

PATTERN AND RHYTHM IN THREE MAJOR NOVELS OF E.M.FORSTER

PATTERN AND RHYTHM  
IN THREE MAJOR NOVELS OF E.M.FORSTER:  
THE LONGEST JOURNEY, HOWARDS END  
AND  
A PASSAGE TO INDIA

By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS:

In the eighth chapter of his Aspects of the Novel, E.M.Forster considers "something which springs mainly out of the plot, and to which the characters and any other element present also contribute." Borrowing his terms from painting and music, Forster calls this aspect "pattern" and "rhythm".

Forster's notions on pattern and rhythm are applied to his three major novels, The Longest Journey, Howards End and A Passage to India, in the thesis, to see how far his achievements matched his intentions. The results of the investigation are also seen in relation to the needs of the twentieth-century man, in particular, and, in general, to the needs of men at all times.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following texts are frequently quoted in the thesis. Subsequent references to these texts are made in the abbreviated form on the left.

- LJ E.M.Forster, The Longest Journey (N.Y., Vintage Books, 1962).  
HE E.M.Forster, Howards End (Middlesex, Penguin, 1969).  
PI E.M.Forster, A Passage to India (Middlesex, Penguin, 1957).

## TITLES

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The titles of the four chapters and the epilogue are taken from:

- I. "A FRESH COAT OF QUICKSILVER" : E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Middlesex, Penguin, 1962), p.27.  
II. "THE UNION OF SHADOW AND ADAMANT": E.M.Forster, The Longest Journey (N.Y., Vintage Books, 1962), p.154.  
III. "GLIMPSES OF DIVINER WHEELS" : E.M.Forster, Howards End (Middlesex, Penguin, 1969), p.307.  
IV. "A UNIVERSE . . . NOT . . . COMPREHENSIBLE TO OUR MINDS" : E.M.Forster in a programme note for the dramatization of A Passage to India, quoted by Santha Rama Rau, playwright, in Natwar Singh, E.M.Forster: A Tribute (N.Y., Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), p.50.  
Epilogue: "A SHY CRABLIKE SIDEWAYS MOVEMENT" : E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p.17.

## EPIGRAPHS

The epigraphs to the four chapters are taken from the letters of John Keats and the epigraph to the epilogue is taken from his sonnet to Homer.

- I. Keats's letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, Feb.19, 1818.  
II & III. Keats's letter to Benjamin Bailey, Nov.22, 1817.  
IV. Keats's letter to George and Thomas Keats, Dec.28, 1817.

Epilogue: Sonnet to Homer, lines 9 & 10. The sonnet is used by Forster himself in his short story "The Celestial Omnibus".

## "A FRESH COAT OF QUICKSILVER"

"Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel - the points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine Web of his Soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering, of distinctness for his luxury." - John Keats

"Art is valuable", testified Edward Morgan Forster in an essay called "The Challenge of Our Time",

not because it is educational (though it may be), not because it is recreative (though it may be), not because everyone enjoys it (for everybody does not), not even because it has to do with beauty. It is valuable because it has to do with order, and creates little worlds of its own, possessing internal harmony, in the bosom of this disordered planet.<sup>1</sup>

Forster's simple trust in the inviolability of Art sprang from a sensitive awareness of the chaos in the world around him and a personal need to find a momentary stay against confusion in that chaos. Both the awareness and the need have become so characteristic of the modern ethos that his voice may well be acclaimed as one of the most prophetic in the twentieth century.

Forster belonged, with other famous modern writers like Eliot and Lawrence, to "the fag-end of Victorian liberalism" and could look back to "an age whose challenges were moderate in their tone, and the cloud on whose horizon was no bigger than a man's hand." It seemed an admirable age

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<sup>1</sup>E.M.Forster, Two Cheers for Democracy (London, Edward Arnold & Co.,1951), pp.70-71.

to Forster in many ways:

It practised benevolence and philanthropy, was humane and intellectually curious, upheld free speech, had little colour prejudice, believed that individuals are and should be different, and entertained a sincere faith in the progress of society. The world was to become better and better, chiefly through the spread of parliamentary institutions.<sup>2</sup>

But the advent of the twentieth century changed all that. For, the Industrial Revolution, which had been slowly building up power during the last decades of the nineteenth century, burst with a sudden irresistible torrential force on an astonished world, flooded mankind with the products of science and technology and swept civilized society away from its moorings in tradition. The effects of the inrush were most manifest in the economic, social and political spheres of life. And sensitive intellectuals like Forster found their liberalism crumbling beneath them, chiefly because it had been reared on such dubious foundations as the exploitation of the poor and the oppression of the backward races. Added to this discomfort of insecurity, there was also "a collision of loyalties" between a love for what was valuable in the "Old Morality" and a respect for what was just in the "New Economy".<sup>3</sup> Above all, there was the dire necessity for individuals to come to terms with the changed aspects of the world in which they were obliged to live.

The material causes of the changes in the outside world were clearly there for all men to see, to admire and to reflect : the internal combustion engine and the dynamo, railway trains and motor cars, international post and telegraph, to mention but a few. Certainly, some changes were beneficial to mankind; the many advances in medicine, for instance, helped to eradicate

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<sup>2</sup>Forster, Two Cheers for Democracy, p.67. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.68-69.

disease and to procure longevity in people. But other changes proved a mixed blessing, probably because of people's failure to incorporate them wisely into their lives. Mechanized transport and mass media, in particular, while catering to speedier travel and better information, also made nomadicism a fashion and person-to-person contact an abomination. Such rootlessness and lack of communication were, in fact, but the outer symptoms of a profound inner malaise in mankind, as sensitive thinkers everywhere came to realize. Having thus diagnosed the modern 'disease', they went on to explore its specific nature and the various forms it could take in their own lives; later, they tried to express the results of their investigations in their own inimitable manner, in the hope of finding a suitable remedy for their sickness.

Indeed, these modern aspirants after truth, with their dedication and industry, greatly resembled the knights of yore, except that they were not in quest of the Holy Grail; rather, they were in search of their own lost selves. As such, they convoked a unique Round Table of their own - of first person singulars, poet-witnesses, who spoke through essay, poem, letter or parable of some intense personal experience or conviction. They were fully aware that their words and thoughts would constitute the inside stories of their culture by which they would be judged as a century in noisy decline, or baffled transition or secret rebirth. Hence, they spoke solely for themselves, not in arrogance or self-absorption, but in humility and trust, informally, and in something like the same needful tone of voice in which Thoreau once desired to speak somewhere without bounds, like a man in his waking moment to men in their waking moments . . .



## I

The inside stories so sincerely intoned by these conscious individuals bore chiefly on three inter-related and even over-lapping themes.

They dealt, in the first instance, with the passing of community, the losing of the sense of unconditional belonging which previous cultures had taken for granted. It was something that had crept in at the turn of the century like an insidious virus and soon overspread the entire socio-economic structure, corroding every form of community from the family and the church congregation to the city and the nation. The forms themselves did not vanish and many appeared to go on functioning as solidly as ever. But they were now under siege and had to be force-fed and defended. They were no longer simply given, like cards dealt out in a game of bridge, to all persons at birth. And so, more and more people came to experience a gnawing insecurity in their hearts, a lack of assurance that they belonged to anyone, or anything, anywhere.

The feeling of incertitude coupled with the loss of identity supplied the poet-witnesses with the second major motif of their inside stories, for they led directly to the realization that aloneness was man's real condition. Poets had no doubt always been enamoured of loneliness since Kalidasa. But loneliness was not the same as aloneness. To be lonely implied separation from someone close, a lover, a friend, a family, God. To be alone meant separateness tout court. Once the umbilical cord was cut, you were on your own. Love, friendship, communion, God: everything had to be sought after, worked for; and earning them was a daily, uninnocent, solo business which depended upon a daily, uninnocent, solo will. Nothing was given - or not in the old way, not any more.

The deprivation of all supports, social and moral, in life, gave birth to a profound inner scepticism that permeated even the domain of art. A great enquiry was instituted into the nature and purpose of art and talented individuals were fired with a passionate longing to justify the practice of art to themselves. The enquiry and the longing were fused together to form the third major motif of the inside stories of the twentieth-century culture.

Once upon a time, poets had been thought of as accessories to the community. They entertained, decorated, sang praises and, if they sneaked in their private mysteries here and there, it was a curious but harmless idiosyncrasy. Now and then, a real misfit appeared - Swift or Blake or Shelley - but he was either ignored or ridiculed as insane. The great majority of artists in every medium produced their work to please someone. It might be Queen Elizabeth or the families who studied Addison's Spectator over their breakfast tables or the thousands who subscribed to Dickens's Household Words magazine. But the purpose was to please.

Then, for a brief time in the nineteenth century, artists regarded themselves as pariahs, outcasts, abandoned by the community and they either rejoiced or howled. But, by the turn of the century, they began, in right earnest, to think of themselves as personal witnesses, bringers of revelations, self-ordained priests. They offered the general public not only their work, but also the gospel according to their own committed living. Their art was made not to please and persuade, but to disturb and convince. No doubt, other artists had done this before them, but they did so, incidentally, without thinking of it as their purpose. Keats revealed truth, so did Hugo. But the Ode on a Grecian Urn and Les Misérables could not be

compared with a work like The Heart of Darkness which was a testament first and then a work of art.

Early in the twentieth century, then, as community began to lapse, and as more and more individuals realized for themselves what Nietzsche had meant when he declared that God was dead and what Dostoyevsky had suffered when he claimed that this consciousness was a disease, the arts were overwhelmed with the infra-artistic purpose of revelation. And everywhere, there was a mighty outburst of house-cleaning, of throwing out and breaking up. Since the arts were no longer considered mere frosting or divertissement, all the old traditions and assumptions had to be scrutinized and questioned: was art an art? In frenzied response, a hundred little magazines sprang up like myrmidons to fight for Imagism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism and two generations of inspired clash about the act, itself, of creating. Yeats, Pound, James, Cocteau, Valéry, Proust, Rilke, Kafka, Joyce, Eliot, Forster - they were all as obsessed with the theory and meaning of their art as with the mere making of it. And at the dead centre of their brilliant generation, there stood the figure of D.H.Lawrence with his flagrant claim, which would have been almost meaningless to Dr.Johnson: "I always say, my motto is 'Art for my sake'."<sup>4</sup>

A  Jihad  was on, in fact - a holy war into which all conscious individuals felt drawn, urged by a compelling need to defend their chosen ideal of art against a derisive and often indifferent world. That they did so with obvious relish and a near-fanatical zeal indicated that ultimately they were tilting their lances against themselves, against their own scepticism and

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<sup>4</sup> D.H.Lawrence, Letter to Ernest Collings, Dec.24, 1912. See The Collected Letters of D.H.Lawrence (N.Y., The Viking Library, 1962), ed. Harry T. Moore, Vol.I, p.171.

uncertainty. Their artistic impulse and their social conscience, their individuality and their herd-instinct were, in short, at logger-heads. They were desperately anxious men, trying to convince themselves of the use and the validity of their practice of art in a world becoming increasingly mechanized and result-oriented. They were loners, valiantly resisting the tendency to see man as a mere economic creature, dominated by the drives of aggression and possessiveness. They were, above all, voices in the wilderness, crying out against the modern trend to melt individuals into a group and human aspirations into mob mentality. And in thus ranging themselves against the forces of disruption, they partook in all honesty of the Zeitgeist, the essential character of their age, which resided in what Jung called the "split consciousness" of modern man, that schism in the soul resulting from the rupture between faith and knowledge, between religious or poetic truth and scientific or rational truth.<sup>5</sup>

## II

The split was fundamental to the modern situation and marked the contrast between an organic view of life and a mechanical view of life, between synthesis and analysis. The contrast was not of recent origin. It had existed in a seminal form ever since Coleridge and Bentham had advanced their diametrically opposed ideas on man and society.<sup>6</sup> Coleridge, an idealist, had seen man as a creature endowed with imagination and destined to work out the salvation of society through the reconciling powers of his faculty divine. Bentham, a pragmatist, had seen man as a creature endowed with reason and

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<sup>5</sup>C.G.Jung, The Undiscovered Self (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1958), p.74.

<sup>6</sup>John Stuart Mill, Essays on Politics and Culture (N.Y., Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), Chaps. III & IV, pp.77-121.

designed to uplift society through the discovery and application of economic laws. Theirs had been the difference between a romantic visionary and a rationalist programmer. In the confrontation of their mutual ideologies had lain the seed that mushroomed into the split personality of the modern age and engendered a society of men tragically divided in their espousal of the ideal or the practical, existing, as it were, on opposite sides of a yawning abyss.

The fragmentation of the modern world stimulated in the artists a messianic zeal. Prompted by the fear that Benthamite forces, if left unchecked, would ultimately seal off the springs of creativity in man, they not only deplored the self-division of their age, but also tried to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the practical in their work. This attempt at the reconciliation of opposites made them essentially Coleridgean in their approach to life and art.

Forster too was implicitly a Coleridgean, functioning within an increasingly Benthamite society. "Society," he wrote in "Art for Art's Sake", can only represent a fragment of the human spirit, and . . . another fragment can only get expressed through art."<sup>7</sup> He was convinced that unless the practical and the ideal aspects of life, the utilitarian and non-utilitarian modes of thought, were somehow united, mankind would shrivel up and die for want of the breath of poetry:

Only connect the prose and the passion and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. (HE, p.174)

Poetry was the missing link in this prose-passion dialectic. Poetry alone could, therefore, furnish the rainbow bridge that should connect the prose

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<sup>7</sup>Forster, Two Cheers for Democracy, p.103.

and the passion in mankind - poetry that did not just denote a literary mode of expression but stood rather for the life of the imagination, a whole rarefied form of existence, in which language was married to music, and the outer world and the inner being were united in metaphor. Essentially, it was a modern restatement of a conception shared by most romantics and derived from Coleridge.

Coleridge had possessed all his life "a sense of the Whole as a living entity, a sense of God in all and all in God, a faith in a divine spiritual activity as the ground of all existence."<sup>8</sup> That wholeness constituted the essence of all poetic activity to Coleridge, imparting an almost divine power of imagination to the poet, a power that revealed itself

in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities; of sameness with difference, of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative.<sup>9</sup>

By virtue of the power inspired in him, the poet was more than a maker of verses; he was a mediator between heaven and earth, the infinite and the particular, the unseen and the seen. The poet had, therefore, a crucial role to play in the Coleridgean milieu, which was rapidly assuming a Benthamite character: the nymphs had gone from Regent's Canal, as Hazlitt mourned, ousted by the coal barges of industry, and a cold scientific philosophy had conquered "all mysteries by rule and line", as Keats feared, emptying "the haunted air."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (London, Chatto & Windus, 1949), p.4.

<sup>9</sup>S.T.Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria", The Selected Poetry and Prose of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (N.Y., Modern Library, 1951), p.269.

<sup>10</sup>John Keats, "Lamia", II, ll. 230, 235-36.

Forster, like Coleridge and the other romantics, was deeply concerned with the flight of the nymphs from man's daily life, the withering of his sense of wonder resulting in a denial of his myth-making powers. Though he had no practical plan of action for banishing the coal barges and restoring the nymphs, yet he permitted himself to hope that the nymphs might somehow be brought back and cherished in all their charm. His hope found expression in his art, which combined nostalgia with prophecy, disintegration with a passionate desire for fusion, and focussed on "that vague and vast residue into which the subconscious enters", that which he labelled "poetry, religion, passion"<sup>11</sup> - the holy trinity, as it were, of the romantic humanist, whose idealism was balanced by realism.

### III

Poetry, then, had an evangelical overtone for Forster. As the summum bonum of the poet's imagination, it created a world that "exists neither in space nor time though it has semblances of both." It invited the reader, therefore, to enter "a universe that answers to its own laws, supports itself, internally coheres, and has a new standard of truth."<sup>12</sup> It enabled the reader, through a willing suspension of disbelief and an imaginative projection of his own self, to approximate to the condition of its creator, so that the reader was lost in the beauty where the creator was lost, was rapt into the region of the eternal to remember that "it was not the speaker who was in the beginning but the Word."<sup>13</sup> Poetry, in

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<sup>11</sup>E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Middlesex, Penguin, 1962), p.108.

<sup>12</sup>Forster, "Anonymity: an Enquiry", Two Cheers for Democracy, p.91.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.93.

short, was the humanist's term for what was holy in the secular world. By impregnating art, it gave birth to the idea of wholeness, so that art functioned as the humanistic surrogate for God and spelt order in a disordered world:

No longer do we find a reassuring contrast to chaos in the night sky and look up with George Meredith to the stars, the army of unalterable law, or listen for the music of the spheres. Order is not there. In the entire universe there seem to be only two possibilities for it. The first of them is the divine order, the mystic harmony, which according to all religions, is available for those who can contemplate it . . .

The second possibility for order lies in the aesthetic category . . . [It is] the order which an artist can create in his own work . . . A work of art . . . is a unique product . . . It is unique . . . because it is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony. All others have been pressed into shape from outside.<sup>14</sup>

The artist was, therefore, entitled to practise art for art's sake. The experience of art was an end in itself, worth having on its own account.

A work of art - whatever else it may be - is a self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator. It has internal order. It may have external form.<sup>15</sup>

Form could be defined as "the surface crust of internal harmony, the outward evidence of order", while internal order or harmony itself was recognized by its function, as in music:

There's an insistence in music - expressed largely through rhythm; there's a sense that it is trying to push across at us something which is neither an aesthetic pattern nor a sermon.<sup>16</sup>

Heard melodies were sweet, but those unheard were sweeter still; by hinting at them, music postulated "a double existence" - in time and outside time,

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<sup>14</sup>Forster, "Art for Art's Sake", Two Cheers for Democracy, p.100-1.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p.99

<sup>16</sup>Forster, "Not Listening to Music", Two Cheers for Democracy, p.138.



simultaneously - and connected the actual and the transcendent.<sup>17</sup> The other arts, including literature, should emulate music and belong at once to Caesar's realm and the one above it, forging links between the seen and the unseen and leading from the phenomenon to the noumenon.

