



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

Montclair State University
**Montclair State University Digital
Commons**

Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects

5-2014

The Struggle to Utopia : Social Reform, Accumulation, and Transformation in Howards End

Danielle Marie Rettino
Montclair State University

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



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

Recommended Citation

Rettino, Danielle Marie, "The Struggle to Utopia : Social Reform, Accumulation, and Transformation in Howards End" (2014). *Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects*. 581.
<https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/etd/581>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Montclair State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects by an authorized administrator of Montclair State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@montclair.edu.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

~~The~~ Struggle to Utopia: Social Reform,

Accumulation, and Transformation

in *Howards End*

by

Danielle Marie Rettino

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

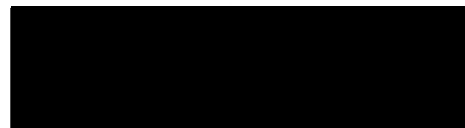
Master of Arts

May 2014

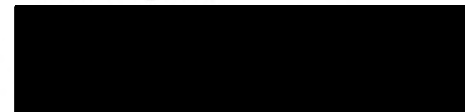
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English

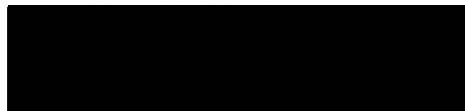
Thesis Committee:



Jonathan D. Greenberg /
Thesis Sponsor



Monika Elbert
Committee Member



Wendy C. Nielsen
Committee Member

Abstract:

E. M. Forster's novel *Howards End* explores transitions within early twentieth century London society's morals, values, and class divisions. I track the progression from excess and affluence to rural, pastoral simplification within the characters' lives and lifestyles. The first chapter examines class relations and social expectations, including a focus on consumerism, accumulation, and inheritance. Character and critics' discussions in reference to class, poverty, and accumulation are reviewed. The second chapter connects *Howards End* to utopian communes, the dystopian society in Forster's "The Machine Stops," and examines *Howards End* as a site for a potential utopia. *Howards End* as a utopian text acts as a model or example for the rest of society. At *Howards End*, peace, happiness, and cooperation can be achieved, transcending class distinction and the unequal distribution of wealth.

THE STRUGGLE TO UTOPIA: SOCIAL REFORM,
ACCUMULATION, AND TRANSFORMATION
IN *HOWARDS END*

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

by

DANIELLE MARIE RETTINO

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Burden of Accumulation and Inheritance in E. M. Forster's <i>Howards</i>	
<i>End</i>	4
Tangible or Intangible: Liberal Denouncement of Accumulation.....	4
The View of Accumulation in <i>Howards End</i>	6
Establishing Social Expectations Through Shopping.....	7
The Collection of Houses.....	12
The Inheritance of Money and Possessions.....	13
The Beneficiaries of Inheritance.....	16
Problems with Inheritance, as seen in <i>Howards End</i>	19
The Burden of Accumulation.....	23
A Shift Away from Consumerism.....	27
Chapter 2: Proposed Social Reform and the Search for Utopia in <i>Howards End</i>	29
Social Reform in <i>Howards End</i>	29
The Commune and Social Reform Thoughts in England.....	35
The Machine Stops.....	43
A Return to the Land.....	45
Utopia: Howards End as the Ideal.....	50
Conclusion.....	52
Works Cited.....	53

Copyright © 2014 by *Danielle Marie Rettino*. All rights reserved.

Acknowledgements:

I would first like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Jonathan D. Greenberg, for his support and amazing feedback at every stage in my writing process. His extensive comments and criticisms made this thesis possible. Additionally, he encouraged me to rely less on the critics: to identify *my* argument, which helped me write this thesis, and will continue to help me in the future. I would like to thank Dr. Wendy C. Nielsen for her readiness to discuss my thesis whenever I was willing, and for being supportive throughout the process. I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to Alicia Remolde, who always had an open door for me, and who helped me cope with hardships over the course of this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Monika Elbert, who signed on as a committee member without hesitation and was encouraging every step of the way. I would especially like to thank Peter Florek, and Nancy and Michael Corbo, who put up with my thesis-inspired moodiness for many months.

Introduction

In 1910, Imperialism in England was in full swing. The British Empire held hundreds of millions of people under its dominion, in territories all over the world. While Imperialists in England were looking to continue to expand their territory, wealth, and power, liberals within England were questioning the benefits of the imperialist mindset. Imperialism created economic opportunities for the few (upper class) and left many (lower classes) economically insecure. In his novel *Howards End*, liberal author E. M. Forster emphasizes the importance of addressing the Social Question of the time: how to create a successful, balanced society that is fair to both the wealthy upper classes and the poor lower classes, Forster's *Howards End* critiques the social expectation to accumulate material goods and the class disparity that accumulation presents and encourages. The Social Question that makes up a good deal of the plot of *Howards End* also makes up a good deal of the criticism surrounding the novel. Most critics seek to understand the liberal within *Howards End*, focusing on the distribution of wealth and liberal guilt seen within the novel. However, Forster does not only display liberal guilt; he also addresses how to diminish that guilt through the creation of a balanced economic and intellectual society.

Daniel Miller's *A Theory of Shopping* provides a socioeconomic theoretical backdrop for my discussion of accumulation of material goods. His arguments are salient for both modern society and Forster's contemporary society, in that he hopes to situate himself within a conversation of materialism and the overall consequences and benefits it has within Western society. Conveniently, his book discusses shopping in modern London, which is not all too different from the shopping available in London at the turn

of the century. Miller acts as a centering point for a discussion of accumulation in the text. Additionally, James Twitchell's "Two Cheers for Materialism"—which plays off the title of Forster's own "Two Cheers for Democracy"—acts as an important social and theoretical text for understanding criticism of accumulation within *Howards End*.

Miller's theories of materialism, accumulation, and consumerism are anachronistic to discussing Forster. Therefore, I have also included excerpts from earlier reform theorists: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels act as a reference point with which to understand Forster's discussion of socialism in the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Likewise, Emerson acts as a reference for understanding the social reform theories within the text. I will use Emerson's lecture "Man the Reformer" to examine in more detail the thought behind the reformist suggestions found in *Howards End*. Although he does not mention Emerson by name, Forster does reference Henry David Thoreau, who was another American reformist and naturalist, and Emerson's contemporary and friend, noted for his own pastoral living and retreat from urban society into nature at Walden.

The Social Question, in order to be fully addressed, must include both a discussion of the question that is raised, and the answer to the question that is proposed in the novel. Forster's treatment of *Howards End* and his continuous assertion of the importance of nature allows *Howards End* to be connected to social reform, in the form of a commune that allows all of society to return to a pastoral lifestyle. Forster frames his own reading between G. W. F. Hegel and Henry David Thoreau; this places Forster and *Howards End*, where these authors are referenced, in between philosophical and physical social reform. These direct references prove Forster's awareness of and engagement with

reformist thought and theorists. Locating Forster within the reformist dialogue places him among participants of social reform, either in thought or in action.

The formation of the Paris Commune in 1871 acts as a focal point for understanding the allusion to commune living that is seen in the final scenes of *Howards End*. The Paris Commune was established, in part, by the working class' rejection of upper class economic demands, such as rent. The short-lived Paris Commune attempted to balance society, economically, socially, and intellectually. The commune's motive was to reduce private property and class disparity by creating interdependence between its members: in order for one to be successful, all must succeed. Contemporary journalists and social reformists, such as E. S. Beesly and Thomas Wright, set the historical backdrop for reform within *Howards End*. Forster alludes to “the ‘eighties’” (221)—that is, the 1880s—which suggests his connection to the historical events happening shortly before his birth. The importance of the establishment of the Paris Commune for both Europe as a whole and England in particular helps to connect Forster’s *Howards End* to the commune.

Connecting *Howards End* to Forster’s “The Machine Stops” allows us to see and understand the importance of social reform for the health and success of human civilization. “The Machine Stops” acts as a model for a consumerist society that has gone too far. The dystopian civilization depends on “The Machine” to provide their every want and desire. The society is completely disconnected from Nature and the earth. The return to *Howards End* and the connection to nature that it provides, acts as a solution to consumerism and accumulation. The connection to Nature in both of these works is viewed as essential to the happiness and success of the human race.

Chapter 1: The Burden of Accumulation and Inheritance in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*

Tangible or Intangible: Liberal Denouncement of Accumulation

The accumulation of wealth, power, and possessions has been a driving force behind Western industrialized society for over 200 years. As a marker of status and success, accumulation of material goods acts as a public portrayal of an individual's work ethic and personality. The materialism associated with accumulation has put the accretion of tangible goods on a pedestal. Liberal author E. M. Forster recognizes accumulation, materialism, and consumerism as detrimental, leading to an overall inability to connect to others. Forster, in *Howards End*, saw materialism as a threat to the lasting progress and success of a connected, art-minded society. In *Howards End*, Forster seeks to reveal the misguided cultural norms that promote the accumulation of objects instead of meaningful relationships.

The accumulation of knowledge, relationships, love, and happiness would be seen by most in modern society as worthwhile accumulation. However, a social shift into helplessly and carelessly accumulating material goods, possessions, knick-knacks, and property—which we see displayed in *Howards End*—has caused a disruption in the valuing and gathering of non-material goods, such as happiness. What once held worth no longer does, as Daniel Miller explains: “alienable goods in our society have come to occupy a niche comparable to inalienable goods in other societies” (8). The alienable, tangible goods available are valued higher and have taken the place of the intangible wealth of relationships and connections with others. Once-sacred “goods”—that is, intangible goods—have been pushed aside in favor of material accumulation and greed.

