and Forster's treatments of a common theme lies in the faith each author puts in the realist method as a way of describing a better world. Peacock, like all of Galsworthy's characters, stands for more than himself; he represents a class of men. Despite this, he has a vivid individual reality. In part this is the result of precise description: he wears breeches and an old straw hat and has little, pig-like eyes, and his speech, a faint dialect peppered with

colloquialisms, is carefully rendered. This patiently observant approach is used toward all of the characters in the novel, whose motives, most significantly, are not untenable, and whose actions are never implausible. Thus their symbolic function complements rather than eclipses an established humanity, for characterization clearly takes precedence over pattern, here. Taken as a whole, Galsworthy's work is at once more successful and less interesting than Howards End. Galsworthy sets out to describe different varieties of Englishmen, and he accomplishes his task; establishing certain limits for himself, the author makes sure that his novel works within them. Forster, on the other hand, pushes beyond a careful realism, with a sometimes evident strain. And yet Howards End at its best achieves a depth of insight and complexity that The Country House does not approach. Despite its flaws, we still read Forster's novel, while Galsworthy's is all but forgotten.

In concluding this discussion, a last word on Forster's search for a home seems in order. As in much Edwardian fiction, the prescriptiveness of Howards End expresses a wish but not necessarily a likelihood. The actual possibility of finding a place like Howards End to serve as sanctuary for a new type of family, a family without passion, seems very slim indeed. On some level the author himself may have realized this. In the essay

"Happiness!" he talks about the "magical island" each person creates for himself. It sounds very much like the house in Howards End. For this is a place which we "call a memory or a vision to lend it stolidity, but it is neither really; it is the outcome of our sadness, and of our disgust with the world that we have made" (Abinger 37).

Notes

1 Forster's creation of Howards End can be traced to autobiographical sources. In Marianne Thornton, the biography of his great-aunt, he explains that Howards End was modelled on the Hertfordshire home where he spent the happiest years of his childhood. Forster associates his feeling for his old home with the way that Marianne Thornton felt about her own house, Battersea Rise, in which she hoped both to live out her life and die (Marianne 301), much as Mrs. Wilcox, of Howards End, expresses a wish to die in the place where she was born. Battersea Rise was the stately home of Forster's ancestors, the Thorntons, business people with a strong pious streak who helped to make up the famous philanthropic group known as the "Clapham Sect." In many respects the Thorntons indicate what capitalists like the Wilcoxes might have been; as described in Forster's essay, "Battersea Rise," "riches, evangelical piety, genuine goodness, narrowness, complacency, integrity, censoriousness, clannishness, and a noble public spirit managed to flourish together" (Abinger 249). Although having no appreciation of literature or art, the Thorntons provided the right type of environment to produce Forster, thus indicating that a moneyed family background coupled with a clearly defined and upheld moral sense is not without its considerable virtues. In 1907, a year before the novelist began writing Howards End, Battersea Rise was demolished (Abinger 253). The fact suggests that a strong feeling for the house and the way of life it represented may have been aroused with its demise and that this, together with a nostalgic fondness for his childhood home in Hertfordshire, inspired Forster in the conception of Ruth Wilcox's ancestral home.

2 For an interesting analysis of the way in which Forster exploits the Gothic tradition in presenting this incident, see Colmer, E.M. Forster 106.

3 In his interview with Forster, K.W. Gransden asked the novelist how he felt about caring less for people than for a place. "His order was the same as it always

had been: first people, then books, then places" (77). This would seem to refute the widespread critical view that Margaret speaks for the author and is thus the custodian of the "right" values in the novel.

⁴ J.B. Beer, in commenting on this passage, sees Helen's metamorphosis into a madonna as her "victory" (128). I would argue, on the contrary, that she has lost a great deal in the process of becoming so saint-like.

⁵ It should be added here that in the last chapter Helen does clearly demonstrate her love for Margaret. But her role as sister pales beside her maternal function, which is continually stressed, and so it seems that her angelic devotion to her child is the most important aspect of her relation to her family.

⁶ Frederick Crews also faults the novel's plot, calling it

an intellectual contrivance for the illustration of a theme; the Wilcox-Schlegel marriage is allegorically significant but psychologically artificial, and the connection of the Bastis to both houses is too appropriate to be considered literal. (174)

⁷ Incidentally, the over-use of this symbolism sent Forster into a spasm of irritation; in Aspects of the Novel he remarks that "with exasperation we find that Galsworthy's spaniel John, or whatever it is, lies under the feet again . . ." (115).

6. THE LONGEST JOURNEY AND MAURICE:

THE FAMILY OF MEN

To the end of life they would go on beating time, and this was enough for her. She was content with the daily round, the common task, performed indifferently. But he had dreamt of another helpmate, and of other things.

-- E.M. Forster, The Longest Journey

The Maurice and The Longest Journey stand in direct relation to one another is suggested by Oliver Stallybrass' report that these were the novels "which meant most to Forster" ("Introduction," Life xvii). Forster himself felt that the works had "similarities of atmosphere" ("Terminal Note," Maurice 254), and on close inspection it is clear that the books are linked in important ways. For the inadequacies of domestic life and the vision of a better kind of family are described through similar characterizations and plot developments. And in both novels a higher form of comradeship between men stands as an alternative to conventional domesticity. The two books can be viewed, justifiably, as the products of Forster's most personal feelings regarding the family; at the same time that they convey the deep dissatisfaction with the modern family present in many

contemporary works, The Longest Journey and Maurice express a sensibility that is hardly typical of the literature of the period. They point to a movement behind certain assumptions underlying the fiction of such authors as Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells, and thus offer a fitting conclusion to a discussion of Forster's Edwardian novels.

In The Longest Journey, the Forsterian family appears at its worst, and domestic influences ultimately lead to the destruction of Rickie Elliot, the protagonist of the novel. The Elliots make up the first domestic group depicted at length in the book, and theirs is a family riddled with problems. The parents' marriage is a bad one, primarily because Mr. Elliot is insensitive and effete, frigid in his interactions with his wife, and even capable of moving out of their house and into his own place for no other reason than that she lacks an artistic sense. With gleeful malice, he also pushes her into an affair with the young farmer, Robert, who is in love with her. Eventually Mrs. Elliot and Robert run away together, but the latter dies soon after this, in unconvincing circumstances which seem designed simply to return Mrs. Elliot to her imprisonment in the English suburbs. Rather than continue to live fully after Robert's demise, she again accepts the death-in-life that is familiar and, one must assume, most comfortable for

her. At this point a theme is sounded that is to appear elsewhere in the book: that a certain type of woman is able to have one, and only one, fulfilling romantic relationship, and that without this "'it is simply a question of beating time . . .'" (239). But even if we were able to accept this premise (and it is hard to swallow), it does not fully explain Mrs. Elliot's situation. For although she knows a brief moment of relief and happiness when her miserable husband dies, she herself passes away eleven days later. In realistic terms, her sudden death seems contrived, but it underscores an important aspect of her life, and one that is psychologically plausible. She seems inextricably bound up in a destructive union with her spouse, and although she cannot live with him, she also cannot live without him.