Forster's esthetic abstractions found a technical footing when he considered the evocation of an internal harmony promoting an external symmetry in the "low atavistic form" of the novel.<sup>18</sup> Borrowing his terms from painting and music, he designated the external form in which a novel was shaped as pattern and the internal order with which a novel was imbued as rhythm.\*

Pattern sprang mainly from the plot of a novel, accompanied it like light in the clouds, and remained visible after the incidents in the novel had departed from memory. In short, pattern meant the shape of a novel, such as the "hourglass" shape of Anatole France's Thais, in which two main characters converged, crossed and receded "with mathematical precision."<sup>19</sup> Other patterns were

the grand chain or converging lines of the cathedral or  
diverging lines of the Catherine wheel, or bed of Procrustes,  
- whatever image you like as long as it implies unity.<sup>20</sup>

Patterns were no doubt beautiful, but often their beauty was obtained at an enormous cost. The novelist should be careful not to over-emphasize the pattern at the expense of life in the novel. The achievement of Henry James in The Ambassadors was a case in point. Pattern was triumphant in the novel

<sup>17</sup>Forster, "The Raison d'Étre of Criticism in the Arts", Two Cheers for Democracy, p.128.

<sup>18</sup>Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 27.

\*The discussion of pattern and rhythm which follows is closely modelled on Forster's own in Aspects of the Novel, chapter 8.

<sup>19</sup>Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p.152.. <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.168.

- the pattern of an hour-glass. But, in following "the narrow path of aesthetic duty", James had sacrificed the characters to the pattern, limiting both their number and their attributes, so that "human life" had disappeared. By an extension of this practice, James had peopled his other novels too with "maimed yet specialized creatures" who reminded one of

the exquisite deformities who haunted Egyptian art in the reign of Akhnaton - huge heads and tiny legs, but nevertheless charming.<sup>21</sup>

The drastic curtailment of characters in the interests of pattern became positively culpable when the castrating was "not in the interests of the Kingdom of Heaven", depriving the novels of all philosophy, religion and prophecy and reducing them to mere aesthetic exercises without any redeeming touch of the superhuman. In short, the Jamesian manner, according to Forster, sacrificed vitality for the sake of rigid pattern: beauty had arrived, but in "too tyrannous a guise", shutting "the door on life."<sup>22</sup>

Beauty had, perforce, to be introduced into the novel by way of rhythm. Two kinds of rhythm could be deduced from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. There was the easy rhythm, which everyone could hear and tap to; and then, there was the difficult rhythm, which some few could hear but no one could tap to. Both rhythms were valid for the novel.

The appearance and reappearance of the little phrase of the Vinteuil sonata in Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu perfectly illustrated the easy rhythm, whose power had gone towards "stitching" Proust's book from the inside. The function of this rhythm, in fact, was

not to be there all the time like a pattern, but by its lovely waxing and waning to fill us with surprise and freshness and hope.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p.162.   <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.163.   <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p.168.

Hence, easy rhythm could be defined as "repetition plus variation" and its purpose was to please the reader.<sup>24</sup>

There was no perfect analogy in fiction, as far as Forster could determine, "to the effect of the Fifth Symphony as a whole."<sup>25</sup> Yet Forster hoped that fiction might somehow give rise to a difficult rhythm and achieve in its own way the type of beauty that music offered in its final expression:

Expansion. That is the idea the novelist must cling to. Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out. When the Symphony is over we feel that the notes and tunes composing it have been liberated, they have found in the rhythm of the whole their individual freedom.<sup>26</sup>

Forster was clearly convinced that "the low atavistic form" of the novel could be elevated to the status of Art with a capital A. The novel was no doubt deeply committed to this world of human beings in a human society. Yet, under proper handling, it could become capable of effecting a passage into that other world of the superhuman. It could transform, as by some divine alchemy, its earthly clay into something ethereal, like the unheard melodies of music.

The novelist par excellence, then, partook of the cloudy vapours of idealism while his feet were planted on the ground of realism. He was involved in an earnest effort to realize the changeless and the transitory, the divine and the human, the timeless and the relative, as parts of an organic whole. Art was the novelist's New Testament and the writing of novels his private attempt to storm the citadels of Heaven.

Forster tried to live and write the gospel he believed in and his novels were irradiated with the missionary purpose of establishing the rainbow bridge connecting the world of human beings with the city of God.

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<sup>24</sup>Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p.169. <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p.169. <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.170.

Consequently, he was engaged in one of the central efforts of our time - the fashioning of a new myth for the tragically self-alienated modern individual.

Forster's allegiance to both the seen and the unseen realms contained, in essence, the theme and manner of his fiction. His plan was daringly uncomplicated: several characters, who did not function satisfactorily as human beings in their present mode of existence, were suddenly encountered with richer, warmer and emotionally more primitive human beings or civilizations; the results were impartially observed and sympathetically recorded; the aim throughout was not to criticize and condemn but to understand and connect. A series of antitheses were highlighted forming a perceptive and often devastatingly honest commentary on the meaninglessness of modern civilization and the hypocrisies rampant in human intercourse: true communication against suburban small talk; the fundamental love of which men and women were capable against the marriages of convenience in a Sawston society; the nebulous currents of feeling that yoked one human being to another against the cut-and-dried forms of an automaton life; ancient myths against their modern application; reality against illusion. These antitheses stressed the gulf dividing the unseen and the seen realms; hence, they functioned as a subtle demand for synthesis, a bridging of the gulf. The underscoring of contrasts, then, was balanced by the need for reconciliation. A profound dialectic came into being and evoked certain distinct rhythms, which shaped the novels from within, endowing them with a definite pattern.

Forster's evocation of the rhythm-pattern sequence is much more pronounced in The Longest Journey, Howards End and A Passage to India than in A Room with a View and Where Angels Fear to Tread; and, in the three

novels which utilize pattern and rhythm most, the intensity of their evocation varies in geometric progression. For, those are the novels most concerned with the fusing together of the visible and the invisible; they focus, moreover, on the increasing inability of the individual to perceive the oneness of the universe. The more the unseen recedes before the individual's vision, the wider yawns the gulf separating the two realms. The possibility of bridging the gulf has, therefore, to be suggested through an increasingly rhythmic imagery, with the individual images assuming wider and wider significance. A lump of chalk or a mound of earth suffices to emphasize the connection of one human being with another and the rest of the universe in The Longest Journey. A wych-elm and a wisp of hay have to strive against great odds just to indicate the connection in Howards End. A cave and its myriad echoes appear to belie all connection and to discourage any human attempt to apprehend reality in A Passage to India. Yet, the final victory resides with Forster's Art, in his masterful blending of pattern and rhythm; for, they imply in their totality an Order that is as vast as the sky and as deep as the ocean.

## II

### "THE UNION OF SHADOW AND ADAMANT"

"I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination." - John Keats.

"The Longest Journey", confessed Forster in an article called "Aspect of a Novel",

is the least popular of my five novels, but the one I am most glad to have written. For in it, I have managed to get nearer than elsewhere towards what was in my mind - or rather towards that junction of mind with heart where the creative impulse sparks. Thoughts and emotions collided if they did not always co-operate . . . For all its faults, it is the only one of my novels that has come upon me without my knowledge. Elsewhere I have had to work into the lumber-room of my past, and have found in it things that were useful to be sure; still I found them; they didn't find me, and the magic sense of being visited and of even returning that visit was absent. <sup>1</sup>

The other famous instance in literature of an author experiencing "the magic sense of being visited" was that of Coleridge, who, when he composed "Kubla Khan", found that "all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort."<sup>2</sup> "Kubla Khan" was evidently an unconscious, though effective, manifestation of the poetic power that "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E.M.Forster, "Aspect of a Novel", The Bookseller (Sep.10, 1960), p.1230.

<sup>2</sup>S.T.Coleridge, "Kubla Khan", The Selected Poetry and Prose of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (N.Y., Modern Library, 1951), p.43.

<sup>3</sup>S.T.Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria", The Selected Poetry and Prose of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (N.Y., Modern Library, 1951), p.269.

A creative faculty, somewhat analogous to this Coleridgean Secondary Imagination, must have been at work, albeit imperfectly, in Forster, when he wrote The Longest Journey, struggling to "idealize and unify" his not-so-co-operative "thoughts and emotions" into a vision of reality. It was a vision that had its roots in the idea of "a man who discovers he has an illegitimate brother" and, in trying to figure out a meaningful mode of existence, branched out in various directions:

There was the metaphysical idea of Reality ("the cow is there"); there was the ethical idea that reality must be faced (Rickie won't face Stephen); there was the idea, or the ideal, of the British Public School; there was the title, exhorting us in the words of Shelley not to love one person only; there was Cambridge, there was Wiltshire. <sup>4</sup>

Forster did not consciously list and pigeon-hole these notions in his mind; rather, they were "whirling" about him as he wrote, imparting an inner harmony to his work and evoking, like a piece of music, a definite pattern and certain unobtrusive though distinct rhythms in the reader's mind.

## I

The novel resembles Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, with its three big blocks of sound, in its three-fold division into "Cambridge", "Sawston", and "Wiltshire", charts Rickie's slow but sure degeneration and culminates in his disillusioned death. The first movement begins quietly with a philosophic discussion of the nature of reality in Rickie's undergraduate rooms at Cambridge, traces his passionate though misguided concern with romantic

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<sup>4</sup>Forster, "Aspect of a Novel", The Bookseller, p.1228.

love and ends on the high note of Rickie's marriage to Agnes, with its ominous rumblings of disaster. The second movement, though melancholic in mood, is intensely searching in its nature and forms a ruthless exposé, in all its inadequacy, of the Elliot philosophy of culture and refinement, for Rickie, its direct inheritor, succumbs to Sawstonian vulgarity and permits his humanity to be eclipsed. The third and final movement gropes its way through the remembrance of things past, the momentary resurrection and ultimate decline of Rickie, to a triumphant affirmation of the values represented by Rickie's mother, who believes

that facts are beautiful, that the living world is beautiful beyond the laws of beauty, that manure is neither gross nor ridiculous, that a fire, not eternal, glows at the heart of the earth. (LJ, p.252)

Her beliefs are vindicated in Stephen, her natural son, who sleeps under the stars with his daughter, confident that "he guided the future of our race, and that, century after century, his thoughts and passions would triumph in England." (LJ, p.310)

Rickie Elliot is a perceptive young man, gifted with a sensitive imagination but crippled by a lack of proportion, so that, in his quest for reality or a momentary stay against confusion in a constantly changing universe, he explores various realms of experience without ever being able to reconcile them successfully. He has his moment of truth, however, at Cambridge, when he realizes that neither an abstract view of reality as represented by Ansell nor an empirical one as represented by Tilliard will suffice for the totality of experience, since both discount the creativity of the imagination, which alone can fuse the intellect and the senses together and present a unified picture of existence.



By virtue of the power that resides in him, Rickie transforms the mundane world around him into one of fantasy, peopling it with "gods and heroes, virgins and brides." (LJ, p.17) The elms outside his study window become Dryads in his eyes and the ordinary cow is glamorized by being invested with sunlit flanks and made to graze on the banks of impassable streams. His stories too bear the impress of thought on sense perceptions and are a product of his imagination.

Since his imagination lacks discipline, however, Rickie often lets his superficial sense impressions carry the day and acts on impulse, divorced in thought from his habitual emphasis "on gods and heroes, on the infinite and the impossible, on virtue and beauty and strength." (LJ, p.65) Consequently, his myth-making becomes frigid and yields petrified images, robbed of the fire and beauty of life. Thus, when he sees Gerald embracing Agnes in the garden, he is overcome by emotion and transports them into an Eden of his own making:

But they had got into heaven, and nothing could get them out of it. Others might think them surly and prosaic. He knew. He could remember every word they spoke. He would treasure every motion, every glance of either, and so in time to come when the gates of heaven had shut, some faint radiance, some echo of wisdom might remain with him outside.  
(LJ, p.44)

Like Keats's figures on a Grecian Urn, Gerald and Agnes are destined to go on loving for ever in Rickie's mind, apotheosized respectively into a Greek out of Aristophanes and a dark, intelligent princess, some happy middle between a kindly Medusa and a Cleopatra with a sense of duty. After Gerald's untimely death, Agnes is still further idealized into "a virgin widow, tall, veiled, consecrated" (LJ, p.64) and cherished as "a single peg" on which to hang "all the world's beauty." (LJ, p.87)

In marrying Agnes, therefore, Rickie couples himself not with a woman of flesh and blood but with a divine being, a Beatrice, "a light . . . suddenly held behind the world to enliven his being and infuse his life with beauty." (LJ, p.90) Only when it is too late does Rickie realize that the light she emits is the brisk glare of an electric lamp and that he has undertaken "the longest journey" of his life in the company of a woman who is both "a sad friend" and "a jealous foe." (LJ, p.138)

In his relations with Stephen too, Rickie is given to idealism at the expense of facts. Stephen's coarse behaviour blinds Rickie to the empirical-cum-mystical realities of nature which he embodies. Stephen's illegitimacy alienates him further. He does not even bother to learn the 'sordid' little details of his birth but rushes to the conclusion that he is the spawn of his despised father. He is overwhelmed by disgust for his brother, certain that his illegitimacy had not tarnished the cherished image of his mother. Ansell's disclosure that Stephen is his mother's son shatters his illusion and plunges him into truth. He manages to keep his head for a short time, sustained by an inner strength that makes him acknowledge Stephen as his brother. But once more his undisciplined imagination prompts him to idealize Stephen into a symbol of redemption and to invest him with a heroic grandeur, in spite of Stephen's repeated admonitions not to hang on him "clothes that don't belong." (LJ, p.287) Inevitably, Stephen's unheroic qualities like drunkenness and failure to keep promise jar on Rickie's sensibilities. Unable to face the reality that Stephen represents, Rickie allows himself to be engulfed and destroyed by truth.

## II

Rickie stems from a largely Christian background and belongs to the Anglican Church. He is inclined by upbringing to trust in an absolute reality. His personal experiences, however, assure him that life lacks stability and that its values are far from absolute. He is aware of a frightening discrepancy between the actual world about him and the ideal world of God. At Cambridge, he encounters the same division of reality, couched in philosophical terms. Ansell's abstractions are set against Tilliard's concretizations. More and more, he comes to rely on the integrating powers of his imagination and create a world of fantasy. His dreams may be actualized only in an instinctual Pagan life, similar to that led by Stephen among the Wiltshire downs. But then, Rickie's imagination is undisciplined and he fails to penetrate superficialities and grasp the inner core of meaning in Stephen's existence. He has journeyed far from his Christian origins to a Pagan world only to find the doors of salvation shut in his face.

Since Rickie's "longest journey" spans two realms, each of which, in its own way, represents an integrated vision of reality, two mythological frames of reference -- one Christian and the other Pagan -- can be distinguished in the novel, overlapping each other and enriching the meaning of Rickie's quest for reality.

Rickie's story resembles that of Adam in many ways. Both men are concerned with their relationship with ultimate reality. Agnes is Eve's true descendant in persuading Rickie to refrain from acknowledging Stephen as his brother:

The girl darted in front of him. He thought he had never seen her so beautiful. She was stopping his advancement

quite frankly, with wide-spread arms. (LJ, p.150)

Rickie succumbs to her arguments and chooses - against his better judgement like Adam - to conceal his kinship with Stephen. He sins in spirit. The lie he acts out poisons his life and even contaminates his wife; because of his failure to keep his girl "in line", Agnes is "the worse woman after two years of marriage." (LJ, p.269) Rickie's aunt, Emily Failing, has her own parallel in Satan. She has a Mephistophelean helper in Mr. Elliot, Rickie's father, a man whose eyes betray only unkindness, cowardice and fear, "as if the soul looked through dirty window-panes," (LJ, p.23) whose voice is suave and whip-like and whose coiled, venomous nature is reflected in the twisted and serpentine frames of his flower vases. A snake-like stream of water intrudes into Mrs. Failing's bower emphasizing her Satanic mission in life, which is to combat any possibility of happiness in this world by withering all humane values with her contempt. In the intensity of her malice, she revels in revealing to Rickie the knowledge that Stephen is his half-brother under the central tree of the Cadbury Rings.

Apart from these biblical motifs, Greek and Roman themes are also deeply embedded in the novel, furnishing a second frame of reference to Rickie's search for reality. Rickie's deformed leg is hereditary and shared by his aunt and his father. It links him with Oedipus. Oedipus had been lamed for life in order to forestall the curse on his family. Rickie too, feels that he has offended some Olympian deity, who has cursed the house of Elliot with barrenness. When he marries against his own counsel, he begets a terribly deformed and short-lived daughter. Rickie's adoration for his mother verges on an Oedipus complex, which Stephen diagnoses

in his native shrewdness :

"You don't care about me drinking, or to shake my hand. It is someone else you want to cure - as it were, that old photograph [of Rickie's mother]. You talk to me, but all the time you look at the photograph." (LJ, p.274)

Agnes is repeatedly referred to as a Medusa by Ansell and even Rickie sees her as "a kindly Medusa." (LJ, p.51) She does succeed in making him throw away Shelley's "Epipsychidion" to marry her, thereby depriving him of the spirit of life, and turning him into stone. Physically as well as psychically, Rickie is fitted for worship only at the shrine of Artemis, the goddess of chastity. Knowing this fully too well, he wilfully blinds himself to facts and strays into the arms of Aphrodite, the goddess of carnal love, ruining his entire life as a consequence.