Accumulation causes problems, pressure, and stress for the individual and for

society. Social, economic, and class distinctions can be made quickly and easily through an assessment of the level of accumulation of physical objects. Through accumulation, “forms of hierarchy and difference are ritually re-established” (Miller 106). The extravagance, abundance, and square-footage of property conveys the economic status of the owner. The hierarchy that is established is immediate; social dominance is acknowledged by anyone of a lower status. Unfortunately, as John Kenneth Galbraith explains, “Because the society sets great store by ability to produce a high living standard, it evaluates people by the products they possess” (21). The higher standard of living is not a moral standard, or an emotional standard; rather, the standard of living is entirely rooted in the physical. Society appraises its members based on their abundance of material goods, and deems them either worthy (upper class) or unworthy (lower class) of prestige. Social expectations of accumulation present the idea that more and more “must be owned in order to maintain the appropriate prestige” (Galbraith 21). Without prestige determined from the possession of material goods, respect and power are difficult to achieve. A materialistic society contributes to a preoccupation with socioeconomic status. It is easy to denounce this system, but difficult to offer an alternative. A society without hierarchy defined by objects could not be established without a serious sociocultural shift.

Liberal denunciation of accumulation is frequent and varied, both in E. M. Forster’s time and in our own. Despite heavy criticism, from many corners, of accumulation, consumerism remains a dominating force in modern society. Many, including Forster, denounced consumerism as a force that physically and psychically separates individuals. However, James Twitchell argues against critiquing consumerism

only: "In demonizing [commercialism and consumerism], in making it the scapegoat du jour, we reveal far more about our own eagerness to be passive in the face of complexity than about the thing itself" (282). That is, in blaming accumulation for the problems within society, no change or reformation can happen. It is not the accumulation itself that is at the heart of social problems; the problem lies within the nature of the society that put into place and emphasizes the need for accumulation. Miller argues, "Consumption practices are condemned primarily because they act as a conservative force reifying the given asymmetries in the social order;" and yet, it is no matter that they are condemned, despite the imbalance, because they remain in practice (106). People are trapped by consumption. On one hand, through consumption and accumulation, people have the opportunity to alter their social status and thus, perhaps, create more economic and leisure opportunities for themselves. Therefore, the overarching view of accumulation within society is one of value. On the other hand, consumption and accumulation pressure many people to work hard and long to prove their social worth, seen through how many things they own, and often miss out on the intangible goods in life. Additionally, more often than not, owning more is a luxury reserved for the wealthiest, leaving many without the means to achieve a higher social status, as determined through their possessions. Through accumulation, an imbalanced and unequal society is almost always a result, by allowing one to accumulate more than another.

The View of Accumulation in *Howards End*

In *Howards End* and the contemporary society that it depicts, the inalienable private life gives way to the distribution and collection of physical objects, which act as emotional placeholders for the intangible. In other words, we consume and accumulate

because we struggle to receive the intangible wealth of the world, found in intimate relationships with others. This is a connection that E.M. Forster frequently asks his readers to make.

Through discussions of liberal reform and the distribution of wealth, Forster presents a critique of the consumerism and accumulation of his time. The consumption in *Howards End* is closely tied to moral values, or a lack thereof, and class distinctions, rather than the careless, modern American style of spending. The vision of consumerism that modern readers are most accustomed to is that of consumption as a hedonistic act, where “spending large amounts of money, almost without a care for the consequences” is the goal (Miller 68). Yet, it is not difficult to see the leap from a loss of moral values and social responsibility, to a loss of careful judgment and priorities. Accumulation, at least in *Howards End*, is a social behavior that identifies and defines the socioeconomic status of the character. The abundance and quality of the goods accumulated, be it books, houses, or umbrellas, help to categorize the characters in a class-based hierarchy. The characters in *Howards End*, and presumably people in both the contemporary and modern worlds, become trapped within this hierarchy, having to constantly struggle to “keep up with the Joneses,” or in this case, with the Wilcoxes.

Establishing Social Expectations Through Shopping

Through shopping—a manifestation of the ever-increasing need to accumulate—class status and societal expectations can be met and maintained. In the Christmas shopping scene in *Howards End*, Margaret Schlegel consciously faces the dichotomy between her private (intangible) and public (tangible) life. She wants to reject the commercialization and materialism that she sees as having corrupted Christmas and

return to the private life's accumulation of personal relationships. Forster simultaneously attacks accumulation and the cultural expectations that have built an obligation around accumulation. However, Margaret, like most of society, remains trapped by cultural expectations to give gifts on Christmas and is forced into accepting the public expectation to accumulate and consume as reality. Because of the social structure, few can escape these cultural norms and still be accepted within society, despite their desire to cast off consumerism.

Margaret Schlegel is invited to go Christmas shopping in London with her new neighbor, Ruth Wilcox. Mrs. Wilcox extends the invitation because she does not feel adept at shopping and does not know what to buy anyone for Christmas. This scene includes a powerful message against consumerism and accumulation: it questions of the righteousness of consumerist culture. While the pair shop, Margaret notices:

Vulgarity reigned. ...Margaret was no morbid idealist. She did not wish this spate of business and self-advertisement checked. It was only the occasion of it that struck her with amazement...How many of these vacillating shoppers and tired shop-assistants realized that it was a divine event that drew them together!...a little mud displaced, a little money spent, a little food cooked, eaten, and forgotten. Inadequate. (Forster 84)

Through the narrator, we understand that Margaret accepts, on a basic level, the capitalist, consumerist culture surrounding Christmas. She does not want the shopping to be "checked;" she only wants the shoppers to realize the true morals, values, and faith of the holiday. Margaret struggles with the dichotomy of anti-consumerism and cultural norms. This struggle represents the struggle that many average people would face when

confronted with social reform theories and movements. Margaret knows that the celebration through consumption is “inadequate,” yet she is unsure of how to act upon that realization.

James Ivory’s film adaptation of *Howards End* offers an altered experience of the shopping trip between Wilcox and Schlegel. Margaret’s treatise against consumerism and holiday corruption is absent from the film, though we do get a taste of the excess discussed in the novel. Shopping in London is introduced via a seemingly endless department store—presumably Harrods—where purchases are piled up until the shoppers’ arms are full. Margaret selects an indiscernible item—perhaps the Christmas cards from the novel—a box, no different from any other around it. Margaret looks at it briefly, and quickly passes it to a clerk, who adds it to her collection of other items awaiting purchase. She does not reflect on the purchase, and does not need to. The film captures the extravagance and mindlessness of accumulation. It does not matter *what* the item is: in the accumulation-driven society, it *must* be purchased, even if it really is just an empty box.

The endlessness of the store in Ivory’s adaptation, and the carelessness of the purchases, reflect the modern shopping experience. While the characters and scene are set over a century in the past, *Howards End*’s shopping scene remains a point of important social criticism. Strong social expectations of excessive accumulation are reflected in the setting of the film’s shopping scene. Modern audiences connect to problems with class disparity through the unnecessary magnitude of store. The store is fancy, elaborate, and presumably expensive; therefore, not all economic classes could afford to shop there. Shopping remains a privilege for the wealthy. Additionally, modern audiences recognize

that accumulation currently remains a social obligation: Christmas gifting remains an icon for accumulation.

In Forster's *Howards End*, and in contemporary London as well, shopping is very closely tied with social expectations and obligations. Then and now, gifts, along with personal accumulation, were expected and anticipated. The act of gift-giving not only connects to accumulation for the self (in the act of buying the gift), but also participates in the expectation to help others accumulate. In both the novel and contemporary society, "shopping is dominated by your imagination of others, of what they desire of you and their response to you; it is about relationship to those who require something of you" (Miller 3). Shopping helps to form the social contract that we live within. In the Christmas shopping scene, this "imagination of others" is brought to life through the list that Margaret makes. Her imagination of servants, for example, is that they need money, and would prefer to receive money more than anything else; it is simply "much easier" (Forster 84). The lack of a gift that contributes to the servants' physical accumulation gives insight into how social status is stratified. Margaret cannot envision the servants' desires; they are so different from her that she cannot anticipate their wants and needs. Without an "imagination" of the lower classes, there can be no true, intangible connection between Margaret and those economically beneath her.

For Ruth Wilcox, shopping can be perceived as the desire to preserve her relationships with her gift recipients. Shopping reestablishes the relationship between Margaret and Ruth. According to Miller, "The shopper is not merely buying goods for others, but hoping to influence these others" to maintain or further develop the relationship that has been established (8). Therefore, shopping becomes "a way of

spending things in order to gain other things” (Miller 99). Purchasing physical gifts in order to strengthen relationships suggests that the ability to build relationships without objects has been lost. Thus, we return to the corruption and loss of intangible goods. Society struggles to connect to others without the middleman of accumulation. By understanding shopping as a cultural expectation, we are led towards “understanding contemporary social relations and their nuances” (Miller 4). The nuances of many relationships, therefore, can be identified by the gifts given in that relationship. The rejection of buying physical objects for servants leads to the conclusion that, as a member of a higher class, Margaret avoids linking herself more closely with members of a lower class. In giving them money, she maintains their relationship and reaffirms the social distance between them.

Despite Margaret Schlegel’s knack for shopping, she begins to gain a sense of anti-consumerism from Mrs. Wilcox, concluding that the Wilcox family might “resent any expenditure on outsiders” like herself (Forster 83). Margaret begins to break from social structures through this foreboding feeling surrounding gift exchange. In her upper class, cosmopolitan society, it would be natural and even expected to give and receive gifts. Nevertheless, Margaret catches on to anti-consumerist feeling quickly, saying: “I’ve odd ideas about Christmas. Because I have all that money can buy. I want more people, but no more things” (83). The reader is triumphant with Margaret’s realization of the unnecessary nature of holiday shopping. While Ruth Wilcox reasserts the social expectations, Margaret challenges the norms: “you cannot pay me back with anything tangible” (84). Margaret redirects social expectations in the scene, in order to reintroduce the importance of the intangible within society.

The Collection of Houses

The accumulation of property and houses is a central focus of the critical view of materialism in *Howards End*. Henry Wilcox, in particular, buys and sells his properties seemingly on a whim. He treats houses and property as if they are trifles: things to be bought and sold without any further thought. Likewise, for most characters, houses have no more importance than any other possession.

The extravagance and overindulgence in houses is seen through the Wilcoxes' excessive collection. Helen Schlegel counts the Wilcoxes' assortment of houses:

the Wilcoxes collect houses as your Victor collects tadpoles. They have one, Ducie Street; two, Howards End, where [Helen's] great rumpus was; three, a country seat in Shropshire; four, Charles has a house in Hilton; and five, another near Epsom; and six, Evie will have a house when she marries, and probably a pied-a-terre in the country—which makes seven.