Her resentment of her husband is apparent in her relations with her son, Rickie, to whom she betrays a certain aversion. Perhaps this is because the boy looks like his father and shares the paternal defect, lameness; at any rate, her responses to Rickie are characteristically rather cool. Capable of much unselfishness, Mrs. Elliot is, nevertheless, a woman who rejects her son, and probably as a reaction to this rejecting behavior, as the expression of a strong need to be cared for, Rickie infantilizes himself when he is with her. Toward the end

of Mrs. Elliot's life their interaction has become unwholesomely eroticized, the sexuality seeming to take the place of an easy affection between child and parent. Coos Rickie, "'I shall be as wax in your hands, mamma.' She smiled. 'Very well, darling. You shall be.' And she pressed him lovingly, as though she would mould him into something beautiful" (27). Rickie will come to idealize the relationship, thinking back, for example, to "his mother and the sweet family life which nurses up a boy until he can salute his equals" (171). He conjures up this picture of his home with such consistency that the tendency of some of Forster's critics has been to share Rickie's positive vision of Mrs. Elliot and see only that she lives on after her death as a nurturing earth mother figure (Thomson 138; Magnus 200). But it is clear that Rickie's perceptions when remembering her become more and more tinged, as do his perceptions of all people, by his own wishful thinking. From what we are told early on in the book, we can infer that the relationship between Rickie and Mrs. Elliot is, in fact, a severely limited and inadequate one, for

the boy grew up in great loneliness. He worshipped his mother, and she was fond of him. But she was dignified and reticent, and pathos, like tattle, was disgusting to her. She was afraid of intimacy, in case it led to confidences and tears, and so all her life she held her son at a little distance. (24)

We will find that Rickie's inability to face up to his feelings about all this sets the scene for the tragedy that is to follow.

Rickie's other damaging early relationship is with his father. The man heartlessly mocks Rickie's handicap, which suggests an element of self-hatred in his responses to his son. Like all of the Elliots, Rickie's father despises the familial weakness and looks to people outside the domestic group for companionship. Mr. Elliot is constantly, cruelly laughing and, as the narrator scathingly comments, "he never did or said or thought one single thing that had the slightest beauty or value" (24). One of Rickie's goals in The Longest Journey is to escape this inheritance from his father, to try to become something other than what he fears he is -- another Elliot. The lameness appearing throughout his father's family suggests a defect of soul, an inability to feel compassion or human warmth, and this is a weakness that Rickie, understandably, fights against.

The menace of the Elliots' restricted approach to life is further emphasized in the portraits of other members of the family. Emily Failing, Mr. Elliot's sister, bears the family's physical handicap and its malicious self-centeredness. The imagery used in connection with her is diabolical: she is associated with the serpent, the snake, and the dragon (Thomson 136). Her

relations with people revolve solely around her own needs, and in this respect she is very much like both Rickie's father and his cousins, the Silts, who are parasitic in their interactions with others and can offer Rickie nothing beyond an obligatory hospitality devoid of affection. Rickie must repulse the paternal side of the family if he is to live as a caring human being, for there is always the danger that their influence will poison him. To use the words of Mrs. Elliot as she appears to Rickie in a dream, he must let his father's kind "'die out'" (193); not just literally, but also symbolically. For at times they almost possess him, as the narrator seems to be indicating when he remarks that Rickie feels, in his worst moments, "diseased in body and soul" (192). Further, he is capable of the thought, "'let me die out'" (251), which stresses his miserable identification with the paternal line. But it is also the idealized picture of his mother which Rickie must shed if he is to survive, and the more realistic, rejecting image of her which would take its place can give him nothing. Thus for Rickie, accepting a state of spiritual orphanage is a necessary first step to becoming whole and happy. Unfortunately, he is never really able to take this step.

The inheritance theme is enlarged upon in the picture of Stephen Wonham, a kind of nature boy who lives on Emily Failing's estate and who is, as it turns out, the

offspring of Mrs. Elliot and the farmer, Robert. Unlike Rickie, Stephen is blessed by his inheritance and has no need to reject it. He retains "a cloudless spirit -- the spirit of the seventeen days [of his parents' affair] in which he was created" (242). Like his father, Stephen has a direct, unsentimental attachment to the earth. He is also remarkably self-accepting, perhaps because, as the product of a love match, he unwittingly carries the marks of the favored child. No doubt another component in his emotional health is the fact that he grows up outside the constraining influences of family life. Stephen is raised as the ward of Emily Failing, but he more or less does as he pleases, and he is untouched by any of the sinister taints of Elliotism. Stephen represents the life that is spontaneous and free, and as such he embodies the ideals of Anthony Eustace Failing, Emily's husband, who died before the novel opens but who left an important body of writing behind. One day, we learn, he saw the child Stephen up on the roof of the estate,

and the vision had remained with him as something peculiarly gracious. He felt that nonsense and beauty have close connections, -- closer connections than Art will allow, -- and that both would remain when his own heaviness and his own ugliness had perished. Mrs Failing found in his remains a sentence that puzzled her. "I see the respectable mansion. I see the smug fortress of culture. The doors are shut. The windows are shut. But on the roof the children go dancing for ever." (119)

A family that stands in direct contrast to the unrestrained Stephen and his kind is that composed of Agnes and Herbert Pembroke. They are denizens of Sawston and, unsurprisingly, they share the traits that the suburb usually breeds: ruthlessness, manipulativenness, and emotional dishonesty with themselves and with others. We know that Agnes and her brother are the wrong types of people in Forster's world because they dislike intimacy and its counterpart, the personal response to life; after an atypically close moment, for example, "their tenderness soon passed. They exchanged it with averted eyes. It embarrassed them" (206). It is fitting that Rickie should be drawn to these people and into a marriage with Agnes, for with them he can unconsciously resurrect a childhood scene; he can return to the heart of a family which cannot help but reject him, for it is in their nature to do so. Though kindly, Herbert uses Rickie as a pawn in his bids for power at Sawston School and simultaneously spurns Rickie's finest feelings. After finding Rickie a job at the school simply to enhance his own position, Herbert assumes that his brother-in-law will exploit situations and people in much the same way that he does; he expects Rickie to act under the guise of benevolence but actually for personal gain. Thus he tacitly rejects Rickie's sensitivity in trying to squeeze him into the Sawstonian mould. Agnes' behavior is even

more clearly rejecting. Like Rickie's mother, she is incapable of loving more than one man in the course of her life, and that man, unfortunately, is not Rickie. Further, she cannot stand his attempts to express deep feelings, to show who he really is; like Mrs. Elliot, Agnes "would laugh or thrust him off when his voice grew serious" (168).

