

## Central Washington University ScholarWorks@CWU

---

All Master's Theses

Master's Theses

---

1968

# E.M. Forster's Short Stories

Joan Meredith Kerns  
*Central Washington University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kerns, Joan Meredith, "E.M. Forster's Short Stories" (1968). *All Master's Theses*. 845.  
<https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd/845>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact [pingfu@cwu.edu](mailto:pingfu@cwu.edu).

57

E. M. FORSTER'S SHORT STORIES



A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Joan Meredith Kerns  
August 1968

LD

5771.3

K41e



SPECIAL  
COLLECTION

171189

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

---

H. L. Anshutz, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

---

Anthony Canedo

---

Frank M. Collins

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF CRITICISM . . . . .	1
Introduction . . . . .	1
Review of Criticism . . . . .	2
II. VOLUME ONE OF THE SHORT STORIES . . . . .	11
"The Celestial Omnibus" . . . . .	11
"The Story of a Panic" . . . . .	20
"The Curate's Friend" . . . . .	28
"Other Kingdom" . . . . .	33
"The Other Side of the Hedge" . . . . .	38
"The Road from Colonus" . . . . .	43
III. VOLUME TWO: <u>THE ETERNAL MOMENT AND OTHER STORIES</u> . . . . .	49
"The Point of It". . . . .	49
"Mr. Andrews". . . . .	57
Other Stories . . . . .	61
"The Machine Stops" . . . . .	65
IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	78
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	81
APPENDIX . . . . .	84

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF CRITICISM

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper will discuss E. M. Forster's short stories, using George Meredith's theory of the comic spirit and plot as a basis for critical analysis. In addition, it will suggest that some of Forster's characteristic ideas, which may appear in his later novels, occur first, and in developed form, in his short stories.

Chapter I will first present a representative selection of current criticism of the short stories, citing from books by Frederick C. Crews, K. W. Gransden, J. B. Beer, John Morris, Wilfred Stone and Harry T. Moore. Then it will introduce Meredith's theory, which says that

instead of recording things as they are, the comic spirit focuses on human egoism and sees that it is justly punished. The comic plot assumes the function of a moral scourge, a purposeful agent of retribution against all forms of self-importance.

Chapters II and III will apply this formula to each story in turn, to discover whether the comic framework will in fact provide a suitable basis for critical discussion. If the main

characters demonstrate a strong sense of self-importance, a disposition to mold all those whose lives they touch into their own narrow patterns, then they should become targets of that just retribution Meredith's formula requires.

Chapter I will also begin to identify Forster's characteristic themes and ideas, focusing first on his concept of Love and the necessity of "connecting." Chapters II and III will continue this process, identifying, among other themes, Forster's dedication to Nature, particular places, Greek mythology, the ancient Greek ideal of the balanced life, and the importance of the individual. Moreover, some of his ideas on Truth, Love, and Imagination will be indicated, plus his dislike of modern civilization and distrust of science, and his plea against the personalized life patterns which result from those pressures.

Chapter IV will present a brief summary.

## II. REVIEW OF CRITICISM

The number of respected and respectable critics who have written about E. M. Forster and his works is considerable--the list includes Lionel Trilling, Virginia Woolf, I. A. Richards, Peter Burra, and Rose Macaulay, among others; the form for their discussions varies from book-length dissections to essays and articles in scholarly journals. Yet, for all this body of criticism, comparatively little of it has

dealt with Forster's dozen short stories, or, indeed, with much of his other literary output except the novels. The general climate of opinion about the short stories seems to be: "Oh dear yes, he did write some short stories"--in a tone which makes it quite clear the critic wishes he hadn't, but since he did, one is obligated to mention them and then hurry on to more congenial topics.

An example of this attitude is Frederick C. Crews, author of E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism, published in 1962. According to other critics, or so the dust jacket says, this book is an excellent, pointed study of Forster's growth as an artist. In it, in the course of 180 pages of closely-reasoned analysis of Forster's background, influences on his writing, and each of his five novels, Crews devotes two pages to a discussion of the short stories; he does, to be fair, mention them in passing and in footnotes several other times. Since the two major pages discuss the stories from the standpoint of whether Forster is more influenced by Apollonian or Dionysian theories of mythology, they serve only as examples for the other material, all included in a longer chapter devoted to "The Limitations of Mythology."<sup>1</sup>

K. W. Gransden's E. M. Forster, also published in 1962, devotes a chapter to the short stories, characterizing them as part of "a vogue for their kind of animistic reaction against material progress and urban convention," "curious" and "touching."<sup>2</sup>



On the other hand, J. B. Beer, in The Achievement of E. M. Forster (1962), spends a considerable amount of time, proportionately, on a discussion of the short stories and Forster's other work. His attitude is sympathetic, and when he quotes Professor Trilling's strictures upon the stories, he does so only to have a point of view to disagree with.

Lionel Trilling points out that Forster is a Hellenist, not a "classicist," but also remarks, "Surely the Greek myths made too deep an impression on Forster." Elsewhere he complains that Forster's mythology is inappropriate to his theme. "It is the most literary and conventionalized of all mythologies and in modern hands the most likely to seem academic and arch, and it generates a tone which is at war with the robust invention of the stories."<sup>3</sup>

Not so, says Beer; Trilling cannot be thinking of the real myths, which are vigorous and robust enough to survive any matching handling of them. His comment "must surely spring from a memory of pale academic pastiches of Greek mythology rather than from the myths themselves."<sup>4</sup> Still, Beer does consider the stories to be flawed, and of interest mostly because they foreshadow the themes that will emerge more fully and be more artistically handled in the later novels.

John Morris, who wrote the first section of the revised edition of Rex Warner's E. M. Forster (1950; 1960)--the section which deals with the short stories and Forster's other work besides the novels--says:

Mr. Forster's short stories have been insufficiently praised, and the student of his work is strongly advised not to neglect them and indeed to read at least a few before beginning the novels. Apart from their intrinsic

merit they are exceedingly interesting in that the main themes of the novels, although in a more dreamlike and remote form, begin to appear; are indeed already the basis of the author's view of life.<sup>5</sup>

Returning to the more critical view, Wilfred Stone, in The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E. M. Forster (1966), characterizes them as "youthful productions," dealing with the problems of youth--

problems of revolt and belief, of self-justification and self-discovery. . . . here is the unformed author seeking his identity . . . awkward, self-conscious, and amateurish. . . .<sup>6</sup>

And Harry T. Moore, in E. M. Forster (1965), says that "the outstanding characteristic of these stories . . . [is] they are almost entirely given over to fantasy, mythology, magic, the supernatural."<sup>7</sup>

Here is, I think, the basic reason most critics are so dubious about the intrinsic worth of the short stories (Morris excepted). It seems incomprehensible to such serious-minded men that the author of a realistic masterpiece like Passage to India should have wasted so much of his time on fantasy, mythology, and the supernatural. The easiest way to explain this seeming inconsistency is to think of the stories as things he wrote as a young man, representing something he had to get out of his system before he could settle down to more serious writing.

It is true that the stories are the work of a young man, for they were all written considerably before the First World

War, although the first collection was not published until 1914.<sup>8</sup> However, as most of the critics point out, the stories do in some measure show "the basis of the author's view of life." I hope to show that Forster's view of life was already well-formed when he wrote these stories. Rather than the stories foreshadowing the novels, the novels but expand the characteristic Forsterian concerns seen quite clearly in his early work.

The main difficulty in critical evaluation centers in the selection of a proper frame of classification for the short stories. Are they, for example, to be considered as straight fantasy? Forster likes the idea of fantasy, "of muddling up the actual and the impossible until the reader isn't sure which is which."<sup>9</sup> He has sometimes, he says in "A Book That Influenced Me," tried to do that in his own writing. However, the stories are more than that; they combine fantasy with the social, domestic comedy that Forster's novels are noted for, plus heavy elements of mythology and moral indignation. Forster says of himself, in the essay "The Challenge of Our Time":

Temperamentally, I am an individualist. Professionally, I am a writer, and my books emphasize the importance of personal relationships and the private life, for I believe in them.<sup>10</sup>

The necessity of finding a critical theory to encompass these qualities and provide a sound basis for intelligent discussion of all the stories seems to have proved an impossible

task for even the most devoted admirers of Forster's literature. Beer comes closest when he says:

The stories have one aim in common: the presentation of some serious truth, within a body of fantasy, against the background of contemporary life. Again and again, one particular method is used for this. Domestic comedy provides the running plot but encloses some fantastic incident which is intended, by allegorical significance, to give meaning to the whole story.<sup>11</sup>

However, Crews, in the work previously cited, provides, though he does not realize it, the perfect answer to this dilemma of classification. He is trying to define "The Comic Spirit" in Forster's novels by relating it to George Meredith's "popular theory of comedy." He quotes Meredith as follows:

The comic spirit conceives a definite situation for a number of characters, and rejects all accessories in the exclusive pursuit of them and their speech. For being a spirit, he hunts the spirit in men; vision and ardor constitute his merit; he has not a thought of persuading you to believe in him.<sup>12</sup>

Crews goes on:

Instead of recording things as they are, Meredith's comic spirit focuses on human egoism and sees that it is justly punished. The comic plot assumes the function of a moral scourge, a purposeful agent of retribution against all forms of self-importance.<sup>13</sup> (Underlining mine.)

I submit that if Forster's neglected short stories were to be regarded in this guise, as fundamentally demonstrations of Meredith's theory, many, if not most, of the critical problems attending them would disappear. (Since it is generally agreed that Meredith had a considerable influence on Forster's early development as a writer, this is not an unreasonable assumption.)

In addition, the main point of Beer's analysis should be kept in mind in any discussion of the short stories; that is, that the common aim of the stories is the presentation of some serious truth. Whether that truth is based on a background of reality or fantasy is really irrelevant, as long as the truth emerges. And what is the truth Forster is trying to put across in his short stories? That all people who base their lives on their own overweening self-importance, all those who fail to "connect" with others, all those who refuse to recognize that Love is of paramount importance in the world, will eventually be punished for their lack, their deliberate avoidance of emotional contact with other human beings.

Considering all these factors, and without pushing the analogy with the comic mode too hard if at times it doesn't seem to fit exactly, this composite formula will provide a working thesis for discussion for Forster's short stories. (No critic must push an analogy too much, or he runs the risk of falling into what Forster defines as the "wrong kind" of critical activity. It is perfectly legitimate, he says in "The Raison d'Etre of Criticism in the Arts," to construct esthetic theories, "though to the irreverent eyes of some of us they appear as travelling laboratories, beds of Procrustes whereon Milton is too long and Keats too short."<sup>14</sup> "The danger [is] that education may lead to knowledge instead of wisdom, and criticism to nothing but criticism. . . .")<sup>15</sup>

Before embarking upon such a discussion, however, it would perhaps be well to give some clearer idea of what Forster means by Love, since the word itself, as he says, has been so vitiated through overuse that it holds almost no meaning for the modern reader. Love, for Forster, encompasses "the Holiness of the Heart's Affection";<sup>16</sup> it is built upon the rock of loyalty in personal relationships; it "feeds upon freedom, and lives."<sup>17</sup> In Aspects of the Novel, he suggests that we should describe the whole bundle of human emotions--sex, affection, friendship, patriotism, mysticism--as love, "and regard [it] as the fifth great experience through which human beings have to pass." (The other four are birth, death, food and sleep.) "When human beings love," he goes on, "they try to get something. They also try to give something, and this double aim makes love more complicated than food or sleep." It is a mixture of "generosity and expectation,"<sup>18</sup> and, since it is such a complicated aspect of life, it is only logical that any writer who tries to deal with love fully, as Forster surely does, is bound to produce some complicated work in the process.

The following chapter, covering the first collection of short stories, will attempt to disentangle some of those complications.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Frederick C. Crews, E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism (Princeton, New Jersey, 1962), pp. 129-130.

<sup>2</sup>K. W. Gransden, E. M. Forster (New York, 1962), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>J. B. Beer, The Achievement of E. M. Forster (London, 1962), p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>John Morris, in Rex Warner's E. M. Forster (London, 1960), pp. 8-9.

<sup>6</sup>Wilfred Stone, The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E. M. Forster (Stanford, California, 1966), p. 122.

<sup>7</sup>Harry T. Moore, E. M. Forster (New York, 1965), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>They were published separately before then, in various periodicals, but no one knows the exact date of composition; Forster himself only says "previous to the First World War." Introduction to The Collected Tales, p. v.

<sup>9</sup>E. M. Forster, "A Book That Influenced Me," in Two Cheers for Democracy (New York, 1938), p. 222.

<sup>10</sup>Forster, "The Challenge of Our Time," Two Cheers, p. 55.

<sup>11</sup>Beer, Achievement of Forster, pp. 50-51.

<sup>12</sup>George Meredith, in Crews, Forster: Perils of Humanism, pp. 99-100.