Ansell connects with the classical civilization through his intellect alone and so he is aware only of the pathos of a vanished past: the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. He cannot grasp

the forces of earth symbolized by the Cnidian Demeter, the transmuting power of parental love that informs the Ephesian Artemis, and the infinite serenities implicit in the Parthenon friezes. <sup>6</sup>

Rickie's response to Greece and Rome is more imaginative. He delights in the poetry of the heavens whose stars have Greek names. He is so fond of the phrase "O Pan, keeper of the sheep" from Georgics that he begins his teaching with those Virgilian lines. He is given to exaggerating

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<sup>6</sup> Frederick P.W. McDowell, E.M.Forster (N.Y., Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1969), p.77. See also The Longest Journey, p.198 :

He [Ansell] left the Parthenon to pass by the monuments of our more reticent beliefs - the temple of the Ephesian Artemis, the statue of the Cnidian Demeter. Honest, he knew that there were powers he could not cope with, nor, as yet, understand.

his emotions, however, and elevating them above reason. His senses and intellect never fully coalesce and so, instead of transporting him into a world of Pagan reality, they erect a barrier between him and his heart's desire.

Thus, it is neither Ansell nor Rickie who is consecrated by the vital traditions of the ancient world but Stephen, for, with a sure instinct, he devotes himself to Demeter, the earth goddess who promotes fertility, and surrenders his whole being to her ministering influence. A framed picture of the Demeter of Cnidus hangs in Stephen's attic at Cadover, swaying, shimmering and grey, in the light of the rising sun, a picture that he is careful not to leave behind him when he leaves Wiltshire. He equates this picture in importance with the faded photograph of Stockholm that hangs in Rickie's rooms at Cambridge and Sawston, for it was in Stockholm that his parents had consummated their 'mésalliance', prompted by the same powerful forces of the earth that stir in Stephen's veins. When Stephen inhabits his new home in Wiltshire, the picture of Demeter graces the walls of his room along with the faded photograph of Stockholm. And as Stephen's little daughter goes out with him to sleep on the downs, she bids goodbye to the two pictures, which she calls "long picture" and "stone lady." (LJ, p.311)

At times, Rickie's attitudes are identical with those of Stephen. Both delight in the glory of the starry heavens and are united in their enthusiasm for one playful yet symbolic moment when they send their paper balls flaming down the stream, turning the arch of the bridge into "a fairy tunnel, dropping diamonds." (LJ, p.293) Rickie loses sight of his

mystic rose but Stephen, who kneels in the water (of life?) sees his floating for a long time, "burning as if it would burn for ever." (LJ, p.293) The life-force that flickers out in Rickie continues to flame forth in Stephen and his progeny. Before his death, however, Rickie saves Stephen from death under the wheels of the train. And as the last rays of the setting sun fall upon "the immortal features and the shattered knees" (LJ, p.308) of the goddess Demeter on the wall of Stephen's room, we are reminded simultaneously of Rickie's crushed legs under the train and of Stephen's glowing face when the flaming flower at the ford lights up his features.

Under different circumstances and without Mrs. Failing's interference, Rickie might have been made whole in Stephen's presence and their friendship might have bloomed. But even the names of the horses they ride over the Wiltshire downs, while indicative of their Pagan bent of mind, are emblematic of their widely differing destinies. Rickie, whose true enthusiasms never find fulfilment because of his infatuation for Agnes, rides a mare called Dido after the Queen of Carthage, who comes to her tragic end through a grievous misunderstanding of her lover's true intentions. Stephen, whose powers will triumph through his descendants, rides a horse called Aeneas after the wanderer on the face of the earth, who carves out a kingdom and founds a new line of kings.

### III

Besides the obvious symbols, Christian and Pagan, which acquire significance when they are disentangled, inspected and compared, there are certain image clusters in The Longest Journey, which are of the very texture

of the novel. Their effect is comparable to "the effect of the Fifth Symphony as a whole", for "all enter the mind at once, and extend one another into a common entity."<sup>7</sup> These image clusters are Forster's "difficult rhythms" and "the common entity" to which they contribute is "expansion", achieved chiefly "by the relation between the three big blocks of sound" in the Symphony.<sup>8</sup>

The idea that human affairs lack stability in an inconstant universe is powerfully shaped by the recurrent motif that "we are all of us bubbles on an extremely rough sea" (LJ, p.61) and gains insistence through the varied ways in which many fragile human beings meet their ends in the novel: Mr. Elliot dies the slow lingering death of an invalid. His wife expires suddenly, surviving her husband only eleven days, "a coincidence which was recorded on their tombstone." (LJ, p.30) Gerald dies, hurt in a football match. A child is run over by a train. Rickie's daughter is too deformed to live. Rickie himself is killed while saving the drunken Stephen from death. This notion of sudden death, rendering all incidents in life inconsequential, is amplified by the picturesque detail that Rickie's name is inscribed over the door of his rooms at Cambridge and that "through the paint, like a grey ghost, he could read the name of his predecessor." (LJ, p.63)

Rickie is not discouraged, however, when he first reflects on the transitory nature of human existence, for, in its incessant flux, he discovers certain rigid images, monuments of unaging intellect:

Into this sea, humanity has built, as it were, some little breakwaters - scientific knowledge, civilized restraint - so that the bubbles do not break so frequently or so soon. (LJ, p.61)

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<sup>7</sup>E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Middlesex, Penguin, 1962), p.169.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.169.



Christianity, with its centuries-old tradition, is one such breakwater, capable of counteracting the forces of ceaseless change with its emphasis on the spiritual side of man. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church at Cambridge

watches over the apostate city, taller by many a yard than anything within, and asserting, however wildly, that here is eternity, stability and bubbles unbreakable upon a windless sea. (LJ, p. 62)

And even on the Salisbury Plain, where Nature seems in her balmiest mood, with wine-like air, wet-smelling stubble and trundling white clouds, inviting everyone to participate in an unashamed Pagan orgy of living, the beautiful spire of the Salisbury Cathedral rises up against the southern sky, like a finger pointing to heaven, altering but little as the land changes its aspect. Stephen, for all his scepticism and disavowal of the Christian creed, finds that his heart leaps up at the sight of the old spire, for it is a landmark in his native Wiltshire, part of the earth he loves passionately.

The forces of earth, to which Stephen surrenders his whole being, find their most impressive and consecrated symbol in the Cadbury Rings, which are situated on a sweeping rise of ground that overlooks Salisbury and Wiltshire. To Rickie they seem "curious rather than impressive" :

But Nature (if she arranges anything) had arranged that from them, at all events, there should be a view. The whole system of the country lay spread before Rickie, and he gained an idea of it that he had never got in his elaborate ride. . . Here is the heart of our island: the Chilterns, the North Downs, the South Downs radiate hence. The fibres of England unite in Wiltshire, and did we condescend to worship her, here we should erect our national shrine. (LJ, p.137)

The Rings are two great circular earthen mounds, enclosing turnips and grass, with a single tree growing at their common centre. Prehistoric in origin and indefinable of purpose, they seem to assert a primordial

existence beyond space and time, a visionary reality that can never be totally grasped or fully explained, a truth which can never be known by the human mind but which can be embodied in a living form like Stephen.<sup>9</sup> As such, the Rings expand and are expanded by the geometric pattern of circles and squares that Ansell draws to illustrate the nature of reality to Rickie; reality, according to Ansell, accrues at the centre of the concentric circles and squares; it is "the one in the middle of everything, that there's never room enough to draw." (LJ, p.19) One gathers, therefore, that reality can only be experienced from moment to moment, by fashioning each time "a new symbol for the universe, a fresh circle within the square." (LJ, p.199) Even as the new symbol gains intensity, its outlines become blurred.

At the Rings, Rickie is insistently reminded of the circular dell near Madingley, in which Agnes had captured his heart to the exclusion of everything else but romanticized love. The Rings, so to speak, are only dells with wider vistas for him. He cannot live up to their high promise of release from worldly bonds for "Agnes was here, as she

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<sup>9</sup>The Rings exist as Figsbury Rings, prehistoric earthworks about five miles northeast of Salisbury, which Forster visited on Sep.12, 1904 and repeatedly later on. He was profoundly stirred by the Rings as he states in "Aspect of a Novel" (p.1228) :

I caught fire up on the Rings. A similar experience had already befallen me in Italy and had produced my first short story. This time it wasn't just looking at a view, it was breathing the air and smelling the fields, and there was human reinforcement from the shepherds who grazed up there. . . The whole experience was trivial in itself but vital to the novel, for it fructified my meagre conception of the half-brothers, and gave Stephen Wonham, the bastard, his home.

had once been there." (LJ, p.140) The Rings are only an enlargement of the marriage ring on her finger, imprisoning him in wedlock. When his aunt, Mrs. Failing, discloses his kinship with Stephen beneath the central tree of the Rings, he is horrified instead of being wonderstruck at the fact that his earlier wish has been fulfilled and that he now has a half-brother in Stephen. The Rings contract on him, instead of expanding his vision:

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 that he was going to faint among the dead. He started running, missed the exit, stumbled on the inner barrier, fell into darkness . . . (LJ, p. 142)

He is conscious of his mistake in not accepting the symbolic moment offered to him among the Rings. He has one chance to redeem himself, when Stephen calls him from outside his window. But once again, Agnes thwarts his purpose, for she thinks Stephen is impure and denies him his share of human rights. And Rickie gradually comes round to accept her point of view:

He too came to be glad that his brother had passed from him untried, that the symbolic moment had been rejected. (LJ, p.151)

The dell as well as the Rings shrinks around Rickie, enclosing him in a cocoon of conventionality.

Unlike the other frozen images in the novel, the dell near Madingley is a fluid symbol, functioning as a continuous commentary on Rickie's spiritual disintegration. Twenty years ago, it was only "a scar of chalk", almost virginal in its sacramental purity. It becomes a haven of refuge from the frightening pitfalls of everyday existence, a secluded shrine, from whose quietness he can draw comfort and security, as in a

mother's womb:

Accordingly the dell became for him a kind of church - a church where indeed you could do anything you liked, but where anything you did would be transfigured. Like the ancient Greeks, he could even laugh at his holy place and leave it no less holy. (LJ, p.19)

It is a spot where time apparently stands still for Rickie and his coterie of friends:

The green bank at the entrance hid the road and the world and now, as in spring, they could see nothing but snow-white ramparts and the evergreen foliage of the trees. Only from time to time would a beech-leaf flutter in from the woods above, to comment on the waning year, and the warmth and radiance of the sun would vanish behind a passing cloud. (LJ, p.30)

The dell's timelessness assumes a sinister aspect, however, when Agnes ensnares Rickie in her love-mesh:

The chalk walls barred out the seasons, and the fir-trees did not seem to feel their passage. Only from time to time, the odours of summer slipped in from the wood above, to comment on the waning year. She bent down to touch him with her lips. (LJ, p.81)

When next Rickie recalls the dell of his youth, he is a married man and stands with his woman, who is more his "jealous foe" than faithful wife, on the threshold of knowledge amidst the Cadbury Rings, about to enter a state of life in which his imaginative and sympathetic nature would be cribbed, cabined and confined.

The dell is closely associated with chalk, which carries suggestions of vitality and purity inherent in the earth's forces, enabling them to override conventions. Thus Stephen, a nurseling of the earth, develops a habit of lobbing pieces of chalk through windows. And Rickie, towards the end of the novel, lets fall a lump of chalk from his hand and breaks Mrs. Failing's prize teacup, thereby strikingly symbolizing his momentary

triumph over her rigid conventionality. The incident, though trivial, acquires significance by reminding us that, in the not too distant past, Rickie had been one of those callow young men, who had not

tasted the cup - let us call it the teacup - of experience ... . Oh, that teacup! To be taken at prayers, at friendship, at love, till we are quite sane, efficient, quite experienced, and quite useless to God or man. We must drink it, or we shall die. But we need not drink it always. Here is our problem and our salvation. There comes a moment - God knows when, - at which we can say, "I will experience no longer, I will create. I will be an experience." But to do this, we must be both acute and heroic. For it is not easy, after accepting six cups of tea, to throw the seventh in the face of the hostess. And to Rickie this moment has not, as yet, been offered. (LJ, p.66)

It is this moment of destiny that Rickie meets with in Mrs. Failing's drawing room, when he has the courage to refute her cynicism. Through his trials and errors, he has acquired the insight to see through her pretensions and recognize that "conventions are not majestic, and that they will not claim us in the end." (LJ, p.298) But Rickie's courage lacks staying power: he agrees to the butler's proposal that he should apologise to Mrs. Failing for damaging her property. It is clear that the final victory, as far as Rickie is concerned, will belong to Aunt Emily's conventional morality. At the end, he lacks energy even to save himself, let alone act a hero:

Wearily he did a man's duty. There was time to raise him [Stephen] up and push him into safety. It is also a man's duty to save his own life, and therefore he tried. The train went over his knees. He died up in Cadover, whispering, "You have been right," to Mrs. Failing. (LJ, p.303)

Fittingly enough, he is buried by Agnes and Aunt Emily to the sound of the "cracked bell" at Cadover. (LJ, p.303)

Rickie's failure to live up to his new-found trust in the forces of the earth must be ascribed to the tenacious hold that the Sawston

morality has obtained over his soul. For, Sawston, as an institution, is a far cry from the Christian church of his boyhood as well as the Pagan dell of his youth. Its watchwords - "Organize", "Systematize", "Fill up every moment", "Induce esprit de corps"(LJ, p.289) - are all bereft of humanity and rob pupils as well as teachers of the joy of friendship and the desire to learn. By adopting such watchwords, Sawston has "lost its quiet usefulness." Instead of becoming yet another breakwater in the rough sea of existence and thereby promoting order, Sawston has itself degenerated into "a frothy sea, wherein plunged Dunwood House, that unnecessary ship." (LJ, p.289) It has, moreover, effectively caught Rickie in its downward swirl.

Not that Rickie lacks stabilizing influences in his Sawston career. Voices out of the past - those of Tony Failing, Robert Wonham and above all his mother - whisper to him messages of love and truth. Voices in the present - those of Ansell, Mr.Jackson and Stephen - counsel, urge and demand him to give up the crippling conventions of Sawston society and to be true to his own self. On one important occasion, a voice of the dead sounds in unison with a voice of the living and does succeed in drawing Rickie away from Sawston: he hears his mother calling him through Stephen to brave the world of nature he has dreaded and he responds eagerly :

Habits and sex may change with one generation, features may alter with the play of private passion, but a voice is apart from these. It lies nearer to the racial essence and perhaps to the divine; it can, at all events, overleap one grave. (LJ, p.276)

While voices, past and present, appeal to the racial memory in Rickie, the constellation of Orion stimulates his imagination at critical

moments in his life. Rickie's family life becomes extremely unhappy when he loses both his daughter and his wife's love. He perceives with dazzling clarity "the cruelty of nature, to whom our refinement and piety are but as bubbles, hurrying downwards on the turbid waters." (LJ, p.208) The bubbles may break, but the stream will continue. Rickie may be denied a daughter, but the family line will be perpetuated through Stephen. Since he still despises Stephen, Rickie is tormented by this possibility; he is comforted by his mother in a dream. Awakening from his sleep, he hurries to the window and sees "the frosty glories of Orion." (LJ, p.209) The implication of his dream as well as of Orion bursts on him only later, when, in his new maturity, he accepts Stephen as his brother, seeing in him the image of his dead mother. He understands that it is best for the selfish and cruel Elliot line to die out, as his mother had urged in the dream. He realizes, moreover, that his spiritual side will be reborn and continue through Stephen. Associating rebirth and continuation with Orion<sup>10</sup> he hurries to the window "to remember, with a smile, that Orion is not among the stars of June." (LJ, p.268)

Rickie's imagination is, however, not so sure as his instinct and he is repelled by Stephen's drunkenness, unable to recognize the Dionysian directness with which Stephen has responded to the call of Mount Cithareon. Stephen refuses to be stratified into a fixed image and

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<sup>10</sup> Micky, the central character in Forster's short story "The Point of It", when he is tormented by the shapeless sands of Hell, associates Orion with continuity like Rickie. He remarks to another voice: "It would be appalling, would it not, to see Orion, the central star of whose sword is not a star but a nebula, the golden seed of worlds to be."  
See The Eternal Moment (London, Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1920), p.83.

Rickie falls apart, losing all faith in continuity and abandoning all hope of reassurance. The stream that had symbolized the perpetuation of his mother's blood no longer means anything, "though it burst from the pure turf and ran for ever into the sea." (LJ, p.303) And Orion no longer carries conviction and affords him but cold comfort:

The bather, the shoulders of Orion - they all meant nothing and were going nowhere. The whole affair was a ridiculous dream. (LJ, p.303)

Thus Rickie dismisses all that has been revealed to him of "the holiness of the heart's affections."<sup>11</sup> His imagination has failed him and no longer connects with the truth.

All his life, Rickie tries to bridge the gulf between the abstract and the concrete, the eternal and the transient. But his efforts are all in vain. It is appropriate, therefore, that he should meet his death at the Roman level-crossing which "wants a bridge." (LJ, p.103) His death at that particular place is also, in a way, an expiation for an earlier sin. The train bringing him and Agnes to Cadover had run over a child at this very level-crossing. At the moment of catastrophe, he had been making love to Agnes. Instead of accepting the juxtaposition of love and death, he not only tolerates but indulges himself in "rotten talk." (LJ, p.103) His imagination is not strong enough to bridge the gap between his own happiness and the tragedy of the child's death with genuine sympathy. He sins, therefore, by omission and in spirit.

A bridge is finally built at the Roman level-crossing and it spans the railway line on which two deaths have been caused as a symbol of life, thereby emphasizing the proximity of life and death in the universe, which Rickie had never fully grasped.

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<sup>11</sup>John Keats, The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Keats (N.Y., The Modern Library, 1951), p.428.



And yet, for all his lack of comprehension of reality, Rickie does triumph over life's impermanence in his death; his spirit lives on in Stephen and his daughter to whom Stephen has given "the name of their mother." (emphasis mine) (LJ, p.311)

The criss-crossing of themes and the intertwining of symbols in The Longest Journey are often unobtrusive but always fascinating. Their combined power goes to stitch the novel from the inside and to impart an extraordinary sense of symmetry and completion, if not of order and expansion.