Rickie is first attracted to her when he witnesses the brutally sexual nature of her relationship with her beloved, Gerald Dawes; after the latter's sudden death Rickie determines that the important part of Agnes' life is over, but nonetheless he becomes involved with her himself. It is in a spirit of admitted resignation that she marries Rickie, and his own dissatisfaction with their union seems to have been preordained from the moment when he perceived that Gerald and not himself would hold the central position in Agnes' life. As Bonnie Finkelstein asserts, Agnes never can accept that it is Rickie, not Gerald, who has survived, and it makes a certain amount of sense that in consequence she works to undermine that spiritual side of him which Gerald lacked (55).

On the whole, Agnes comes off very badly. We are repeatedly informed that she has a number of serious shortcomings: besides the patent inability to respect her husband's best qualities, she has a loathsome tendency to legacy-hunt and of course (and worst of all), a

deeply rooted belief in social conventions. In this last respect she is similar to Emily Failing, who entreats Rickie to accept that

"we are conventional people, and conventions -- if you will but see it -- are majestic in their way, and will claim us in the end. . . . I tell you solemnly that the important things in life are little things, and that people are not important at all."
(275-76)

This is Agnes' view also; as John Harvey notes, she "translates everything into terms of social relationship -- she rarely perceives the human relationships that lie beneath" (123). It is altogether in character that Agnes supports Herbert in his efforts to make Rickie into a Sawstonian and rejects the elusive, unconventional qualities in the short stories Rickie writes.

Rickie, for his part, soon begins to feel alienated from his wife. He senses that she will not acknowledge the significance of the dead, while for him the dead, specifically an idealized memory of his mother, are supremely important. In fact, his distorted memory of the dead and a correspondingly over-zealous commitment to this will finally lead Rickie away from the reality of the present and thereby away from life itself. But Agnes goes to the other extreme, for an acceptance that the dead do play a part in the lives of the living is a vital aspect of full humanity, as defined in this novel. Thus

Agnes' aversion to the dead "made her own image somewhat transient, so that when [Rickie] left her no mystic influence remained . . ." (168). It is interesting to note that Agnes sometimes is compelled, in spite of herself, to acknowledge her own dead; this becomes clear when she momentarily mistakes Stephen Wonham for the deceased Gerald. The incident is even more explicit in an early draft of The Longest Journey, where she and Stephen embrace and "for a moment of unutterable bliss that mortal spirit entered immortal flesh, and beneath her lips lips that the grave had ravaged were warm and strong" ("Appendix C," Journey 379). In both versions of this encounter, it is apparent that the dead Gerald is an important part of Agnes' life, but her experience is subsequently devalued by the narrator because her reaction to it is deluded -- "cloudy" -- and conventional (260). The point is that it is essential to have a spontaneous and impassioned response to all aspects of one's life rather than subscribe to the restrained, hypocritical behavior endorsed by Sawston.

Rickie ceases to love Agnes and yet, in order to remain with her, he turns away from his feelings. Here, as when he distorts the memory of his mother into a pleasing one, the denial of painful feelings leads Rickie to have an increasing amount of difficulty in distinguishing the real from the unreal in his world. In

effect, Rickie resorts to the same kind of passionless, inhuman existence that Margaret Schlegel chooses at the close of Howards End. With the birth of Rickie's child there seems a chance that the cloud of self-willed blindness will lift -- "the mists that had gathered round Rickie seemed to be breaking" (183) -- but the baby's death, followed by the hideous ill-treatment of one of Rickie's boarders at Sawston School, returns him to a state in which his environment seems unreal because he cannot cope with his feelings about it, and thus "the spiritual part of him proceeded towards ruin" (193).

One of the clearest indications that Rickie's marriage is anti-life comes in the fact that he must renounce important relationships if he is to live in harmony with his spouse. His two significant connections with men, both of which Agnes opposes, are, initially, with Stewart Ansell and, later, with Stephen Wonham. Stewart is the first person in Rickie's life to give him a deep and unharnessed affection, and their interaction at school is characterized by a lover-like tenderness. The homosexual overtones are evident in Rickie's thoughts that such a friendship merits "a society, a kind of friendship office, where the marriage of true minds could be registered" (64). The suggestion has been made that Rickie's "defect" is actually a covert allusion to repressed homosexuality (Colmer, E.M. Forster 83), and the effeminacy of his

responses has often been commented on in analyses of the novel (see, for instance, Crews 57; McConkey 37). In one idyllic scene, for example, he plaits garlands of flowers for Stewart and himself, which they wear as they tumble about together in the grass. It is no coincidence that these moments of good fellowship are interrupted because Rickie has arranged a meeting with Agnes. That she rather than Stewart will come to dominate his life is suggested by her appearance at this meeting, which indicates her strength and power as well as her emotional frigidity:

She wore a flowered muslin -- something indescribably liquid and cool. It reminded him a little of those swift piercing streams, neither blue nor green, that gush out of the Dolomites. Her face was clear and brown, like the face of a mountaineer; her hair was so plentiful that it seemed banked up above it. . . . (66-67)

It will soon become apparent that Agnes has no use for Stewart; she reduces him to an object for pity, presumably in the hope that if he is emasculated he will cease to act as a major force in Rickie's life. In reference to Agnes, Stewart himself becomes a kind of glacier and moves further and further away from Rickie. Upon being introduced to Agnes, he refuses to shake her hand, and he later has a hyper-intellectual explanation for his behavior. He loftily informs Rickie that Agnes is "the subjective product of a diseased imagination

. . .'" (17). Although his reaction is an unpleasantly priggish one, we assume that his evaluation of Agnes is correct; at least insofar as Rickie is determined, for a long time, to ignore her inadequacies.

Ansell's unequivocal distinctions between the real and the unreal indicate that he has no need to muddle the facts, as Rickie does; perhaps this is related to a happy and secure upbringing which stands in marked contrast to Rickie's painful childhood. Interestingly, there seems to be no mother in Stewart's family, where women, in general, are pushed off to the side. This is the ideal Forsterian set-up, a home run by and for men without the malevolent or (at best) misguided contributions of the opposite sex. Here Stewart's needs are given priority over his sisters'; financing his education, for example, is supremely important, while the two girls are allotted enough money to lure good husbands, but no more. Mysteriously but conveniently, the daughters quietly accept their lives as second-fiddles to their brother. The relation between Stewart and his father is reminiscent of the blissful relation of George and Mr. Emerson, in A Room with a View, where the father is an all-accepting figure delighted to place complete faith in his son. The harmony in the Ansell household is further attributed, by Rickie, to "their complete absence of taste" (30), a curious unifying factor until one remembers that the

villainous Mr. Elliot placed a high value on taste but no value at all on personal relations, and that the terrible Pembroke also have "a certain amount of taste" (33). Thus taste is associated with emotional callousness; it carries with it the connotation of asceticism, of a bloodless appreciation of the artificial.

Although the Ansell's represent the happy family established within a home, they are barely pictured in the novel and so offer only a faint possibility for domestic harmony. The real option for family life will come via the development of Stephen as a character and in the final hint at his mystical union with Rickie in the great outdoors. The ideal of a purer existence of man in nature, indifferent to all considerations of taste, will reach full flower in the last chapter of The Longest Journey and offer the novel's strongest wish for a better kind of family.