Oh yes, and Paul a hut in Africa makes eight. (Forster 155)

This excludes Oniton, as well as a conjectural house in Cyprus, where Mr. Wilcox would have met Jackie. The collection of houses here seems extreme, although the accumulation of these properties is not seen as unusual. In fact, Margaret nearly adds another to the list when she agrees that a new house should be built for her and Henry.

The lack of appreciation for the nature that those houses are built upon is one of the fundamental problems with the accumulation of houses. The accumulation of property, for Mr. Wilcox, is a trifle, as Nancy Von Rosk explains: “nature becomes another ‘thing,’ another commodity” to be bought, sold, and conquered (341). Mr. Wilcox does not seem to care for the nature he is destroying with his home buying and

building. In fact, it is hard to imagine that he *does* care, since he has hay fever (we are first introduced to him sneezing and seeking a tissue [22]). He is not alone in his lack of appreciation for the outdoors; Leslie White argues, “The other Wilcoxes, of course, when they think of the house at all, see it as burdensome, out of date, an impediment to suburban progress; their interest in *Howards End* amounts to the vulgar desire to modernize” (51). For all of the Wilcoxes except Ruth, a house in the country cannot be a useful and beautiful thing. Rather, it is a burden: something that must be treated and reworked to suit the life and lifestyle of the cosmopolitan consumer. *Howards End* could not be left alone as a simple farmhouse: it had to be modernized in order to accommodate accumulation, seen through the tearing down of the paddock in favor of the garage.

The Inheritance of Money and Possessions

The accumulation and collection of money and inherited possessions is a frequent topic of conversation for the characters within *Howards End*. Money is what makes consumerism possible, of course, but it also makes socioeconomic hierarchy possible. Money is seen as the keeper of the status quo. As long as one has her own “golden island [of money] upon which [s]he stands” (Forster 132), she cannot fall into the abyss, into a lower status, both socially and economically. Money becomes, and still is, the “agent of all change” (Turner 338). Both money and possessions are seen, in *Howards End*, as desired objects to inherit. Both are capable of swaying social opinions and creating change on the whims of whichever class holds the most of both.

Leonard Bast, and most of London society, must work for his money; without work, he will be without money. In contrast, the Schlegels do no work, and yet they have enough money to live comfortably. Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests the upper classes

must “rely on the power of a dollar” (536) to keep their world in a stasis, rather than by their own hard work. By inheriting wealth, status, and property, a select few are allowed to maintain a social status that they did not work for, and often times, that they do not deserve. As a tradition, inheritance contributes to the cyclical nature of accumulation: We must accumulate to show our power and status, and then solidify the establishment of that power and status by being able to transfer it to future generations, who do much the same. The accumulation of money through interest or inheritance is often sneered at, suggesting Forster views the process, in theory, with a negative attitude. Yet, in practice, Forster was able to travel and live his life comfortably, much like the Schlegels, through an inheritance with which he could live off of interest.¹ The Schlegels live off of the interest of their inherited wealth and they cannot imagine living without it. They depend on wealth, but it plays a miniscule role in their consciousness, just another part of life: “[money] is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence. ...the very soul of the world is economic, and that the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin” (Forster 67). The tragedy of the absence of the coin is created because society put the coin (wealth) on a pedestal and has taken it for an idol.

The depth of accumulation as a social expectation is seen in the tradition of inheritance: objects can be accumulated throughout generations and add to each succeeding generation’s status. Miller discusses the cultural importance of inheritance: “The most legitimate spending is that which goes down the generations ...there is some more important goal than immediate gratification, that there is some transcendent force or

¹ Although Forster did work, and write for pay, he got his feet under him, so to speak, by inheriting from his great aunt, Marianne Thornton. Forster later wrote a biography about his aunt, *Marianne Thornton: A Domestic Biography 1797-1887*.

future purpose that justifies present deferment:" that of the legacy of inheritance (104). Inheritance as a tradition seeks to justify accumulation as a ritual and social necessity. Accumulation becomes the "more important goal" and aids in securing a strong, class-based future for descendants.

Unfortunately for Leonard Bast and others in his impoverished situation, he feels himself as being viewed and judged mostly by the number and quality of his possessions, despite his lack of an inheritance. In English society, Forster suggests, "All men are equal—all men, that is to say, who possess umbrellas" (55). Possessions in *Howards End* often, if not always, serve, as Henry S. Turner suggests, "as a crucial mark of social distinction" (338). Sadly, Leonard's umbrella, the only possession he is seen in public with, is in a deplorable condition, which reflects his low social standing. He cannot bear the thought of knowing that the upper-class Schlegels have witnessed his symbolic umbrella and know him to be a cultural fraud. A disturbing passage alludes to the ills of poverty: "beneath these superstructures of wealth and art there wanders an ill-fed boy, who has recovered his umbrella indeed, but who has left no address behind him, and no name" (Forster 55). Leonard Bast could not leave his name, because then his fraud could be discovered. Further, the lack of address and name left behind alludes to the lack of ancestry and inheritance. When the poor die, there is no one who benefits from them, and therefore, no one to remember their name. Leonard puts himself further into debt and poverty by putting on airs of wealth, in his attendance at lectures and concerts. He is so obsessed with being accepted by the upper class that he needlessly spends; eventually, he can no longer afford the entertainment and cultural excitement of the upper class.

Leonard's socioeconomic struggle raises questions of the morality of the tradition of inheritance. Without inheritance to buoy future generations, there would be a less extreme class disparity. Indeed, more people might have to work to support themselves, rather than living off the interest gained from their ancestors' work. If familial inheritance were less of an expectation, less of a tradition, would Leonard have to struggle so hard? Without inheritance to support the upper classes, there could be a shift in the cultural importance that money holds. Leonard, like all others, might be judged, instead, on his eagerness and interest in the arts and culture. Turner suggests, "Forster's negotiation between money and morality takes place through the narrative's persistent attention to the physical objects of everyday life" (329). In a moral society, it would be standard practice for lower classes to be judged on personality and interests, rather than on possessions and wealth, which is the focus of judgment in a materialistic society. Perhaps if Leonard did not have to worry about the condition of his umbrella and other possessions, he could focus on building a more solid relationship with the Schlegels and others, while also feeling less the fool. In this way, White argues, Forster suggests that "fervently passionate appreciation is required, involving what he calls a desire to 'pass on' the creations of culture, a zeal to bequeath" the important aspects of society and culture: those of art, honesty, morality, and the inner life (White 47). The struggle associated with gaining social status illuminates the necessity for society to shift and accept the intangible in people, rather than judge them only on the tangible.

The Beneficiaries of Inheritance

Characters within *Howards End* suggest alternate routes for the elevation of the lower classes. Rather than disband accumulation and inheritance altogether, they seek to

help the poor by including them in the tradition of inheritance. Helen and Margaret Schlegel attend a dinner party to discuss how the practice and tradition of inheritance might be changed to enact social reform. The discussion during the party focuses on how philanthropy might help the poor:

[The poor man's] conditions must be improved without impairing his independence; he must have a free library, or free tennis-courts; his rent must be paid in such a way that he did not know it was being paid...he must be forcibly parted from his uninspiring wife, the money going to her as compensation...he must be given food but no clothes, clothes but no food, a third return ticket to Venice, without either food or clothes when he arrived there. In short, he might be given anything and everything so long as it was not the money itself. (Forster 120)

The Schlegels and the other guests discuss how to help the poor and what the best way to help them to help themselves is. Several of the ladies at the dinner party argue in favor of the bequeathing some form of inheritance on the poor. Judith Weissman suggests, as “Good liberals, they hope to be generous to someone of a class below them” (436). Yet, it is clear that the ladies have little notion of what would really help the poor and enact social change. They cannot decide between giving food or giving tennis courts. This odd struggle with what really helps create social change shows how far removed the wealthy are from the needs of the poor. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels assert that, by becoming benefactors, the ladies would only further create “nations of peasants [dependent] on nations of bourgeois” (17).

Part of the dinner party discussion includes the casting off of current social limitations in regards to social status and the class-based status quo. During the dinner party, renouncing wealth is argued against:

The subject of the paper had been "How ought I to dispose of my money?" the reader professing to be a millionaire on the point of death, inclined to bequeath her fortune for the foundation of local art galleries, but open to conviction from other sources. ...The hostess assumed the ungrateful role of "the millionaire's eldest son", and implored her expiring parent not to dislocate society by allowing such vast sums to pass out of the family. Money was the fruit of self-denial, and the second generation had a right to profit by the self-denial of the first. (Forster 120)

The hostess plays the role of the millionaire's eldest son in jest, but it is a serious matter. It is clear that the hostess and the other participants agree with the benefits of inheritance, as they are likely inheritors themselves. The concept of dislocating society by disallowing inheritance reads as an honest belief. The well-to-do ladies of the discussion club cannot realistically imagine giving up their wealth for the benefit of others.

Likewise, Charles Wilcox offers an additional look at how important inheritance is to the expectant beneficiaries. Charles relies on his inheritance heavily; he complains: "the pater saying that he will be just to all [in his doling out of inheritance] ... There'll not be enough to go round, for there's none coming in, either through Dolly or Percy. It's damnable!" (191). Charles forgets himself and his upper class manners, cursing the threat to his easy, inherited lifestyle. Unfortunately for Charles, "He lacked his father's ability in business, and so had an even higher regard for money; unless he could inherit plenty,

he feared to leave his children poor” (191). Like the ladies at the discussion club, Charles cannot imagine giving up his wealth, or even sharing it with his siblings’ families. He predicts himself as being dislocated within society. His children will not be able to maintain their social status through their inheritance, and could fall into that ever-looming abyss. Without any real skill or motivation, Charles is reliant on his inheritance and the stability and safety that accompany it.

The ladies of the discussion club see inheritance as something wildly beneficial. They, much like Charles Wilcox, believe they could not maintain their lifestyle without their inheritance. The discussion shows how consuming the prospects of inheritance can be, how that inheritance will be doled out, and whether others threaten it. For example, Charles Wilcox struggles constantly to accept Margaret into his life, because he fears her secret intentions to take control of his inheritance. The use of inheritance becomes a part of the Social Question, as Forster shows inheritance to be a meddling force within social relations.