The sense of order and expansion that is rather inadequately conveyed in The Longest Journey is better realized in Howards End, where the forces of the earth which enrich the individual consciousness are powerfully contrasted against the forces of materialism which impoverish it. Also, Margaret, who connects with her fellow-beings through the earth, is an individual more complex than Stephen, the instinctual Pagan, more responsive than Ansell, the dry academic, and more balanced than Rickie, the fantasy-prone romantic. Gifted with both intellect and intuition, she unites them both through the active play of her imagination.

## "GLIMPSES OF DIVINER WHEELS"

"What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be the Truth - whether it existed before or not." - John Keats.

"It is the soul that matters;" declared Virginia Woolf describing the problem Forster had set for himself in Howards End,

and the soul . . . is caged in a solid villa of red brick somewhere in the suburbs of London . . . We have at once to believe in the complete reality of the suburb and the complete reality of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

Forster had attempted "to connect the actual thing with the meaning of the thing"<sup>2</sup>, to draw together the seen and the unseen.

In trying to effect "this combination of realism and mysticism"<sup>3</sup> and to project a unified vision of reality, Forster must have had recourse to a power that "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities"<sup>4</sup>, to the very same power which was so tellingly exercised in The Longest Journey and which would be so triumphantly manifested in A Passage to India - imagination. And this imagination invests Howards End with a clear-cut pattern and certain unique rhythms. The pattern endows the book with an outward symmetry, while the rhythms knit the varied incidents together from within, evoking, like a piece of great music, a rich inward harmony.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Novels of E.M.Forster", The Death of the Moth and other essays (London, The Hogarth Press, 1942), p.107-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>4</sup> S.T.Coleridge, "Biographia Lieteraria", The Selected Poetry and Prose of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (N.Y., Modern Library, 1951), p.269.

## I

The tri-partite movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony can be detected in Howards End, though it is not so obvious as in The Longest Journey or so indispensable as in A Passage to India.

The first movement (Chaps.1-12) confronts the idealism of the Schlegels with the pragmatism of the Wilcoxes. The opening is dramatic - Helen's letter to Margaret announces her sudden engagement to Paul; then, her telegram announces her equally sudden break with him - and underlines the force of attraction-cum-repulsion that comes into play between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes and dominates their relationships to the end, now drawing them together and then pulling them apart. After the termination of the Helen-Paul episode, there is a slow but sure strengthening of the bond uniting the two families in the friendship that develops between Ruth and Margaret. This bond is greatly weakened towards the end of the movement by Ruth's sudden death and all but snaps under the Wilcoxes' resentment of her will bequeathing Howards End to Margaret. And when this will is destroyed by Ruth's family, the movement strikes a rather discordant note, with the Wilcox pragmatism triumphant. This triumph is offset by Margaret's acquisition of the wisdom of proportion, an acquisition brought about by the sudden demise of her friend. The movement comes, then, to a hopeful if quiet close.

The second movement (Chaps.13-30) is separated from the first in time by a lapse of two years. It begins on a minor key, with the quickening of the Schlegels' interest in their suburban acquaintances, the Basts, but soon develops into a masterly presentation of Henry's

courtship of Margaret and attains a climax in her reasoned decision to marry him. At this juncture, Helen's antipathy to Henry, coupled with her sympathy to Leonard, precipitates a series of events at Oniton that culminate in the disclosure of Henry's one-time affair with Jacky, threatening his relationship with Margaret. The movement trembles on the verge of disaster, with Henry's misguided past echoing into the present and the Basts assuming catastrophic significance. Margaret's sense of proportion saves the situation and the movement ends on an intriguing note with the frustrated Helen having an interview with Tibby in his rooms at Oxford before the flight into Germany.

The third and last movement picks up Margaret leading a satisfactory married life with Henry, in spite of her estrangement from Helen. As the movement progresses, the combined influence of Helen and Leonard challenges Margaret's conjugal happiness and ultimately compels her to **disown** her husband. At Oniton, her sense of proportion had ruled that she be true to her sexual instinct and support her husband; now, at Howards End, her sense of proportion dictates that she be true to her inner life and support her sister. The death of Leonard follows soon after and completely undermines Henry's show of strength. And the movement closes on a note of muted triumph, with Margaret in full control of the changed circumstances and established with her sister and husband at Howards End.

Apart from shaping the three-part movement in Howards End, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony functions as a symbol containing the polarities of human experience within the book. Its music sums up for Helen "all that had happened or could happen to her in her career." (HE, p.34) Indeed, the

significance of the Symphony extends beyond Helen's career to life itself, for it leads from the goblin footfalls of panic and emptiness to tones of joyous splendour, from negation to affirmation, thus defining the two poles of human experience. Like Helen, one may alternate between feelings of joy that there is splendour and poetry and love in the world and feelings of despair that there is no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world. Or, one may realize and accept what Beethoven shows and Margaret comes to understand: heroic splendour is at once affirmed and denied by human experience. Such a realization and acceptance alone can lead to the serene and poised confidence possessed by Margaret at the end.

The Symphony defines, then, the nature and extent of the experiences encountered by the characters in Howards End. Consequently, there are as many motifs and levels of meaning in it as there are in the Fifth Symphony. The book spans three chief social milieux. There is the intellectual urban milieu of the Schlegel sisters, young ladies with independent incomes and refined attitudes, of the eldest of whom, Margaret, it might be said that her "imaginative life is distinguished by the greater clearness of its perception, and the greater purity and freedom of its emotion."<sup>5</sup> There is the country commuter's world of the Wilcoxes, men of business with a lot of money and little taste, headed by Henry who "would be in every way a more admirable and respectable being if his imaginative life were not so squalid and incoherent."<sup>6</sup> And then, there is the suburbia of

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5 & 6

These two quotes are taken from "An Essay in Aesthetics" (1909) by Roger Fry and demonstrate how closely Forster's thought patterns were modelled on those of his compatriots in the Bloomsbury intellectual aristocracy. See Vision and Design (London, 1928), pp. 24,23.

Leonard Bast, the clerk of yeoman stock, with aspirations to make it to the top of the socio-cultural ladder. These different worlds tend to intersect on cultural occasions. The Schlegels meet the Wilcoxes looking for a Rhineland cathedral. Leonard Bast and the Schlegels are brought together during a Queen's Hall concert. Pulling them all asunder are economic disparities which disrupt personal intercourse. Overshadowing all three worlds, moreover, is the 'civilization of luggage' which insists on ceaseless change and movement.

Interpenetrating these echoing contradictions of modern 'nomadic' civilization and cutting across all barriers is a basic human concern for one's fellow beings, which is both precious and illuminating; for, it is

the private life that holds out the mirror to infinity;  
personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever hints  
at a personality beyond our daily vision. (HE, p,77)

In short, it is only in the lingua franca of the heart that one can sense the transcendental irradiating the mundane, the unseen behind the seen. One must learn, therefore, to build "the rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion." (HE, p. 174) And the means whereby this bridge can be built and reconciliation effected between the twin realms of the seen and the unseen remains the same in Howards End as in The Longest Journey. The earth still operates as a redemptive power and can bestow harmony on the person who can respond to it.

## II

The person who responds to the earth and achieves harmony in Howards End is Margaret Schlegel. Through the influence of Ruth Wilcox, she comes to realize the importance of places like Howards End in human relations and even sense, as in the farm near Howards End, the connection

that the countryside may still provide among mankind:

In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole, group in one vision its transitoriness and its eternal youth, connect - connect without bitterness until all men are brothers. (HE, p.250)

In spite of this vision of the earth as a unifying force, Margaret is no simple Pagan like Stephen Wonham of The Longest Journey. For, like Ansell, she is aware of a supersensuous reality beyond human grasp and like Tony Failing, she trusts in human brotherhood. Above all, like Rickie Elliot, she possesses a sensitive imagination, uncrippled, however, by a lack of proportion. As an integral element of her feminine spirit, Margaret's imagination is instrumental to her perception of unity gained through the earth.

Margaret inherits her synthesizing imagination from her father, Ernest Schlegel, whom one classed as "the countryman of Hegel and Kant, as the idealist, inclined to be dreamy, whose Imperialism was the Imperialism of the air" (HE, p.28), a man who refutes his Teutonic nephew for his unimaginative enterprise:

'Your Pan-Germanism is no more imaginative than our Imperialism over here. It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness . . . That is not Imagination. No, it kills it . . . Oh, yes, you have learned men, who collect more facts than do the learned men of England. They collect facts, and facts and empires of facts. But who will kindle the light within?' (HE, p.29)

Imagination, "the light within", is Margaret's priceless possession. It enables her to connect with her fellow human beings in all humility and sincerity. Because of the reverence for place she acquires from Ruth Wilcox, Margaret's "Imperialism of the air" grows deep roots in the soil, instead of getting lost in the clouds. Her Imagination is tempered with a robust common sense, investing her at once with a romantic outlook and

a realistic approach. Thus, while she recognizes the divisions of reality into the body and the spirit, the seen and the unseen, she is not daunted by them. On the contrary, she is idealistic enough to wish to reconcile the physical and the transcendental realms. And she sets about this business of reconciliation in a highly practical fashion. With her quick insight, she goes to the root of the problem:

The businessman who assumes that this life is everything, and the mystic who asserts that it is nothing, fail, on this side and that, to hit the truth. (HE, p.182)

And the truth does not lie midway between them. Rather, it is "to be found in continuous excursions into either realm." (HE, p.182) Continuous excursions into the realm of the seen implies love, which means acceptance of things as they are (realism), while continuous excursions into the realm of the unseen implies truth, which means yearning for things as they ought to be (idealism). Out of many such excursions will emerge a balanced perspective or proportion, "the final secret." (HE, p.182) And this proportion enriches a person's inner life, being reflected in the ability to say 'I'. This development of the inner life is not impractical, for, as Margaret discovers, there are "moments when the inner life actually 'pays', when years of self-scrutiny, conducted for no ulterior motive, are suddenly of practical use." (HE, p.182) The ability to say 'I' is the outcome of an inner poise or serenity. As such, it enables a person to connect with fellow human beings with facility, resulting in an outer life of rewarding personal relationships.

In the hands of an imaginative individual like Margaret, proportion can do wonders even for a man like Henry Wilcox, who is so much concerned



with the commercial life of "telegrams and anger" that he totally neglects the inner life and consequently lacks the ability to say 'I'. He is muddle-headed, as a result, whenever a crisis comes up in his personal life and all within him is panic and emptiness. His muddle-headedness extends even to his sexual life, rendering him bestial in his affair with Jacky Bast and monkish in his distrust of the flesh. He is, indeed, a meaningless fragment, half-monk, half-beast, an unconnected arch that has never joined into a man. In spite of her discernment of Henry's divided self, Margaret accepts him as her husband and tries to redeem his materialistic nature by the sheer power and spirituality of her great love:

Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. (HE, p.174)

Margaret attempts to resolve the prose-passion dialectic in Henry by infusing into him the missing poetry of love.

Margaret's romantic realism enables her to make non-spectacular though steady progress towards a total integration of personality and an intense awareness of life in all its aspects. It is true that, in the beginning, the conflicting demands of the seen and the unseen realms cause her to doubt the efficacy of personal relationships in a society dominated by money and class, telegrams and anger. She is unable to reject the outer life of the Wilcoxes entirely; nor is she able to welcome the inner life advocated by Helen unreservedly. She has yet to find proportion, the golden mean between two extremes. She does so in the end, through the gentle spiritual tutelage of Ruth Wilcox, when she discovers that "there were truer relationships beyond the limits that fetter us now" (HE, p.307) and lodges a protest through her husband "against the inner darkness in high places that comes with a commercial age." (HE, p.309)

Margaret's sister Helen, while she possesses admirable qualities like spontaneity and natural gaiety, is romantic without being realistic. Misreading the Wilcox prose for poetry, she permits herself to be overwhelmed by Paul's momentary passion and fancies herself in love with him. When she realizes her mistake, she swings to the other extreme and she begins to hate the entire Wilcox clan passionately. Passion makes her unreasonable in her devotion to Leonard Bast in his misfortune, even to the extent of giving herself to him on impulse. All in all, Helen lacks proportion; she is unable to bridge the gulf between the prose and the passion in her daily life. Her failure is most apparent in her sexual contretemps and results in her spiritual stagnation. Her inner condition is mirrored in her choice of Monica, "the crude feminist of the South" (HE, p.274), for a companion during her sojourn in Europe. On her return to England, the cumulative influence of Howards End and Margaret's unquestioning acceptance of her, works a spiritual regeneration in her and makes her whole.

Margaret's proportioned imagination leads her to one spiritual triumph after another, each more comprehensive than the previous one. She establishes a servable if shaky bridge between worldliness and spiritual insight in her marriage to Henry. She learns to connect with Howards End through Ruth Wilcox. Love of a place like Howards End broadens out into a love of England's countryside. This "unexpected love for the island" (HE, p.191) enables her to connect "on this side with the joys of the flesh and on that with the inconceivable." (HE, p.191) She gains "a feeling of completeness", envisions the brotherhood of man and even senses a kinship of her soul with an eternity beyond life and death. (HE, p.250)

Because of her reverence for the earth and her implicit trust in the connection that it can afford between the visible and the invisible, Margaret is diametrically opposed to the values of the society in which she lives. It is a society whose rootlessness and disbelief in permanence are epitomized in the monstrous, ever-destroyed and ever-reconstructed city of London. London stands as "a caricature of infinity" (HE, p.261), mocks at any attempt to connect or rejuvenate oneself through the earth and even threatens to alienate man from his natural habitat by creeping out to the countryside and trying to engulf Howards End itself in its "red rust." (HE, p.316) Indeed, London is symptomatic of the modern disease of cosmopolitanism under which man

shall receive no help from the earth. Trees and meadows and mountains will only be a spectacle, and the binding force that they once exercised on character must be entrusted to Love alone. (HE, p. 243)

To a Love akin perhaps to that of Margaret who can, in the face of the soul-stifling cosmopolitan civilization, still entertain the hope that

because a thing is going strong now, it need not go strong for ever . . . This craze for motion has set in only during the last hundred years. It may be followed by a civilization that won't be a movement, because it will rest on the earth. (HE, p.316)

Margaret's hope is not mere wishful thinking. It is rather an intense yearning for things as they ought to be, balanced by a sober acceptance of things as they are. Her head may be in the clouds, but her feet are firmly planted on the ground. And though, as a determined aspirant for proportion, she may possess extraordinary qualities of mind and heart, she still remains credibly human. For, while the shadowy Ruth Wilcox is settled without a struggle at the apex of her 'being', Margaret demonstrates the possibility of 'becoming'. She succeeds, moreover, in

connecting the unseen and the seen, the inner life of contemplation and the outer life of action.

The future of the human race was entrusted to the instinctual Paganism of Stephen Wonham in The Longest Journey. It abides, in Howards End, within such a connection as Margaret obtains through the exercise of her disciplined imagination. It is a fragile connection though, "a rainbow bridge" in imminent danger of collapse from the goblin footfalls of disaster that herald man's total dissociation from the earth. Hence, it has to be force-fed and defended against the onslaught of modern nomadic civilization: "May Love be equal to the task!" (HE, p.243) This is the poignant wish at the core of Howards End, a wish that would meet its nemesis in the harsh climate of A Passage to India where the earth seems alien to man, only to be resurrected phoenix-like in the Hindu ceremony at Mau and ultimately transformed into the all-embracing compassion of Godbole.

The binding force of the earth that was so potent in The Longest Journey is, then, already under retreat in Howards End. The imaginative reconciliation of the seen and the unseen realms becomes at once more imperative and more difficult so that the epitaph "Only connect . . ." may well be rephrased into "If only we could connect . . ." to sum up the criss-crossing currents of thought and action that compose the intricate pattern in Howards End and constitute its multiple rhythms.

### III

The rhythms serve a two-fold purpose. They drive home the various dualisms - the seen and the unseen, the outer and the inner, motion and rest, the city and the country, monk and beast, love and truth - by repeated though unobtrusive emphasis. They also manage to impart an organic quality to the book

by linking the various incidents together from within. They function, in short, like leitmotifs in a musical score that grow on us with repeated hearing. And so, they enhance our understanding of the over-all movement of expansion from the cacaphonous rhythms of "telegrams and anger" (HE, p.27) reflected in the outer life of the city-dweller, to the harmonious rhythms of love and truth, reflected in the inner life of a person like Margaret, who triumphs in the realm of the spirit by surrendering her being to the earth.