<sup>13</sup>Crews, Forster: Perils of Humanism, p. 100.

<sup>14</sup>Forster, "The Raison d'Être of Criticism in the Arts," Two Cheers, p. 108.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Forster, "What I Believe," Two Cheers, p. 74.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>18</sup>Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927), pp. 47-51.

## CHAPTER II

### VOLUME ONE OF THE SHORT STORIES

#### I. "THE CELESTIAL OMNIBUS"

The Celestial Omnibus, Forster's first collection of short stories, published in 1914, includes, besides the title story, "The Story of a Panic," "The Other Side of the Hedge," "Other Kingdom," "The Curate's Friend," and "The Road from Colonus." "The Celestial Omnibus" demonstrates better than almost any other some of the points in the preceding section: the difficulty critics proceeding by ordinary methods have in analysing Forster's stories and the applicability of the comic mode to those stories.

The variation in critical evaluation can be seen in the following examples.

J. B. Beer, in The Achievement of E. M. Forster:

"The Celestial Omnibus" is a fantasy about a boy who finds himself able to travel on an omnibus to a scene closely resembling one in Wagner's Rheingold. The omnibus comes to a flaming rainbow; as the sun strikes down into the everlasting river beneath, maidens rise to the surface, playing with a ring and singing "Truth in the depth, truth on the height." But as in the earlier story ["The Story of a Panic"] only the boy sees: the adults cannot understand, and the one man who tries to accompany him perishes in the attempt.<sup>1</sup>

This comment focuses on only one part of the story, and picks the wrong emphasis even for that much. It is true that the account of the journey does somewhat resemble the librettos



of Wagner's operas, but the Living Mountain of Joy, Truth, Literature, Beauty--reader's choice--which lies at the other end of the flaming rainbow is Greek, not Nordic, in temper. (Forster's concepts do not run to *Gotterdammerung* or *Weltschmerz*.) Perhaps the reason Beer chose to concentrate on this point was that it was one solid thing he could grasp in an otherwise bewildering maze of juxtaposed reality and imagination.

K. W. Gransden, in E. M. Forster:

"The Celestial Omnibus" is a whimsical trifle on the text "Except ye . . . become as little children. . . ." A small boy finds a bus that goes to Heaven. No one believes him, but the Erewhonianly-named Mr. Bons, a cultured snob with seven Shelleys in his house . . . condescends to accompany him on his next ride. The boy, genuinely humble, thinks the immortals will wish to honour Bons, but it is the boy they crown, while Bons falls to earth with a crash because he did not dare to "stand by himself," confused the letter of art with the spirit, and saw culture as an end instead of as a means to life. This fable is insipidly presented, its literary allusions offered with so straight a face that they might have come out of the well-stocked library of Bons himself. But the piece is interesting. . . .<sup>2</sup>

To the first two sentences of this commentary, and the last three, I would take exception; the middle section is a good description of the story. And when Mr. Gransden gets over being self-conscious about his own literary knowledge, he manages to grasp quite clearly one point Forster is making: those who refuse to stand by themselves, by their own judgments and intuitions, preferring instead to accept the pronouncements of Authority, will eventually be punished for their cowardice.

The omnibus, or buses, are not going to Heaven, despite Shelley's sign, or at least not to such a place as the term usually implies. No conventional Heaven includes Mrs. Gamp, Mrs. Harris, Achilles, Tom Jones, and the Duchess of Malfi among its clientele. Gransden might have done better to choose for his motto the one found upon Dante's omnibus: "Lasciate ogni baldanza voi che entrate," which roughly translates as "Give up all haughty self-esteem, ye who enter here."<sup>3</sup> Nor is the fable "insipidly presented"; it has several passages of real imaginative and sensual excitement, and if those are not to the reader's taste, certainly he should be delighted by the realistic dialogue among the unbelieving adults which occurs at the beginning of Chapter III. This story has many aspects, many levels of appreciation for the reader; it seems a pity that Gransden and others choose to concentrate on the one they are apparently least in sympathy with.

In a fascinating book of collected essays about Forster, edited by Malcolm Bradbury, F. R. Leavis says that "The Celestial Omnibus" is basically a try at making "a poetic communication about life," as are the other short stories in that first volume.<sup>4</sup> And Austin Warren comments:

One of Forster's short fantasies concerns the "Celestial Omnibus," driven now by Sir Thomas Browne, now by Jane Austen, now by Dante, and conducting the candidly imaginative to the land of vicarious experience. . . . A "boy" makes the journey in innocence, because he is too ignorant and wise to attribute the experience to his personal "merit." Not so Mr. Bons, Surbiton

councilman who owns seven copies of Shelley. Rich in his spiritual possessions and conscious of how they set him above his fellows, Mr. Bons invokes the great Dante: "I have honoured you. I have quoted you. I have bound you in vellum." But in vain; for poetry is means and not end. Poetry is a spirit, not to be won like a degree but to be cherished like a flame. And those who, like Mr. Bons, do not connect their conduct with their "culture," will, like Mr. Bons, topple from the precipice of heaven into a junk-heap of glittering fragments. . . . Culture [for such people] is a list of books.<sup>5</sup>

All of these men grasp a part of the truth, grasp at the essence of what is important in this story and in Forster's other short fiction, yet they do not relate the parts to a larger whole, do not see that the truths he is presenting here are just as valid and important to his theory of life and literature as any judgment he makes in his later novels. Notice, they describe the story as a fantasy, a bit of whimsy, as though these were denigrating terms. They seem to feel that such trifling matters are beneath the dignity of the man who could create Passage to India. But as an example of Meredith's comic mode, in which the plot functions as a moral scourge, punishing self-importance, the story is a gem.

Lionel Trilling, usually a most perceptive critic, recognizes Forster's comic manner clearly, as the following passage shows, but even he fails to connect it with its use in the short story form and thus dismisses the stories as of little value.

It is Forster's manner, no doubt, that prevents a greater response to his work. That manner is comic; Forster owes much to Fielding, Dickens, Meredith and James. And nowadays even the literate reader is likely

to be unschooled in the comic tradition and unaware of the comic seriousness. The distinction between the serious and the solemn is an old one, but it must be made here again to explain one of the few truly serious novelists of our time. Stendahl believed that gaiety was one of the marks of the healthy intelligence, and we are mistakenly sure that Stendahl was wrong. . . . our suspicion of gaiety in art perhaps signifies an inadequate seriousness in ourselves. A generation charmed by the lugubrious--once in O'Neill, Dreiser and Anderson, now in Steinbeck and Van Wyck Brooks--is perhaps fleeing from the trivial shape of its own thoughts.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, gaiety in art still seems to be regarded with suspicion by public and critic alike; whether because of trivial thoughts each reader will have to decide for himself. But Forster, as writer and sometime critic, has no doubts about the value of gaiety, tied as it is to the worth of spontaneity, an integral part of the Greek ideal of the necessity of living a complete life, one that achieves a proper balance between the pleasures of the mind and the body, the reason and the emotions. Forster has little patience with those who would deny or thwart the body, since, as he says in "What I Believe," "bodies are the instruments through which we register and enjoy the world."<sup>7</sup>

This Greek ideal of the complete life is one Forster celebrates throughout all his work, but in few places more concretely than in the short stories. It is a necessary concomitant to the comic mode, for those who are filled to the brim with their own self-esteem have little room left in their lives for enjoyment of anything other than their mental picture

of themselves--thus becoming targets for the action of the comic spirit, which "hunts the spirit in men" and will not be satisfied until it, or its lack, has been discovered. Those who strive toward the union of all phases of life are the true aristocrats of the world, an "aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky."<sup>8</sup> They connect; they are not afraid of the imagination, of the senses.

The boy in "The Celestial Omnibus" is such an aristocrat; although his reason and his experience tell him that a celestial omnibus is not possible, that it cannot be real, when faced with the contrary evidence of his senses, he accepts the result joyously, wholeheartedly. Not so Mr. Bons, who owns seven Shelleys, who quotes Dante, who understands only the letter, not the spirit of art, and life. His lack of faith, his denial of the reality of the imagination draws the punishment it deserves.

The comic mode, then, is certainly demonstrated in this story at least, as is Forster's early devotion to the Greek ideal of the spontaneous life. There are, of course, other possible ways of analyzing the story. For instance, it could be considered as a demonstration of Forster's knack for transmitting character through characteristic speech, an essential quality of domestic comedy, often mentioned as one of his hallmarks. Even the most disparaging of his critics admit that he is a master of domestic comedy, with an excellent ear for

the likely in middle-class speech. Examples are rife in the story, but since they require a great deal of the surrounding context to make them come alive, the best way to discover them is to read the story in its entirety. Another method of analysis might be to look at two of the central symbols, a technique popular with modern critics. It is also a good way to get at some of Forster's basic philosophies. Leaving aside the omnibuses themselves, their drivers and their accoutrements--since the symbolism there is relatively obvious --we have the rainbow bridge and Achilles' shield.

The rainbow bridge is clearly a reference to Wagner, whose music was popular at the time Forster was growing up, who is still one of his favorite composers. More pertinently, it is also an image that fits into Forster's "Hellenistic" mythological pattern, for Iris, one of the messengers of the gods, used the rainbow bridge as her highway between earth and Olympus--a clear link between the physical and spiritual realities of life. As such a link, this rainbow image is an important one to Forster; he uses it again in the novel Howards End, where it occurs as an example of the idealist trying to help the materialist to "the building of the rainbow bridge<sup>9</sup> that should connect the prose in us with the passion."<sup>10</sup>

The symbol of Achilles' shield is not one I should have singled out as especially important in this story, but it seems to have had a great impact on Professor Trilling and has been

considered important enough to be picked up and mentioned by J. B. Beer. The relevant passage from "The Celestial Omnibus" is as follows. As the boy returns to his Mountain, bringing with him Mr. Bons, he cries out:

"Who stands sentry?"

"Achilles."

And on the rocky causeway, close to the springing of the rainbow bridge, he saw a young man who carried a wonderful shield.

"Mr. Bons, it is Achilles, armed."

"I want to go back," said Mr. Bons.

The last fragment of the rainbow melted, the wheels sang upon the living rock, the door of the omnibus burst open. Out leapt the boy--he could not resist--and sprang to meet the warrior, who, stooping suddenly, caught him on his shield.

. . . . .

Achilles raised him aloft. He crouched on the wonderful shield, on heroes and burning cities, on vineyards graven in gold, on every dear passion, every joy, on the entire image of the Mountain that he had discovered, encircled like it, with an everlasting stream.<sup>11</sup>

An arresting passage, though not as wonderful, I think, as the one it directly refers to, the description of the god-forged shield of Achilles found in Chapman's translation of Homer. That shield also depicted all the things in life which are important. Nothing was left out; war was shown, and the pain of burning cities, and death in battle, and justice being dispensed to the criminal, as well as a wedding, festival processions of youths and maidens, singing, dancing, drinking,

rejoicing over a good harvest and thankful sacrifices to the gods.

Trilling's explanation of the symbol does not bear directly on this short story, nor on any of the short stories, but is instead incorporated into what Beer says is Trilling's concluding judgment on the novels in his E. M. Forster: A Study (1944).

Forster reminds us of a world where the will is not everything, of a world of true order, of the necessary connection of passion and prose, and of the strange paradoxes of being human. He is one of those who raise the shield of Achilles, which is the moral intelligence of art, against the panic and emptiness which make their onset when the will is tired from its own excess.<sup>12</sup>

Beer reuses the phrase at the end of his own book assessing Forster's work:

. . . he [Forster] has attracted many readers of the present time who have learned to present to their own moral and spiritual situation the same front of endurance and tolerance, backed by a similar cultivation of truthfulness and kindness. Such readers . . . regard Forster as a highly articulate defender of things which they find difficult to express without danger of misunderstanding--as (to quote Lionel Trilling's phrase again) "one of those who raise the shield of Achilles, which is the moral intelligence of art."<sup>13</sup>

Trilling and Beer must mean that Forster's work shows patterns for life which others can place belief in, can cling to in times of doubt, when no one is really sure whether there is anything left to believe. The Victorians, of course, whose thought Forster inherited, believed this was the function of all art: to show, if necessary to create, patterns for life. Perhaps this is what Forster had in mind when he used the



symbol of Achilles' shield in "The Celestial Omnibus." It is certainly not a belief foreign to his philosophy; several of his other stories demonstrate that. He may also have intended the shield as a further underlining of the belief he shares with the ancient Greek civilization--that both pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, the reality of the body and the mind are important. At any rate, Professor Trilling was obviously familiar with this particular short story, for the symbol is not used anywhere else by Forster, as far as I know.

## II. "THE STORY OF A PANIC"

Unlike "The Celestial Omnibus," "The Story of a Panic," the first story in the first collection, has received favorable attention from critics. More so, possibly, than any other he wrote, probably because the idea of "panic" is used so frequently in Howards End and Passage to India. A study of the story is therefore fruitful ground for cross-reference and commentary upon the novels. In addition, Forster himself, who rarely comments specifically on his own work, has done so with this one. It is the first story he ever wrote, he says, and he remembers the circumstances of its composition very distinctly.