Problems with Inheritance, as seen in *Howards End*

Inheritance, especially for the Wilcoxes, becomes physically and emotionally altering. While Mrs. Wilcox thrived in the natural environment surrounding Howards End, her children and widower do not thrive there. Instead, the Wilcoxes are burdened and transformed by their inheritance. They are imprisoned by the anxiety of protecting their wealth and possessions. Emerson argues the downfall of inheritance and accumulation, suggesting that it creates “a puny, protected person guarded by walls and curtains, stoves and down beds, coaches, and men-servants...and who, bred to depend on all these, is made anxious by all that endangers those possessions” (529). The Wilcoxes,

especially Henry and Charles, are incredibly anxious about the endangerment of their wealth and possessions. Charles, although he does not want to live at Howards End, is determined that he should still be the inheritor of the house: “though he disliked the house, was determined to defend it” (265). The Wilcoxes and the upper classes are driven by the desire to protect their possessions, wealth, and what they see as their rights (that of the right to inherit). Thomas Wright, nineteenth-century reformist writer, argued that the men who own property “are keenly opposed to anything that tends to trench upon the ‘sacredness’ of individual property, or about which there is any savour of the leveling doctrine” (134). That is, the loss of property is considered a loss of status and brings the upper classes down, closer to being equal with the working class. We see this clearly in Henry Wilcox, who, when discussing the inheritance of Howards End, asserts that Margaret could have no possible use for the place, for “she has a house of her own. Why should she want another?” (99). Henry is a complete hypocrite here; as Helen described earlier, he has a plethora of houses, with less use for each one successively. He cannot connect his own amassing and accumulation to that of others. Rather, he sees himself as the only one who might accumulate goods with abandon, and that the process of accumulation for anyone other than a Wilcox is a threat to Wilcox status and power.

Despite the stress and anxiety brought on by inheritance and accumulation, most characters seem to agree that it is necessary for their well-being. However, the Schlegels’ perspective of inherited objects offers a more radical view of the tradition of inheritance and accumulation. The Schlegels’ lease is up at Wickham Place and they will be forced to move. Margaret muses on this prospect and comes to the realization that consumerism

and accumulation are not the best devices with which to live life. She analyzes and critiques her own accumulation:

The Age of Property holds bitter moments even for a proprietor. When a move is imminent, furniture becomes ridiculous, and Margaret now lay awake at nights wondering where, where on earth they and all their belongings would be deposited in September next. Chairs, tables, pictures, books, that had rumbled down to them through the generations, must rumble forward again like a slide of rubbish to which she longed to give the final push and send toppling into the sea. But there were all their father's books—they never read them, but they were their father's and they *must* be kept.

...The feudal ownership of land did bring dignity, whereas the modern ownership of movables is reducing us again to a nomadic horde. We are reverting to the civilization of luggage, and historians of the future will note how the middle classes accrete possessions without taking root in the earth. (Forster 138-39, my emphasis)

Margaret is revolutionary in her critique of her own accumulation of wealth and possessions. Her suggestion that she might be better off without her possessions, having pushed them "into the sea," is unorthodox, especially given her high social status. The prospect, however unlikely, of giving up her father's inheritance: that of his books, furniture, and other possessions, is a refreshing ideological possibility.

Thus, the stress that accompanies inheritance allows the true burden of inheritance to become clear. Margaret is burdened by her inheritance of possessions once she is faced

with the prospect of moving that inheritance. Emerson suggests a solution to this burden: "If the accumulated wealth of the past generations is thus tainted,--no matter how much of it is offered to us, --we must begin to consider if it were not the nobler part to renounce it, and to put ourselves into primary relations with the soil and nature" (527). This renouncing of inherited wealth is, in some ways, what we see from the Schlegel sisters when Margaret muses on her possessions and the struggle they pose in moving.

Additionally, this mindset of viewing past wealth as "tainted," seems to be a lesson that Forster is trying to teach his readers and his characters. Charles Wilcox represents the taint of inheritance because he is consistently worried or complaining about his inheritance and its dwindling nature. Traditionally, *Howards End* "would come to Charles in time" (94) through inheritance and the legacy of Ruth Wilcox. When his inheritance of the house is threatened, Charles is made anxious and nearly forgets his status and the manners and expectations that go with it. The threat becomes real through Margaret. As consequence, "Charles began to run, but checked himself," (96) his anxieties about losing what he saw as rightfully, legally his, allows him to break from his character, just for a moment, and allows the reader to see those anxieties plainly in his run. Eventually, Charles is sent to prison, in part, from a reformist perspective, for his excessive greed and unwillingness to renounce his inheritance and work instead.

A legal prison is not the only trap that accumulation presents. Accumulation through inheritance traps the inheritor with possessions that they do not want, but cannot relinquish. Emerson discusses the issues he sees with inheritance: "whoever takes any of these things into his possession, takes the charge of defending them from this troop of enemies, or of keeping them in repair" (529). Emerson suggests that inheritors do not

really want, and do not really benefit, from the wealth and accumulation of their ancestors; rather, accumulation and inheritance forms a mental and emotional prison, which the prisoner feels bound to. This can be seen in the Wilcoxes' treatment of *Howards End*. The Wilcox family does not initially want to live there; they see it as a burden. They sublet the house and find themselves repeatedly dealing with issues arising from this inheritance they never wanted. In addition, it is clear through Wilcox behavior that inheritance and accumulation provides an emotional trap: "the son finds his hands full—not to use these things,—but to look after them" (Emerson 529). Charles Wilcox is so consumed with his need to control his inheritance that it affects his relationship with his wife. Charles admonishes Dolly for her perceived participation in losing him his inheritance: "Miss Schlegel always meant to get hold of *Howards End*, and, thanks to you [Dolly], she's got it" (166). Like *Howards End* for the Wilcoxes, and family possessions and furniture for the Schlegels, an inheritance traps the inheritors and gives them more to worry about.

The Burden of Accumulation

The burden of accumulation is placed by benefactors and by society. It is because of societal expectations and conformity that consumerism and accumulation must take place. Forster argues against conformity through his lifestyle and writing; he was liberal in thought, but also in practice: participating in the heavily criticized and socially prohibited homosexual community. Another liberal in thought, though less in practice,² Emerson explains conformity and pleads with his listeners to reject social conformity in favor of deep thinking:

² Emerson rejected participating in the commune lifestyle because it was too restrictive and focused on self-denial.

Our expense is almost all for conformity. It is for cake that we run in debt; 't is not the intellect, not the heart, not beauty, not worship, that costs so much. Why needs any man be rich? ... Only for want of thought. Once waken in him a divine thought, and he flees into a solitary garden. (533)

Ruth Wilcox understands that expense is almost always conformity. This is precisely why she struggles with her Christmas shopping. She does not follow social customs. Ruth Wilcox, the only unnatural Wilcox (nee Ruth Howard), wants desperately to flee from London back to her "solitary garden" at Howards End. She does not understand the point of spending because of custom, and therefore cannot succeed in it.

Ruth Wilcox's lack of accumulation is contrasted with the rest of her family's extreme accumulation. We see no other character consuming property in the way of the Wilcoxes, presumably because no one else has the means to be so extravagant with her purchases. Marx and Engels suggest that very few would be able to consume in the style of the Wilcoxes: "private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths" (23). Their extreme wealth marks the Wilcoxes, and especially Henry Wilcox, as the bourgeoisie.

As members of a select few, the Wilcoxes, especially Henry, have difficulty connecting to others, specifically those economically beneath them. Forster's narrator suggests all upper classes, like the Wilcoxes, would say: "We have tried knowing another class—impossible" (132). The class disparity, marked through the amount of possessions owned and the ability to continue to accumulate marks the Wilcoxes almost as a different race, unknowable to all others. Daniel Born argues that for Henry Wilcox, "the 'real life'

...reveals itself to be equally preoccupied with the business of real estate. Of what, after all, does the 'real life' consist? Friendships or property?" (141). Mr. Wilcox is exceedingly preoccupied with his real estate and brings it up almost every time he speaks. Unnervingly, for him, it seems that real life consists more of property than of friendships. Considering that connection to lower classes is seen as "impossible," it is no surprise that Henry Wilcox struggles to connect with others. Mr. Wilcox "struggled for possessions that money cannot buy. He desired comradeship and affection, but he feared them" (Forster 151). Forster suggests that the wealthy of England are disconnected from people in favor of a connection with possessions. Helen takes this a step further, saying: "the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and gold-clubs, and that if it fell I should find nothing behind it but panic and emptiness" (39). The Wilcoxes, except for Ruth, are a product of their accumulation and materialistic desires. This is a striking criticism on accumulation, because it is such a direct attack on the problems that arise in personality and values due to a heavy social suggestion, expectation, and emphasis on the importance of accumulating. While Henry does not seem disquieted by his inability to connect, his aloofness and primary concern in business and accumulation is unnerving for the reader.

Aside from Ruth, the Wilcoxes are not portrayed in a positive light. The novel's tone is overwhelmingly liberal and critical of snobbish, conformist attitudes and personalities. Ross C. Murfin notes, "The Schlegel sisters, as well as Forster's narrator, are liberal enough to disapprove of the Wilcoxes" and their accumulation and consumerist tendencies (427). The negative portrayal of the greedy Wilcoxes provides a model for the readers of whom *not* to be like. The Wilcoxes are the perfect example of

understanding why “no one should take more than his share” (Emerson 538). Specifically in the imperialist, capitalist English society of the early twentieth century, resources were not infinite. This lack of resources, and the greedy desire for more than what one needs, prompts the growth of an imperialist mindset of bourgeois families like the Wilcoxes. They seek to drastically differentiate themselves from the poor masses, and therefore leave less for those masses, cyclically increasing economic imbalance.