Too great a reliance in the outer life of "telegrams and anger" has bred in the Wilcoxes an inner instability so that, one and all, they are men of straw, hollow at the core. Helen is quick to detect this inner void, in spite of her infatuation for Paul Wilcox who is terrified lest personal relation interfere with his career:

'. . . I felt for a moment that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs, and if it fell I should find nothing behind it but panic and emptiness.' (HE, p.26)

Panic and emptiness! It is Helen's special phrase, a refrain that is heard again and again in Howards End, each time with ever-widening circles of meaning. It defines not only the Wilcox way of life but also Helen's own, with her hysterical methods of making contacts, methods that are defeated by the very manic enthusiasms that motivate them. The motif is recalled by Helen as she listens to the Fifth Symphony at the Queen's Hall concert. Her reaction, which is so different from that of the others, is yet true to her wildly romantic nature. While Margaret is content to "see the music" and Tibby is all ears for "the transitional passage on the drum", while Aunt Juley wants to tap and Fräulein Mosebach compliments Beethoven

for being "echt deutsch", Helen fancies "heroes and shipwrecks in the music's flood" (HE, p.31) and is spell-bound by the goblins whom she associates with "panic and emptiness":

They were not aggressive creatures; it was that that made them so terrible to Helen. They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing splendour or heroism in the world . . . Panic and emptiness! Panic and emptiness! (HE,p.32-33)

This despair clouds her reason and frustrates all her attempts at connection. By refusing to accept things as they are, she converts most of her life into romantic day-dreaming. "I used to be so dreamy", she confesses to her sister,

'about a man's love as a girl, and think that for good or evil love must be the great thing. But it hasn't been; it has itself been a dream.' (HE, p.314)

It is the confession of a woman, whose early disappointment in love inspires her with a such a deep distrust of the flesh that later she immolates herself on the altar of love, a woman, who sees her own inadequacies reflected as "panic and emptiness" in the Wilcoxes and turns away terrified. Her horror over Margaret's decision to marry Henry is quite in character:

'Don't, don't do such a thing! I tell you not to -don't!  
I know - don't!'  
'What do you know?'  
'Panic and emptiness!' sobbed Helen, 'Don't!' (HE, p.161)

Since she associates the Wilcoxes with money, Helen becomes fearful of its contamination, feels guilty over her own class and wealth and begins to exercise a brooding care over the fortunes of Leonard Bast, the yeoman clerk who affords her a glimpse into the social 'abyss' on whose edge he stands. In her salvationist zeal, she even offers him her passion and money. She is, in fact, finding in him an outlet for her frustrations, withering his life away in her frantic clutch for connection:

She and the victim seemed alone in a world of unreality, and she loved him absolutely, perhaps for half an hour. (HE, p.295)

It is half an hour's sexual frustration rather than fulfilment; a gift of "panic and emptiness" rather than of love and truth. The act savours of self-destruction, not of self-sacrifice. Hence, instead of a liberating sense of joy over the mutual sharing, Leonard experiences only an inhibiting sense of sorrow over the mutual guilt. And as if in expiation, he meets his death later on under the Schlegel sword.

The motif of "panic and emptiness" is last sounded undiminished in Helen's conversation with Leonard and refers to Henry who is the epitome of Wilcox shallowness for Helen:

' . . . and if you could pierce through him, you'd find panic and emptiness in the middle.' (HE, 219)

With this contemptuous dismissal of Henry, Helen devotes herself full-time to the task of saving Leonard from the cynical belief that money supersedes everything in this world. She argues passionately that death is more real than money or injustice, for death is not only the great leveller but also the ultimate challenger who goads us on to heroic deeds in this life:

'Death destroys a man: the idea of death saves him.' Behind the coffins and the skeletons that stay the vulgar mind lies something so immense that all that is great in us responds to it. (HE, p.223)

The idea of death saves a man by showing him "the emptiness of money" (HE, p.222) and all things material before the dread imperialism of death. He realizes that his own flesh is not exempt from destruction and that its destiny is neither splendid nor heroic in the face of death. Such a realization paradoxically strengthens the thews of love and enables him to connect, for he steels himself to accept things as they are without ceasing to yearn

for things as they ought to be. Accepting the transience of the flesh, he courageously seeks the permanence of the spirit. He responds to the unseen as well as the seen; he learns to connect and to attain proportion.

"Death destroys a man; the idea of death saves him." It is a code that grows out of the motif "panic and emptiness" as naturally as Leonard grows out of Paul and marks the shift in Helen's concern from the mundane to the spiritual, from the particular to the universal. And curiously enough, it becomes Leonard's motto and resounds in his mind as he plods towards *Howards End* to beg forgiveness of Margaret for "his private sin" (HE, p.301) against her sister:

Again and again must the drums tap, and the goblins stalk over the universe before joy can be purged of the superficial. It was rather paradoxical, and arose from his sorrow. Death destroys a man, the idea of death saves him . . . Squalor and tragedy can beckon to all that is great in us, and strengthen the wings of love . . . and the knowledge of this incredible truth comforted him. (HE, p.301-2)

It enables him to shed his sense of sin and march on to *Howards End* in a spirit of supreme adventure, only to meet his unexpected martyr's death under the Schlegel sword, like some knight-of-old sans peur sans reproche.

The proposition "Death destroys a man; the idea of death saves him" is reinforced by the pervasive vegetable imagery associated with the individual characters in the book. Flowers and grass, for instance, are instinct with life but under the sickle of death; the flower that blooms today will droop tomorrow and the grass that is now green will soon wither. Flower and grass represent, then, the individual who is alive today and gone tomorrow. Hay, on the other hand, is withered grass that has sweetened and thereby triumphed over death. It represents, therefore, the individual whose life is so informed by the idea of death that it remains a source of inspiration



to those who come after.

Ruth Wilcox is one such individual. She knows "no more of worldly wickedness and wisdom than did the flowers in her garden, or the grass in her field." (HE, p.85) She is aware of the mortality under which they live and which is sure to overcome her in the end. But by facing up the reality of death, she endeavours to make her life sweet and meaningful. In this endeavour, she finds the lives of those long dead of great value: "she cared about her ancestors and let them help her." (HE, p. 22) By her link with the past, she enlivens the present and embodies the future. Hence, everyone and everything is "a fragment of her mind."(HE, p.292) The continuity she stands for is symbolically asserted by her deep attachment to hay, that which was once grass and that which will sweeten hereafter.

Margaret, who attains proportion instead of naturally possessing it like Ruth, is associated with grass till the very end. When she first visits Howards End she picks up some weeds before entering the house. And Miss Avery, one-time friend of Ruth's grandmother from whom Ruth inherited Howards End, mistakes Margaret for Ruth. The incident is a foretaste of what is to come in Margaret's life and indicates that she has already advanced considerably toward spiritual integration with Ruth. Later, in the garden at Oniton, she plays with grass from the mowing machine, while she listens to Henry's lame excuses for his affair with Jacky Bast. Henry is unable to realize that he has actually been faithless to Ruth and Margaret forgives him as Ruth herself would have done had she been alive. Hence, when she returns to her room after the conversation, she leaves "a long trickle of grass" (HE, p. 232) along the hall, vividly recalling to mind Ruth's earlier "trailing noiselessly across the lawn"(HE, p. 22) with a wisp of hay in her hands. The shock of

Leonard's death brings her to the goal towards which she has been tending all winter:

At such moments 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. She alters her focus till trivial things are blurred. (HE, p.309)

Margaret begins to realize the saving power of death and her ripening is complete when she settles down at Howards End with her sister, her husband and Leonard's child:

Helen took up a bunch of grass . . . She raised it to her face.  
 'Is it sweetening yet?' asked Margaret.  
 'No, only withered.'  
 'It will sweeten tomorrow.' (HE, p.315)

The wisdom she has gained enables Margaret to protect a broken Henry, who had once been susceptible along with the other Wilcoxes to hayfever, and to keep hopeful watch over Helen's son as he plays in the hayfield, which betokens the continuity and the sweetness conferred by the earth. Through her gentle influence, Helen has come to share her vision and the story closes with her gleeful cry that "it'll be such a crop of hay as never" (HE, p.319), a cry that comes from her heart and testifies to the saving power of death as well as the value of the inner life.

As an individual who comes to understand that the idea of death saves, Margaret develops a sense of the ancestral, which she associates with the six Danish tumuli. The Six Hills are a part of the landscape and belong to the present. As "tombs of warriors" (HE, p.288) they are connected with the past and as "breasts of spring" (HE, p.288) they herald the future. It is on the grassy incline of the Six Hills that Margaret hears of Charles's indictment for manslaughter from Henry and witnesses Henry's breakdown,

signifying the death of all that in the past has denied him connection:

Margaret drove her fingers through the grass. The hill beneath her moved as if it was alive. (HE, p.311)

For, corresponding to the death in Henry of all that prevents connection, "a new life"(HE, p.311) has begun to move in the world, fulfilling the promise of the Six Hills. This new life is personified in the child who will inherit Howards End and grow up into a man who will have his roots in the earth and so serve as a bulwark against the modern craze for motion.

And the earth which can offer such significant aid to the individual in establishing a natural civilization, manifests itself most forcefully in a place like Howards End to bestow instinctive wisdom on a person like Ruth. The other Wilcoxes are all incomplete in that they lack a place of their own. Though they may possess title-deeds and door-keys to Howards End, to Oniton and to the house in Ducie Street, they do not belong anywhere. They are rootless. Margaret comes to understand the importance of a place through Ruth's influence. She realizes that a deep and abiding trust in place is a prerequisite for personal relations, for only a place can imbue life with a sense of continuity, a sense of

the past sanctifying the present; the present, with a wild heart-throb, declaring that there would after all be a future. (HE, p.278)

Indeed, a house like Howards End can add a new dimension to the proposition that the idea of death saves, by stressing the wisdom that can accrue from those now dead and the hope that can lodge in those who are not yet alive.

Clinging to Howards End and encumbering its south wall is an unprolific vine which Ruth strives to preserve and which Helen loves on sight. It is Margaret's symbol in one sense for she too encumbers the Wilcoxes and is unprolific. Just as the vine embraces the house, moreover, so she embraces

the way of life adduced by Ruth and becomes the spiritual heir to Howards End. Above all, the fact that the vine has always been present in close contact with the house is strangely suggestive of the spiritual kinship that has always existed between Ruth and Margaret; prior to their meeting in the flesh, it had existed as an undercurrent and when they actually met, it surfaced to become a living stream.

On Helen's return from Germany, the vine becomes associated with the new life within her; Helen, who is great with child, sits "framed in the vine", her hand playing with "the buds." (HE, p. 269) The vine that seemed unprolific has suddenly blossomed, a sure sign that Howards End will soon be resurrected and inhabited again and a subtle indication that Margaret, though childless, will promote fertility through her sister. Because of its association with the dead (Ruth), the living (Schlegels) and the unborn (child), the vine functions as yet another symbol of continuity, linked with the past, rooted in the present and spreading into the future.

Participating in the continuity emphasized by grass and hay, house and vine, is the individual in whom the wisdom of the past and the hope of the future unite to vivify the present. Every moment in an individual's life, in other words, at once enshrines the past and envisions the future and is, therefore, highly significant. This significance of the moment is powerfully conveyed through the wych-elm, which overhangs the house and is, in fact, "the genius of the house", that which sustains the spirit of the place, for if a "westerly gale" were to blow down the wych-elm, it might bring "the end of all things." (HE, p. 312)

It is under the wych-elm that Helen has her moment of passion with

Paul so that they kiss each other in its shadow. It is under the same tree that she recalls her night with Leonard:

'Oh, Meg, the little that is known about these things.'  
 She laid her face against the tree.  
 'The little, too, that is known about growth! Both times  
 it was loneliness, and the night, and panic afterwards.  
 Did Leonard grow out of Paul?' (HE, p.291-2)

As she listens to Helen's whimsical question, Margaret's attention wanders to the pig's teeth embedded in the tree and she recalls the legend that the teeth medicate the bark. She connects the legend with life: the tree has not only endured the injury of the teeth but also transformed the injury into something beneficial to mankind; Helen too has sublimated her moment of passion through her night's gift of herself to Leonard into something rich and strange - an as yet unborn child in whose birth and growth the hope of mankind will reside. Margaret's answer to Helen is both compassionate and understanding:

'Leonard is a better growth than madness,' she said. (HE, p.292)

As Leonard evolved out of Paul, so the heir to the earth will evolve out of Leonard. This awareness enables Margaret to apprehend the peace of the moment and to bestow it on Helen:

The present flowed by them like a stream. The tree rustled. It had made music before they were born, and would continue after their deaths, but its song was of the moment. The moment had passed. The tree rustled again. Their senses were sharpened, and they seemed to apprehend life. Life passed. The tree rustled again.  
 'Sleep now,' said Margaret.  
 The peace of the country was entering into her. It has no commerce with memory, and little with hope. . . . It is the peace of the present, which passes understanding. Its murmur came 'now', and 'now' once more as they trod the gravel, and 'now' as the moonlight fell upon their father's sword. (HE, p.293)

Margaret's attainment of peace results in a unique comradeship with her sister, a comradeship that rests secure in the knowledge that every moment

of their individual lives is of the present and yet in the ceaseless flow, forever making contact with the past and stretching forth into the future.

The soundness of Margaret's experience is tested most severely when Leonard is cut down by Charles in the garden at Howards End: the incident does shock her greatly:

Here Leonard lay dead in the garden, from natural causes; yet life was a house, death a wisp of hay, a flower, a tower, life and death were anything and everything except this ordered insanity. (HE, p.307)

Margaret's horror, however, is not lasting; for even when horror constricts her heart, the images that flash in her mind's eye are all true, not random and fragmentary. The river of life includes in its ceaseless flow the death of the individual. The blue sky betokens an infinity that contains all earthly impermanence. The house, Howards End, strengthens the sense of the ancestral in the individual. The hay is dead grass sweetened and stresses the saving power of idea of death. The flower blooms and withers and blooms again as the ever-recurring seasons flit by. The towering Six Hills are "breasts of the spring" (HE, p.288), promising that the withered flower will bloom again and asserting that death is but a prelude to resurrection. Thus, all the images which Margaret sees associated with Leonard's death are archetypal, enforcing the inseparability of life and death and stressing the continuity behind all the scattered phenomena of the natural world. The images help Margaret to view Leonard's death in true perspective, under the aspect of eternity, and to understand that

there was beauty and adventure behind, such as the man at her feet had yearned for; there was hope this side of the grave; there were truer relationships beyond the limits that fetter us now. As a prisoner looks up and sees stars beckoning, so she, from the turmoil and horror of those days, caught glimpses of diviner wheels. (HE, p.307)

Ripeness is at length Margaret's portion; the aspirant after proportion has reached her goal.

The recurring motifs and images in Howards End suggest, in their totality, the stream of Life itself, flowing forever from the past to the future through the needle-eye of the present. And all the characters, including Margaret and Helen, and all the places and objects associated with them, dwindle into insignificance before the fact of the stream itself. This is "the larger existence"<sup>7</sup> possessed by the symphony that is Howards End after it has been played out. And the overwhelming impression it leaves behind is one of continuity - a flow without pause from the beginning to the end of time, a flow that hints at a mysterious order and serenity beyond mortal grasp.

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<sup>7</sup>E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Middlesex, Penguin, 1962), p.170.

#### IV

### "A UNIVERSE . . . NOT . . . COMPREHENSIBLE TO OUR MINDS"

". . . several things dovetailed into my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, . . . I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." - John Keats

"God", runs a popular Renaissance adage, "is a Circle whose Circumference is nowhere and whose Centre everywhere."<sup>1</sup> It is an image peculiarly appropriate to A Passage to India, for from its central Caves circle after circle expands and echoes to the uttermost limits of the Universe, like the endless ripples set up on the surface of a pond by the casting of a stone. Within its periphery, then, the book includes all existence, animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, though individual men, tragically wrapped up in their own private cocoons, often do not perceive the essential unity of all creation in that Great Circle called God.

Forster dwelt at length on the significance of the Malabar Caves in his Paris Review interview:

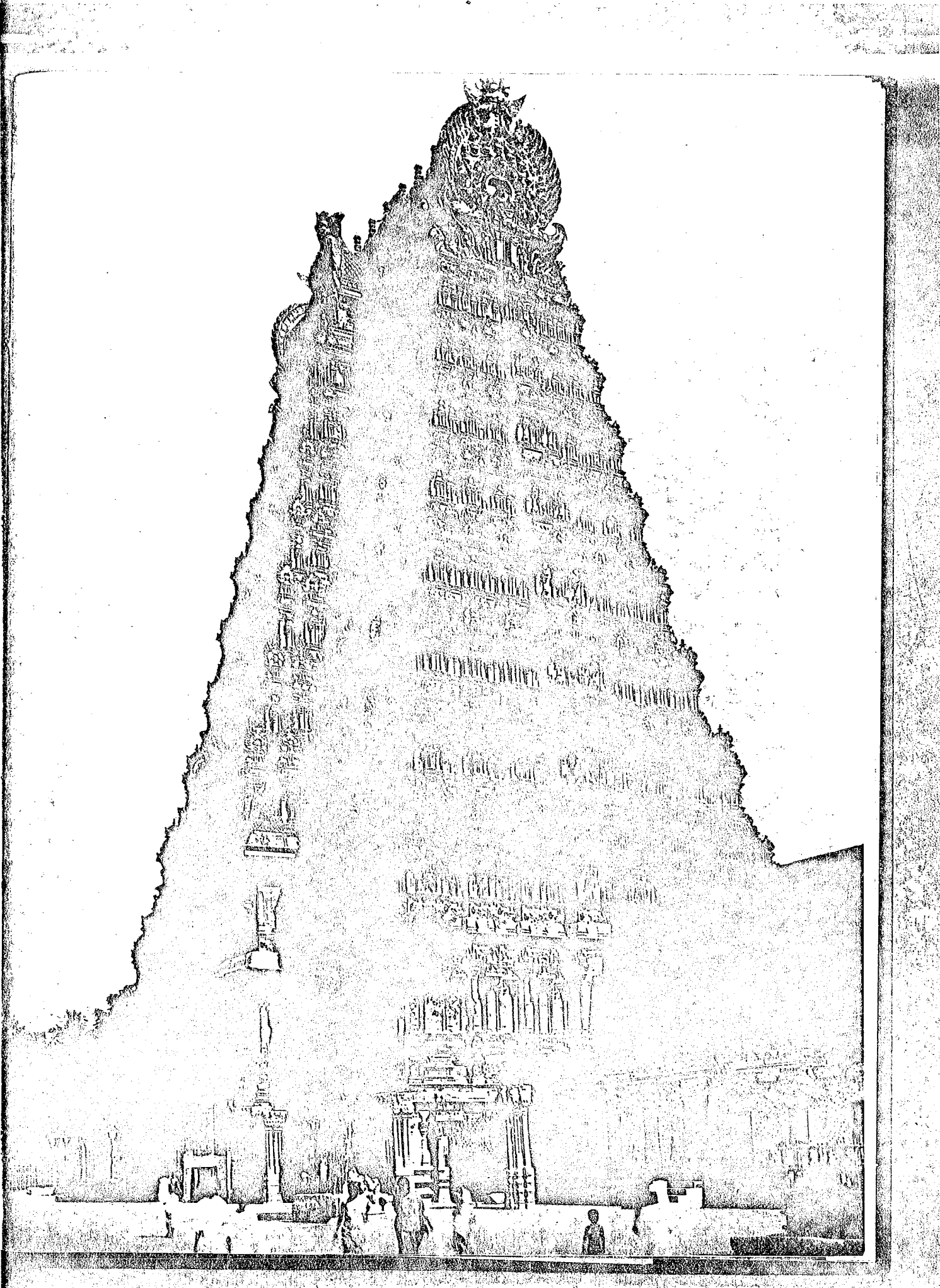
When I began A Passage to India I knew that something important happened in the Malabar Caves, and that it would have a central place in the novel - but I didn't know what it would be . . . The Malabar Caves represented an area in which concentration can take place. A cavity: They were something to focus everything up: they were to engender an event like an egg.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Marjorie Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle (N.Y., Columbia University Press, 1962), p.47.