In the meantime, Agnes opposes any involvement between Rickie and his brother. She actively undermines Stephen; eventually he is thrown out of Emily Failing's house as a result of Agnes' damaging insinuations about him. When he learns that Rickie is his sibling and innocently brings the news to him, Agnes immediately attempts to buy Stephen off. "'We guessed,'" she says, "'you had come to be silenced'" (221), but one imagines that it was she who guessed the worst of Stephen and then influenced

her husband to share this opinion. At any rate, it was she who determined to begin by offering Stephen a bribe rather than wait, as the open-hearted Rickie suggested, to see if he really would attempt blackmail.

That both Stephen and Stewart genuinely care for Rickie and can offer him a healthier kind of life than Agnes can is indicated by the fact that each tries to save him from his self-deceiving tendencies. And at different points they do get through to him, but only temporarily. In one of the novel's most dramatic moments, Ansell informs Rickie that Stephen is his mother's rather than his father's son, and Rickie is suddenly able to see Mrs. Elliot as she was: not ideal, but mortal. As the narrator intones, this is all for the good, for "we do but shift responsibility by making a standard of the dead" (227). Nevertheless, Rickie falls into delusion once more as he determines, for reasons which have no bearing on the real Stephen, that his brother should come to live with him; that only he can take care of Stephen; that Stephen must be cured of his drunken ways so that he can live up to the image of their mother -- an image which Rickie has once again idealized. It is this unreal quality in Rickie's view of him that repulses Stephen and makes him feel that his sibling is treating him as a symbol, as the ideal of a brother rather than a person in his own right. Although Rickie can accept that Stephen's

criticism is valid, old habits die hard and eventually he reverts to his usual way of perceiving, or rather misperceiving. Although he turns away from Agnes and into an alliance with his sibling, he cannot hear Stephen's words: "'Come with me as a man. . . . Not as a brother; who cares what people did years back? We're alive together, and the rest is cant'" (257). The alliance is doomed because once again Rickie chooses not to look at the man as he really is; hearing his mother's voice in Stephen's, Rickie then makes Stephen into no more than the spirit of Mrs. Elliot. Actually, of course, he is not only this, but much more.

Rickie is bound to collapse into despair when confronted with a brother who is irresponsible and selfish as well as inherently good. When Stephen breaks his promise not to drink, Rickie has a disproportionate, confused response to the situation. Overly upset, he cries out that his failure has been to pretend again "'that people were real'" (281). In fact, Rickie's failure has been just the opposite of this. Throughout the novel he has been persuading himself that people are unreal; he has robbed his mother, Agnes, and Stephen of their individuality and turned them into projections of his needs. Rickie dies feeling that Emily Failing was right in her belief that conventions, and not people, matter; he dies in self-deception, and his tragedy is

that he has missed the chance for happiness in a vital relationship with Stephen by refusing to accept his brother for what he is. Raymond Williams, in his perceptive analysis of Wuthering Heights, describes a condition very close to Rickie's:

It is that finding of reality in the being of another which is the necessary human identity: the identity of the human beyond the creature; the identity of relationship out of which all life comes. Deprived of this reality there is indeed only image and resemblance, and it is exactly right that even physical life then stops. . . . (68)

It is important to remember that Rickie's limitation can be traced to the damaging family situation of his childhood, that his weaknesses are played upon in his marriage, and that heterosexual families are, as a rule, inadequate for all of the central figures in this novel. As a running commentary on the problems bred by conventional families is the condemnation of houses which is expressed throughout the book.

One of the feelings that Rickie shares with Agnes is the need for a home as a defense against the outside world, but he is mistaken in thinking that he will find such a home with her, for, as it turns out, they have very different notions of what home means. This is apparent when they move into Sawston School and the house that they live in there becomes an image of deprivation.

Because Agnes embraces the life of unthinking conventionality, it is no surprise that she should feel perfectly comfortable in Dunwood House, a place to which young boys are sent by their parents to be regimented and toughened up. This is really a "hotel," as Rickie see it (172), and not a home either for the boarders or for himself, for the house embodies the terrible ideology of institutions in general: that the public spirit, "personal influence" as opposed to "personal intercourse" (164), and emotional callousness are what life is all about. Dunwood House upholds an ideal rather than reality as a measure of human action (McDowell 58), a world-view that can only lead to destruction, as we have seen. Further, odd boys are cruelly ill-treated by their peers there and become, in turn, insufferable hypocrites. Thus the place traps and civilizes people in the worst way; as its name suggests, it is a gloomy wood in contrast to the other woods throughout Forster's fiction which act as symbols of complete freedom. These woods will become supremely important in Maurice, but even here, one of Rickie's short stories proposes an escape from societal restraints by running into the woods -- the "real," life-enhancing woods outdoors as against the "unreal" indoor woods of Dunwood House.

The most formidable house in Rickie's world is Cadover, the dwelling of Emily Failing. It is an unpleasant place which provokes scandals and fallings-out and which fills Rickie, understandably, with feelings of insecurity. The house is like the miserable woman within it: malicious, lacking in warmth, unable to offer anything to anyone. It proves Rickie's thesis that a house is "an organism that expresse[s] the thoughts, conscious and subconscious, of its inmates" (155). And it is altogether appropriate that the inhabitants of Cadover after Mrs. Failing's death are the acquisitive and calculating Silts, for these cousins, who reject Rickie as do the rest of his father's relations, seem at home in a sinister, loveless house.

Although the chaotic Ansell home and his own rooms at Cambridge are two indoor places that make Rickie feel happy, he has his clearest hope for finding sanctuary in an existence out of doors. This turning away from the house mirrors the break with the traditional family that is implied at the end of the novel, and it will play an important part in the conclusion to Maurice, as well. In The Longest Journey, the first outdoor environment to suggest a refuge for Rickie is the Madingley dell near Cambridge. As Wilfred Stone convincingly argues, the dell functions as a maternal image and provides Rickie with a sense of protection as well as self-confidence

(195; also see Thomson 145). The place fills him with such bliss that he imagines an inscription on the dell reading "This way to Heaven" (18), which, as Elizabeth Heine points out, reminds us of the alley in Surbiton where the hero of Forster's story, "The Celestial Omnibus," discovers a sign labelled "To Heaven" ("General Notes," Journey 409). In both instances a place outside the house offers an escape from psychic trauma; in the case of the boy in the short story, the alley affords him with a chance to leave a sadistic family behind, while for Rickie the dell is a substitute mother, warm and nurturing. But it will not suffice for long as Rickie's home because within the dell he is not, after all, completely safe; it is here that he is lured into pledging his love to Agnes, and disaster ensues. This can be read as a covert comment on the inadvisability of looking for a perfect mother anywhere, either in one's memories or in external places.