While accumulation of physical possessions may not be the primary target of much of the criticism surrounding *Howards End*, it is, nevertheless, a crucial aspect of Forster’s social critique. We are shown, through the expansion of London and the destruction of the countryside, how fully “consumerism becomes the primary image for the destruction of the world” (Miller 97) in *Howards End*. The face of the earth is negatively affected by consumption and accumulation. Likewise, the beauty of things humans once created becomes lost or corrupted. Murfin explains, “How can people mechanically stamping out things that bear no mark of their producer’s individuality (people thereby ‘reified,’ turned into things themselves) be expected to recognize, produce, or even consume things of beauty?” (418). The overproduction of goods to meet the needs of consumerism creates a society who cannot appreciate the goods that they own. Without an aesthetic appreciation of what they have, a society that carelessly accumulates is created. Margaret’s uncle Ernst critiques the younger generation’s priorities:

You only care about the things that you can use, and therefore arrange them in the following order: money, supremely useful; intellect, rather useful; imagination, of no use at all. ... It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be

thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile. (Forster 42)

The social expectation to accumulate and consume reorders individual values. Uncle Ernst asserts that the carelessness, the desire for more, for “bigness,” creates a society rooted in vice. Accumulation in *Howards End* becomes “simply a ceaseless movement, a restless overturning and change” without any real meaning or import (Turner 340-41). This change in social values (shifting from valuing the intangible to the tangible) is presented in a negative light in order to prompt the reader to question her own entanglement with societal expectations surrounding consumerism and accumulation.

A Shift Away from Consumerism

In *Howards End*, Forster pushes readers to see consumerism in an unconventional light. He presents consumerism, accumulation, and inheritance, as being unconstructive influences on life, from which society must break free. Of Forster’s discussion on accumulation, Turner remarks, “This is not a vision of surplus as profit but of surplus as waste” (340). Accumulation is causing the characters to waste their money, time, efforts, and ultimately be distanced from other humans. They worry about their wealth and possessions more than the happiness of themselves and others. When Margaret and other liberals push against this societal norm, they intrinsically advocate for social reform.

According to White, those in the text who are willingly open-minded:

are intellectually and morally committed to transcending (but also transforming) the pressures of prevailing conventions and imperatives—completion, “bigness,” material progress, ...[Liberals] instinctively act to

preserve the sacred rituals, creations, and rhythms of life inherited from the past. (50)

The inheritance “from the past” is not only in *Howards End*, but the emphasis on the intangible, natural way of life, morals, and values that it signifies. A return to the past, then, would be a return to rural, self-sufficient living with little to physically accumulate, and even less to inherit. The values of the past are seen in the treatment of others: “Old Mrs Howards [sic] never spoke against anybody, nor let anyone be turned away without food” (237). Once reconnected to the earth, morals and the value of the intangible would become socially important again. It is the morals and values that would be inherited, such as the Howard way of kindness and generosity, rather than social disconnection from others. Forster advocates, through *Howards End* and the final return to the house, for a social change that would shift morals and cultural expectations.

Chapter 2. Proposed Social Reform and the Search for Utopia in *Howards End*

Social Reform in *Howards End*

There are several problems with the reformist propositions seen in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*. A repeated "solution" that the novel offers is for the wealthy to act as benefactors to the poor. However, class distinctions remain apparent in a society of benefactors and beneficiaries. Although acting as a benefactor is a step in the right direction towards social reform, it still fosters a separation of classes. The sentiment from the rich, as discussed at the ladies dinner party, is that they want to help, but they do not want their names tied to the poor; the poor must be helped without knowing how or from whom they benefit. Perhaps unintentionally or subconsciously, the ladies advocate for the continuation of class distinctions: they must remain wealthy in order to allot money to the poor. Forster's narrator argues that the wealthy's interest in economic social change is insincere: "We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet" (55). The upper classes are concerned, as at the dinner party, only in theory and in jest. The bourgeoisie do not know how to connect with the poor. The voices of social reform that were heard come from "one who had never been dirty or hungry, and had not guessed successfully what dirt and hunger are" (Forster 59). In the same way that Margaret cannot conceive of servants' desires for Christmas presents, the rich cannot conceive of the true needs of the poor or how to truly alleviate those needs.

No true change can come about from money alone; a mental and social shift must also happen. Margaret Schlegel realizes the shortcomings of a social reform program that advocates for an exchange of money only and does not allow the beneficiary to learn or

grown on his own. Margaret opposes the hierarchical views of the dinner party, suggesting that the money itself should be a tool for learning given to the poor to do with as they will. She argues:

Don't dole them out poetry books and railway tickets like babies. Give them the wherewithal to buy these things. When your socialism comes it may be different, and we may think in terms of commodities instead of cash. Till it comes give people cash, for it is the warp of civilization, whatever the woof may be....don't bother about [the poor man's] ideals. He'll pick up those for himself. (121)

While this is a refreshingly honest and realistic look at social reform, it is still fraught with class separation struggles. In this reform scenario, the poor man remains intellectually and ideologically under the rich, even when he is given enough money to balance their economic relationship. Even with money, his ideals are still that of a poor man: he remains trapped behind that social barrier. Additionally, he remains a dependent of the wealthy, not being able to achieve or maintain his wealth without their help. To Margaret and the other ladies, money is an interwoven part of the fabric of society. They know that there are other things that hold civilization together, that of the "woof," but cannot quite guess at what they are. However, like a truly realistic reformer, Margaret sees the need for temporary solutions that might alleviate social problems while real and lasting solutions are discovered and put into practice.

It is clear that a system of benefactors does not produce any true or lasting relief from the nagging Social Question. A hierarchical society creates poverty in which the poor cannot survive without the help of the rich. Marx and Engels suggest that:

the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. (21)

It is striking that Marx and Engels choose to name the working, lower classes as slaves, suggesting their utter inability to raise themselves up in the world.³ The poor are trapped in their unfortunate situations. They cannot make drastic improvements to their socioeconomic situation without help; they are slaves to the will and whims of the upper class.

The lower, working classes do not have much ability to improve their circumstances independently. The structure of society often kept the lower classes within one profession, if they had a profession at all. Emerson explains the struggles and entrapment of the working class:

The [lower class] young man on entering life finds the ways to lucrative employments blocked with abuses... it requires more vigor and resources than can be expected of every young man, to right himself in [employments of commerce]; he is lost in them; he cannot move hand or foot in them...he must sacrifice all the brilliant dreams of boyhood and youth as dreams; he must forget the prayers of his childhood; and must take on him the harness of routine and obsequiousness. (525)

³ Marx and Engels refer to G.W.F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (or the Master-slave dialectic, as it is commonly known). Likewise, Forster directly mentions "Hegel...as the idealist" (41).

We see much of Leonard Bast in Emerson's lecture. Leonard Bast, like the young man of whom Emerson speaks, is trapped by his situation. Although he dreams of a better, more intellectual life filled with sophisticated relationships, he must ignore these dreams in order to support himself. We are sad to hear from Leonard Bast: "the real thing's money, and all the rest is a dream" (209). The once vivacious and ambitious Leonard is replaced by one sucked into the trials of a hard economic life. The life and suffering of Leonard Bast is the cost for the wealthy living comfortably. Forster attempts to critique the social structure that reduces Leonard to a stereotype of the lower classes. Leonard's dream is to raise his social status and be considered a culturally competent individual. And yet, he cannot get there without money. He cannot make more money because he, paradoxically, does not have money to start with.

It seems as though only the upper classes are allowed to be seen as culturally competent and find happiness and satisfaction through the intellect. Henry S. Turner argues that we continually see "class-marked characterizations [which] insist repeatedly on the importance of the intellect, the spirit, and the emotions" (333). The lower classes cannot focus on spiritual, intellectual, or emotional growth because they are swallowed up in the struggle and darkness of the abyss. On the surface, there is no true abyss to be seen in *Howards End*. We see nothing intrinsically shocking or degrading to a human being. The Bast family is not in such poverty that they suffer hunger or true homelessness: they are not in rags and workhouses, although they do approach the abyss. Rather, their suffering is experienced through Leonard Bast's dejection and his loss of innocence and ambition. It is the loss of the inner life that we pity and mourn, not the outer life experienced by the poor. Leslie White criticizes the unnatural harmony that is seen on the

surface of an imbalanced society: "Sanity, the normal, determines what will 'fit in,' and what sort of order best suits its perpetuation. But since it is an order imposed from without, whatever 'harmony' results is transitory or fraudulent. Such imposition inhibits acts of self-determination" (47). The imposition from without is that of social pressure to conform and to consume. There may be a semblance of harmony and peace that comes from securing a social position, a house, the right outfit or artifact. Yet that harmony and contentment is fraudulent since it does not connect to the inner life that is so forcefully promoted in *Howards End*. Additionally, that harmony of securing a social position is not achievable by all, such as the Basts.

The power and influence of money is discussed throughout the novel and is an intrinsic part of the Social Question. The proper use and distribution of money has the potential to create extensive social change; who determines what is proper distribution is what is at stake when attempting to address social and economic reform. Turner suggests that Forster does not see the use of money in black and white: "Forster seems fascinated by the power of money to change things and people but at the same time distrustful of its superficiality, of the structures that produce it and that are required to manage it, and of the world of impermanence it ushers in" (334). Money cannot be eliminated directly in the current society; it has too much power. Therefore, the strategy for reform is not a direct attack on money, at least not immediately.

The first strategy of social reform seen in *Howards End* is to reject consumerism and accumulation. The narrator of *Howards End* suggests accumulation is at the root of the problems within society: "the modern ownership of moveables is reducing us again to a nomadic horde. We are reverting to the civilization of luggage, and historians of the

future will note how the middle classes accreted possessions without taking root in the earth" (139). Consumerism and accumulation, according to Forster's narrator, creates a "horde" in society, mindlessly moving towards materialism as the destination. John Kenneth Galbraith suggests that consumerism can only be rejected once urgent and non-urgent needs are distinguished: "If the individual's wants are to be urgent, they must be original with himself. They cannot be urgent if they must be contrived for him" (20). This notion rejects consumer culture as unnecessary for society. No matter how much the need to have the latest and greatest (a desire most often seen in *Howards End* through the collection of houses) seems urgent, it is a desire contrived by consumerist culture, meant to make people spend money. Only urgent desires (that is, life-sustaining desires, such as food and clothing) must needs be sought out and met.