<sup>2</sup>Forster in his Paris Review interview. See Writers at Work: The 'Paris Review' Interviews, (ed.) Malcolm Cowley, New York, 1958, p.27.





The Caves, in short, imparted to Forster "the sense of a solid mass ahead, a mountain round or over or through which . . . the story must somehow go."<sup>3</sup>

## I

The Caves are contained within those abrupt and monstrous swellings in the ground, the Marabar Hills, and form, as it were, bubbles inside the earth's sphere. The Caves and the Mountains, then, together constitute an archetypal symbol of life and evolution - the circle within the circle.

The origins of the Caves are shrouded in mystery, lost

In the dark backward and abysm of time.<sup>4</sup>

Because of their extraordinary antiquity, they manage to suggest the womb of Mother Earth and thereby point back to the fount of all creation.

Having inhabited India for a far longer time than either the Moslem or the Christian, the Hindu is closer to an apprehension and assimilation of the primordial meaning embodied in the caves and mountains of the Indian landscape. He is moved even to cherish and worship that meaning in a transmuted and subliminal form in the architecture of his temple. The ends of Hindu art and religion, therefore, are one and the same. Their purpose

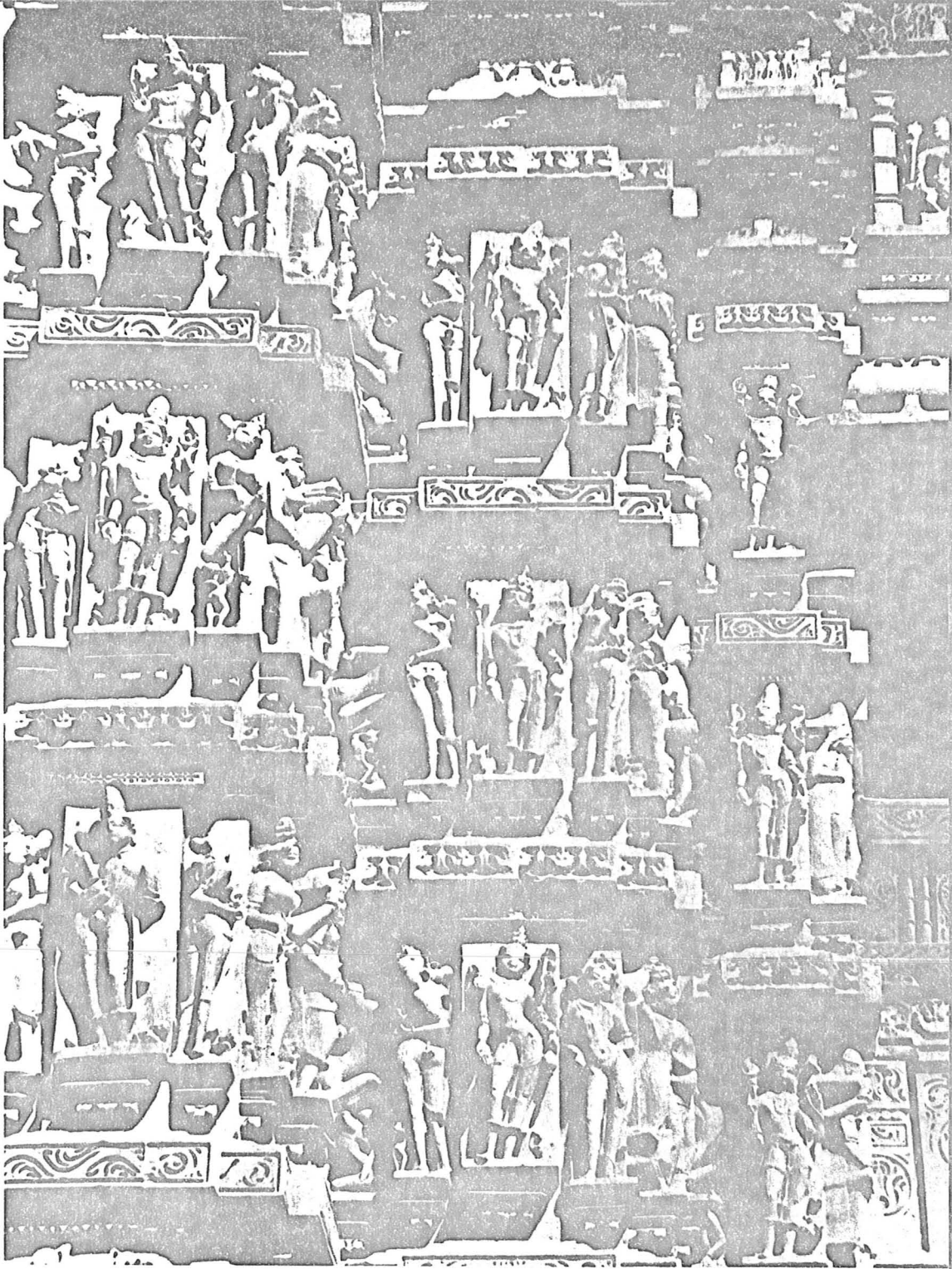
is not to extract beauty from nature, but to reveal the  
Life within life, the Noumenon within the phenomenon,<sup>5</sup>  
the Reality within unreality, the Soul within matter.

That is to say, both Hindu art and religion are designed to lead man back to the spring-head from which his life-current runs or else dries up.

<sup>3</sup>Forster, The Paris Review interview, p.27.

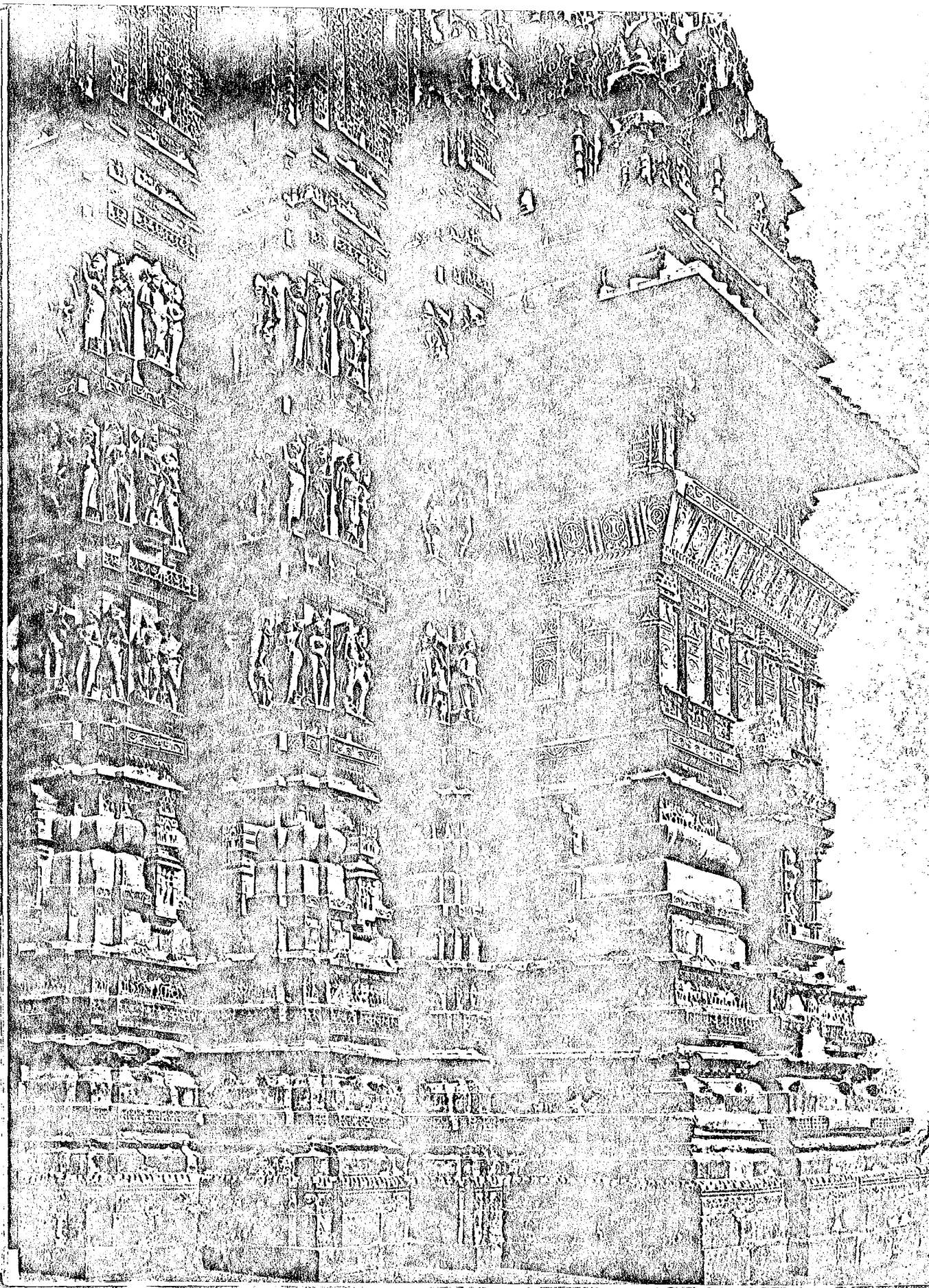
<sup>4</sup>The Tempest, Act I, scene ii, l.50.

<sup>5</sup>E.B.Havell, The Ideals of Indian Art (London, John Murray, 1920), p.24.  
See also: Mulk Raj Anand, The Hindu View of Art (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1957), pp.1-6.



§ 77 & § 78 KANDARIYA MAHADEVA TEMPLE  
Khajuraho / Sandstone / 30 m high / 950–1050 A.D.

*This temple to Siva is representative of Central Indian architecture, showing a more unified, organic overall shape. Built on a terrace, the horizontal stability balances the vertical mobility of the tower (sikhara). The massive groupings are intersected by the main lines, shadows, and porches. The base is crowded by diverse figures, but inside the temple where one meditates, it is plain and dark—the darkness of the womb. (see also plate 81, color)*



The most striking feature of the Hindu temple is its Gopura  
(or World Mountain)

on whose exterior is displayed life in all its forms, life human and superhuman and subhuman and animal, life tragic and cheerful, cruel and kind, seemly and obscene, all crowned at the Mountain's summit by the sun.

Deep within this Gopura, which forms the shell, as it were, around an egg, is contained

a tiny cavity, a central cell, where, in the heart of the world complexity, the individual could be alone with his god.<sup>6</sup>

This garbha-griha (womb-house) is connected to the Gopura by a simple, doorless corridor inviting everyone to pass freely to and fro between them.

When one walks into a Hindu temple, therefore, he passes symbolically from the external world of egotism and desire, tragedy and comedy, nobility and absurdity, order and chaos to an internal realm of anonymity and detachment, in which only a passionless neutrality holds sway. And when one reaches out beyond symbol to its essential meaning, realization dawns that one's own body is, so to speak, a temple housing a dark, secret, inner core of being. Gradually this feeling is intensified until at last the humorless region of the subconscious takes complete control over one's personality and reaches out to the ends of the universe. Then, one is said to have attained the Mukti (freedom tout court) of Nirvana; instead of flitting to and fro between the order-cum-disorder of the Gopura and the utter non-order of the garbha-griha, he is one with the primal force of creation coiled within his own self and engendering the universe.

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<sup>6</sup>E.M.Forster, "The World Mountain", The Listener, XXXLII(1954), p.978.

Because of his proximity to "the Ancient Night" (PI, p.74) of the Caves in his temple, the Hindu, as Forster intuitively realized and found attractive,

is concerned not with conduct, but with vision. To realize what God is seems more important than to do what God wants. He has a constant sense of the unseen - of the powers around if he is a peasant, of the powers behind if he is a philosopher, and he feels that this tangible world, with its chatter of right and wrong, subserves the intangible.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, though the Marabar Caves are not considered "holy" (PI, p.74) and are not venerated, their symbolic and archetypal significance is immediately grasped by the Hindu, Godbole, while it only intimidates, bewilders, or wearies others. Consequently, a vision akin to that of the Hindu runs through the varied incidents in the book, threading them together like a string its handful of scattered pearls; it provides, moreover, a cosmic backdrop against which are enacted the minute details of everyday life, tragic, comic and absurd, all equally insignificant or indistinct like tiny jabs of oil in a masterpiece of painting.

Implying as they do a cosmic negation of all that is comprehensible to the finite and reasoning human mind, the Caves are appropriately housed in the "unspeakable" Marabar Hills (PI, p.123), which are "like nothing else in the world" bearing "no relation to anything dreamt or seen" (PI, p.123)

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<sup>7</sup>E.M.Forster, "The Gods of India", The New Weekly, May 30, 1914, p.338. Cf., W.B.Yeats in his essay called "An Indian Monk", Essays and Introductions (N.Y., MacMillan, 1961) p.431:

The Indian, . . . approaches God through vision, speaks continually of the beauty and terror of the great mountains, interrupts his prayer to listen to the song of birds, remembers with delight the nightingale that disturbed his meditation by alighting on his head and singing there, recalls after many years the whiteness of a sheet, the softness of a pillow, the gold embroidery upon a shoe. These things are indeed a part of the 'splendour of that Divine Being.'

and are themselves unvaried in pattern:

. . . no carving, not even a bee's nest or a bat distinguishes one from another. Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation - for they have one - does not depend upon human speech. (PI, p.124)

Even if they are excavated, "nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good and evil." This "nothing" of the Caves is a negation of everything finite and human but does not mean a vacuum; it indicates rather an infinite absence that points in turn to an infinite presence. It is similar to the Sunya of the Buddha or the nirguna Brahman of the Upanishads, Absolute Reality without attributes.

The non-human nature of the Caves is implicit in its response to any human sound. There is only a "terrifying echo" (PI, p.140), terrifying to anyone unable or unwilling to transcend human limitations and be overwhelmed by a primal awareness of life in the Universe. It is an echo, moreover, "entirely devoid of distinctions":

Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. 'Boum' is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum' or 'ou-boum' - utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeaking of a boot, all produce 'boum'. Even the striking of a match starts a little worm coiling, which is too small to complete a circle, but is eternally watchful. And if several people talk at once, an over-lapping howling noise begins, echoes generate echoes, and the cave is stuffed with a snake, composed of small snakes, which writhe independently. (PI, p.140)

The coiling worm is reminiscent of the serpent biting its own tail, an archetypal symbol of "the cyclic unity of all life, the inseparability of beginning and end, the eternal round of the seasons."<sup>8</sup> The worm is

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<sup>8</sup> Wilfred Stone, The Cave and the Mountain (Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1966), p.298-9).

genetically linked to the small snakes, "which writhe independently" within the larger snake, reproducing in miniature the archetypal circles-within-the-circle concept embodied in caves and mountains. Psychologically speaking, therefore, the coiling worm stands for the human consciousness reaching back in the collective unconscious to the prehistoric memory of the ur-womb of all creation, that indescribable nothingness from which we all come and to which we must all return. On a metaphysical level, the coiling worm represents the solitary human soul (Jivatman) striving through eternity (that is, through endless reincarnations) to complete itself in the essential unity of the Great Circle (Paramatman). The extreme difficulty of this union from the human point of view is mirrored in the worm's present inability to complete the circle, while its "eternal watchfulness" holds out the promise of a possible future consummation. The near-impossibility of union between the human and the non-human, the rational and the non-rational, is strikingly illustrated everytime a casual visitor to the Caves lights a match:

Immediately another flame rises in the depths of the rock and moves towards the surface like an imprisoned spirit . . . The two flames approach and strive to unite, but cannot, because one of them breathes air, the other stone. (PI, p.124)

The air-fed flame of the match is brought in from the rational and chaotic world outside and signifies human consciousness. It is also Jivatman, the individual soul which, according to the Katha Upanishad, "is like a flame without smoke."<sup>9</sup> Jivatman is ever at one with Paramatman or Brahman so that fundamentally there is no duality, only unity of being. And when this unity is concretely experienced, the Jivatman is said to enter "the cave of the heart, the abode of the Most High" and to dwell

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<sup>9</sup>The Upanishads (New York, A Mentor Publication, New American Library, 1957), translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, p.21.



"for ever in the heart of all beings", so that "in one's own heart, Brahman is realized clearly, as if seen in a mirror."<sup>10</sup> The finite human mind, however, is unable or unwilling to reach deep enough into the unconscious and grasp this essential unity of all being. This human incapacity to transcend limitations and connect with the non-human is beautifully imaged in the refusal of the air and stone fed flames to meet and merge:

A mirror inlaid with lovely colours divides the lovers,  
delicate stars of pink and grey interpose, exquisite  
nebulae, shadings fainter than the tail of a comet or  
the midday moon, all the evanescent life of the granite,  
only here visible. (PI, p.124)

This division between the human and the non-human, however, is only an apparent truth. For, from the standpoint of the unity of being, there can be no duality. To the Atman in indissoluble union with Brahman, there can be no other reality but itself; by mere being, it precludes the phenomenal universe and admits of neither the duality of the twin flames nor even their striving for union. Indeed, with what can the one indivisible and ever-present Reality unite? The phenomenal universe functions but as a mirror-reflection of this Reality; it is a seeming truth (mitya), that which the human mind must somehow overleap in order to find its true identity in Brahman. That the essential unity of the Atman in Brahman can be realized only by an annihilation of the human consciousness and the flooding-in of the non-human awareness is brought out by the extinction of the twin flames in the caves:

The radiance increases, the flames touch one another, kiss,  
expire. The cave is dark again, like all caves. (PI, p.125)

It is the moment of Nirvana, when the Atman frees itself from all seeming

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<sup>10</sup>The Upanishads, p.19, 23.

truths and finds its true self in Brahman, the unlimited absolute without attributes, symbolized in the infinitely mirrored darkness of the Caves.

