

CHAPTER I

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WRITER



Influence of Places

Forster dedicates not a small part of his works to the places by which he has been impressed — Cambridge, Italy, and India.

Cambridge is the background of The Longest Journey. Though Sawston plays a big part, Cambridge is continually present throughout the book as an antithesis of Sawston, and sometimes it stands for its own virtues.

That Forster admires Cambridge as an institution from which young people can obtain knowledge is without doubt. So much does he adore nature; he has no less regard for intellect. For him a man who despises intellect is a stupid person no matter how adroit in business he is. Rickie thinks Herbert Pembroke is a stupid person — a goat, because Herbert despises philosophy which is something beyond the man's apprehension. Forster also admires Cambridge for its freedom of thought and its recognition of individuality. Rex Warner writes that:

"In Cambridge, individuals were respected, not herded together; ideas were discussed, not forced down the throat,"

(Warner, Rex: E.M. Forster; Supplement to British Book News)

The opening scene of The Longest Journey is a metaphysical discussion. The love of truth inspires the students. Ansell asks Rickie:

"Don't you think there are two great things in life that we ought to aim at --- truth and kindness ? Let's have both if you can, but let's be sure of having one or the other."

(The Longest Journey: p. 140)

Also Ansell goes to read in the Reading room of the British Museum.

"There he knew that his life was not ignoble. It was worth while to grow old and dusty seeking for truth though truth is unattainable."

(The Longest Journey: p. 199)

Cambridge itself is truthful. It never pretends to be the great world in miniature as the public schools do.

Most of all Cambridge is where young people learn the warmth of personal relationship.

"(Ricke) had crept cold and friendless and ignorant out of a great public school, preparing for a silent and solitary journey, and preparing as a highest favour that he might be left alone."

(The Longest Journey: p. 10)

In Cambridge Rickie lives with his friends, as a bedder remarks, more like brothers. Cambridge reassures Rickie of his own value

and promises his success with a password to the heart of all things. Years later Rickie recalls the time he lives at Cambridge and thinks

"For he had known the password once - known it and forgotten it already."

(The Longest Journey: p. 166)

For all the good things Cambridge offers her students Forster loves her and praises her in Rickie's words:

"—That's why I pity people who don't go up to Cambridge: not because a University is smart, but because those are the magic years, and-with-luck you see up there what you could not see before and mayn't ever see again."

(The Longest Journey: p. 192)

Italy is another place that has won a great admiration from Forster. She is a world of beauty. She becomes a background for his two novels — Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View.

Where Angels Fear to Tread opens in England then soon shifts to Italy, and, except for a short interval, stays in Italy to the end.

Philip Herriton tells Lilia, his sister-in-law, when seeing her off for Italy:

"Love and understand the Italians for the people are more marvellous than the land."

(Where Angels Fear to Tread: p. 7)

Philip has said what is in Forster's mind. In fact he does love the country, but he admires more the people. He thinks the Italians are natural, uncorrupted by civilization, and that their hearts have not been stiffened by their minds. Gino Carella, an Italian becomes one of the chief characters in Where Angels Fear to Tread along with Philip. (Philip Herriton's heart is gradually developed. He also has some prospect of marrying Miss Abbot.)

Gino though crude, a little greedy for money, and unintellectual, is more lovable than Philip --- a cultured man, because of the liveliness in himself. He is passionate, friendly, and instinctive. He bears no ill will and knows nothing of hypocrisy.

Forster does not white-wash his Italians. For instance, Gino is unfaithful to his wife. In A Room with a View an Italian stabs his friend to death in a quarrel over money. But nevertheless Forster puts into both Lilia's and Lucy's mouth the judgment that Italians are childlike. And a child is the most spontaneous and lovable of all people.

In A Room with a View, the Italian influence dominates the novel. The story takes place in Italy though the characters are not Italian by nationality, ^{they} are invested with some Italian virtues. George Emerson, after the spell of melancholy breaks, becomes enlivened and passionate. It is Italy, her beautiful landscape and the violence of her people, that changes George. The stabbed man tries to convey a message. George is the only person who can interpret it, Lucy is unlucky; she cannot. George understanding the message declares:

"I shall probably want to live."