The second spot to offer Rickie hope is the Cadbury Rings, which are formed of two circles of entrenchments surrounding a single tree and are located near Cadover, standing in direct contrast to what it represents. These circles associate with the imagery in Where Angels Fear to Tread, where circles emphasized Philip Herriton's constant returns to a life of enslavement. Rickie shares Philip's plight, and the Rings make this clear, for they

provide Rickie with the moment of truth that he so badly needs, the clarity of perception that is the key to his salvation, and yet he ultimately rejects this to return to his delusions. The sequence of events is as follows. First Emily Failing informs Rickie, at the Rings, that he has a brother. And then,

he was gazing at the past . . . which gaped ever wider, like an unhallowed grave. Turn where he would, it encircled him. It took visible form: it was this double entrenchment of the Rings. His mouth went cold, and he knew he was going to faint among the dead. He started running, missed the exit, stumbled on the inner barrier, fell into darkness -- 1

The "dead" among whom Rickie faints are actually the dead soldiers buried at the Rings, but on a symbolic level they are the dead who haunt his present: his dead father (whom he believes, at this point, to be the parent of Stephen) and his dead mother. The horror of a life constricted by too much involvement with the dead is palpable in this scene, and "for one short moment he understood" (130). He is ready to turn in full acceptance to his brother Stephen, to dismiss the fact that he is, as Rickie thinks, the offspring of his hated dead father, but at this instant Agnes clasps Rickie to her. Once again Woman has invaded the sanctuary, and it is only a matter of pages before Rickie is under Agnes' thumb once more and agrees not to acknowledge his kinship

with Stephen. Nevertheless, there is a strong feeling here that the Rings could provide Rickie with what he needs if only he would let them. Much later he thinks back to the Rings as a place which fosters truth, and thus it is all the more unfortunate that he determines not to go there with Stephen, as they have planned, when he discovers that his brother has broken his word and gotten drunk. For a second time, and now without the excuse of Agnes' influence, Rickie is rejecting the possibility of clear vision, of a communion based in reality, which the Rings offer. In so doing, he denies himself a home, the spiritual and emotional home that he would find through accepting his brother as he is and living in harmony with him.

In The Longest Journey the element of prophecy accounts for a number of the book's most stirring and persuasive scenes, and in these places the novel seems to "reach back" to something larger than itself and sound deep, sustained chords. The prose is frequently lyrical and uplifting and works with the imaginative conception to give certain incidents their transcendent quality. One of the most famous passages from the novel is indicative. Stephen and Rickie crumple a piece of paper, set a match to it, and

the paper caught fire from the match, and spread into a rose of flame. "Now gently with me," said Stephen, and they laid it flower-like on the stream. Gravel and tremulous weeds leapt into sight, and then the flower sailed into deep water, and up leapt the two arches of a bridge. "It'll strike!" they cried; "no, it won't; it's chosen the left," and one arch became a fairy tunnel, dropping diamonds. Then it vanished for Rickie; but Stephen, who knelt in the water, declared that it was still afloat, far through the arch, burning as if it would burn for ever. (273)

This is an impassioned description of what actually happens on a larger scale in the course of the book: the brothers are momentarily united but then return to separate worlds. Rickie, with his restricted vision, can perceive no possibility for the future -- for him the "rose of flame" vanishes -- while Stephen does have hope, for he sees the rose "burning as if it would burn forever." These viewpoints are taken to their logical conclusions in Rickie's despairing death and Stephen's survival at the close of the novel.

Stephen, who is instinctively able to accept reality and who is unrestrained by conventions, is last seen "musing on his happy tangible life" (288) in the outdoors that offered hope to Rickie. There is a deep pathos in the fact that Rickie cannot share this life with Stephen, but the death rather than redemption of Rickie is perhaps inevitable. In Forster's view, death lent a sense of permanence to the end of a novel which almost nothing

else could give it (Letters 1: 216), and possibly in this, the novel so close to his heart, a feeling of permanence was more important than it was elsewhere in his fiction. At any rate, his decision to kill Rickie off indicates that a vision of his protagonist in an enduring relationship with Stephen was simply impossible, maybe because too much space had been given over to displaying Rickie's limitations and a sudden change of character would not be convincing. It is also possible that such a union between the men was too risky to portray because of its implicitly homosexual flavor. The latent homosexuality in the Stephen-Rickie relationship is evident in the teasing flirtatiousness which characterizes their interaction toward the very end on the train bound for Cadover and in Rickie's fretful solicitude, his plea that Stephen refrain from drinking: "'Do be more careful over life. If your body escapes you in one thing, why not in more? A man will have other temptations.' 'You mean women,' said Stephen quietly . . ." (265). As will be discussed below, Rickie's relations with both of the young men in his life, Stephen and Stewart, are paradigmatic of the clearly homosexual relations in Maurice. But it is not surprising that in The Longest Journey, a novel intended for publication (as Maurice was not), the possibility of a triumphant, fulfilling connection between two men could not be realized because of its sexual overtones.

In The Longest Journey it was still necessary for Forster, working within the boundaries of a heterosexual world, to create a kind of magical child out of Stephen's marriage who could suggest a brighter tomorrow. It is also possible, however, that the child acts as a disguised reference to a successful, fertile union between Stephen and Rickie.

It is significant that Stephen's wedlock is a rather dismal affair and hardly equates with a "healthy, tranquil" domesticity, as Don Austin claims it does (219). In this marriage Stephen keeps his wife "'in line'" by ignoring her wishes, specifically -- and notably -- in regard to their child. Despite her protests, he takes the little girl out to sleep on a hillside and, when it suits him, he confides what Mrs. Wonham views as "'foolish things'" about himself, "'things that aren't any longer true,'" in the child (288).²

Stephen's responses to his daughter have more to do with his relationship with Rickie than with his wife, as his thoughts of Rickie on the novel's final page suggest:

"What am I to do?" he thought. "Can he notice the things he gave me?" . . . One thing remained that a man of his sort might do. He bent down reverently and saluted the child; to whom he had given the name of their mother. (289)

The obvious point is that Stephen has paid tribute to Rickie in choosing his daughter's name, but there is also a suggestion that Rickie and Stephen are the spiritual parents of this girl -- that she is their daughter, bearing their mother's name; that the child is one of the gifts that Rickie "gave" Stephen. The daughter can be seen as a disguised wish-fulfillment; the hope for a familial union between men which is raised in the book but remains unrealized may find hidden expression here in the fantasy of a child generated by such a relationship. The infertility of homosexual couplings is discussed, explicitly, in Maurice, but it could be that the conclusion to The Longest Journey offers men a possibility of fruition that life does not, while still appearing to be an endorsement of heterosexual unions.

Nevertheless, even in the concluding picture of this child a deep hostility toward women is evident; Stephen's little girl delights in licking the boots of grown men, and her "prostrate figure" offers a portrait of the female utterly humiliated (284). Interestingly, at an earlier point in the book Agnes also is reduced to this fawning posture, for after Gerald's death she kisses the footprints he has left behind him in the carpet in a comparably degrading scene. This hostility will find full expression in Maurice, where women will finally prove the

losers when an enduring connection between men is actually achieved and a new type of family, making a life in the freedom out of doors, appears.