The polished stone of the Caves that prevents the union of the two flames implies the seeming truth (mitya) of the phenomenal universe, for stone - the granite of the Caves as well as the rock on which the wasp rests - represents the point beyond which human consciousness may not venture in its passage towards ultimate Reality.

The symbology of the Caves and Mountains, then, with its intricate and multiple meanings, determines the structure of A Passage to India, making it resemble, to a very large extent, the architecture of the Hindu temple. Thus, at the centre of the book is located a small, secret and dark inner core of being or 'nothingness', around which are clustered, like whirling electrons about an unmoving nucleus, all the apparent contradictions and the seemingly irreconcilable opposites of the day-to-day phenomenal universe.

The central Caves function, moreover, as a great echo-chamber so that its lights and shadows, shapes and sounds, snakes and stones, mesh and coalesce into one another, with the nonchalant ease and symbolic depth of the multitudinous gods of the Hindu pantheon. And they are propagated in rhythmic waves across the "hundred Indias" (PI, p.204) to the uttermost limits of the phenomenal universe and to resound in the ears of Hindu, Moslem and Christian alike, conveying bliss, ennui or nemesis according to the individual's capacity to apprehend and assimilate the fundamental 'nothingness' of all creation.

The circular form of the Caves, for instance, is echoed in the "overarching" (PI, p.10) Indian sky that presides over a spherical earth

containing hills with "bubbles" inside them, so that "outside the arch there always seemed an arch, beyond the remotest echo a silence."(PI,p.52 ) The Caves, then, invest the phenomenal universe, which is but a mirror-reflection of the boundless Noumenon, with an apparent infinitude, making the entire universe seem but a gigantic Marabar Cave.

## II

The endless circularities generated by the Caves, suggestive of the non-human infinitude of God, are criss-crossed by the profusion of phenomenal life - the same disorderliness so picturesquely depicted on the Gopura of the Hindu temple. Consequently, subtle and stubborn divisions are created, never to be fully resolved by a finite human consciousness. Yet such is human nature that it must at least attempt to bring order into chaos.

The book falls into three sections, comparable to the three big blocks of sound in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. 'Mosque' represents the season of cool spring, when instinct or emotion, symbolized in the full moon, holds sway, as in the Moslems. 'Caves' stands for the hot summer, when reason or intellect, symbolized by the parching sun, rules the earth, as do the Anglo-Indians. 'Temple' signifies the rainy autumn, when intuition or inspired love, symbolized by the fertilizing waters of Mau, achieves a partial triumph, as in the Hindus.

The sky, the water and the earth of the Indian landscape form yet another triad. The sky houses the sun and the moon, which are eternally at war with each other in Indian myth. The moon is daily deprived of one half of her sovereignty over time by her enemy, the sun, who swallows her up bit by bit every month.

Appropriately enough, it is when the full moon of instinct rides the Indian sky in 'Mosque' that Ronny and Adela, the two Anglo-Indian lovers, are momentarily able to suspend their reason and achieve "a spurious unity." (PI, p.86) The unity is spurious, because their inhibiting Western education with its false pride and emphasis on dry intellect stands in their way and prevents them from a total surrender to the dark gods of passion within them. Hence, the perpetual hostilities of the phenomenal universe, symbolized in the enmity between the sun's day and the moon's night threaten to rend them apart:

And the night that encircled them, absolute as it seemed, was itself a spurious unity, being modified by the gleams of the day that leaked up around the edges of the earth, and by the stars. (PI, p.86)

Towards the end of 'Mosque' the sun gains control over the moon and banishes human love by its burning power to destroy:

The sun was returning to his kingdom with power and without beauty - that was the sinister feature. If only there had been beauty! (PI, p. 111-2)

The sun is also creator and preserver of life and functions as a beacon at the crest of the Gopura, inviting men to annihilate human consciousness by the light of discrimination and attain a primal awareness of the universe. But then, just as false sentiment can defeat the full-fledged passion of the moon and yield only a spurious unity, so also dry-as-dust reason can lead to sterility:

Through excess of light, he [the sun] also failed to triumph, he also; in his yellowy-white overflow not only matter, but brightness itself lay drowned. (PI, p.112)

Water, which the sun sucks up along with everything else is not destroyed, only transformed into cloud and later returned to the earth

as rejuvenating rain to interpenetrate all being, organic and inorganic. Even the granite of the Marabar Caves is not exempt from its primal moistness; the cave walls are "smoother than windless water" and all visitors to the caves first circumnavigate "a puddle of water" to be "sucked in like water down a drain" into the Caves. Water stands, then, for all-embracing compassion and as such defines the nature of Mrs. Moore's spiritual exaltation under the spacious Indian sky:

In England the moon had seemed dead and alien; here she was caught in the shawl of night together with earth and all other stars. A sudden sense of unity, of kinship with the heavenly bodies, passed into the old woman and out, like water through a tank, leaving a strange freshness behind.  
(PI, p.30)

Unlike Ronny, Mrs. Moore can sense the common humanity of all men under dark and fair skins. Unlike Adela, she is prompted by no vulgar curiosity to see the "real India." (PI, p.25) Her heart and head are both in their places. Consequently, the very same night sky that came between Adela and Ronny, with their lack of proportion, endows Mrs. Moore with a unique Wordsworthian experience of unity in nature.

Water and all that it stands for dominates 'Temple'. Thus, "in the air thick with religion and rain" (PI, p.294), Godbole reaches upward through Krishna (the Hindu God of Love akin to Mrs. Moore's Christ) and succeeds in uniting Mrs. Moore and the wasp in himself. He discards his consciousness to such an extent that he can not tell himself apart from other human beings and even insects. He sees all organic life in the phenomenal universe as part of himself. He does not, however, delve deep enough into his unconscious, to render the stone - the granite of the Caves as well as the rock on which the wasp rests - a part of his existence. "Logic

and conscious effort" (PI, 282) force him back to a state of mind when he must perforce distinguish himself as an entity separate from the rest of the universe. He does not despair:

That was all he could do. How inadequate! But each according to his own capacities, and he knew that his own were small. (PI, p.286)

It is precisely because Godbole knows his limitations that he refuses to discuss the Caves at Fielding's garden party and even avoids making a trip to the Caves by doing such elaborate puja (worship and prayer) to his beloved Krishna that he misses the train. Worshipping Krishna as he does - a God with attributes (resembling the Allah of the Moslems with his ninety-nine names), the saguna Brahman of the Upanishads - he can not yet comprehend, let alone assimilate, the Ancient Night of the Caves - a Being without attributes, the nirguna Brahman of the Upanishads. He confesses as much to Fielding:

Good and evil are different, as their names imply. But in my humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great, as great as my feeble mind can grasp. (PI, p.175)

Consequently, total comprehension and realization of the unity of being for Godbole is as yet an unfulfilled desire, not a reality. Even as he reaches out towards it, his consciousness shrinks back from its neutrality. He accepts this insufficient expansion of his self, in all humility and perhaps with dignity:

'One old Englishwoman and one little, little wasp,' he thought, as he stepped out of his temple into the grey of a pouring wet morning. 'It does not seem much, still it is more than I am myself.' (PI, p.286)

Recognition of his incapacities goes hand in hand in Godbole with an

intuitive grasp of the metaphysical truth that the unmoving imperishable One can never come to him, for it includes him and the rest of the universe. How can that which includes everything and is everything go or come? Thus, Godbole knows that however long, humble and involved his song, his beloved Krishna will never come:

'Oh no, he refuses to come,' repeated Godbole . . . 'I say to Him, Come, come, come, come, come, come. He neglects to come.' (PI, p.78)

For Krishna, the God with attributes (saguna Brahman) is included in that Being without attributes (nirguna Brahman) represented by the 'nothingness' of the Caves. Is then the infinite 'absence' of Absolute Reality "a universe . . . not . . . comprehensible to our minds"? Yes. Must then the finite human mind give up its efforts to connect with Reality in despair? No. Though the finite human mind cannot grasp an infinitude of 'nothingness', it must persist in its attempt to connect, since

' . . . absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence, and we are therefore entitled to repeat, Come, come, come, come. (PI, p.175)

The passage to the infinitude of absence lies through the plenitude of presence. The best way to attain the inner core of the unconscious is to intensify consciousness to the point where it refines itself out of existence. And so, Godbole is justified in reaching out to the Being without attributes (nirguna Brahman) through the worship of Krishna, the God with attributes (saguna Brahman). Like the coiling worm of the Caves, he may be unable to complete the circle at present; but then all eternity lies before him and he will be "eternally watchful" of another moment when he may seek to identify himself with Reality.

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\*From a programme note by Forster for the dramatization of A Passage to India by Santha Rama Rau, the playwright.

In expanding oneself out to the Absolute through Krishna, consciousness is so refined as to pass through all barriers, especially the barrier of logic: 'God si love' reads one of the inscriptions at Mau, "composed in English to indicate his universality" (PI, p.284), a distorted echo of Mrs. Moore's logical "God . . . is . . . love." (PI, p.51) Even though Mrs. Moore senses a unity in nature, she conceives of the universe as divine order and not as unspeakable 'nothingness'. Indeed, she is not even conscious that a barrier of logic exists. She lacks the metaphysically adventurous spirit of Godbole, who can not only conceive and accept the indescribable 'nothingness' at the core of existence but also consciously strive towards self-abnegation, the surrender of his individuality in that 'nothingness'. Knowing that Krishna too is finally a mere seeming truth, just a token of the Absolute, he is not perturbed when the clay images of his beloved Krishna are cast into the waters of Mau; they are but

emblems of passage; a passage not easy, not now, not here,  
not to be apprehended except when it is unattainable. (PI, p.309)

God si love. Yes, that is the final message of India. The Indian mind, wary of even a God of love, a God with human attributes, can find total repose only in a non-human and infinite 'nothingness', without qualm and in silent serenity.

On the human level, the waters of Mau promise a world-embracing compassion, a promise to revoked with the return of summer, for the present is only a part of the ever-changing flux of existence. Thus, the Hindu festival of Gokulashtami is an attempt to apprehend the joy of the moment and celebrates the birth of Krishna, the God of love, in a "wild and sincere" spirit and all men love each other. (PI, p.299) Under a temporary benediction, as it were, of the sky in the form of rain and surrounded by the



waters of fertility, the boats of Aziz and Fielding collide, just as the earthen images of Krishna mingle with the stream. The collision symbolizes a momentary union of East and West, emotion and intellect, heart and head.

Earth, alternately baked by the sun and cooled by the rain, is the third element in the triad of earth, water and sky. It is both womb and grave. Out of its primordial slime have evolved all the myriad forms of life and into its muddy nakedness must they all return.

The triad of sky, water and earth is intermingled with the triad of animal, vegetable and mineral life. The animals of India lack "any sense of an interior" and will lodge as soon "inside a house as out"; houses to them are only "a normal growth of the eternal jungle, which alternately produces trees, houses, trees." (PI, p.35 ) A wood of trees often "seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving" (PI, p. 9 ) so that earth as well as water seem commingled in vegetable life. Vegetation also connects earth, water and air:

The toddy palms and neem trees and mangoes and peopls . . . rise from the gardens where ancient tanks nourish them . . . Seeking light and air . . . they soar above the lower deposit to greet one another with branches and beckoning leaves, and to build a city for the birds. (PI, p.10)

And above all is "the overarching sky", the sky that is blue like Krishna, the God of love, and so "settles everything - not only climates and seasons but when the earth shall be beautiful." (PI, p.10) The sky has also its eddies and swirls of air, which transmits sounds as well as echoes and sustains life, human and animal and vegetable. Air fills the book, then, from beginning to end, so that the entire novel seems an exercise in pranayama (the yogic art of breathing).

Earth, water, sky and air combine to form a grand stage, as it were, on which are enacted, in the brief interim between birth and death, the lives of human beings as well as plants and animals. And ceaselessly, the background is shifting: days and nights pass on their diurnal rounds, seasons flit by on swift-winged feet and the stars whirl on in their cyclic paths ad infinitum. Time, moreover, operates geologically, not historically, in this cosmos:

The Ganges . . . is not an ancient stream. Geology, looking further than religion, knows of a time when neither the stream nor the Himalayas that nourished it existed, and an ocean flowed over the holy places of Hindustan. (PI, p.123)

Placed against such a stupendous setting, people are reduced to the stature of dwarfs, their deeds and misdeeds, virtues, faults and absurdities pale into insignificance, their politics and the differences arising from it become dust-heaps of illusion. For, behind all this multitudinousness, mess and confusion of the phenomenal universe is the Noumenon, that which describes all while itself remaining indescribable. Manifesting itself from within the ur-womb of all creation, hidden in the inmost cavity of all being, it is at once the spectacle, the spectator and the manipulator of the cosmic dance; centred in its 'nothingness' it apprehends no other reality but itself. It is the puppeteer par excellence, who pulls the strings that motivate the dolls and yet remains indifferent to the show, aware that the strings, the dolls and the show are all included in its own being.

This complex idea that has its origin in the Caves is most beautifully echoed in the untouchable, who pulls the punkah in the courtroom where Aziz is tried:

Pulling the rope towards him, relaxing it rhythmically, sending swirls of air over others, receiving none himself, he seemed apart from human destinies, a male fate . . . The Punkah-wallah . . . scarcely knew that he existed and did not understand why the Court was fuller than usual, indeed he did not know it was fuller than usual, didn't even know he worked a fan, though he thought he pulled a rope. (PI, p.212)

The swirls of air from the rhythmically relaxed Punkah are carried all over the courtroom to become the common respiration of all the races, Hindu, Moslem and Christian, but they do not remind them that, in the final analysis, they are all one indèscribable 'nothingness'. They function, therefore, like the clay images of Krishna flung into the waters of Mau, as emblems of a passage not yet realized.

### III

Lacking an awareness of the infinitude of absence, the three prominent races in the book, the Moslems, the Anglo-Indians and the Hindus are never able to unite. They are divided not only from other races but also from people of their own races. And ultimately, they are divided within themselves: "The fissures in the Indian soil are infinite." (PI, p.288)

Aziz, whose name runs the gamut from A to Z as if to encompass all the divisions, religious and racial, inherent in the Moslems, is at once superstitious and scientific, passionate and rational, political and non-political, practical and visionary, perpetually at war with himself, Hindus bore and disgust him and Hinduism, with its dark confusion of cow-dung and double-talk, compares unfavourably with the hard gem-like brilliance of his beloved Islam. Anglo-Indians amuse and infuriate him by turns so that he finds it impossible to make true friends among them;

they are all, including his 'dear Cyril', subtly infected with sahibdom, never letting him forget that they are the ruling whites and that he is the subject native. Mrs. Moore is the sole exception with whom he can communicate in the lingua franca of the heart. Other than this brief interlude, his only escape is in poetry that extols the heroic past of Islam, with which he delights his compatriots:

He recited a poem by Ghalib. It had no connection with anything that had gone before but it came from his heart and spoke to theirs. (PI, p.102)

The "sad beauty" of the song of Ghalib greets "ridiculous Chandrapore, where every street and house was divided against itself" and tells her that she is "a continent and a unity." (PI, p.103) Essentially, it is the same message that resounded in Godbole's miming of the milkmaid's song, inviting Krishna to 'Come'. Aziz and the other Moslems, however, have not intensified their consciousness beyond "pathos" to grasp the fundamental unity behind everything:

They were overwhelmed by its pathos; pathos, they agreed, is the highest quality of art; a poem should touch the hearer with a sense of his weakness. (PI, p.102)

Lacking the strength of Godbole, who can serenely contemplate self-abnegation in a central 'nothingness', Aziz and his fellow-Moslems can only be soothed, not inspired, by Ghalib. His song sounds "not as a call to battle", a battle in which all opposites may be reconciled in a unity of being, but as "a calm assurance" that "India is one; Moslem; always had been; an assurance that lasted until they looked out of the door" (PI, p.102) into the mess and confusion of the phenomenal universe. Consequently, their hearts and heads are always at loggerheads. None of them, including Aziz, ever subsume both heart and head to a condition of the soul when the unconscious

may unfold to reveal that which is latent in the inmost cavity of being. And so, whenever the Marabar Caves are mentioned, their reaction is either a shrug or a yawn.

The typical Anglo-Indian reaction to the mysteries of India, its art and religion, is a mixture patronising contempt and reluctant tolerance and comes out very well in Ronny's oracular pronouncements:

'We're here to do justice and keep the peace . . . India isn't a drawing room . . . We're not pleasant in India and we don't intend to be pleasant. We've something more important to do.' (PI, p.50)

It is the attitude bred by the British Public School, which equips Englishmen for the world with "well-developed bodies, fairly well-developed minds, and undeveloped hearts" so that they seldom break their Sawstonian postures of defence against contamination by the heathen. "It is not that the Englishman can't feel - it is that he is afraid to feel"<sup>11</sup> - a fear that stands condemned in Mrs. Moore's reproach of her son's priggishness:

One touch of heart - not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart - would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different situation. (PI, p.50)

As it is, the kindness that bespeaks the heart is conspicuous by its absence in the rulers of Moslem and Hindu India. The Collector Turton, though no racist, believes only in law and order. Major Callender confines himself to his surgical duties. McBryde, the police Inspector is outspoken in his belief of the superiority of the whites over the blacks at Aziz's trial. Anglo-Indian women are worse than their male counterparts. Aziz and his friends believe that it takes only six months for an Englishwoman to lose her humanity in India. Unburdened with duties or children, with empty hearts and minds, they while away their time in gossip and abuse of the

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<sup>11</sup> E.M. Forster, Abinger Harvest (London, Edward Arnold & Co., 1965), p.13.

natives. They are the chief reason for the dismal failure of 'The Bridge Party', which, instead of bridging the gap between the rulers and the ruled, only drives in the wedge of separation deeper than ever between them:

The Englishmen had intended to play up better, but had been prevented from doing so by their women-folk, whom they had to attend, provide with tea, advise about dogs, etc., (PI, p.46)

Such attitudes make even Christianity, the professed religion of the Anglo-Indians, a hollow mockery. Ronny, for instance, approves of religion only so long as it endorses his patriotic zeal; he objects when it tries to influence his life. Indeed, the true Anglo-Indian hymn is the British National Anthem, inviting God to participate in nationalist politics, and demanding a stiff and solemn posture, as if the listeners expected their King to pay an unscheduled visit any moment. In a land saturated with religion, such shallowness virtually guarantees the defeat of any attempt to bridge the gap between heart and heart.