After I came down in my boyhood from Cambridge--the place to which I have lately returned as an old man--I travelled in Italy for a year, and I think it was in May of 1902 that I took a walk near Ravello. I sat down in a valley, a few miles above the town, and suddenly the first chapter of "The Story of a Panic" rushed into

my mind as if it had waited for me up there. I wrote it out as soon as I returned to the hotel, and thought it was complete. A few days later I added some more to it until it was three times as long--its present length.

Of these two processes, the first--that of sitting down on the theme as if it were an anthill--has been rare. I achieved it again next year in Greece, where the whole of "The Road from Colonus" hung ready for me in a hollow tree near Olympia. And I achieved it a third time, though with sorry results, in Cornwall, at the Gurnard's Head. Here, in exactly the same way, a story met me in the open air, and since the "Panic" and "Colonus" had now been published and admired, I embraced the newcomer as a masterpiece. . . . It was a complete flop. My inspiration had been genuine but worthless, like so much inspiration, and I have never sat down on a theme since.<sup>14</sup>

This particular story does not quite fit within the definition of the comic mode, because while the theme of retribution for self-importance, failure to connect, to love is present, the punishment for it exists only in the mind of the reader, in his contempt for the demonstrated character of Mr. Tytler and the artist Leyland. The dialogue each is given by Forster makes clear that these characters are being held up to ridicule, they and all the stuffy, obtuse Surbiton people they represent.

The main event of the story takes place in a wooded valley above a small village in Italy; it concerns a party of English tourists on a picnic and their assorted reactions to a visit by the great god Pan. This is not the gentle Pan with the pipes familiar in Edwardian fantasies, which one might expect Forster to portray. Rather, it is the pagan god who can cause uncontrollable fear in those who refuse to acknowledge

his presence and power.

Forster shifts very skillfully from the banal atmosphere proper to an ordinary picnic to one filled with foreboding, putting premonitory ideas into the minds of the most unlikely people. For instance, as the picnic party arrives at the chosen site, the narrator, Mr. Tytler, who has been carefully delineated as a man of no discernment whatsoever, is suddenly influenced by his surroundings into this uncharacteristic thought: "the general appearance [of the valley and enclosing hills] was that of a many-fingered green hand, palm upwards, which was clutching convulsively to keep us in its grasp."<sup>15</sup>

However, no one else seems to be thus affected by the scenery, and after luncheon they all relax in a restful silence, for it is the noon hour, the time when all Nature rests. The shepherds of the countryside know that at this time Pan also rests, drowsing in a cave somewhere in the hills, and they do not talk or laugh loudly, for they do not wish to disturb him. Most especially they do not play their shepherds' pipes, for a Pan disturbed by any sudden loud noise they have no wish to encounter.

Of course, the English people know none of this, nor would they believe it if told. Sheer superstition. These people are fully characteristic of their age, semi-educated, semi-rational, convinced there is nothing in Nature that cannot

be explained by science. Nevertheless, as they sit there, the narrator's thought again takes an oddly imaginative tack. All sounds seem to die away; "everything was absolutely motionless and still; and that feeling of suspense which one so often experiences when Nature is in repose, began to steal over [him]."<sup>16</sup> Suddenly the silence is split by the excruciating noise of the whistle the boy Eustace has been making. Startled, all of the adults exclaim in annoyance; then as the "terrible" silence falls again, each finds himself suddenly on his feet, watching a catspaw of wind running down one of the opposite ridges. (Eustace has inadvertently disturbed, summoned Pan, and now they are to feel the results.)

It is not possible to describe coherently what happened next [continues the narrator]: . . . I became terribly frightened, more frightened than I ever wish to become again, frightened in a way I never have known either before or after. And in the eyes of the others, too, I saw blank, expressionless fear, . . . . [Yet there was nothing to disturb them but the catspaw of wind, now travelling up the ridge on which they stood.]

Who moved first has never been settled. It is enough to say that in one second we were tearing away along the hillside. . . . The sky might have been black as I ran, and the trees short grass, and the hillside a level road; for I saw nothing and heard nothing and felt nothing, since all the channels of sense and reason were blocked. It was not the spiritual fear that one has known at other times, but brutal overmastering physical fear, stopping up the ears, and dropping clouds before the eyes, and filling the mouth with foul tastes. And it was no ordinary humiliation that survived; for I had been afraid, not as a man, but as a beast.<sup>17</sup>

All had fled; all had felt the panic; all, that is, except the young boy of the party, Eustace, whose behavior

up to this moment of the story has been shown, through the comments of the conventional narrator, to be untypical of a boy of his class. Eustace alone has remained behind. When the others, discovering he is not with them, hurriedly return to the site of the picnic, Eustace is discovered lying quietly on his back in the grass. His first reaction to their expositions and questions is to smile, something he had not been prone to doing before. It was, the narrator says, a "peculiar," a "disquieting" smile. While they have been gone, he has been, he says, very happy just standing or sitting or lying there. And that is all he will tell them.

Thoroughly unnerved by these inexplicable happenings, the other members of the party at once begin the homeward trip to the safe and the familiar. They decide among themselves not to say anything to anyone about their experiences of the afternoon, for as the narrator puts it: "Importunate truth-telling, which brings only bewilderment and discomfort to the hearers, is, in my opinion, a mistake."<sup>18</sup> It is not a mistake in Forster's lexicon of values, for it may be, often is the only way to arrive at the real meaning of an event in life; it may represent the only pathway for making the connection between the prose and the passion within us. This is, by the way, an important idea in one of his other short stories, "The Eternal Moment."

During the descent from the hills, Eustace continues

to behave strangely; he bounds, he dances, he whoops; he captures a hare with ease; he scurries down the path "like a goat." His first move on returning to the town is to seek out the very uncultured, very Italian, sub-waiter at the hotel and leap into his arms, further shocking the already exasperated feelings of the rest of the party. Gennaro, the waiter, understands immediately; we find out later in the story that he too had previously been visited by Pan.

That night, after all of the rest of the house is asleep, the narrator hears Eustace pattering up and down in the garden beside the hotel. The boy will not come in: his room is too small, he cannot see, no flowers, no leaves, no sky. He sings, anything he can think of--"exercises, scales, hymn tunes, scraps of Wagner." Then he talks.

At any other time it would have been ludicrous, for here was a boy, with no sense of beauty and peurile command of words, attempting to tackle themes which the greatest poets have found almost beyond their power. Eustace Robinson, aged fourteen, was standing in his nightshirt saluting, praising, and blessing, the great forces and manifestations of Nature.

He spoke first of night and the stars and planets above his head, of the swarms of fire-flies below him, of the invisible sea below the fire-flies, of the great rocks covered with anemones and shells that were slumbering in the invisible sea. He spoke of the rivers and waterfalls, of the ripening bunches of grapes, of the smoking cone of Vesuvius, and the hidden fire-channels that made the smoke, of the myriads of lizards who were lying curled up in the crannies of the sultry earth, of the showers of white rose-leaves that were tangled in his hair. And then he spoke of the rain and the wind by which all things are changed, of the air through which all things live, and of the woods in which all things can be hidden.<sup>19</sup>

"And then," Eustace goes on, "there are men, but I can't make them out so well." And later: "I understand almost everything. The trees, hills, stars, water, I can see all. But isn't it odd! I can't make out men a bit. . . . It almost seems as if--as if--"<sup>20</sup> And then he is captured, and taken into the hotel. What is the end of his statement--"as if they don't belong," perhaps? Forster never tells. As Trilling puts it, "The hypothesis [referring to one of Forster's novels, but it can as well be applied to the central theme of this, or any of Forster's stories] having led us to criticize respectability, is useful, but we had wanted it to be conclusive. And Forster refuses to be conclusive."<sup>21</sup> True. He seems almost not to believe in conclusions, at least not on the short fiction level. Perhaps because they smack too much of a creed, and above all things he detests creeds. Although he professes one of sorts for himself in his essay "What I Believe," reprinted in Two Cheers for Democracy, he makes quite clear that this is strictly an individual creed, the only kind worth anything.

At any rate, Eustace does manage to escape again from his captors, to--as Gennaro puts it--run through the woods, and climb the rocks, and plunge into the water, until he has accomplished his desire. What desire? We are again left to guess.

It becomes increasingly evident as the story progresses

that the narrator is not the only one of the party being held up for ridicule, although he certainly gets the lion's share of it. In dozens of lines of dialogue he reveals all that is worst about the English traveller abroad--the snobbishness, the lack of understanding, the contempt for anyone or anything different from his own narrow standards. They are manifest enough to anyone who reads the story attentively.

The artist, or rather the psuedo-artist, is also fair game; when Eustace is standing in the garden, "saluting, praising, and blessing, the great forces and manifestations of Nature," Leyland's comment is that the speech is "a diabolical caricature of all that [is] most holy and beautiful in life."<sup>22</sup> In his artificial little cosmos, Nature must be "spiritualized" to be worth consideration. Forster is delineating here the same sort of intellectual snob we found in Mr. Bons, the kind who understands only the letter, not the spirit, of art. Not for that sort is the Shelleyan grandeur, the sweep, the warmth and love of the boy's description of the earth, the sea, and the sky. They want their Nature organized, corralled, controlled within strict rules of style. A Leyland would never be able to escape the clutches of convention and good form to welcome Pan, as Eustace had. The loss is theirs; the boy has come to know what is important.

In The Achievement of E. M. Forster, J. B. Beer states that in Forster's early work there is a distinct division



between characters who are at peace with the earth and Nature, and those who fear it.<sup>23</sup> In this story, Pan is not only the personification of Earth and Nature but also, since the name of the god signifies all, a symbol of the universe.<sup>24</sup> Those who will not welcome, who indeed fear the former, will never be reconciled with the latter. The universe is incomprehensible to the human intellect; only by relating it to a known thing with natural patterns--i.e., the Earth and its seasonal round, Nature and its birth and death cycles--can human beings function, live a full life. Those who try to impose an artificial pattern, as so much of human society does, are always at a loss when that pattern is somehow broken. This is what happens in the panic--the adults suddenly become aware of something incomprehensible; something breaks into their tidy little lives which they do not understand, and their first reaction is to run from it in blind, animal-like fear. The fact that panic and emptiness do exist in the world, but that they can be coped with through an exercise of the spirit and the imagination is a theme Forster uses often, here and elsewhere. Such vision is not reality, but if allowed to it can shape reality and give life a sense of wholeness.

### III. "THE CURATE'S FRIEND"

Perhaps the next story that should be considered is "The Curate's Friend," since it deals with the same sort of

subject: a visit by a representative of Pan, a Faun. This particular Faun lives in Wiltshire. The narrator, the curate of the title, is "uncertain" how the Faun came to be there; he may have come with the Romans and been left behind when they were recalled, or he may have been there always.

There is nothing particularly classical about a faun; it is only that the Greeks and Italians have ever had the sharpest eyes. . . . any country which has beech clumps and sloping grass and very clear streams may reasonably produce him.

How I came to see him is a more difficult question. For to see him there is required a certain quality, for which truthfulness is too cold a name and animal spirits too coarse a one, and he alone knows how this quality came to be in me. No man has the right to call himself a fool, but I may say that I then presented the perfect semblance of one.<sup>25</sup>

Before his visitation by the Faun, the curate lectures to his congregation on the other world "in the tone of one who has been behind the scenes"; he gives "'straight talks to his lads'--talks which led straight past anything awkward." And every Thursday he addresses "the Mothers' Union on the duties of wives or widows" and gives them "practical hints on the management of a family of ten."<sup>26</sup> (He is a bachelor). But when the moment of choice arrives--the moment when he must choose between his stuffy outer self and the inner truth the Faun makes him face--he chooses truth, and so is saved.