At a first glance, Maurice Hall seems the opposite of Rickie; he is "handsome, healthy, bodily attractive, mentally torpid, not a bad businessman and rather a snob" ("Terminal Note," Maurice 250). But in a number of important respects Maurice is related to the protagonist of The Longest Journey. Like Rickie, Maurice grows up without a father and in an oppressive suburb. Like Rickie, he attends Cambridge and forms a significant friendship there. Finally, Maurice's relationships with both men and women parallel Rickie's, and a number of the feelings that are hinted at but remain submerged in The Longest Journey are discussed openly in Maurice.

Maurice is the product of a family which, as is typical in Forster's fiction, consists mostly of women: in this case, a widowed mother and two daughters. After his early youth has passed, Maurice's siblings, Ada and Kitty, can no longer bear him; they resent his status as man of the house and object to his tyrannical attitude and arbitrary rule-making. Maurice's responses to them are characterized by contempt and even disgust. His view of Ada is illustrative:

She lay, the picture of health, in a big leather chair, with her hands dropped on either side and her feet stretched out. Her bosom rose and fell, her heavy black hair served as a cushion to her face, and between her lips he saw teeth and a scarlet tongue. (108)

Ada is being contrasted here with Maurice's beloved friend, Clive, who lies ill in a room upstairs, and the feeling of the entire passage is that a creature like Ada has no right to be so robust when a person of real worth is sickly. The "scarlet tongue" peeping out between Ada's lips adds to the unpleasantness of this portrait of her, for it suggests an emerging and gross sexuality obviously repellent to Maurice.

In regard to his mother, Maurice is the usual Forsterian son. As Samuel Hynes puts it, "in Forster every mother has a son to devour, and every son has a slightly chewed look" (Occasions 118), and this is clearly the case with Maurice. His interaction with his mother takes the form of a saccharine coquettishness reminiscent of Rickie's latter-day relations with Mrs. Elliot; the young Maurice and his parent wander about the garden "kissing one another and conversing aimlessly" (16). "'Now I must give my Morrie a lovely time,'" she declares, and to his assertion that he "'like[s] here best,'" she responds, "'Darling boy . . .'" She embrace[s] him, more affectionately than ever" (17).

When he gets older, this kind of babying enrages Maurice; he feels that his mother is trying to soften him, which is one way of saying that she emasculates her son at the same time that she is lover-like with him. Ultimately Maurice finds, without any sense of pleasure, that "his mother began to speak of him in the tones she had reserved for her husband" (101). She also gives in to all his demands and refuses to disapprove of any of his actions, but this comes across to Maurice as a basic indifference, and in time he discovers that she "would not fight for him any more than she would fight against him . . ." (143). Throughout his youth Maurice feels stifled and coddled but never really looked after by this woman.

Another member of Maurice's family who plays an important part in his life is his maternal grandfather, who makes a brief but impressive appearance rather late in the novel. This mystical old man has developed an extensive cosmogony centering on the notion that God lives within the sun and absorbs all wickedness into a center of goodness, and he holds a complementary belief that the soul within the body is like God inside the sun; it also is a kind of "'power within'" and should be released in good time, "'but not yet, not till the evening'" (139). This is appropriate advice for Maurice, who is suffering from Clive's rejection of him and has

been contemplating suicide, and he moves toward life and away from death as he realizes that his grandfather's words, absurd as they seem to him, spring from deep conviction. In making his grandfather "come alive" for himself, Maurice, we are told, "had accomplished an act of creation, and as he did so Death turned her head away" (139). Thus Mr. Grace, true to his name, grants Maurice a kind of grace.³ It is significant that he is the father of Mrs. Hall, for as such he represents what the maternal line has to offer Maurice: no more and no less than his very existence.

It takes Maurice longer to accept what his own father (or rather, his father's ghost) has to give him, but nonetheless he, like Rickie Elliot, does receive a legacy from his father, and at first it seems as great a misfortune as lameness. A number of allusions are made to the fact that at some point Mr. Hall had a homosexual affair, which sounds the inheritance theme when Maurice discovers himself to be homosexual. But it is also apparent that Mr. Hall was quick to embrace a conventional and heterosexual life and, we infer, he lost some vital connection with himself in the process. His ghost looks at Maurice and "is touched with envy, the only pain that survives in the world of shades" (151), for he sees that Maurice is to go further than he did and achieve what Mr. Hall could not, a full acceptance of his homosexual

nature. Yet this achievement may be possible, in part, because the anxious spirit of Mr. Hall hovers over the growing man and has a complex influence on him. In writing a statement describing his homosexuality for the hypnotist whom he hopes will cure him of it, Maurice senses someone glancing over his shoulder and has the persistent feeling that "he wasn't alone. Or again, that he hadn't personally written . . . he seemed a bundle of voices, not Maurice, and now he could almost hear them quarrelling inside him" (176). Later another allusion to the spirit world and, by extension, Maurice's father, comes in the image of the "ghostly" primroses (184) that are the symbol of Maurice's relationship with Alec Scudder. And he and Alec will finally acknowledge their deep involvement with each other when they are in the British Museum, a building that "suggested a tomb, miraculously illuminated by spirits of the dead" (219). The spirit who haunts Maurice is waiting, like the benevolent ghost of Ruth Wilcox in Howards End, for a full communion with the living. In this case, the communion occurs when Maurice finally accepts the homosexuality he has inherited from his parent and thus is able to move into a life that is emotionally and sexually rewarding.

Maurice has his first important relationship with a man outside the family when he meets Clive Durham, a fellow student at Cambridge. Clive comes out of a

domestic background that is a virtual double of the Hall household: Clive also has a widowed mother and two sisters, and there is even a Durham "'family ghost'" (171), perhaps none other than Clive's dead father. Clive's feelings about his mother are both fiercer and more consciously acknowledged than are Maurice's feelings about Mrs. Hall, but they are very similar in kind; Clive despises all that his mother represents, her life of convention and hypocrisy. Yet the woman dominates his life. Much of his relation with Maurice seems prompted by a desire for revenge; for instance, Clive feels that it serves his mother right when he secretly kisses Maurice under her roof. And the influence of his mother is apparent as Clive ultimately opts for a heterosexual rather than a homosexual life after realizing that he is interested in his nurse, a woman cast in a maternal role who offers him the possibility of a comfortable mother-child relation (Finkelstein 158). A point is made of the fact that Mrs. Durham shares her son's features, which emphasizes the bond between them, and the words that Clive uses to describe her -- "withered, unsympathetic, empty" (71) -- are precisely the epithets that can be applied to Clive himself at the end of the novel. Where Maurice will eventually accept the inheritance from his father, Clive will accept the inheritance of his mother's qualities and become, thereby, unfeeling and detestable.