Forster sees the intangible goods of the world as being urgent needs, which have been pushed aside by the materialistic society, but must eventually be met. There is a potential to remake society to suit a more equalized, less harmful transformation of the landscape, while increasing happiness and the intangible goods found in life. According to Emerson, Man is not stuck with this society forever: "What is a man born for but to be a Reformer, a Re-maker of what man has made" (535). Forster proves that he has a larger message to encourage society and not just his characters to participate in reform:

"[Margaret's plea for Henry to connect] had to be uttered once in a life, to adjust the lopsidedness of the world. It was spoke not only to her husband, but to thousands of men like him" (282). The epigraph of the novel to "only connect" (21) acts as a suggestion that, if all people are like Henry Wilcox, living without an inner life, without "connecting," then society can never be improved. White implores that "the daunting

quest for connection *must* be undertaken, whatever the conditions or consequences, if society's problems are to be corrected and human life improved" (50). Connections must be made in order to enact the social changes and reforms that are continuously referred to, and are a central theme of the text.

The politics of social reform, both in real life and in the novel, are tricky. Judith Weissman asserts, "Both [Leonard and Jacky Bast] are a part of the underclass produced by the Wilcox economy; both are problems for which...the Schlegels offer no solution" (438). The Basts are made to be a part of the underclass because of the excess of accumulation by the Wilcoxes of the world. However, the Wilcoxes and Schlegels of the world also sustain them. While the Schlegels do not see their position as benefactors as a lasting solution, that does not mean that a solution does not exist. Rather than an uprising from the poor, the social reform suggested in *Howards End* must happen from the top down. Leonard Bast has little agency; therefore, the upper classes must change social structures for him, in order to ensure a balanced future. Forster posits the long-term solution as the establishment of a class-eliminating commune.

The Commune and Social Reform Thoughts in England

Journalists and revolutionary liberals were the primary spectators of the evolution of the English working class opinion and mindset regarding social change in the nineteenth century. The potential for working class rebellion in England sets the backdrop for rebellion within *Howards End*. Revolutions of the working classes in Paris in 1871 led to the establishment of the Paris Commune. The establishment of this commune, however fleeting, sparked in English journalists and reformers the idea of a

new future for England.⁴ Although Forster does not directly discuss the establishment of a commune within *Howards End*, the close ties to a similar language, attitude, and outcome suggest that Forster was aware and affiliated with the process and product of social disturbance as experienced in the establishment of real-world communes.

Conveniently for a discussion of *Howard End*, the Paris Commune was brought about (essentially) by the demand that the landlords placed on their tenants to pay owed rent, despite the fact that those shops and houses were under siege and therefore unoccupied. So, it is through houses and the distribution of wealth that the Paris Commune was born. Paris Commune contemporary James Harvey argues that this could very well be the same impetus for change in England, "Is not London seething with the same spirit of discontent? And is not London in the same situation as Paris? Have we not a landlord class, grinding rack-rent from the poverty-stricken Londoners?" (160). The trouble of landlords and expensive rent is a large plot-motivator in *Howards End*. Wickham Place's rising rent forces the Schlegels to move. Likewise, Leonard Bast is evicted because of his inability to pay his rent.⁵ The uneven economic forces in London in reality and in *Howards End* suggest a change in the structure of home ownership and rental policies is necessary and impending.

The creation of the Paris Commune allowed for further exploration of the possibilities of social reform abroad. The Paris Commune, which was open to Englishmen as well as other nationalities, set the stage for revolutionary thoughts in

⁴ So much so was the affect in English society that Royden Harrison compiled an anthology of the English discussion and the reform thoughts provoked by the Paris Commune in 1871.

⁵ Although, the Basts' rent is eventually taken care of by Helen, who "had paid the rent, redeemed the furniture" (199).

England in the late nineteenth century. E.S. Beesly suggested that the Paris Commune was only the beginning of European reformation movements: "The same necessity will arise in time for all the overgrown states of Europe, including [England]" ("The Paris Commune" 69). Beesly was rooting for the success of the Paris Commune, and saw its failure not as a loss, but as an opportunity for other countries, including England, to take up the mantle of the commune. The fall of the Paris Commune made extravagance more prominent as a vice; the "re-appearance of insolent luxury and unblushing vice in the metropolis of the West" would act as a beacon for the working classes: a symbol of the lack of equality they face, and therefore would become an impetus for the establishment of an English commune (Beesly, "Some Results of the Victory" 101).

American communes existed prior to the Paris Commune, but the Paris Commune was closer to home, for the English, and resonated with social struggles they were facing. Modern literary critic, Maura D'Amore, investigates the historical background behind the creation of reformist utopian communities in the United States, such as Brook Farm. The formation of Association communities in the United States, attributed to Albert Brisbane, was based on Charles Fourier's theories.⁶ commune creators in the United States viewed their reformist communities as a space, "physically and ideologically distinct from both the urban and rural ways of life" (D'Amore 164). Some social reformists fantasized about the deviation from the ease of life in urban, industrialized society to the physical hardships they would face in the agricultural communes. Ralph Waldo Emerson, among others, suggested that the implementation of overly idealist methods within communes

⁶ As Joyce Oramel Hertzler argues, "Utopian Socialists are all French, with but one exception" (181). Much of the theoretical background for the establishment of communes in the United States came from the French, although the implementation of those theories varied.

was unrealistic. Through misconceptions about life within the communities and lack of commitment, participants in these communities doomed the success of said communities both philosophically and physically. Louisa May Alcott suggests these work-ethic-fanatics, “expected to be saved by eating uncooked food and going without clothes” (369). We can assume, from her close connection to commune life,⁷ that some of this philosophy did exist in the Fruitlands community and elsewhere. It is clear that some reformers truly believed, “The kingdom of peace is entered only through the gates of self-denial” (Alcott 368). Alcott writes of ruthless self-denial and how detrimental it can be to both the standards of the community—creating more hardships than are necessary—and to the pride of the individual when self-inflicted hardships become impossible to sustain. It is precisely this self-denial that was so naïvely glorified in the American communes that kept Emerson from joining.

The English, unlike the French and Americans, are not known for their revolutionary attitudes and ideas. Although Beesly had previously said that Englishmen did not have a history of wanting to challenge their government, Beesly saw the rise of the English commune as inevitable: “workmen will gradually come to see that their interests will never be properly attended to by an Imperial Parliament sitting at Westminster” (“The Paris Commune” 70). As the majority of the population, the working classes of England need to contribute to governance, in order to ensure their needs and desires are met.

⁷ Alcott lived, for a short time, in the Fruitlands Utopian society. Her account of community living, although fictional and satirizing, gives a first-hand look at the fanaticism and disconnection from reality in communes within the United States.

Even without a tradition of rebellion and reformation, the English could still, and according to Beesly and others should still, participate in reforming their nation and governance to better suit the majority of the population: that of the working class.

Thomas Wright alerts us to the interests the Englishmen had in the Paris Commune:

the working classes of [England] did sympathise with the Commune...they have come to know that among the ideas of regenerative social systems there is one of a *Commune*, having as its leading object that of placing the laboring classes in a relatively better position, not only towards the non-productive classes, but also towards capitalists, as sharers in the results of productive labour. (133)

Although we see little discussion of the commune among the English of this time period, those opinions of solidarity and a desire for reform “do exist, and are firmly believed to be right by those who hold them” (Wright 139). The purpose of social reform in the case of the commune is to establish equality between classes and professions. The establishment of unified communities, communes, was seen as a righteous and justifiable pursuit.

The class disparity felt throughout the world was to be renounced through communes. Wright proposes, much like Marx and Engels, that it comes down to, “essentially a battle between ‘the two parties who still divide the world –of those who want and those who have’” (Wright 139). Those who have wealth, like the Wilcoxes, have a great power over those who want. The “constitution of society is unfair to [the English working classes], and that the power of regulating that constitution is monopolized by those whose interest it is to make it continue unfair, and who persistently

act for their own interests” (Wright 141). The Wilcoxes are the perfect example of understanding why, as Emerson says, “no one should take more than his share” (538). Specifically in the imperialist, capitalist English society of the early twentieth century, resources were not infinite. This lack of resources, and the greedy desire for more than what one needs, prompts the growth of the imperialist mindset of bourgeois families like the Wilcoxes. They seek to drastically differentiate themselves from the poor masses, and therefore leave less for those masses, cyclically increasing economic imbalance.

Henry Wilcox argues against the disestablishment of classes, wealth, and private property. He tells Margaret: “By all means subscribe to charities—subscribe to them largely—but don’t get carried away by absurd schemes of Social Reform. ...there is no Social Question—except for a few journalists who try to get a living out of the phrase. There are just rich and poor, as there always have been and always will be” (172). The panic in Mr. Wilcox’s speech is tangible for readers. Clearly, he will lose much wealth if economic equality was attempted. He is threatened by the possibility of upheaval and change. While a socioeconomically balanced society threatens Henry Wilcox directly, he argues that it also threatens the health of England. It is the Wilcoxes of the world who made imperialism possible. Henry Wilcox argues “that one sound man of business did more good to the world than a dozen of your social reformers,” but it depends what that “good” is, and what the goal is (38). Certainly, he is right that the business-minded made economic and territorial gain possible. The question, the Social Question, is then: At what cost? Forster writes, through Henry Wilcox, of the dilemma of a communist overthrow of society by the proletariat, similarly discussed in “The Communist Manifesto:” “if wealth was divided up equally, in a few years there would be rich and poor again just the same”

(Forster 143-44). The cyclical nature of socioeconomic revolutions, in theory and in practice, suggests that the problem is in the structure of the system that binds people together, and not the people themselves.