Here it is necessary to point out an integral facet of Forster's writing, which also constitutes a distinctive variation on the comic mode definition. Throughout his fiction,

not only in the short stories but also in the novels, Forster's main characters are always given a moment of choice. Somewhere in the action they are vouchsafed a moment of vision when they can opt for the life of imagination or remain "safe." They are given a chance of "freedom, escape, self-realization";<sup>27</sup> if they miff it, if they are too spiritually or emotionally timid or obtuse to even realize it is there, it will never return. Mr. Bons muffed his chance; so did all the adults in "The Story of a Panic." But the curate does not. Through the agency of the Faun, which Crews describes as "at once a representative of the countryside and a mirror," the curate can see his natural self. That natural self is "the passionate side" of human nature, which must be confronted and admitted to the personality before it can become a balanced whole.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, even though the curate eventually makes the right choice, this is still a tale of moral retribution, for until that moment he is amply punished for his self-importance. He is made to look ridiculous in the eyes of his fiancée and her mother, and he suffers emotionally when the Faun's power makes Emily (his fiancée) and her "little friend" declare their passion for each other and their disdain of him. When first the Faun made contact with him, in the midst of an outdoor tea with Emily, her mother, and the "little friend," he realized "that a great crisis in my life was approaching,

and that if I failed in it I might permanently lose my self-esteem."<sup>29</sup> But he does not understand the nature of the crisis until the Faun has driven away his fiancée, and he tries to be dismayed. The Faun commands him to laugh instead, and

all nature stood waiting, while a curate tried to conceal his thoughts not only from nature but from himself. I thought of my injured pride, of my baffled unselfishness, of Emily, whom I was losing through no fault of her own, of the little friend, who just then slipped under the heavy tea basket, and that decided me, and I laughed.<sup>30</sup>

And was saved. The incarnate god of Nature had dissolved the cloud of "muddle" he was living in (one of Forster's favorite images for the state of most "civilized" life) and restored him to imaginative reality.

The theme that pervades this story, other than the evident one of the Faun, is love for the land, especially the chalk-downs of England. Forster has a special feeling for the countryside of England, and seldom misses a chance to celebrate its natural glories or lament the effects of encroaching civilization upon them. He says, in an essay entitled "The Last of Abinger," that

the moment nature is "reserved" [somewhat like our national parks system] her spirit has departed for me, she is an open-air annex of the school, and only the semi-educated will be deceived by her. The sort of poetry I seek resides in objects Man can't touch--like England's grass network of lanes a hundred years ago, but today he can destroy them. . . . Peace has been lost on the earth, and only lives outside it, where my imagination has not been trained to follow. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, in Howards End he decries the stress of cosmopolitanism, under which we are disrupted from our

essential necessary contacts with the earth. "Trees and meadows and mountains will [become] only a spectacle, and the binding force that they once exercised on character must be entrusted to love alone. May love be equal to the task!"<sup>32</sup>

Love was not yet necessary as the only binding factor in "The Curate's Friend," however, since the story was a product of his early writing career. Nature was then still unspoiled in some parts of England--Fauns could still flourish, the trees and the streams and the land were still there to bring joy to the spirit. He described that landscape in loving terms:

[It was] indeed only beautiful to those who admire land, and to them perhaps the most beautiful in England. For here is the body of the great chalk spider who straddles over our island--whose legs are the south downs and the north downs and the Chilterns, and the tips of whose toes poke out at Cromer and Dover. He is a clean creature, who grows as few trees as he can, and those few in tidy clumps, and he loves to be tickled by quickly flowing streams. He is pimpled all over with earthworks, for from the beginning of time men have fought for the privilege of standing on him, and the oldest of our temples is built upon his back.<sup>33</sup>

And, after the curate laughed, and thus joined the natural world of the Faun forever:

That evening, for the first time, I [the curate] heard the chalk downs singing to each other across the valleys, as they often do when the air is quiet and they have had a comfortable day. From my study window I could see the sunlit figure of the Faun, sitting before the beech copse as a man sits before his house. And as night came on I knew for certain that not only was he asleep, but that the hills and woods were asleep also. The stream, of course, never slept, any more than it ever freezes. Indeed, the hour of darkness is really the hour of water, which has been somewhat stifled all

day by the great pulsings of the land. That is why you can feel it and hear it from a greater distance in the night, and why a bath after sundown is most wonderful.

The joy of that first evening is still clear in my memory, in spite of the happy years that have followed.<sup>34</sup>

Happy indeed will be the life of the man who can make a connection with the natural, the joyous forces of Nature.

#### IV. "OTHER KINGDOM"

The next story to be discussed should be "Other Kingdom," since K. W. Gransden characterizes it as a "typical 'faun-piece,' complete with classical allusions which come true pour epater, and a wild, transcendental yet ironic climax. Though preposterous enough, its charm makes it nearly irresistible."<sup>35</sup> Crews says it is "the Apollo-Daphne myth . . . given a refreshing twist: the girl who becomes a tree is spared not from ravishment, but from the opposite, a life in which her senses would have been starved."<sup>36</sup> In fact, we are back with a classic example of the comic spirit in action, with a plot that is certainly the purposeful agent of retribution.

The main characters in this story are Harcourt Worters and his fiancée, Evelyn, the girl who eventually becomes a tree.

He had picked her up out of "Ireland" and had brought her home, without money, without connections, almost without antecedents, to be his bride. It was daring of him, but he knew himself to be a daring fellow. She

brought him nothing; but that he could afford, he had so vast a surplus of spiritual and commercial goods. "In time," I [the narrator] heard him tell his mother, "in time Evelyn will repay me a thousand fold."<sup>37</sup>

That is a devastating and revealing bit of dialogue. Forster has, in this passage, irrevocably consigned Worters to the Surbiton category, for all his surplus of commercial goods and his efforts to act like the lord of the manor. The name is changed to Sawston in Forster's novels, but the two are interchangeable; they always represent the insensitive part of human nature and civilization. Forster, says Beer, felt that this group, "at its worst, . . . treats people as objects which it can trade in and use, . . . an unforgivable sin."<sup>38</sup> Harvey points out: "The great sin of the spiritually blind [such as Worters] is to deny the autonomy of human beings, to impose upon them a pattern of one's own making, to mould them and organize them."<sup>39</sup>

Impose, organize, repay: these are not the words one should apply to personal relationships, which are sacred to Forster--the one absolutely necessary essence of a meaningful life. In "What I Believe," he states:

If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. Such a course may scandalize the modern reader, and he may stretch out his patriotic hand to the telephone at once and ring up the police. It would not have shocked Dante, though. Dante places Brutus and Cassius in the lowest circle of Hell because they had chosen to betray their friend Julius Caesar rather than their country Rome.<sup>40</sup>

Thus Worters has sinned, unforgivably, by treating what

should have been the closest of personal relationships as an object to be used, to make a profit on. He must be punished. And he is, when Evelyn finally and completely escapes him. Throughout the major part of the story, during a series of disputes that revolve around personal relationships, she seems to acquiesce to his concept of people as property. But just when he is congratulating himself on his victory, she dances away from him into Other Kingdom, the beech copse that was his engagement present to her. (Typically, the deed was to be in her name, while he retained complete control).

She danced to the song of a bird that sang passionately in Other Kingdom, and the river held back its waves to watch her (one might have supposed), and the winds lay spell-bound in their cavern, and the great clouds spell-bound in the sky. She danced away from our society and our life, back, back through the centuries till houses and fences fell and the earth lay wild to the sun. Her garment was as foliage upon her, the strength of her limbs as boughs, her throat the smooth upper branch that salutes the morning or glistens to the rain.<sup>41</sup>

And then she disappeared within the wood. Forever.

One of the main symbols for Forster in any story about the Pan-Nature association is obviously the beech tree. The beech copse is the central image in this story, and beech trees figure prominently in both "The Curate's Friend" and "The Story of a Panic." (True, the trees mentioned in "Panic" are chestnuts, but those are members of the beech family, as is the oak.) The association of all these trees with the cult of Pan is strong; the Oak especially was considered sacred to



the god. From the dawn of history this family of trees has figured in the religious traditions of man; in their beauty and strength, in their roles as providers of food, shelter and medicine, they symbolize life itself: the periodic and unending renewal of all living things. What better symbol could Forster have found to convey his belief in the essential vitality of Nature?

Another point to be noted in "Other Kingdom" is Forster's characteristic dislike for all that smacks of the Gothic, the medieval--the model for the excessively pious, neo-classic, unnatural view of life. The ancient Greek ideal and myth he admires so much celebrated both body and soul: fruition in all things, never falseness, never asceticism. Defiance of the natural and the naturally beautiful is always condemned in his writing, and those who hold such views with them. Two instances of such condemnation are the artist Leyland in "Panic" and Worters in this story.

In his further delineation of Worters' character, Forster gives the man the following speech:

"The classics are not everything. We owe them an enormous debt; I am the last to undervalue it; I, too, went through them in school. They are full of elegance and beauty. But they are not everything. They were written before men really began to feel. [That is, before they developed "a soul"] . . . Hence, the chilliness of classical art--its lack of--of a something. Whereas later things--Dante--a Madonna of Raphael--some bars of Mendelssohn----" His voice trailed reverently away.<sup>42</sup>

At first glance, it is a little difficult to see why

these three examples should be picked out for scorn by Forster, as the tone of the passage and who speaks it indicates they are. Especially Dante, who is one of the drivers and chief spokesmen in "The Celestial Omnibus" and is often mentioned approvingly by Forster in his other writings, as in the section already quoted from "What I Believe." But Forster has an ambivalent attitude toward Dante. When he is being honest and open and human, Forster likes him; when he is medieval, not. This can be shown specifically through a subtle little point of description in "The Celestial Omnibus" where Forster notes that of the three horses that draw Dante's vehicle--black, grey and white (Hell, Purgatory and Heaven)--the grey is the finest.

Raphael is not considered a medievalist, by date at least, but his best work copied the techniques of other men, and his style was noted for its delicacy and its graceful, idealized figures. In the same vein, Mendelssohn's music is noted for its lyric grace, its delicacy of expression, its "romantic" tone. Forster is not anti-romantic; he is, after all, an ardent admirer of Wagner and Beethoven. But false romanticism, over-delicacy, bespoke the wrong view of life to him. In addition, both artists concentrated on religious subjects, relating specifically to the Roman Catholic assumption of the ends to which life and art should be dedicated. So did Dante. And Forster has always been unalterably opposed to any

conception of life and art which does not consider first the glory of Man and his works.

#### V. "THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE"

On the other hand, several of Forster's stories make quite clear that he does not believe Man and his works are infallible. One, "The Machine Stops," has this for a main theme, but since it occurs in the second volume of his short stories, it shall not be considered here. Another, found in the first volume, makes much the same point. "The Other Side of the Hedge" contrasts the circumscribed environment Man has created for himself with the free and natural life he should be participating in.

Crews characterizes this story as similar in theme to "The Story of a Panic," in that it is an example of the "Dionysian" ideal of "participation in all experience."<sup>43</sup> The hero, he says, is presented with "a choice between the ordinary temporal world and a timeless existence. . . ." His awareness "of the unity of all things is granted only after the temporal, 'Socratic' spirit has been abandoned."<sup>44</sup> In a sense, he is correct, considering his terms of reference. J. B. Beer comes closer, however.

If Forster is preoccupied with the eternal significance of single moments in time, he is also aware that the trend of modern civilization is to produce people whose minds are closed to the imaginative and visionary. The idea is used with effect in a story entitled "The Other Side of the Hedge."

The story opens with a pleasantry which proves by its double layer of meaning to be typical of Forster. "My pedometer told me that I was twenty-five." At first sight this looks like a piece of rather tiresome, maidenly humor. But it turns out to have more significance than at first appears, when we discover that the road is in fact the organized road of modern life, and that the statement "I was twenty-five" is literally true. Along this road everyone travels as fast as possible; it is never admitted in conversation among them that there can be anything on the other side of the parched brown hedges that line it. But the narrator decides to break through the hedge and finds himself in a timeless country. He goes on murmuring the beliefs on which he was brought up: "Give me life, with its struggles and victories, with its failures and hatreds, with its deep moral meaning and its unknown goal." But slowly he comes to realize that this peaceful country, devoid of hurry and progress, is the country in which men were intended to live.<sup>45</sup>

Beer also comments:

Forster has always been suspicious of the idea of progress and its vociferous supporters. In a broadcast talk he remarks that when he was young everyone spoke of problems, evidently on the assumption that problems were the stepping-stones over which progress was made. The First World War killed the complacency of this attitude without substituting any other belief.<sup>46</sup>

Obviously, even before the First World War Forster was disenchanted with the idea of progress for progress' sake; he has never been one to accept blindly what authority tells him is the proper philosophy of life. This story focuses on the kind of human self-importance and egoism that deludes itself into believing that whatever the majority of people at any one given time think is important must therefore be important. (The Wilcoxes in Howards End are later examples of the same kind of attitude.) Never mind if the muscles and the inner spirit rebel, if they whisper that there must be something

more to life than this. The evidence is clear: those who listen to such pernicious ideas are left behind. As the narrator of this story had had to leave his brother behind

by the roadside a year or two round the corner. He had wasted his breath on singing, and his strength on helping others. But I had travelled more wisely, and now it was only the monotony of the highway that oppressed me--dust under foot and brown crackling hedges on either side, ever since I could remember.<sup>47</sup>

He was so tired that he prayed he might give up, and finally, in his "weak, morbid state" he pushed through the hedge, getting well-scratched in the process. His moment of choice had come, but it was not to be too easy--choosing the truth never is, Forster maintains again and again. On the other side he fell first into a deep pool (a symbolical baptism into a new life?) and, when rescued, found himself "still dazed," for he had never before

been in so large a space, nor seen such grass and sunshine. The blue sky was no longer a strip, and beneath it the earth had risen grandly into hills--clean, bare buttresses, with beech trees in their folds, and meadows and clear pools at their feet.<sup>48</sup>

(Note the beech trees again. No fauns, no Pan this time, only the sense of freedom found in Nature.)