But all of this is not evident from the outset, when Maurice is instinctively attracted to Clive because he recognizes his own hitherto unacknowledged homosexuality in his Cambridge friend. In the other man, Maurice sees himself; he attempts "a friendship based on identity" with Clive (Spender 116), and the relationship is important to his acceptance of himself. However, Clive's fastidious aversion to consummating their love points to the inevitable inadequacy of the affair while also foreshadowing his eventual demise into an antiseptic, unimpassioned way of life.

Clive's priggish behavior is reminiscent of some of Stewart Ansell's overly intellectual responses in The Longest Journey, and it is fitting that Maurice, like Rickie Elliot, moves on from this early and limited relationship to an interest in someone who has a vital apprehension of the natural world and an uncomplicated acceptance of sexuality. (Rickie does, of course, re-establish his friendship with Ansell toward the end of The Longest Journey, but his most passionate involvement is, at that point, with the more earthy Stephen Wonham.) Notably, Clive also shares one of Rickie's major shortcomings, for he is unable to see people or things as they are (Finkelstein 146; McDowell 91). His eventual turning away from homosexuality and his stuffy wedlock with Anne Woods are further reminders of Rickie and his wretched marriage to

Agnes; with Anne, Clive is trapped within the dark woods of self-deception just as with Agnes Rickie is trapped within the gloom of Dunwood House. One can view Clive's decision to remain in an unfulfilling life as comparable to Rickie's actual death and see that one of Clive's functions in the novel is to be offered up in place of Maurice as the victim of family life.

Throughout Maurice, homosexual love is juxtaposed with heterosexuality and marriage. From the first chapter, men's relations with women, as defined by the conventional Mr. Ducie, are ideally chivalrous and without passion: the most admirable type of man is "chaste with asceticism. [Ducie] sketched the glory of Woman. . . . To love a noble woman, to protect and serve her -- this, he told the little boy, was the crown of life" (15). After drawing diagrams in the sand illustrating sex to the young Maurice, Ducie panics at the thought that they may be seen by an approaching lady. Thus Maurice's first knowledge of heterosexual relations brings with it an awareness of furtive, hypocritical behavior, and the boy's immediate and credible response is one of disgust at all that Ducie stands for.

Later the connection between women and a sort of medieval pure-mindedness is made again by Dr. Barry, a neighbor and advisor of the Halls. After learning that Maurice has been sent home from Cambridge for cutting

classes and frolicing with Clive in the countryside, Barry reproves Maurice for having no consideration of his mother's feelings and declares him "'a disgrace to chivalry'" (85). Maurice wonders if he would be perceived in this way if he had spent an afternoon in an escapade with a woman rather than a man; the suggestion is that he would not have been cast into disgrace by such a situation. One's relations with women are founded on a special set of rules which, if they are observed, earn the approval of society at large, whereas intimate involvements with men are viewed as an affront to the opposite sex and are circumscribed by a rigid set of directives.

Society's attitude toward and definition of marriage are as revolting as its view of male-female relations in general. Both Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Durham are anxious to come up with wives for their sons, not because they hope that their offspring will find fulfillment in wedlock, but rather because fertile unions are necessary to a society which wishes to remain well-populated and powerful. Maurice's mother encourages him and his sister to find mates for one another but, as her son observes, she has no emotional connection with what she is doing and so appears to be motivated by social prudence and not by a concern for the happiness of her children. Mrs. Durham's behavior in this regard is even more transparent; her country estate needs an heir, Clive must provide it, and

thus the sooner he marries the better. It is no wonder that Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Durham take an instant liking to one another, for they are both the manipulative agents of convention, and although they lack depth (it is the love between Clive and Maurice, "the strongest force in either family," which prompts their friendship [100]), they are drawn to each other in a community of shared values. Maurice sees the interchange between the female members of the two families as simply "nothing, nothing, and still nothing" (101). For women, with their cool calculations revolving around marriage and begetting, stand opposed to the fully lived life; in consequence, the world that they represent is meaningless, an emotional wasteland with nothing to offer the individual.

The marriage of Clive and Anne, which is the only one actually pictured in the novel, is a nightmare of all that is anti-feeling and valueless. And as the single heterosexual union depicted in Maurice, there is no way to see this except as a comment on the very nature of heterosexual love. Further, we are prevented from thinking that this is a situation unique to the two individuals involved by the narrator's dry remark that "beautiful conventions received them" (165). The sex life of Anne and Clive is detached from the rest of their existence, and yet "this secrecy drew after it much else of their lives" (164). Furtiveness is built into the sexuality

sanctioned by a society which believes that women must be treated with chivalry instead of candor, and this inevitably contaminates other aspects of existence. The idealizing Clive views wedlock as "temperate and graceful" rather than impassioned (165), and Anne is happy to go along with this bloodless way of life. Later Clive's habit of abstracting and idealizing is attributed to the marriage itself, which is clearly unfair when one looks back to the generalizing Clive of Cambridge but which makes perfect sense if Maurice is read as a condemnation of heterosexual love. The very last line of the novel affirms its anti-heterosexual message, for after learning that Maurice plans an escape to a life in the woods with his beloved Alec, Clive goes back into his house "to devise some method of concealing the truth from Anne" (246). Marriage, like all of one's relations with women, is the enemy of truth, and it must be avoided at all costs if men are to survive as creatures capable of emotional fulfillment.

Marriage is just one of the givens in contemporary life which is questioned in Maurice; the class system is another aspect of society, or at least of English society, which is examined in the course of the book. Like Stephen Wonham, Maurice's second love, Alec Scudder, is a man of the earth;⁴ like Stephen's father, the farmer, Alec comes out of a different social class than both Maurice

and Rickie Elliot do. The interest in men of the lower classes that is evident in Maurice and throughout Forster's homosexual short stories can be interpreted in two distinctly different ways. On the one hand, the defiance of the heterosexual norm seems to have a logical correlative in the breaking of other boundaries. Thus the overthrow of society's sexual taboos allows for a triumphant overthrow of class taboos, as well. On the other hand, there appears to be a timidity in this kind of rebellion. For it can be argued that Forster is unable to envision an illicit relationship with a social peer but thinks that he must look elsewhere, to safer situations, in the portrayal of sexual relations between men. In the essentially wish-fulfilling vein that characterizes this thinking, the lower classes appear to be freer, less inhibited, than the middle and upper classes are, and therefore offer one a virtual guarantee of sexual success. The reader cannot help but feel, however, that the problems caused by a repressive society have not been so much solved as gotten around. In any event, it is clear that Forster intends the life-enhancing relation of Maurice and Alec to be a very good thing. Perhaps the least problematic way to view this is, simply, as an intimacy founded on "otherness in which Alec's difference of class . . . is a mystery substituting for difference of sex" (Spender 116).