Therefore, a reestablishment of society must take place. The original Utopian Socialist, Abbé Morelly, circa 1755, saw “inequality and its accompanying human misery...to be due to the institution of private property” (Hertzler 187). Many later reformist theorists and activists build off of Morelly’s original schemes to achieve a utopian society. For example, in reaction to the Paris Commune, British socialist William Harrison Riley proposed a list of demands, which England must meet in order to secure the happiness and well being of its most populous class. Riley then offered insight into what the English society would look like and become, once his demands were met. The English commune would be “the establishment of a village in which all shall help all...In our commune all material profit will be shared by all, as all material loss will be shared by all” (Riley 283). The language of the village system resonates with the final living situation of the Wilcoxes and Schlegels at Howards End. Likewise, “the adoption of common ownership of all wealth” (Hertzler 187) is adopted in *Howards End* through the acceptance and inclusion of Helen’s child. In the end, Henry Wilcox is not socially superior to Leonard Bast’s bastard child; the child is not restricted from receiving an equal share of inheritance based on his status.

The establishment of the commune was not solely an economic shift. Riley reconnects to the intangible discussed in the previous chapter when he proposed the abundance the English commune will encounter: “We shall be able to increase our wealth, even though we do not increase the number of pieces of precious metal” (285).

That is, the English commune would allow for the reestablishment of the importance of the intangible over the tangible, by seeing wealth not only in the form of money. Through a unified village-society, where hardship and prosperity affect all, relationships and stronger ties to community would need to be established in order to succeed. By restructuring the society to value that connection over the connection to materialism and accumulation, England would become the ideal society that we briefly see at the close of *Howards End*. Likewise, “No man will be allowed to make a ‘profit’ out of this work, except such *real* profit as all will participate in” (Riley 286). Riley alludes to the wealth of the intangible as being the “*real* profit” for society.

The commune that we see in *Howards End* is an amalgamation of the Paris and American communes. The commune sought to abolish “standing armies, established churches, [and] privileged officials, in favour of the hands, hearts and heads of the citizens themselves” (Harrison 8). This is exactly what we see at the conclusion of *Howards End*. By rejoining the agricultural landscape that surrounds Howards End, the Schlegels and Wilcoxes are able to sincerely connect to one another. The narrator proposes the return to the Howards End as a positive shift, one that society as a whole should take: “In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole...connect without bitterness until all men are brothers” (233). Increasing the role of the intangible “To bring about a common good feeling, conjoint action, and a fusion of interests among the working classes throughout the world, was a chief object of the Commune” and the English working-classes “sympathized very heartily” with this objective (Wright 136). The spirit of the revolution, which allowed for the establishment of the Paris Commune, had infiltrated English minds and hearts. Forster, in *Howards*

End, is including a microcosm of the English commune that never was. This allows social reform theories to play out and come to fruition, to not just be ideas discussed over dinner. The return to Howards End may seem pastorally nostalgic and idealist. However, it offers a realistic look at social interactions that are not conducted through class barriers. The loss of class disparity and the successful reconnection to others in *Howards End* suggests that reform is possible, once social expectations and pressures are reduced.

The Machine Stops

Forster's dystopian short story, "The Machine Stops," offers a more extreme view of the future of humanity without the social reform found in *Howards End*. "The Machine Stops" is a modernist critique on the progress of technology and society. The short story was published within a year of *Howards End*, which shows how deeply Forster was connected to the Social Question and its outcome. A traveler in the story asks, "Are we to travel in the dark?" (95): the metaphorical meaning of this question is varied and profound. Science and technology are connected to Enlightenment, moving out of the Dark Ages, moving out of the intellectual darkness, and into the light of reason and truth. However, the speedy progress of technology suggests that there was not enough time for foresight into the implications and consequences of human advancement. Either way, progressive society travels in the dark, either blind to reason, or blind to the consequences of our actions.

The passengers on the airship take care to avoid "one another with an almost physical repulsion" (98). This is the end result of the industrial, urban society seen in *Howards End*, if no social reform takes place. The power of the tangible over the intangible has overtaken the ability to form relationships and connections with others. Put

to the extreme: "People never touched one another. The custom had become obsolete, owing to the Machine" (97). People do not touch each other physically, spiritually, or intellectually. There is no desire to connect to others on any level. This is the outcome of a disparate society that values accumulation above all else. This type of society fosters isolation. The civilization within "The Machine Stops" may seem as though it is a utopia, but it is too uncanny. The lack of connection and human contact alerts us to the satirical nature of the story. While, on one hand, the absence of want within the society is utopian, the absence of connection to others suggests a society that is no longer human, or is no longer connected to humanity.

Kuno, the liberal hero, knows that humanity is altered to a negative point: "We have lost a part of ourselves" (100). It is up to the reader, in both of these works by Forster, to understand what it is that humanity is in the process of losing. Humans give meaning to the world, but they also are given meaning by the world: "Man's feet are the measure for distance, his hands are the measure for ownership, his body is the measure for all that is loveable and desirable and strong" (100). The repetition of the phrase "Man is the measure" (101) is an allusion to philosopher Protagoras, who promoted subjectivity and truth as being determined by individuals, rather than an outside influence. The outside influence, which gives a false truth, is the Machine, symbolic of the city, accumulation, industrialization, and urbanization. The false truth in both "The Machine Stops" and *Howards End* is the rejection of human contact and relationship in favor of the material comfort of the industrial world. Perhaps this is the connection requested in the epigraph of *Howards End*: to "only connect" to each other.

Alternately, one might say that "The Machine Stops" is a critique of communism.

The many rooms, which "exactly resembled" one another (99), "all were exactly the same" (99) are disconcerting in their lack of individuality. The society in "The Machine Stops" is not individualistic, and promotes conformity. The lack of class distinctions, a known leader, religion, and private property reflect the principles of communism; this story is like putting communist theory into direct practice. So, the hazards of communism, as seen here, are the lack of a desire for free will and the inability or unwillingness to be unique. Much like the society that is created without social reform, this extremist method of reform creates a society that is no longer human or connected to humanity.

Forster connects to the need for finding a home for society in "The Machine Stops," as in *Howards End*. The search for the proper home in *Howards End* reflects the disconnect between social wants and intellectual, moral, and spiritual wants. This homelessness could only be rectified once those desires and expectations are combined into a universal want: that of the simple pastoral life. In "The Machine Stops," defying expectations is "punishable by Homelessness" (96). In the story, "Homelessness means death" (99). This euphemism is unique and interesting. The lack of a moral as well as physical home for society suggests that, if we continue down the path of industrial progress, we will destroy our home (the Earth) and our civilization.

A Return to the Land

The destruction of rural, agricultural land is seen as an atrocity in *Howards End*. London is demonized: "The city seemed satanic, the narrower streets oppressing like the galleries of a mine" (87). London is associated closely with "the rural decay" and with that a loss of rural values (31). This hellish outlook on London is contrasted with the

view of Howards End as “the Holy of Holies” (88). We often see a contrasted view of city and country. The “unspoilt country of fields and farms” are exalted far above the “accreting suburbs” that surround the farms (89). Forster critiques the expansion of the city and sees the transformation of the countryside as infectious. The dust from the roads “had percolated through open windows, some had whitened the roses and gooseberries of the wayside gardens, while a certain proportion had entered the lungs of the villagers” (33). This settling of dust into country windows, flowers, and even into the villagers themselves suggests the obscuring of nature by the modern, industrial world. Nature cannot exist as it is; the roses turn from red to white. Likewise, the villagers, who once exemplified rural living and the agricultural lifestyle, will be infected and sickened by urbanization. The narrator takes a dejected tone, when discussing the urban sprawl and the lack of morals that spread with it:

money had been spent and renewed, reputations won and lost, and the city herself, emblematic of their lives, rose and fell in a continual flux, while...month by month the roads smelt more strongly of petrol, and were more difficult to cross, and human beings heard each other speak with greater difficulty, breathed less of the air, saw less of the sky. (105)

Forster insists on the importance of land and the deformity that industrialization and urbanization causes. The spread of the city into the countryside reflects the spread of vice and disconnection: people struggle to listen to each other and to connect with and appreciate Nature. The rural village and ancient farmland surrounding Howards End acts as nostalgic grounds for an agricultural past. Benjamin Bateman voices this pastoral homesickness: “Each sister voices the anxiety of an age increasingly defined by

displacement, where homes give way to apartments as individual and collective identity come untethered from place and soil" (Bateman 191-92). Without a connection to the land, Bateman suggests, identity is harder to come by. He acknowledges, through the Schlegel anxiety, that accumulation and urbanization form a superficial and insufficient identity.

The anxiety is that it is already too late: the process of industrialization cannot be reversed. Judith Weissman argues that the rural "world has already died, killed by the full-fledged forces of urban culture, machines, and now, in 1910, British imperialism. Rural culture has died (or dies, with Ruth Wilcox...)" (432). Weissman suggests there is no hope within the text for a de-urbanized society. This would be the popular view, that we are on a progressive journey that cannot be stopped. In a world without the chance for reform, the memories of old houses and old ways of life in London, like the fate of Wickham Place, are "swept away in time, and another promontory would arise upon their site, as humanity poled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London" (Forster 25). The narrator's tone is snarky and ironic. The soil of London is only seen as "precious" because it is closer to the urban, industrial center. Rather, it is the soil itself that is precious, regardless of where that soil lies.

However, the characters' return to Howards End proves that it is not too late to reverse the process of urbanization, or at the very least to reject urbanization. Even Henry Wilcox acknowledges the beauty in the nature at Howards End. The land is sacred: "Things may be done for which no money can compensate. For instance, I shouldn't want that fine wych-elm spoilt" (170). And shortly after Margaret answers, "There are still a great number of sacred trees in England" (170). The sacredness of Nature acts as a call to

action to preserve and appreciate the countryside. Forster's narrator acknowledges the hope intrinsic in the return to Howards End. The Schlegels and Wilcoxes eventually surround themselves with rural folk, whose "hours were ruled, not by a London office, but by the movements of the crops and the sun. ... They are England's hope. Clumsily they carry forward the torch of the sun, until such time as the nation sees fit to take it up" (276). Clearly, society cannot return to the land all at once, but there is a lingering hope for a cultural shift that encourages a connection to the land.