However, the spirit of "Progress" is not so easily defeated. As Beer says, the young man goes on for quite a while murmuring his slogans, his catchwords; only at the end of the story does he finally admit that it was out of this clean and peaceful place mankind departed "countless ages ago, when it was first seized with the desire to walk." And

that it would be to this beautiful place that humanity, all that was left of it, would return, at the end of its dreary dusty road.

As long as the young man remains wilfully ignorant of the truth, the plot requires that he suffer. The people of the other side offer him food and drink, flowers and friendship, but he will not accept such purposeless things. Only when at last he admits what Crews calls the necessary unity of things (and Forster, the necessity to connect) is he reprieved; before he sinks into the most restful sleep he has ever known, his long-repressed senses expand to perceive "the magic song of nightingales, and the odour of invisible hay, and stars piercing the fading sky."<sup>49</sup>

Much in this short story can be read as a comment upon civilization in 1968, even though it was written prior to the First World War. Even as early as that, Forster was already questioning the traditional liberal values he had grown up with. Is what is called progress really progress? Are "the Transvaal War, the Fiscal Question, Christian Science, Radium" --the reader can make up his own categories, although several of these still apply--all advances in the sum of human knowledge? Bradbury says: "he [Forster] . . . confronts an essentially modern disquiet": whether "the positive optimism about the future that one finds in the nineteenth century"<sup>50</sup> and in the early part of the twentieth really has a basis in

fact and human behavior. Bradbury concludes that Forster does not think so, and that is why his later work, such as the essays and broadcasts found in Two Cheers for Democracy, are "wearily pessimistic." I wouldn't agree that most of that work is either weary or pessimistic. The prevailing tone, however, is certainly one mostly of hope, rather than of confidence and faith that all will come right at the end of the road. The end of the road, as we have seen here, is not the goal he thinks we should be striving for; there is a better life on the other side of those hedges which we allow to close us in, and we should be crawling through them.

Some variation on this basic theme can also be found in all of Forster's novels: a plea for man to unshackle himself, to leave the narrow dusty road that society insists is the only way through life, to open his eyes and his being to the full range of experience that lies all around him, and, most especially, to realize and enjoy the gifts that Nature and natural relationships with others have to offer.

The short stories offer capsule versions of Forster's philosophies, more easily grasped here than in his more diffuse novels. Unlike many writers, he seems to have arrived at his basic themes early in life, and has found little reason to alter them in later years. He realizes fully that they may no longer have currency in the modern world, "in a world which is rent by religious and racial persecution, . . .

where ignorance rules, and science, which ought to have ruled, plays the subservient pimp."<sup>51</sup> But his faith remains in the individual, and the worth of the individual life, and the necessity for its greatest possible expansion.

## VI. "THE ROAD FROM COLONUS"

Enough has been said about the comic spirit informing these stories; the pattern is reasonably clear. When there is a plot that focuses on human egoism and self-importance and sees that it is justly punished; when the story revolves around the blindness of one or several characters to the necessity of enjoying all the aspects of life, or their effort to fit all people into one pre-cast mold; when the main character is given a moment of choice--then the formula for analysing a Forster short story is at hand. The essential qualities are readily recognizable.

Nor do I propose to do an exhaustive study of all the rest of the short stories--only those that seem especially interesting, either to me or to the published critics. The last story in the first volume is entitled "The Road from Colonus." It fits the criteria fairly well. It is one of the two which came to Forster ready-made, as it were; Beer calls it a "counterpart to 'The Other Side of the Hedge,'"<sup>52</sup> in that "the landscape on the other side of the hedge is intended to give some sort of permanence to . . . [the coherent vision of



life] which Mr. Lucas saw when he entered the hollow tree."<sup>53</sup>

K. W. Gransden describes it as

something we are glad to have. An old man, Mr. Lucas, travelling in Greece with his tiresome family, is strangely drawn to spend the night in a tiny dirty village kahn or country inn. His daughter pretends to fall in with the fantasy . . . not seeing that her father means it; he prepares to remain and is angry to find they have no intention of altering their plans. . . . The moment of vision is vouchsafed and rejected. Later, back in England, the family discover from an old newspaper that the kahn was destroyed in a storm on the very night Mr. Lucas had wanted to stop. But--and it is now that Forster takes the story on from the point where a Maugham or a Maupassant would have stopped, and takes it in his own unmistakable direction--the old man no longer cares; he is peevish and dull, hardly listens to the account, being preoccupied with trivial household matters. His family's victory over the life of the imagination, his own failure through weakness of body and will--they are absolute and complete.<sup>54</sup>

What Mr. Lucas found within the tree was a presence, "something unimagined, indefinable," which "passed over all things, and made them intelligible and good." "The sun made no accidental patterns upon the spreading roots of the trees, and there was intention in the nodding clumps of asphodel, and in the music of the water." He discovered there "not only Greece, but England and all the world and life. . . ." <sup>55</sup> Up till then his trip to Greece, looked forward to for forty years, had been a disaster: "Athens dusty, Delphi wet, Thermopylae flat. . . ." He was growing old, and he had lost without knowing it the love of beauty which had been his forty years earlier. But for one glorious half-hour he got it back, only to lose it again to his own weakness and his

family's blindness. It would not have been fair, however, for the comic spirit to punish him for his bodily weakness, since that is something unavoidable that comes to all men with age. No, he loses his moment because he had allowed his sense of beauty to atrophy long before--it is necessary to remain aware, Forster maintains. Without awareness, there can be no connection between the prose and the passion.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Gransden, Forster, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Forster, The Collected Tales of E. M. Forster (New York, 1966), p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>F. R. Leavis, "E. M. Forster," in Forster: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966), p. 34.

<sup>5</sup>Austin Warren, "E. M. Forster," Critical Essays, Bradbury, pp. 51-52.

<sup>6</sup>Lionel Trilling, "Forster and the Liberal Imagination," Critical Essays, Bradbury, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup>Forster, "What I Believe," Two Cheers, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>Gransden's view of this particular passage in Howards End is rather interesting. He says "the reader today may find the symbol purely decorative in comparison with the use Lawrence makes of the rainbow symbol." Perhaps, but it was hardly purely decorative to Forster.

<sup>10</sup>Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 196.

<sup>11</sup>Forster, Collected Tales, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup>Lionel Trilling, quoted in Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup>Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 206.

<sup>14</sup>Forster, Collected Tales, p. v-vii.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-29.

- 20 Ibid., p. 33.
- 21 Trilling, in Critical Essays, Bradbury, p. 76.
- 22 Forster, Collected Tales, p. 29.
- 23 Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 30.
- 24 Bulfinch's Mythology, p. 136.
- 25 Forster, Collected Tales, pp. 113-114.
- 26 Ibid., p. 114.
- 27 Gransden, Forster, pp. 13-14.
- 28 Crews, Forster: Perils of Humanism, p. 130.
- 29 Forster, Collected Tales, pp. 118-119.
- 30 Ibid., p. 123.
- 31 Forster, "The Last of Abinger," Two Cheers, p. 361.
109. 32 Forster, quoted in Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. (Howards End, Chapter XXXI, p. 275).
- 33 Forster, Collected Tales, p. 116.
- 34 Ibid., p. 123.
- 35 Gransden, Forster, p. 14.
- 36 Crews, Forster: Perils of Humanism, p. 130.
- 37 Forster, Collected Tales, pp. 86-87.
- 38 Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 71.
- 39 John Harvey, "Imagination and Moral Theme in E. M. Forster's The Longest Journey," Critical Essays, Bradbury, p. 124.
- 40 Forster, "What I Believe," Two Cheers, pp. 68-69.
- 41 Forster, Collected Tales, p. 108.
- 42 Ibid., p. 90.
- 43 Crews, Forster: Perils of Humanism, p. 129.

- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 49.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Forster, Collected Tales, p. 39.
- 48 Ibid., p. 41.
- 49 Ibid., p. 48.
- 50 Malcolm Bradbury, Introduction to Critical Essays,  
p. 4.
- 51 Forster, "What I Believe," Two Cheers, p. 67.
- 52 Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 49.
- 53 Ibid., p. 50.
- 54 Gransden, Forster, p. 13.
- 55 Forster, Collected Tales, p. 130.

## CHAPTER III

### VOLUME TWO: THE ETERNAL MOMENT AND OTHER STORIES

#### I. "THE POINT OF IT"

The second volume of short stories, published in 1928, was The Eternal Moment and Other Stories. It included "The Machine Stops," "The Point of It," "Mr. Andrews," "Co-ordination," "The Story of the Siren," and "The Eternal Moment." I wish to leave "The Machine Stops" until last, since it is a radical departure from Forster's usual format. The next story in order is "The Point of It," and a discussion of it is particularly appropriate right after "The Road from Colon-us," for it deals with exactly the same subject--the necessity of remaining aware--only in more extended fashion. The main character, Mickey, later Sir Michael, allows his love of truth and beauty to atrophy over the years, in the name of tact and making others happy, and for this sin he is consigned to Hell, as was Mr. Lucas, though on another plane.

In his introduction to the Collected Stories, Forster comments that "The Point of It" was ill-liked by his friends when it came out. "'What is the point of it?' they enquired thinly, nor did I know how to reply." Others have not had a similar difficulty. Gransden says:

"The Point of It" seems little more than an expansion of its title, a phrase that rather too evidently took its author's fancy. It contrasts two lives: the life

lost young in a glorious moment of physical triumph and the respectable public servant's life, prolonged but emotionally and physically dead. The opening is dramatic. . . . But the rest does not live up to the opening.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of another work, but in a context which definitely relates the statement to this story, Beer says that such a plot represents

a contrast that intrigues Forster: the contrast between the hero and the man of civilization. The hero strives after some absolute ideal and is therefore liable to perish in youth, physically and spiritually: the man of civilization is intent on establishing a way of life.<sup>2</sup>

The "dramatic opening" deals with two young men at the shore, one recovering from an unnamed illness--the reader suspects rheumatic fever--the other supposedly looking after him: respectively, Harold and Micky. "Micky had been a nuisance at first, but common sense had prevailed, as it always does among the young." They had had a glorious day; "rowed out to the dunes at the slack, bathed, raced, eaten, slept, bathed and raced and eaten again." Now they were heading back across the stream against the ebb tide, Harold rowing. The challenge of the sea and man's eternal fight against it was upon him.

He made himself all will and muscle. He began not to know where he was. The thrill of the stretcher against his feet, and of the tide up his arms, merged with his friend's voice towards one nameless sensation; he was approaching the mystic state that is the athlete's true though unacknowledged goal: he was beginning to be.<sup>3</sup>

However, Micky began to have second thoughts, and tried to dissuade Harold from the great effort.

"Look here, Harold, you oughtn't to--I oughtn't to have let you. I--I don't see the point of it."

"Don't you?" said Harold with curious distinctness. "Well, you will some day," and so saying dropped both oars.

. . . He had strained his heart. Half in the boat and half out of it, he died, a rotten business.<sup>4</sup>

Micky expected never to recover from the shock, but the accretions of time soon robbed the event of all its meaning and eventually submerged even the memory. Besides, he and Harold had really nothing in common except youth; Harold was only "athletics and aimless good temper," while "Love, the love of humanity," warmed Micky.

. . . even when he was thinking of other matters, was looking at Orion perhaps in the cold winter evenings, a pang of joy, too sweet for description, would thrill him, and he would feel sure that our highest impulses have some eternal value, and will be completed hereafter. So full a nature could not brood over death.<sup>5</sup>

In his desire to serve humanity, he entered the Civil Service, at the British Museum. Because he was gifted with tact, "he could mollify his superiors, encourage his inferiors, soothe foreign scholars, and show that there was something to be said for all sides." His nature was sweet; "toleration and sympathy" became the "cardinal points of his nature." However, as Sir Michael grew into his fifties and sixties, he became "rather stout and timid. He was against late hours, violent exercise, night walks, swimming when hot, muddling about in open boats," and all such youthful folly. Nonetheless, he had "a serene and dignified old age." Perhaps



he had not carried out the ideals of his youth.

Who has? But he had succeeded better than most men in modifying those ideals to fit the world of facts, and if love had been modified into sympathy and sympathy into compromise, let one of his contemporaries cast the first stone.<sup>6</sup>

Then he has an accident. As he lies in a coma, about to die, he hears his youngest son's judgment upon him:

"It's because nobody speaks out that men of the old man's type get famous. It's a sign of your sloppy civilization. You're all afraid--afraid of originality, afraid of work, afraid of hurting one another's feelings. You let anyone come to the top who doesn't frighten you. . . ."7

Enraged at such callousness and ingratitude, he chooses to die. And contrary to what he had every right to expect, he ends up in Hell. At first he does not understand why, but he finally comes to realize that

the years are bound to liquefy a man or to stiffen him, and that Love and Truth, who seem to contend for our souls like angels, hold each the seeds of our decay. With him lay the sentimentalists, the humanists, and all who have trusted the warmer visions; with his wife [in another separate part] were the reformers and ascetics and all sword-like souls.<sup>8</sup>

All, all in Hell.