Maurice first meets Alec on the grounds of Penge, the Durhams' country house. The place is in a state of ever-worsening dilapidation, its decayed roofs under constant siege by the dismal rains. The condition of Penge points to the self-destructive state of a world bound on all sides by conventions; as Frederick McDowell asserts, it serves to symbolize the ill-health of the entire country (94). The decrepit house seems to Maurice "unfit to set standards or control the future" (239), for inside it one is incapable of fine feelings and, like Dunwood House in The Longest Journey, it is really little more than a "'hotel'" (Maurice 174). It is in this place, naturally, that Clive and Anne live in frigid matrimony. Penge opposes freedom, love, and truth, and therefore it comes as no surprise that Maurice and Alec should choose a life at a far remove from it, out of doors and in darkness: "not the darkness of a house which coops up a man among furniture, but the darkness where he can be free!" (194). It is ironic that Alec and Maurice make their full commitment to one another on the Penge estate, but they do this in the boathouse there and it is, in fact, an appropriate site. Alec has literally missed the boat that was to take him to an enterprising life far from Maurice; instead, he has returned to his lover here, and from the boathouse they embark on their

journey together, although it is a journey through the greenwood rather than across the sea.

As long as society does not allow for truth and passion, one must make one's journey into freedom through the wild. At the end of Maurice, the houselessness of Maurice and Alec parallels the situation of Lucy and George in the conclusion of A Room with a View -- with a significant difference, however, in the mood with which houselessness is rendered. We feel that Lucy is missing out on something very important, while Maurice is clearly and unregrettably better off without it. In the earlier novel, the failure to achieve some kind of integration with one's society was a grievous one, while in the later book such an integration is not only impossible; it is undesirable, as well. For Maurice and Alec, "the only penalty society exacts is an exile they gladly embrace" ("Terminal Note," Maurice 250).

This exile is problematic for the reader, however, for it is essentially fantastic and unconvincing; it is at odds with the pervasively realistic thrust of the rest of the novel. Fantasy springs from an escapist impulse and requires a large suspension of disbelief and reason. On the other hand, realism, as presented via the "plain mode" of writing that Forster uses most often in Maurice, makes intellectual and moral demands on the reader (Hotchkiss 166). Fantasy is a fairly lightweight approach

which simply cannot offer a persuasive alternative to life's difficulties when overbalanced by a careful realism chronicling human interaction and strife. We do not really believe in the greenwood as we believe, for instance, in Clive's miserable wedded life. The inadequacy of fantasy in Maurice leads to the sense that issues have not been resolved, that a happy escape from society and its conception of the family is not really possible.

In two important ways, Maurice offers points of departure from the conventions of Edwardian fiction. First, the author's readiness to champion, however implausibly, a life cut off from society is atypical.⁵ Second, the way of life that is recommended for Maurice and Alec clearly is not viable for everyone. As Maurice notes when he wonders what would happen if everyone chose the existence he is embracing, there is no way around the considerable problem that a society of homosexuals would quickly disappear as a result of its failure to produce offspring. Thus the solution for Maurice and Alec cannot be adopted by the world at large. (A rejection of heterosexual life forms a hidden part of the framework of The Longest Journey, as well, where the vision of a true "fraternity" necessarily excludes women and so is not a vision available to everybody.) This is in opposition to the public-spirited quality of much Edwardian fiction.

Because these novels by Forster express such private feelings, there is a danger in any attempt to place them within the context of contemporary statements about domestic life. It must be recognized that The Longest Journey and Maurice offer some viewpoints that are significant with regard to understanding their author but that are not illustrative of the period in which they were written. Nevertheless, in choosing to detail the problems of the modern family, Forster demonstrates his affinity with other Edwardian novelists. For in both Maurice and The Longest Journey the ills of the family are the ills of the world. Domesticity and, by extension, twentieth-century life are bound by conventions which, although presented as valueless, prove hardy enough to pose a threat to personal well-being. The family, like other institutions, needs reconstruction if it is to serve the needs of the individual. And yet in this fiction there is often an underlying uncertainty or, worse, a basic pessimism about whether or not proposed changes will prove efficacious. Frequently, in Edwardian novels, the hope that is expressed masks a deeper sense of despair; this explains why, in a number of cases, the improvements suggested in this literature fail to resonate in the way that the problems detailed within the novels do.

The logical next step was for fiction to abandon the attempt to cure serious social ailments. This movement is apparent in Forster's career as a novelist. By the point at which he was writing A Passage to India, the impulse to envision solutions was undercut in numerous instances by the perception that solutions really were not available or, rather, that any solution could only be effective for a limited amount of time; then it was replaced by another problem. The Edwardian struggle for control and comprehension of an uncertain world was supplanted by a conviction that the world could not be known. A new age and a new literature had been born.

Notes

¹ There is a further allusion here to Where Angels Fear to Tread, and this stresses the connection between Rickie and Philip. Rickie's "mouth went cold" before he fainted and Philip, after making the sudden discovery that Harriet kidnapped Gino's baby, felt "a cold circle [come] round his mouth, and he fainted" (Angels 131).

² John Colmer astutely comments on this

ingenious pastoral coda that formally celebrates a happy marriage but which in fact releases Stephen Wonham from its limiting bonds. . . . Significantly, Stephen's wife has no name, no character; she is only a disembodied voice, chiding her wilful, errant husband. ("Marriage" 119).

³ In the autumn of 1914, Forster began a study of Samuel Butler, a writer with whom he felt a deep affinity. This critical work was never completed, but the influence of Butler is apparent throughout Forster's fiction (Furbank 2: 3-4). In Maurice, there is a noteworthy correspondence between Mr. Grace's relationship with the protagonist and the interaction, in The Way of All Flesh, of an elderly traveller and Ernest Pontifex, who meet in a railway carriage. At a moment of painful remorse and self-pity Ernest looks out of the window and sees that

there was a grey mist across the sun, so that the eye could bear its light, and Ernest . . . was looking right into the middle of the sun himself, as into the face of one whom he knew and was fond of. At first his face was grave, but kindly, as of a tired man who feels that a long task is over; but in a few seconds the more humorous side of his misfortunes presented itself to him, and he smiled half reproachfully, half merrily, as thinking how little

all that had happened to him really mattered, and how small were his hardships as compared to those of most people. (190-91)

In the next moment Ernest's fellow traveller makes a pleasant remark to him about "'carry[ing] on conversations with people in the sun,'" and so impresses himself on Ernest's memory (191). This man will later appear again as the judge who sentences Ernest to a brief term of imprisonment, a happy misfortune which allows for the hero's first step into emotional freedom. Thus here, as in Maurice, an old man who is associated with the revitalizing warmth of the sun offers the protagonist life.

⁴ Forster claimed that Alec and Stephen might have run across one another but that they would have had little in common ("Terminal Note," Maurice 252). Alec certainly has a maturity and emotional depth that Stephen lacks, but the two men share a straightforward and life-affirming acceptance of nature and natural behavior, and therefore play similar roles in the lives of Rickie and Maurice.

⁵ In Wells' The New Machiavelli, for example, the married hero and his lover also leave a confining environment for a life of freedom elsewhere, but the loss of their society is devastating. As Dick Remington reflects, "It seemed to me we must be going out to a world that was utterly empty. All our significance fell from us -- and before us was no meaning any more" (394).

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