(A Room with a View: p. 59)

This is of course a great announcement for its author ~~Believes~~ in living as full and rich a life as possible, and in knowing what one wants. Mr. Emerson tells Lucy:

"We know that we come from the winds, and we shall return to them; that all life is perhaps a knot, a tangle, a blemish in the eternal smoothness. But why this makes us unhappy? Let us rather love one another, and work and rejoice."

(A Room with a View: p. 38)

Some English Characters go to Italy and return to England changed. Among them we find Philip Herriton, Miss Abbot, and George Emerson. In The Longest Journey we have a remembrance of Italy in Stephen Wonham. He is Rickie's illegitimate brother. He was born from parents who choose love instead of respectability. He is truly a child of nature -- spontaneous and uncultured. He has very little education being brought up with not much care among shepherds. He does not bother about his own history or his own future. To live peacefully with nature -- like any shepherd or any lamb -- is enough for him. He lies naked in the sun on the top of the roof of his guardian's house murmuring "Good ... good..." Forster is depicting Italian characters and implying the "being natural". Here Stephen is shown almost as an animal. He wants the warmth

of the sun so he lies naked in it. There is no reasoning but just to fulfil a desire. Stephen is really an animal, but he is an animal that is more lovable and more admirable than some rational cultured people. He is obedient to Mrs. Failing because he really believes that she loves him. His naughtiness is not disgusting but childlike. He sings an obscene poem "Emily" without any wish of disparaging his patroness. He stops singing and stops his friend from singing too when he sees that the singing is then becoming disrespectful to his patroness. He breaks his promise not to drink because he meets some old friends in trouble who are drowning their sorrow. Rickie has asked of him more than his nature can offer. He is unwilling to give the promise from the beginning. Stephen has realized that he can not abstain from drinking; he sees no reason he must do so. The love he bears Rickie makes him attempt to act against himself. An honest man can not act against himself without struggle nor can he persist his nature very long. Stephen breaks his promise to Rickie, he wants to console his friends in their grief. At Rickie's funeral, realizing Rickie does not love him, he keeps away.

In fact Stephen is a British Cino. He believes himself equal to any man — a graduate from Cambridge as Rickie or a shepherd working on Mrs. Failing's estate. His self-esteem is mixed up with respect for other people. He is the master of himself but he does not impose on others.

The other place that has influence over Forster is India. The vastness, the variety and some extremities of the country make

it majestic and unique. Some mystic abounds and makes India incomprehensible and awe-striking. In India nature shows some phases which, if they exist at all, are not so striking in England and Italy. That is the dominating power of nature over mankind.

The distressed condition of some people is described.

"—humanity grading and drifting beyond the educated vision, until no earthly invitation can embrace it."

(A Passage to India: p. 40)

It is almost unbelievable that those people should exist in India which is renowned for its riches and civilization in the old days.

"—people who wore nothing but a loin-cloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives in knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll—"

(A Passage to India: p.40)

The fact depicted here has shown that sham culture is a mere silly game enjoyed by idle and self-deceiving people. At the same time the fact inspires us with the recognition of the greatness of nature. To see some part of mankind in such a humiliated status is to realize man's inferiority before nature. In the second part of the novel called "Caves" nature even mocks at mankind.

In the Marabar Caves, Mrs. Moore encounters a dreadful

experience. That has crushed her spirit. The echo of the caves has managed to murmur

"Pathos, piety, courage—they exist—but are indetical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value."

(A Passage to India: p. 156)

She feels that whatever man has created and even Christianity all amount to nullity—"boun", an echo. She loses her hope and interest in life. She becomes apathetic to all human beings. She dies on her journey home. Her weakness of old age and troubled mind cannot stand the tropical summer.

Perhaps Mrs. Moore would not die so soon if she possessed the idea of the Hindus that good and evil are one. The absence of either also implies the presence of it. The Indians rich and poor live and are happy in their own ways—at the breast of Nature. The power, that she feels it menaces her, does not mean hostility.