But there are no young people there. Their spirits dwell beyond the infernal river, and occasionally one is permitted to cross into Hell, to harrow the souls there, trying to make them desire to remember the days when they were young. It comes as a star, and it sings.

"I was before choice . . . I was before hardness and softness were divided. I was in the days when truth was love. And I am."

. . . . .

"I have been all men, but all men have forgotten me. I transfigured the world for them until they preferred the world. They came to me as children, afraid; I taught them, and they despised me. Childhood is a dream about me, experience a slow forgetting: I govern the magic years between them, and am."

. . . . .

"Who desires to remember? Desire is enough. There is no abiding home for strength and beauty among men. The flower fades, the seas dry up in the sun and all the stars fade as a flower. But the desire for such things, that is eternal, that can abide, and he who desires me is I."<sup>9</sup>

Micky desires, and dies a second time, in terrible pain, but he is free of Hell. (Once again Forster makes the point that real choice is never easy). Still he must cross the infernal stream. He suddenly finds himself in a rowboat, with "all that is evil in creation, all the distortions of love and truth by which we are vexed," surging down the estuary. The boat lies motionless; Micky hears the pant of breath, "the crack of angelic muscles;" then a voice says: "The point of it . . ." and he is across.

I quote at such length because this story is replete with all sorts of characteristic Forsterian concerns. What is the nature of Love and Truth, and Imagination; how does one make choice among them; is it possible to balance the three? Is it possible to lead a life in which the prose and the passion are connected, or is the golden mean of the Greeks an impossible ideal? Austin Warren comments: "If there is a

'golden mean,' it is not what so often passes for it--tepidity or compromise or apathetic good humor."<sup>10</sup>

Somewhere Forster himself remarks that the choice is relatively easy for youth, for they do not yet understand all that is involved; they do not yet have responsibilities to anyone but themselves. In addition, they are not yet old enough to appreciate how difficult it is to retain a desire for beauty, when all its earthly manifestations have such an ephemeral life. The point of this story is that this matter of choice, the matter of what is most important, which qualities should be cultivated for the best chance at a full life, is not an easy question. Forster is perhaps implying that there is no final or correct answer in real life; only in an art form can the total, meaningful pattern be seen and the proper choice made. If this assessment is correct, "The Point of It" would be one of the most realistic of his stories, despite its "fantastical" final section.

On the other hand, it is necessary to remember Forster's frequent praise of youth's vision and imagination. He emphasizes the necessity for retaining these qualities in this story especially, but it also is a theme which is present in all the other stories as well. Once that vision, that imagination is lost, through yielding to the pressures of the adult world, or the tendency of adults to take themselves and their accomplishments too seriously, it can not be regained, and something

very precious, very necessary is gone from life. The curate still retained his possibility for vision, his youthful desire for truth and love, and that was the quality which the faun saw within, the quality which drew him to the curate. Because Bons, because Worters had lost it, the one perished, the other forfeited his chance for happiness. Because the people of the road had lost it, they were doomed forever to walk its dusty way. But those who admit the possibility of something above and beyond may escape through the hedge, over the river, out of their self-created Hells.

One particular symbol in this story has a continuing importance for Forster: the constellation Orion. He often refers to stars in his short stories and novels; his interest in them was strong even as a little boy. In the biography of his great-aunt, Marianne Thornton, he describes in loving terms the house he lived in as a young boy; it had, among other marvelous attributes, a "great view to the west." While he lived there he was always making up stories about the stars and searching out the constellations; he made the maids and nurses go out with him to survey them, and grew quite irate if they could not learn to identify the various features of the sky.<sup>11</sup> Beer suggests:

Perhaps it was the great view to the west that encouraged, even at this age [4-14], his great love for the stars. [They] became more than beautiful objects to him. They came to stand for an ideal beauty, a perfection rarely attainable on the earth beneath: and man's devotion to the stars seemed in itself a recognition

that all human beings found mirrored in them an ideal for which they were striving. Stars are common in romantic symbolism; with Forster, however, one is conscious that the symbol is not second hand but an expression of personal feeling.<sup>12</sup>

In "The Point of It," the main star symbolism occurs in a passage in which Micky, lying in the dust of Hell, converses with his neighbor. (There has been a previous mention, in the section about the love he felt for humanity in his early life.) One of the greater tortures of that place is that the inhabitants are forced to resurrect some memories of their lives on earth in order to be more tormented by the contrast between them and the dull landscape and duller sky under which they are now lying. Micky says:

I, too, regret my wasted hours, especially the hours of my youth. I regret all the time I spent in the sun. In later years I did repent, and that is why I am admitted here where there is no sun; yes, and no wind and none of the stars that drove me almost mad at night once. It would be appalling, would it not, to see Orion again, the central star of whose sword is not a star but a nebula, the golden seed of worlds to be. How I dreaded the autumn on earth when Orion rises, for he recalled adventure and my youth. It was appalling. How thankful I am to see him no more.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, it was the still vital presence of that memory that finally reprieved him from Hell. Beer points out that in this statement the reader can begin to see something of the significance of Orion to Forster. "He is associated with the love of humanity as it is experienced in youth, splendidly, before a man 'goes soft' in benevolence."<sup>14</sup>

Forster has used the symbol again in "The Machine Stops";

I will deal with it more fully later. It is enough for now to remark that it is important, and the reader of Forster's short stories and novels should be on the lookout for any mention of stars or constellations. Forster rarely uses any detail, no matter how small, without having some specific reason for choosing that particular bit of description rather than another--this is one reason why even his most fantastic backgrounds have a distinct air of plausibility.

## II. "MR. ANDREWS"

"The Point of It" is a story about Hell; "Mr. Andrews," about the other place. This story has received practically no notice from the critics, although it is one of the most devastating little pieces of satire that Forster ever wrote. The only things comparable to it in his other work are some of the propaganda broadcasts he made during the Second World War and some of the sections of his Guidebook to Alexandria in which he neatly dissects the early schisms of Christianity.

However, it has not been totally ignored. Harry T. Moore mentions the story in his E. M. Forster (1965), as "a brief, light allegory" dealing with the after-life.<sup>15</sup> And Wilfred Stone, in The Cave and the Mountain (1966), devotes almost a half-page to "Mr. Andrews," in which, he says,

we are taken on an epic ride from this world to the next, and the heaven we reach is that of the jokebooks or of Byron's "The Vision of Judgment." . . . Parts of the story are quite funny. . . . But . . . the fantasy mixes serious criticism with its fun.<sup>16</sup>

Actually, the seriousness and the criticism predominate in this story. The first and last paragraphs are distinctly Emersonian, and Emerson has never been noted for his sense of humor. Forster has been known to set up openings which sound serious and then use them for ironic contrast instead, but this is not true here.

The souls of the dead were ascending towards the Judgment Seat and the Gate of Heaven. The world soul pressed them on every side, just as the atmosphere presses upon rising bubbles, striving to vanquish them, to break their thin envelope of personality, to mingle their virtue with its own. But they resisted, remembering their glorious individual life on earth, and hoping for an individual life to come.<sup>17</sup>

.....

As soon as they passed the gate [going out of Heaven], they felt again the pressure of the world soul. For a moment they stood hand in hand resisting it. Then they suffered it to break in upon them, and they, and all the experience they had gained, and all the love and wisdom they had generated, passed into it, and made it better.<sup>18</sup>

Although this seems rather mystical for Forster, who seldom writes in that vein, it still carries the same message to be found in the other stories--it is necessary to connect. The departure really lies in the fact that he has put the connection partly on the plane of a merger with something greater and better, instead of his usual celebration of the individual at the expense of the whole. Perhaps he saw this particular whole as the sort of necessary liberating force which he talks about much later in "What I Believe." In that essay he says that it is "not by becoming better, but by

ordering and distributing his native goodness" that man will ever be able to improve the world. Some force is needed to liberate and make effective "the good will and the good temper which are already existing."<sup>19</sup> Christianity, he adds flatly, is not that force. Only "Love, the Beloved Republic, which feeds upon Freedom and lives," can accomplish such a task.

The story itself deals with two particular souls ascending toward the Gate of Heaven--one, Mr. Andrews, the other, an unnamed Turkish bandit. They meet as they float upward; each discovers that the other is not of the "true faith." Instead of being filled with proper disgust or moral indignation at the presumption of the other, thinking he will be admitted into Heaven, each is consumed with horror "at the approaching tragedy." When they reach the Gate, each asks that the other be admitted, "for the same spirit was working in each of them." And from the Gate a voice replies, "Both can enter."

As they do, another man passes out "with gestures of despair." Mr. Andrews asks why. No answer. He asks what are all the figures seated inside "on thrones and mountains."

Still no answer. Then he sees that those seated figures are

all the gods who were then being worshipped on the earth. A group of souls stood round each, singing his praises. But the gods paid no heed, for they were listening to the prayers of living men, which alone brought them nourishment.<sup>20</sup>

There were Buddha, Vishnu, Allah, Jehovah, the Elohim, and

the vast shadowy outlines of the neo-Pagan Zeus. There were cruel gods, and coarse gods, and tortured gods, and



worse still, there were gods who were peevish, or deceitful, or vulgar. No aspiration of humanity was unfulfilled. There was even an intermediate state for those who wished it, and for the Christian Scientists a place where they could demonstrate that they had not died.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Andrews, garbed in traditional white robe, with harp, wanders through Heaven, but can find none of his departed friends; Heaven seems curiously empty. "Though he had all that he expected, he was conscious of no great happiness, no mystic contemplation of beauty, no mystic union with good. There was nothing to compare with that moment outside the gate, . . . ." <sup>22</sup> He finds the Turk, surrounded by his traditional seven-times-seven virgins, and the Turk too feels discontented; both have all that they expected, but that is not enough, for in that place "their expectations were fulfilled, but not their hopes."

"I am going," said Mr. Andrews at last. "We desire infinity and we cannot imagine it. How can we expect it to be granted? I have never imagined anything infinitely good or beautiful excepting in my dreams."

"I am going with you," said the other.<sup>23</sup>

And they merged with the world soul, and made it better.

Even this story fits the comic spirit definition, since humanity's colossal egoism and selfishness, projected in its gods, is what is being delineated here. Contrary to what orthodox belief preaches, the only meaningful aspect of Heaven for these two representatives of mankind is the moment when they are united in love outside the Gate of Heaven. The happiness, beauty, and good which they hoped to find within: these are only found in human Love, in "the Holiness of the heart's

affection," in connection. Or, possibly, in the composite World Soul, which contains all the human "love and wisdom they had generated."

### III. OTHER STORIES

The next three stories in this volume are "Co-ordination," "The Story of the Siren," and "The Eternal Moment." Each has some interesting passages; none are particularly fascinating in toto, although critics have a considerable amount to say about "The Eternal Moment."

Reaction to "Co-ordination" is varied. Stone says [it] is perhaps the least interesting and most pointless story Forster ever wrote. Its theme seems to be that the abstractions "melody" and "victory" are greater than the particulars creating them, but neither the theme nor the fable supporting it seems valid or interesting.<sup>24</sup>

Beer is more sympathetic, describing it as a pleasant story, notable for an ending which proclaims the twin values of Melody and Victory and for a strong reference to Beethoven and Napoleon which reflects Forster's romantic interests.<sup>25</sup>

Two passages of description in "Co-ordination" deserve special notice; they show Forster's belief in the way the imagination can transport even the most pedestrian lives to a moment of beauty and happiness. A frustrated music teacher and annoyed principal listen to a shell; each finds within its murmur the healing truth of her deepest dreams. The music teacher hears the sea, in all its different moods. The sound refreshes her and gives her courage to admit the truth about

herself and her life: that truth sets her free from an existence which has stifled her for years. The principal hears the rustling of trees in a wood, and feels all the people she has ever known near to her there, sharing her joy: she is also able to free herself from a program that has been stifling her desires. For a moment, each is vouchsafed a vision of the truth, and given a chance to make a choice of how she shall order her life in future; each makes the right choice toward a freer, fuller existence.