The Hindus, though less affected than Moslems and Anglo-Indians by racial and political cleavages, have yet their social divisions, their castes and sects and sub-sects, with their wheels within wheels of ancient discriminations. Beyond caste, they have other circles, which include their sadhus and sannyasins,

people who wore nothing but a loincloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives in knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll. (PI, p.37-8)

During the festival at Mau, the cleavage is between "Brahmin and non-Brahmin; Moslems and English were quite out of the running, and sometimes not mentioned for days." (PI, p.287) Even religion is not exempt from these pervasive divisions:

Hinduism, so solid from a distance, is riven into sects and clans, which radiate and join, and change their names according to aspect from which they are approached. (PI, p.288)

When representatives of the three cloven races get together, as during the expedition to the Marabar Caves, the problems posed by food alone are staggering. Godbole cannot eat meat, Aziz no ham, the English need whisky, soda and port. Aziz, in organizing this miniature 'bridge' party, challenges "the spirit of the Indian earth which tries to keep men in compartments." (PI, p. 127)

How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried but they remain in exile. The important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who cannot find their way home. India knows of their trouble . . . She calls 'Come' through her hundred mouths . . . But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal. (PI, p.135)

Come. It is Godbole's appeal to the unresponsive God, echoed and multiplied a hundred-fold from the cavities scattered all over the Indian sub-continent. An appeal, therefore, to travel back in memory to that imperishable One from which we all come and to which we must all return.

Fielding, Adela and Mrs. Moore try to respond to that appeal.

Fielding is free of racial prejudice and travels light like "a holy man minus his holiness." (PI, p.118) He extends his hand in friendship to everyone in all sincerity. He too gives a 'bridge' party at his home and it fares better than the other two parties, chiefly because of his warmth and friendliness. As a liberal humanist, he confronts the darkness of India with Grecian clarity of thought:

The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence - a creed ill-suited to Chandrapore, but he had come out too late to lose it. (PI, p.62)

Yet, only by losing his Hellenist-cum-humanist notions and abandoning himself to the primeval memories churning within his unconscious, can he hope to fully respond to the appeal of India and to connect in radical sense with her teeming humanity. He does not suffer from an undeveloped mind or heart, but from an undeveloped soul. He is curious about Hinduism as an astronomer may be curious about the uncharted seas of the moon. But curiosity is not enough; it cannot penetrate the dark mysteries of the World Mountain. Only a consciousness mature enough to transcend all barriers, logic among them, can come to rest in the innermost cavity of being, and Fielding does not possess it. His is the tragic portion of a man who has found such a good servant in reason that he has become its enamoured slave:

Great is information, and she shall prevail. It was the last moment of light, and as he gazed at the Marabar Hills, they seemed to move graciously towards him like a queen, and their charm became the sky's . . . Lovely, exquisite moment, but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself; it was as if someone had told him there was such a moment and he was obliged to believe. And he felt dubious and discontented suddenly, and wondered whether he was really and truly a successful human being. (PI, p.187)

This vague discontent and the mystifying message of 'nothing' from the caves he does not penetrate are all that Fielding can know of the fantasia of the unconscious.

Adela Quested is the queer and cautious girl who comes out to India to see if she is really in love with Ronny. She "hates mysteries." (PI, p. 68) When she undertakes to see the "real India" (PI, p. 25), therefore, all unknowingly she ventures into very deep waters and discovers to her consternation that a tourist's vision of India can involve her in an encounter with the Ancient Night of the Caves. She too has been taught



like other Britishers that feeling is bad form and that one must bottle up one's emotions. She recognizes this to be a mistake and determines not to emulate the other Anglo-Indians in this respect: "I won't be bottled up." (PI, p.133) More as an act of bravado than one of real courage she shuns the 'chastity belt' of her inhibitions and takes a 'trip' into the dark 'bottles' of the Marabar Caves, only to be sent screaming back to the safety of the civil station.

What happens to her in the cave? Nothing. Literally speaking, no incident takes place, for Aziz is not even near the cave she enters. Psychically, she obtains a glimpse into the everlasting no, the cosmic negation that lies coiled at the bottom of the unconscious. Clinically, she suffers from sexual hysteria. She has been extremely nervous all day; just before she enters the cave, she suddenly realizes that she is not in love with Ronny and simultaneously notices that Aziz is handsome in a dark Oriental fashion. She is, therefore, in a highly excited state when she starts the usual echo by scratching the cave walls with her finger nail. Her tension snaps under the cave's "ou-boum" and she is precipitated into the gloom in gloom of the unconscious, in which she sees a "shadow" at the entrance of the cave bottling her up; she reacts in "panic and emptiness." (PI, p.189) Her repressed mind interprets her experience in sexual terms; she feels as if she has been raped, entered into and ravished of her personality by the "shadow", that which overshadows everything else by its uniqueness. The "emptiness" that results from a momentary draining away of her personality and the "panic" of being infinitely expanded and compressed at once, inspire in Adela a vague humiliation:

She felt that it was her crime, until her intellect, re-awakening, pointed out to her that she was inaccurate here and set her again upon her sterile round. (PI, p.190)

Even Mrs. Moore does not explain to her jaded personality the significance of the incident in the caves, for it is incommunicable. Hence, the echo flourishes "raging up and down like a nerve in the faculty of her hearing, and the noise in the cave, so unimportant intellectually, was prolonged over the surface of her life." (PI, p.190) Even her great act of courage in the courtroom, when she testifies to Aziz's innocence, is somehow robbed of all emotion, as if she looked on it from an ironic height. And so, while relieving the Oriental mind, she chills it by a subtle insincerity:

Truth is not truth in that exacting land, unless there go with it kindness and more kindness and again kindness, unless the Word that was with God also is God. And the girl's sacrifice - so creditable according to Western notions - was rightly rejected, because though it came from her heart, it did not include her heart. (PI, p.238)

Adela, like Fielding, is hampered by an intellectuality that cannot progress beyond words to a bewildering yet haunting wordlessness. Hence, when she seeks with his help to give a rational explanation of what happened to her in the cave with words like "hallucination" and "telepathy", "a friendliness as of dwarfs" is in the air and their words are followed

by a curious backwash as though the universe had displaced itself to fill up a tiny void, or as though they had seen their own gestures from an immense height - dwarfs talking, shaking hands and assuring each other that they stood on the same footing of insight. (PI, p.257)

Mrs. Moore, unlike Adela, does not turn away from the "shadow", but meets it face to face. Her character undergoes a transformation into something rich and strange, in which all her loyalties to family, race and religion are swept away. By conviction and upbringing a staunch Christian,

she begins to feel the change in her from the instant she meets Aziz in the mosque and is dubbed by him an honorary Oriental. She jokes with Aziz: "We shall be Moslems together." (PI, p.131) But she moves steadily towards a vision akin to that of the Hindu Godbole. His song disturbs her equanimity as it does Adela's naiveté. She too feels like Adela that she has been enclosed in a cocoon of conventionality all her life. Unlike the younger woman, however, she does not resent her condition and complain of being bottled up. She accepts her condition apathetically. The more she is in India, the less benignly Christian her God becomes. When she enters the cave, she is discontented with "poor little talkative Christianity." And she encounters a primordial 'nothing' that includes life as well as death in the cave's echo, an echo that reduces her Christian doctrine of "Let there be light" to "It is finished" and then to "ou-boum" (PI, p.149)

Coming at a moment when she chanced to be fatigued, it had managed to murmur, 'Pathos, piety, courage - they exist, but are identical with filth. Everything exists, nothing has value.' If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same - 'ou-boum'. If one had spoken with the tongues of angels and pleaded for all the unhappiness and misunderstanding in the world, past, present and to come . . . it would amount to the same, the serpent would descend and return to the ceiling. (PI, p.148)

The serpent, an archetypal symbol, serves as a mute comment on the seeming truth of all except that Reality which yields but a characterless echo.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>The serpent also echoes Adela's experience on her way to the Caves. Adela sees a snake which on closer examination turns out to be a twisted tree stump. This seems to be Forster's version of one of the classic examples of maya or seeming truth. For, a piece of rope lying by the way-side perceived as a snake is Sankara's famous example of maya in his exposition of the Vedanta philosophy. See Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India (Cleveland, World Publishing Co., 1956), p.19n.

Totally unprepared by culture or religion for such a vision - a vision, so to speak, "with its back turned"<sup>13</sup> - Mrs. Moore retreats into a cave of her own "where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time, the twilight of the double vision in which so many elderly people are involved." (PI, p.202) She stands, in short, in the dim-lit corridor connecting the daylight and confusion of the Gopura with the darkness and simplicity of the garbha-griha. Under different circumstances and background, she might have plunged into that annihilating darkness and achieved the limitlessness of which Godbole knows. She alone among the Anglo-Indians meets the "shadow" face to face, though she sees without understanding. And so, she is finally linked up in Godbole's consciousness with the wasp as he attempts, through a desperate contortion of his body in dance, a spiritual ravishment of the unknown in the temple at Mau.

As she journeys across India homeward bound for England, she sees the fortress town of Asirgarh at sunset through her train-window:

The train in its descent through the Vindyas, described a semi-circle round Asirgarh. What could she connect it with except its own name? Nothing. But it had looked at her twice and seemed to say: 'I do not vanish.' (PI, p.204)

Like the train and like the coiling worm of the caves, Mrs. Moore has not completed her circle and her incapacity is reflected in her inability to realize the unity that includes everything. She cannot connect Asirgarh with anything in her consciousness, unlike Godbole who links her with the wasp. That is her tragedy, to have emerged from her plunge into the sea of her unconscious without any redeeming pearl of infinite compassion. She dies at sea and though her grave is unmarked, her spirit becomes a

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<sup>13</sup>Forster, The Paris Review Interview, p.27.

part of the Indian earth. She becomes a legend among Indians, who associate her name with Aziz's triumphant acquittal and transform it by some queer spiritual alchemy of their own into "Esmis Esmoor", a mantra, a hypnotic chant of thanksgiving-cum-invocation to the goddess who has mysteriously influenced Adela's testimony and saved their countryman Aziz. (PI, p.219) As mantra, Mrs.Moore's name crosses the barrier of logic, which even Godbole is not able to transcend, and so serves as a reminder that the flight of the human soul into the unknown must be on the wings of the non-rational. Subsequent to the trial, a temporary truce is declared between the Hindus and the Moslems and "Esmis Esmoor" - an expression of Mrs.Moore's spirit in an incantatory form - penetrates the partitions of India to suggest that ultimately there are no disparities, everything and everyone being equally valueless in the presence of the naked being within the echoing cave. Finally, "Esmis Esmoor" has its own tremendous echo and parallel in the chant

Radhakrishna Radhakrishna  
 Krishnaradha Radhakrishna  
 Radhakrishna Radhakrishna  
 Radhakrishna Radhakrishna (PI, p.306)

of the worshippers in the temple at Mau, compelling even Aziz, who despises Hinduism, to hear in the insistence "almost certainly, the syllables of salvation that had sounded during his trial at Chandrapore." (PI, p.308)

Towards the end, the failure of friendship between Aziz and Fielding strikes a seemingly discordant note:

But the horses didn't want it - they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it sending up rocks through which the horses must pass in single file; the temples, the tanks, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath; they didn't want it, they said in

their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said,  
'No, not there.' (PI, p.317)

It is not a last despairing wail over le condition humaine, not a final adieu to hope. It is merely a quiet acknowledgement of the enduring Welt-schmerz and a calm determination to persist in attempting to connect against all odds. The failure of love between the Englishman and the Indian is but a minor episode in the mess and confusion of the phenomenal universe depicted on the slopes of the Gopura, and does not belie the naked being of unity within the inner cell or garbha-griha. Both Aziz and Fielding have not responded to the centripetal pull of the primal force of creation. Hence, the phenomenal universe itself seems to rise up in revolt against their union. Only by coming to terms with the non-rational within themselves can they hope to be really united in the Noumenon. The horses are libido symbols, emblems of psychic energy derived from primitive biological urges. By defying their riders' desire to come together, the horses drive home their riders' incapacity to penetrate Mother India, a penetration neither possible nor desirable until men can hearken to her call and understand her echoes and know themselves to be but points of contact within that Great Circle called God.

The myriad echoes that emanate in rhythmic waves from the central Caves join, separate, distort, accelerate and amplify each other endlessly, to offer a type of beauty which music attains in its final expression:

Expansion . . . Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out. When the symphony is over we feel that the notes and tunes composing it have been liberated, they have found in the rhythm of the whole their individual freedom.<sup>14</sup>

For the echoes are all-pervasive and irresistible. They spell nightmare

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<sup>14</sup>E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel(Middlesex, Penguin, 1962), p170

and hysteria, uncertainty and pain, to those who stop their ears. They evoke dreams of harmony and peace, assurance and ecstasy, in those who hearken to their call. And their common refrain is that for all our apparent differences we are in reality One. Not only are we fused together each to each as human beings, but we are also a blend of earth, water, sky, and air; of mud, temples, stones and mosques; of trees, birds, monkeys and flies; even "of shoes and ships and sealing-wax, of cabbages and kings." Psychically as well as physically, we are one indivisible whole and it is reason's denial of our common root deep in the womb of the Mother Earth that prevents our growth skywards to the sun of enlightenment (Gnana) and causes us to rule ourselves and our hundred Indias with such futility and blindness as to produce in every era dictators and tyrants who set brothers against brothers and bloody human history for generations. It is our prime responsibility, therefore, to attempt to integrate ourselves and to base our civilization on that which we have in common with the rest of the universe. In other words, we must try to effect a 'passage' like Godbole to the ageless enigma that resides in the inmost cavity of our being. When this passage is an accomplished fact, then and only then, shall the poet's prophecy become a reality:

All these hearts as of fretted children shall be soothed

All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall  
be told,

All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hooked  
and linked together.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (N.Y., Modern Library), p. 324.

## EPILOGUE

### "A SHY CRABLIKE SIDEWAYS MOVEMENT"

"Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light,  
And precipices show untrodden green." - John Keats

"Not by becoming better," declared Forster on the eve of The Second World War in an essay called "What I Believe",

but by ordering and distributing his native goodness will Man shut up Force in its box, and so gain time to explore the universe and to set his mark upon it worthily. At present he explores it at odd moments, when Force is looking the other way, and his divine creativeness appears as a trivial by-product, to be scrapped as soon as the drums beat and the bombers hum.<sup>1</sup>

It was a powerful, if quiet, affirmation of personal faith in the unassailability of Art that creates and beckons to Order, a faith that had irradiated all his fiction. It was also a profound, yet subtle, appeal for public confidence in those men of imagination, who "have always insisted on behaving creatively under the shadow of the sword", doing "their artistic and scientific and domestic stuff for the sake of doing it" and inviting us to emulate their example even under the shadow of the aeroplanes.<sup>2</sup>

More than three decades have passed since Forster made his stand. Our twentieth century has less than a third of its course to run. Both its groundswells and its pitfalls have come into sharper focus than ever before.

On the outside, we are witness to quite astounding physical changes in the world around us. Our Columbus has left the imprints of his space shoe on the dust of our satellite moon. We derive benefit from nuclear energy and IBM computers, X-rays and Radar, preserved bread and frozen juice. We have our democracies and dictatorships, capitalist economies and socialist policies, insurance premiums and income-tax returns.

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<sup>1</sup>E.M.Forster, Two Cheers for Democracy, p.84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.81.



On the inside, we are witness to equally alarming psychological changes in the world within us. The wars have so disillusioned us that we are no longer ensconced, even in our dreams, in the world of our fore-fathers, where objects and images were stable and secured. Movements, trends, groups, masses continue to flourish in our midst. We meet, march, join, tell ourselves that we belong - in vain. For, we are aware every moment that we are alone. We are distraught, taciturn, repressed, lacking the immediacy and force of feeling - in brief, we lack poetry.

We should acknowledge, therefore, the validity of Forster's high claim for Art as the only promoter of order in a disorderly universe. We should respond whole-heartedly to the inspired lives of committed men, learn that "Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion"<sup>3</sup> and aspire to be included in "the aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky", whose temple is the Holiness of the Heart's Affections and whose kingdom is the wide-open world.<sup>4</sup>

Then, we might be granted a vision of the rainbow bridge of poetry like the boy in Forster's short story "The Celestial Omnibus." Or we might sleep in peace under the stars like Stephen and his daughter. Or we might attain the proportion that sages know like Margaret.

We might even cultivate antennae of awareness like Godbole and grasp how our time on earth may not just be endured or diverted but actively embodied and possessed, so that, however alone and unbelonging our 'I' may be, it can still break through, break in and find something like the Kingdom of Heaven waiting there.

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<sup>3</sup>Forster, "Anonymity: an Enquiry", Two Cheers for Democracy, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>Forster, "What I Believe", Two Cheers for Democracy, p. 81.

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