The cultural ideology that encourages a destruction of land in favor of the production of buildings is viewed as an illness. Emerson argues that a return to the land "is the one remedy for all ills, the panacea of nature" (Emerson 537). Fitting with utopian movements and communes, White suggests, "a certain remove from society encourages self-development through introspection and contemplation" (45). Remove is found at Howards End, as the narrator suggests, "London only stimulates, it cannot sustain" (139). White asserts that the liberal views in *Howards End* are Forster's own, and therefore, the removal from urbanized society is necessary for the health of a balanced society, in Forster's eyes. The return to Howards End offers a hope for the rest of society. Weissman suggests: "This farm is not a retirement home; it is the beginning of a reborn agricultural economy" (445). Forster is not just contributing to nostalgia for the past. Rather, he is creating a suggestion for the future: people can and should reverse urban sprawl and return to a simpler, pastoral lifestyle. Forster, like the Utopian Socialists, suggests a return to the land as a viable option for social reform. *Howards End* reflects "desperate exhortations to a damaged citizenry to come home to their best selves, to the beautiful lands that they are no longer really seeing, and to the old divinities that give both shelter

and justice” (Weissman 444). While the plea is ripe with nostalgia for England’s agricultural traditions and rolling countryside, it is also a plea for people to notice the possibility of social and economic change.

A version of a commune is created in *Howards End* through the rejection of social customs and expectations, as well as the abandonment of possession and socioeconomic status. Helen remains in the house, despite her loss of virtue and disgrace in society. Her bastard child is accepted and loved by the once-rich and well-respected Henry Wilcox. The revolution and rebirth of a nation will not be an easy transition and some struggle and effort to effect change must be involved. The successful rebirth of the group at Howards End suggests that rebirth for the nation is possible: “Unwelcome in the rest of England, at Howards End they suggest the possibilities of...personal transformation...Forster’s most daring hope for the future of England” lies in the reestablishment of society, ideologically removed from industrialized desires (Weissman 446). The change Forster proposes is a social and cultural change. Henry names Margaret as the official heir of Howards End, which deviates from the line of inheritance—the house was once supposed to be Charles’. Weissman asserts Forster’s reformist message in the choice to return the land: “bringing them back to an ancient agricultural life not as the fanciful choice of dilettantes but as an economic and moral necessity” (442). As social outcasts—Helen loses her virtue, Henry his respect, the baby had neither, and Margaret is closely connected to all three—they lost their place within conformist society. Despite their social rejection, their happiness and moral contentment at Howards End proves that conforming to society’s expectations is not the only way to live.

It is Ruth Wilcox, and later Margaret, who consider their ideal method of social reform to be possible and already in existence. Both understand the significance of the pastoral holy land that is Howards End. Both see and feel the draw of the home. This gravitational pull towards the home is meant to suggest what Forster sees as the natural gravitational pull for all society: people belong in agricultural lifestyles, and indeed and benefitted by it. Forster shows that it is possible for the urbanized people and landscapes to return to nature, just as “grass had sprung up at the very jaws of the garage” (236). The reform in *Howards End* is not an idyllic return to the pastoral; rather, it is a suggestion for the future: for materialistic society to let go of its grip on industrialization and cosmopolitanism.

Utopia: Howards End as the Ideal

Howards End becomes not just a commune, in the way that it abolishes the meaning of status and conformity, but a utopia. Howards End is glorified and even deified throughout the novel. The shift from material or moral is apparent in the language surrounding life at Howards End: “They were building up a new life, obscure, yet gilded with tranquility” (286). The play is on “gilded” here, normally a physical extravagance and display of wealth, here a display of humility and peace. The productivity at Howards End is not only agricultural; it is socially and morally productive. Howards End acts as a contrast to the houses Mr. Wilcox buys and sells, as Weissman argues: “The land is fertile, and the house is modest and useful, not a palatial monument to Victorian greed” (439). The nature that surrounds Howards End is infectious, touching everyone who willingly meets it. Helen is picturesque at Howards End; she “sat framed in the vine, and one of her hands played with the buds. The wind ruffled her hair, the sun glorified it; she

was as she had always been” (248). Because she is so accepting of Nature, and so willing to relinquish her cosmopolitan identity, Helen can be “glorified” through the holiness of Howards End.

In the eponymous novel, a return to Howards End is inevitable. As a representative of the utopian spirit, Ruth drives the characters towards the commune that they unintentionally create at Howards End. The transition to Howards End as being a utopia, a paradise, is made through the connection with the train. Howards End is only reached, in the novel, by train. The railway terminals “are our gates to the glorious and the unknown. Through them we pass out into adventure and sunshine” (28). This description is more apt for the sublime unknown afterlife than the suburban countryside that adjoins London. Once Howards End is reached, values, expectations, and norms seem to shift. At Howards End, “Drawing-room, dining-room and hall—how petty the names sounded! here were simply three rooms where children could play and friends shelter from the rain” (179). Howards End serves as a physical marker of spiritual and moral enlightenment. White asserts that Howards End also acts as “a part of the cultural heritage of England, a work of art in its embodiment of spiritual truth that must be preserved and passed on” (52). If we can view Howards End, and the lifestyle that it symbolizes, as a utopian goal, then we can better connect to the underlying messages of a search of social reform and a move away from accumulation towards utopia. Forster points towards the disconnect between art and society throughout the novel, and uses the unconventional harmony at the end of the novel to suggest that change can be made, even in the face of extreme consumers like the Wilcoxes.

Conclusion

Forster not only raises the Social Question, he also posits an answer to the question. The solution to the Social Question, as proposed in *Howards End* is a relinquishing of material wealth and a return to the earth. The Schelgels and Wilcoxes successfully return to Howards End and represent the ability of society as a whole to halt unnecessary, industrialized progress, in favor of Nature. Helen Schelgel argues the true theme of the novel: “The popular view is, as usual, exactly the wrong one. Our bothers are over tangible things—money, husbands, house-hunting” (174). Social pressures present an unnecessary struggle for sincere happiness through the expectation to pursue material gains. By undertaking a structural shift, both socially and individually, society has the opportunity to find lasting happiness and reconnect to the intangible.

Forster offers a pastoral, utopian alternative to industrialism. “The synthesis of a new social and economic order” (Murfin 419) that is created at the end of the novel suggests that reordering of socioeconomic standing is possible, but that it still comes with a price, represented most visibly in Leonard Bast’s death. Through Leonard’s death, Helen and her son, both social outcasts, are able to live under the same roof as socially dignified Henry Wilcox and his wife, Helen’s sister, Margaret. While the achievement of a true utopian society is impossible, Forster suggests, through the final success of Howards End, that society can approach the ideal.

Works Cited

- Alcott, Louisa May. "Transcendental Wild Oats." *The Blithedale Romance*. Ed. William E. Cain. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996. 366-81. Print.
- Bateman, Benjamin. "Beyond Interpellation: Forster, Connection, and the Queer Invitation." *Twentieth Century Literature* 57.2 (Summer 2011): 180-98. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 Sep. 2013.
- Beesly, E.S. "Some Results of the Victory: The Bee-Hive No. 505 Saturday, June 17, 1871." *The English Defence of the Commune (1871)*. Ed. Royden Harrison. London: Merlin Press, 1971. 99-102. Print.
- . "The Paris Commune: The Bee-Hive—No. 494 Saturday, April 1, 1871." *The English Defence of the Commune (1871)*. Ed. Royden Harrison. London: Merlin Press, 1971. 68-70. Print.
- Born, Daniel. "Private Gardens, Public Swamps: *Howards End* and the Revaluation of Liberal Guilt." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 25.2 (Winter 1992): 141-59. *EBSCO*. Web. 2 Aug. 2013
- D'Amore, Maura. "Hawthorne and the Suburban Romance." *Studies in American Fiction* 37.2 (Fall 2010): 155-80. *ProQuest*. Web. 1 Oct. 2013.
- Emerson, Ralph W. "Man the Reformer." *The Dial: a Magazine for Literature, Philosophy, and Religion (1840-1844)* Apr. 1841: 523-39. *American Periodical Series*. Web. 13 Nov. 2013.
- Forster, E. M. *Howards End*. Ed. Alistair M. Duckworth. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997. Print.

- . "The Machine Stops." *The Machine Stops and Other Stories*. Ed. Rod Mengham. London: Andre Deutsch, 1997. Print.
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. "The Dependence Effect." *The Consumer Society Reader*. Eds. Juliet B. Schor and Douglas B. Holt. New York: The New York Press, 2000. 20-25. Print.
- Harrison, Royden. Introduction. *The English Defence of the Commune (1871)*. Ed. Royden Harrison. London: Merlin Press, 1971. 7-27. Print.
- Hertzler, Joyce Oramel. *The History of Utopian Thought*. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965. Print.
- Ivory, James, dir. *Howards End*. Merchant Ivory Productions, 1992. Film.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "The Communist Manifesto." *Selected Works*. Trans. Samuel Moore and Friedrich Engels. Vol. 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969. 98-137. Web. 12 Apr. 2012.
- Miller, Daniel. *A Theory of Shopping*. New York: Cornell UP, 1998. Print.
- Murfin, Ross C. "Marxist Criticism and *Howards End*." *Howards End*. Ed. Alistair M. Duckworth. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997. 416-31. Print.
- Turner, Henry S. "Empires of Objects: Accumulation and Entropy in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 46.3 (Autumn 2000): 328- 45. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 Sep. 2013.
- Twitchell, James. "Two Cheers for Materialism." *The Consumer Society Reader*. Eds. Juliet B. Schor and Douglas B. Holt. New York: The New York Press, 2000. 281-290. Print.

- Von Rosk, Nancy. "Spectacular Homes and Pastoral Theaters: Gender, Urbanity, and Domesticity in *The House of Mirth*." *Studies in the Novel* 33.3 (Fall 2001): 322-50. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Aug. 2013.
- Weissman, Judith. "Howards End: Gasoline and Goddesses." *Howards End*. Ed. Alistair M. Duckworth. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997. 432-446. Print.
- White, Leslie. "Vital Disconnection in *Howards End*." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 15.1 (Spring 2005): 43-63. Web. 22 Jul. 2013.
- Wright, Thomas. "The English Working Classes and the Paris Commune: By 'The Journeyman Engineer.'" 1871. *The English Defence of the Commune (1871)*. Ed. Royden Harrison. London: Merlin Press, 1971. 133-144. Print.