"The Story of a Siren" seems to evoke comment from almost all critics for varying reasons. Moore calls the story

the last-written and the finest of Forster's mythological stories, one that concentrates various themes of all the others, especially his preoccupation with the natural world (as represented by his vital Mediterranean figures), linked with the supernatural or mythological (here the Siren) against the false world of society (the priest and Giuseppe's conventional fellow Sicilians).<sup>26</sup>

Beer describes it as "one of the most successful stories in the volume,"<sup>27</sup> mainly because the story is told by one man to another, as something which happened to a third person, thus avoiding "the awkwardness of making supernatural events appear in a actual scene."<sup>28</sup> Stone says "The Story of a Siren" seems to be

an attempt to prove the thesis of "The Point of It": that one can recapture the spirit of youth, which "all men" have had but which all forget.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, Crews:

[It is] an account of the destruction of two people who claim to have seen a siren and are considered mad by

society. The moral of the story is obscure, but its frame, again, is a contrast between the workaday human world and a darker, mythic order of experience.<sup>30</sup>

The "moral" of the story is not too obscure; found in the last two paragraphs of the story, it deals with a typical concern of Forster's--the dearth of communication between people. Someday, says the young Italian fisherman telling the story, there will come someone who can "fetch up the Siren from the sea, and destroy silence, and save the world! . . . Silence and loneliness cannot last forever."<sup>31</sup> They must not, or all the world will perish.

"The Eternal Moment" seems to be destined to serve as a link for remarks about others of Forster's works. Beer's discussion of it, for instance, falls between "The Point of It" and "The Other Side of the Hedge." "What was then," he says of the former, "a visionary moment, not even understood, has been revealed as the eternal moment, the one that gives meaning to all the others." After a delineation of the plot, he continues:

The dark irony of "The Eternal Moment" indicates a theme which dominates other stories. If Forster is pre-occupied with the eternal significance of single moments in time, he is also aware that the trend of modern civilization is to produce people whose minds are closed to the imaginative and visionary. The idea is used with effect in a story entitled "The Other Side of the Hedge."<sup>32</sup>

Gransden relates "The Eternal Moment" to Forster's first novel, Where Angels Fear to Tread, and finds many important parallels. Both, for instance,

are set in Italy, both were first published in 1905; both may recall . . . James . . .; both move from the plane of social comedy towards a climax of isolated psychological intensity.

. . . The story (it is almost a nouvelle) explores the mind of an elderly female novelist at the end of its tether.<sup>33</sup>

[In the end] she equates the town's moral decline and commercial success with the pattern of her own life since the moment when she ran away from passion and took art as a substitute for living.<sup>34</sup>

Stone, in the six pages he devotes to a discussion of the story and all the relevant quotations that could be brought to bear on it, describes it as moving "from the realm of fantasy to that of prophecy"<sup>35</sup> and as "a rather startling anticipation of the theme of Howards End."<sup>36</sup>

Forster himself merely says, in his introduction to the Collected Tales: "'The Eternal Moment,' though almost an honest-to-God yarn, is a meditation on Cortina d'Ampezzo."<sup>37</sup>

The "importunate truth-telling" remark, referred to earlier in "Panic," would fit with equal ease in the mouth of Colonel Leyland, one of the characters in this story. At the very end of the tale, he is thoroughly disgusted with Miss Raby, the elderly female novelist, because by doing just that--recalling a past moment of time and romance in public conversation with a social inferior and thus bringing "bewilderment and discomfort to the hearers"--

she had exposed her thoughts and desires to a man of another class. Not only she, but he himself and all their equals, were degraded by it. She had discovered their nakedness to the alien.<sup>38</sup>

Because Colonel Leyland has such an attitude, he is left to cope with what is to him a most embarrassing situation --his punishment. Miss Raby too suffers, however, for though she makes a valiant try at connection with passion in her old age, she had run away from the proffered moment of choice when she was young, and now has nothing left within her soul but a "triumph magnificent, cold, hardly human,"<sup>39</sup> a feeble fire at which to warm her lonely heart. Somehow the tone of this reminds me of the Hell of "The Point of It." All is dust and ashes.

#### IV. "THE MACHINE STOPS"

Now we come to what is surely the strangest example of Forster's story-telling art, which he describes as "a counterblast to one of the heavens of H. G. Wells."<sup>40</sup> Gransden calls it "the longest and most tedious of the stories, . . . straight science-fiction, or rather anti-science fiction, an Orwellian reaction to a Wellsian future with a curiously Kiplingesque ending."<sup>41</sup> Beer says:

"The Machine Stops" . . . explores the time-ridden, enclosed road of human life more fully. [He has just been talking about "The Other Side of the Hedge."] This story, which owes something to Wells' Time Machine, depicts a world in which mechanical progress has been completed, so that all men live underground in air-conditioned comfort. Only one man and his mother have any feeling for the old days, a sense that something essentially human has passed from the earth.<sup>42</sup>

That last statement is a small misreading of the story, for the man's mother has no such feeling until she is forced to it at

the very end of the tale, but the rest of the account is accurate enough, as far as it goes.

This is an extremely difficult story to discuss, for it combines so many differing elements. It is certainly science fiction, and as such deserves a good deal more attention than it gets, for it is one of the earliest examples of a genre now accepted as legitimate fiction. Science fiction was distinctly not so accepted at the time Forster wrote the story, and one must at the very least admire his temerity in tackling such a subject. However, I don't suppose he really thought of it as science fiction per se; it was simply a story he wanted to write, encompassing some of his deepest concerns. The love of earth that is one of man's most redeeming characteristics and what will probably happen to him as he moves farther and farther away from that source of strength; the necessity for making the right choice, both on the personal level and on that of civilization; the importance of the stars and the necessity for patterns in man's life; the dreadful effects of a failure, of a refusal to connect with direct experience and love--all are included. Plus his steadily growing dislike for and distrust of science and its claims to save humanity, and his plea for the importance of the body as well as the intellect.

Several aspects of "The Machine Stops" set it apart from Forster's other stories. For one, it is certainly the longest story he ever wrote. Furthermore, its setting lies in the

distant future, rather than the near past. The first paragraph makes this immediately clear.

Imagine, if you can, a small room, hexagonal in shape, like the cell of a bee. It is lighted by neither window nor by lamp, yet it is filled with a soft radiance. There are no apertures for ventilation, yet the air is fresh. There are no musical instruments, and yet, at the moment that my meditation opens, this room is throbbing with melodious sounds. An arm-chair is in the centre, by its side a reading-desk--that is all the furniture. And in the arm-chair there sits a swaddled lump of flesh--a woman, about five feet high, with a face as white as fungus. It is to her that the little room belongs.<sup>43</sup>

That phrase--"at the moment that my meditation opens"--is an indication of another of the differences in this story: instead of employing some character within the story as narrator, as has been his habit, Forster undertakes the task himself. There have been examples of direct authorial comment in all the other stories, but in none has Forster been quite so open about delineating the issues that concern him. He is especially caustic in his criticisms of what he sees as the destructive trends in modern life. For example, when the woman described in the opening paragraph, Vashti, talks to her son Kuno on the visiplat, the way of communication among the people of the Machine,

she fancied that he looked sad. She could not be sure, for the Machine did not transmit nuances of expression. It only gave a general idea of people--an idea that was good enough for all practical purposes, Vashti thought. The imponderable bloom, declared by a discredited philosophy to be the actual essence of intercourse, was rightly ignored by the Machine, just as the imponderable bloom of the grape was ignored by the manufacturers of artificial fruit. Something "good enough" had long since been accepted by our race.<sup>44</sup>



The reason for Kuno's communication with his mother is that he wishes her to visit him. He lives under the other end of the world and wants to talk to her about something important, but he does not wish to do so through the Machine, which he detests. At first she refuses to make the trip; she hates air-ships; she gets no "ideas" in air-ships. She and the rest of mankind have substituted the study of ideas for direct experience, and as a result feel they are far superior to preceding generations.

The people of the day of the Machine live underground, supported by and subservient to the Machine; they fear and dread any contact with the outside air or the light of the sun or stars. The last attempt of the preceding generation at a coherent goal had been an effort to defeat the revolution of the sun, but no matter how fast the racing aeroplanes went west, the sun "went eastward quicker still."

The sun had conquered, yet it was the end of his spiritual dominion. Dawn, midday, twilight, the zodiacal path, touched neither men's lives nor their hearts, and science retreated into the ground, to concentrate herself upon problems that she was certain of solving.<sup>45</sup>

Now "men seldom moved their bodies; all unrest was concentrated in the soul."<sup>46</sup> Kuno was the exception, the atavism--he moved his body, and thus had rediscovered the lost knowledge that man is the measure of things. He had learned, as he says,

'Near' is a place to which I can get quickly on my feet, not a place to which the train or the air-ship will take me quickly. 'Far' is a place to which I cannot get quickly on my feet; . . . Man is the measure.

. . . Man's feet are the measures for distance, his hands are the measure for ownership, his body is the measure for all that is lovable and desirable and strong.<sup>47</sup>

Vashti finally conquers her fear and dislike of the air-ships enough to visit her son, whom she loves despite his peculiarities, and despite the fact that feelings of parental affection and responsibility are frowned upon by the Machine. She discovers with horror that he has disobeyed one of the prime directives of the Machine and has been out on the surface of the earth without permission, on his own feet. For, through some oversight of the Machine,

Kuno was possessed of a certain physical strength. By these days it was a demerit to be muscular. Each infant was examined at birth, and all who promised undue strength were destroyed. Humanitarians may protest, but it would have been no true kindness to let an athlete live;<sup>48</sup> he would never have been happy in that state of life to which the Machine had called him; he would have yearned for trees to climb, rivers to bathe in, meadows and hills against which he might measure his body. Man must be adapted to his surroundings, must he not? In the dawn of the world our weakly must be exposed on Mount Taygetus, in its twilight our strong will suffer euthanasia, that the Machine may progress, that the Machine may progress, that the Machine may progress eternally.<sup>49</sup>

Kuno's escape had not passed unnoticed by the Machine; its mending apparatus, which he likens to "a long, white worm," (maggots feeding on decaying material?) had discovered his exit, and had dragged him back and down, forever. The last memory that he carries back with him is of certain stars which he saw; he felt "that a man of my sort lives in the sky."<sup>50</sup> (Orion, almost certainly.) Hearing his story, Vashti realizes he is fated; there is not room for such a person in the world

of the Machine. She retreats to her own cell, never to see him again.

In the following years, "two important developments took place in the Machine." Respirators, the breathing apparatus necessary to leaving the artificial environment of the Machine, were abolished, thus cutting the last link between man and the natural world of real experience. And, to meet the growing need for something to replace the world of experience, to try to cope with the rampant unrest of the soul, which is not so easily put down as that of the body, religion was re-established, in the worship of the Machine.

To attribute these two great developments to the Central Committee [which supposedly controls the Machine], is to take a very narrow view of civilization. The Central Committee announced the developments, it is true, but they were no more the cause of them than were the kings of the imperialistic period the cause of war. Rather did they yield to some invincible pressure, which came no one knew whither, and which, when gratified, was succeeded by some new pressure equally invincible. To such a state of affairs it is convenient to give the name of progress. . . . Humanity, in its desire for comfort, had over-reached itself. Quietly and complacently, it was sinking into decadence, and progress had come to mean the progress of the Machine.<sup>51</sup>

But not even the Machine is immortal; it too begins to decay. Things go wrong with the apparatus; sighs are heard in the piped-in music; the artificial fruit grows mouldy; the poetry machine emits defective rhymes. Then the apparatus for providing beds when the people summon them fails. "It may seem a ludicrous matter, but from it we may date the collapse of humanity. . . . mankind was not yet sufficiently adaptable to

do without sleeping."<sup>52</sup> Then the light begins to fail, and the air becomes foul. Things improve again after a time, but "humanity never recovered from its entrance into twilight."

Finally, the Machine breaks down completely; it has so stifled the people it was built to serve that they no longer have the capacity to understand its workings or repair the damaged sections. Silence encompasses the underground world, a terrible silence--something the people have never known. For the Machine had hummed; and the hum had been always in their ears, from the time of birth until death. The shock of that sudden and unnatural silence kills many people immediately, but Vashti and Kuno survive for a few hours. Since his escapade he had been moved from his old quarters to a room near his mother, and in the final catastrophe they meet, though they cannot see each other, and weep for humanity.

They could not bear that this should be the end. Ere silence was completed their hearts were opened, and they knew what had been important on the earth. Man, the flower of all flesh, the noblest of all creatures visible, man who had once made god in his image, and had mirrored his strength on the constellations, beautiful naked man was dying, strangled in the garments that he had woven. . . . Truly the garment had seemed heavenly at first, shot with the colours of culture, sewn with the threads of self-denial. And heavenly it had been so long as it was a garment and no more, so long as man could shed it at will and live by the essence that is his soul, and the essence, equally divine, that is his body. The sin against the body--it was for that they wept in chief; the centuries of wrong against the muscles and the nerves, and those five portals by which we can alone apprehend--glozing it over with talk of evolution, until the body was white pap, the home of ideas as colourless, last sloshy stirrings of a spirit that had grasped the stars.<sup>53</sup>

This is not the end of all mankind, however; Forster is not apocalyptic. There are men, and women, who yet live on the surface of the earth, although the Machine had informed its minions that nothing could live there. Kuno had seen them and spoken to at least one of them during his escape. Tomorrow, he reassures his mother, tomorrow--

"Oh, tomorrow--some fool will start the Machine again, tomorrow."

"Never," said Kuno, "never. Humanity has learned its lesson."<sup>54</sup>

Whether humanity will ever learn that lesson is debatable, but at least Forster has done his best to depict the possible pitfalls contained in a blind reliance on the machine, science, and what is called "progress." Whatever else, the reader must agree with Morris that "this is a remarkable story to have been written so early in this century."<sup>55</sup>

Since once again we have a story in which the symbolism of the stars, and of Orion, is strong, an examination of their obvious importance to Forster can reveal much about his philosophy of life and art. Beer says that if, as Forster does, one rejects the idea of a metaphysical order transcending the universe, then in order to have some rational view, some point from which to examine the world, it is necessary to look for positive facts in the material universe that might suggest a pattern of life. The fact of order is the most obvious. The order of the seasons, the order of the stars: the same patterns

reappear, century after century.

. . . not only do these patterns appear in the sky, but they are seen by men, generation after generation, as pictures. One constellation is seen as a splendid man with armour and a sword. Myths are created about him. This sort of imaginative projection is also a fact, to be laid at the side of other facts; it tells us something about man that he should project his own ideal of himself upon the stars in the sky. There is a reality in such "shared vision."<sup>56</sup>

"All of us, even the sophisticated," says Forster in Aspects of the Novel, "yearn for permanence";<sup>57</sup> even though permanence may not exist, since even the order of the universe which we think we see is not permanent, not immutable, it is the artist's function to pretend that it does, and by that pretending, to create at least the semblance of order within the shared vision of man and man.

Forster has made many other statements about this creative function of art and its necessity in human life. In "The Challenge of Our Time" (1946):

Art is a self-contained harmony. Art is valuable not because it is educational (though it may be), not because it is recreative (though it may be), 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>58</sup>

He repeats the same argument in almost the same words in "Art for Art's Sake" (1949), summing it up by saying that since "works of art . . . are the only objects in the material universe to possess internal order, . . . that is why, though I don't believe that only art matters, I do believe in Art for Art's Sake."<sup>59</sup>

He also believes in places, and in the elusive sort of shaping influence that a place, or the love of a certain area, can have on a person. When Kuno escaped, he climbed up out of the machine into Wessex, an area of "little, low colourless hills." To his eyes, however,

they were living and the turf that covered them was a skin, under which their muscles rippled, and I felt that those hills had called with incalculable force to men in the past, and that men had loved them. . . . They commune with humanity in dreams. Happy the man, happy the woman, who awakes the hills of Wessex.<sup>60</sup>

As the curate had awakened them and they, him. Forster has a strong feeling for this part of the country. Nowhere else except in the chalk downs of England, remember, would one be likely to encounter fauns, except in Italy or Greece--nowhere else in England can one get so close to the elemental, the natural, the things mankind knew it was important to be in relation with before he became so "progressive" and "civilized." There, in the most ancient part of England, one can have a sense of the roots of the past, of a tradition which is necessary to any really civilized life. Forster says, in "Does Culture Matter?" (1940): "If you drop tradition and culture you lose your chance of connecting work and play and creating a life that is all of a piece."<sup>61</sup> And that is what is most important, after all--what he has really been talking about in all of his stories, the value of "a life that is all of a piece."

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

- 1Gransden, Forster, p. 13.
- 2Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 114.
- 3Forster, Collected Tales, pp. 199-200.
- 4Ibid., p. 201.
- 5Ibid., p. 203.
- 6Ibid., pp. 209-210.
- 7Ibid., p. 211.
- 8Ibid., p. 218.
- 9Ibid., pp. 221-222.
- 10Warren, in Critical Essays, Bradbury, p. 54.
- 11Forster, Marianne Thornton (New York, 1956), pp. 301-  
305.
- 12Beer, Achievement of Forster, pp. 31-32.
- 13Forster, Collected Tales, pp. 216-217.
- 14Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 93.
- 15Moore, Forster, p. 8.
- 16Stone, Cave and Mountain, pp. 127-128.
- 17Forster, Collected Tales, p. 225.
- 18Ibid., p. 232.
- 19Forster, "What I Believe," Two Cheers, p. 75.
- 20Forster, Collected Tales, p. 229.
- 21Ibid., p. 230.
- 22Ibid.
- 23Ibid., pp. 231-232.



- 24Stone, Cave and Mountain, p. 159.
- 25Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 50.
- 26Moore, Forster, p. 9.
- 27Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 51.
- 28Ibid., p. 52.
- 29Stone, Cave and Mountain, pp. 159-160.
- 30Crews, Forster: Perils of Humanism, pp. 129-130.
- 31Forster, Collected Tales, p. 258.
- 32Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 49.
- 33Gransden, Forster, p. 16.
- 34Ibid., p. 18.
- 35Stone, Cave and Mountain, p. 142.
- 36Ibid., p. 143.
- 37Forster, Collected Tales, p. viii.
- 38Ibid., p. 308.
- 39Ibid., p. 307.
- 40Forster, Collected Tales, p. vii.
- 41Gransden, Forster, p. 12.
- 42Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 50.
- 43Forster, Collected Tales, p. 144.
- 44Ibid., p. 148.
- 45Ibid., pp. 159-160.
- 46Ibid., p. 156.
- 47Ibid., p. 167.

48In this context, a statement of Peter Burra's in an essay on Forster is interesting. "By the very nature of the conflict which he arranges [in his plots] it is clear how much store Mr. Forster sets by the athletic. . . . [The athlete] is life, at the centre and at the circumference--he is the world's essential simplicity, transformed by the author's vision." In "The Novels of E. M. Forster," Critical Essays, Bradbury, p. 30.

49Ibid., pp. 166-167.

50Ibid., p. 179.

51Forster, Collected Tales, pp. 185-186.

52Ibid., p. 190.

53Ibid., pp. 195-196.

54Ibid., p. 197.

55John Morris, in Warner, E. M. Forster, p. 8.

56Beer, Achievement of Forster, p. 28.

57Forster, Aspects of Novel, p. 69.

58Forster, "The Challenge of Our Time," Two Cheers, p. 59.

59Forster, "Art for Art's Sake," Two Cheers, p. 95.

60Forster, Collected Tales, pp. 175-176.

61Forster, "Does Culture Matter?" Two Cheers, p. 103.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has given critical analyses of E. M. Forster's short stories, using George Meredith's theory of the comic spirit and plot as a basis. It has also pointed out some of Forster's characteristic ideas, ideas which did appear in his later novels, but occurred first, and in developed form, in his short stories.

Chapter I presented a representative selection of current criticism of the short stories and introduced Meredith's theory, which said that

instead of recording things as they are, the comic spirit focuses on human egoism and sees that it is justly punished. The comic plot assumes the function of a moral scourge, a purposeful agent of retribution against all forms of self-importance.

Chapters II and III applied this formula to each story in turn, discovering that it did provide a suitable basis for critical discussion. Most of the stories conformed quite well to Meredith's concept of the comic plot; when the principal characters were not finally punished for their egoism, the reason was that, in Forster's terms, they eventually made the right choice toward the full life rather than the narrow.

Therefore, it is clear that, using these criteria, Forster's short stories can be commented upon as a coherent whole, without the necessity of trying to classify them under

other headings such as whimsey, fantasy, domestic comedy, or the only partially successful efforts of a young author to build his own myth of escape from a world he does not like. (This last assessment is Wilfred Stone's, found in his book The Cave and the Mountain.)

Chapter I also began to indicate Forster's characteristic themes; first to be noted were his concept of Love as the basic force in life and the necessity of "connection" between people. Chapters II and III continued this process, identifying, among other themes, Forster's dedication to Nature, particular places, Greek mythology, and the ancient Greek ideal of the balanced life and the importance of the individual. In addition, some of his ideas on Truth, Love, and Imagination have been pointed to, plus his dislike of modern civilization and distrust of science, and his plea against the depersonalized life patterns which result from those pressures.

Chapter I stated that Forster has written other prose, besides the novels and short stories, and that his non-fiction work has also been largely neglected by critics. Since a study of that other prose was outside the scope of this paper, it has been referred to only peripherally in the text. Nevertheless, it would be valuable to track Forster's characteristic themes through his two volumes of essays, two biographies, travel guides, and the recently published book of letters home from India. If my conclusions about the establishment

of his basic ideas early in life and their essential coherence throughout his writing career are correct, those themes will continue to appear.

In addition, a reader in sympathy with Forster's basic commitments to freedom, individual liberty, and the "necessity to connect" will find that his later non-fiction contains many pungent and apropos comments on the state of modern life. Although the material surroundings of society have changed considerably in the last fifty years, people have not changed much; we still have to cope with the same problems that always concerned Forster--how to order our own lives and get along with those around us. Forster offers no magic formula for solving these problems, but he does provide hints toward possible courses of action.

E. M. Forster deserves much more notice and a higher evaluation than he has received so far in the United States. In particular, his other prose, short stories, and non-fiction have been greatly underestimated. I hope this paper may encourage those who read it to investigate his neglected excellence.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beer, J. B., The Achievement of E. M. Forster. London: Chatto and Windus, 1962.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, editor, Forster: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.
- Crews, Frederick C., E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962.
- Forster, E. M., Abinger Harvest. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1936.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Alexandria: A History and a Guide. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1922.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Aspects of the Novel. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1927.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Collected Tales of E. M. Forster. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Hill of Devi. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1953.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Howards End. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1910.
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Longest Journey. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1907.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Marianne Thornton. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_, A Passage to India. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1924.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Pharos and Pharillon. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923.
- \_\_\_\_\_, A Room with a View. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1908.
- \_\_\_\_\_, Two Cheers for Democracy. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1938.
- Gransden, K. W., E. M. Forster. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962.

- Moore, Harry T., E. M. Forster. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.
- Stone, Wilfred, The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E. M. Forster. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1966.
- Warner, Rex, E. M. Forster. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1960. (There is some ambivalence about who exactly should be considered the author of this book. Warner wrote the first edition published in 1950; when it was to be issued in revised form in 1960, he was unavailable to do the revising, so John Morris undertook the task. The latter has discussed Forster's other writings, leaving the novel criticism much as Warner wrote it.)



## APPENDIX

APPENDIX

"Victorian Morals and the Modern Novel," John Henry Raleigh.  
In Partisan Review, Spring, 1958 (Volume XXV, Number 2).

Butler quite clearly looks forward to E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence, with their instinctive ethic, their dynamic, purposive concepts of life, their disdain for and lack of concern with the minutiae of individual consciousness, and their sense of comedy (p. 254).

.....

The Butler-Forster-Lawrence tradition . . . In the first place it is quite consciously interdependent. Both Forster and Lawrence were admirers of Butler and his intellectual unconventionality. [Shown in rebellion against middle-class opinions and hide-bound morals, and satiric jibing at them.] Forster once contemplated a book on Butler, and his own novels are filled with Butlerian echoes and attitudes. [As are his short stories.] The Longest Journey is a repetition of the Butlerian thesis that the intellect is not supreme and that only common sense and instinct can make existence bearable, indeed liveable. Lawrence and Forster, of course, knew each other, and although Lawrence, as was his custom, was sparing in his praise of Forster's work, the tie between the two writers is manifest. Forster's admiration for Lawrence's work and his recognition of Lawrence's genius are specifically documented in Aspects of the Novel, where Lawrence is called the one indisputable "prophet" among modern writers. And the "natural man" who figures in Forster's early work, either an Italian like Gino or an Englishman like Stephen Wonham, anticipate Lawrence's "dark gamekeeper."

The Butler-Forster-Lawrence tradition likewise has its own form and content. Formally, it prides itself on being non-literary, without involved manipulation of structure or scrupulously maintained "points of view" and without agonies over the mot juste. Forster thought that the sanctity of the device of the point of view, made into a holy of holies by James and Percy Lubbock, was an artificial shibboleth and very consciously in his own novels he violated it. . . .

In matters of content the Lawrencian tradition is equally divergent from the Joyce tradition. Stasis is replaced by dynamics, tragedy by comedy, and pessimism by hope. Space becomes freedom, time becomes growth, and history can be shed as the snake sheds its skin. . . . This is a world which is

organic and purposive; it is expressive of the anti-Darwinian argument that Butler had initiated, and Shaw had furthered. . . . In her [a character in a Lawrence novel] mind everything in the universe is potentially living and eternal, and time itself is no longer tyrannous. The earthly institution that most fully symbolized the victory over time of this Butlerian or Lamarckian universe was the medieval cathedral.

. . . . .

Finally, the Lawrencian tradition is avowedly, one might say frantically, kinetic; it has a "message," and the burden of this message, from Butler to Lawrence, is that the middle-class consciousness has become thin and neurotic, divorced from primal needs and instincts (256-258).