The endeavours of man are limited by Nature. Aziz and Fielding though loving each other and willing and trying to maintain their friendship have to part only because nature does not want it.

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

Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not there."

(A Passage to India: p.336)

In none of Forster's novels has Nature shown its power over man as much as in this novel about India.

Faith in Culture

Forster displays his faith in culture in two ways. One way is by giving a chance criticism in some descriptive parts. The other way is by investing culture in some of his principal characters.

The first method expresses in undertones his regard for culture. In A Passage to India, Forster writes of the Anglo-Indians whom he despises

" , they left literature alone. The man had no time for it, the woman did nothing that they could not share with the men. Their ignorance of the Arts was notable, and they lost no opportunity of proclaiming it to one another."

(A Passage to India: p. 43)

This description obviously shows the author's regard for culture.

His second method is more deliberately worked out. The characters invested with culture can be roughly divided into two types. The first type is usually referred to as the "cultured

people". They have knowledge of "cultural stuff"* and enjoy it. They have more interest in "cultural stuff" than in human beings. In this type we find Rickie's father, Philip Herriton, and Cecil Visc.

The other kind enjoys "cultural stuff" but is more interested in human beings. They are thoughtful, understanding, and kind. Of this type are Fielding, Ansell, the Schlegels, and the Honeychurches.

Being a great admirer of culture, Forster distrusts the "culture" which takes no account of natural forces. Love, for example is not just a question of two persons liking the same music or the same books—a degree of "animality" must be there too.

In Where Angels Fear to Tread Miss Abbot is attracted by Gino's physical beauty. She falls in love with him in spite of knowing the misery of Lilia who marries him. In A Room with a View the love between George Emerson and Lucy Honeychurch is purely a passion. In Howards End the Schlegel sisters are attracted by the Wilcox masculinity. In The Longest Journey the love between Agnes and Gerald is almost animality. Later Agnes when seeing Stephen's robust physics thinks of her Gerald. In A Passage to India Adela Quested renounces her engagement to Ronny Heaslop because she cannot find any emotional attachment between her and Ronny. On a ride with the Nawab Bahadur, she touches his hand by

* Forster uses this term in his article titled "Does Culture Matter?" in Two Cheers for Democracy.

accident; the touch brings them together again.

Forster opposes the sort of culture which enfeebles and tames men and women. Along with intellectual good taste there must be passion without which life may not exist. Miss Abbot says to Philip Herriton

"Oh, you appreciate me !" 'I wish you didn't. You appreciate all of us. And all the time you are dead--
~~dead--~~dead!....."

'You are so splendid, Mr. Herriton, that I can't bear to see you wasted'".

(Where Angels Fear to Tread: p. 168)

Such a man as Philip Herriton or Cecil Vyse is usually unattractive, uninterested in mankind, and sterile. For them a girl is at best a living symbol of a heroine in literature.

This is why in his writings Forster creates **some children of nature**—Lilia, Gino, Stephen and Gerald. Their actions are sometimes shocking in contrast to the cultured type's.

But again Forster does not wholly trust in passion. Passion though being the source of life is in itself deficient and may decline into savagery or violence. Think of the Italian who stabs his friend on a street, and also the angry Indians who almost crush Miss Quested to death, and furthermore the brutality Gerald exhibits towards Agnes Pembroke.

A child of nature as Gino has many fine characteristics. He is open-minded, warm-hearted and capable of love; but he is also course, greedy, and in some way cruel. Philip Herriton is dull and lifeless but refined, generous, and kind. Both of them represent each only a half of the desirable human qualities. What Forster desires is the union of these antitheses. In Howards End Stephen Wonham is the compromise between these two types — Stephen has self-pride, sense of responsibility, and presentable manners. He does not accept money from a person he does not love. He worries about the accidents at the railway-crossing. He stops his friend from singing an obscene song about his benefactress. By nature Stephen has a cultured though untutored spirit.

To the question of whether or not the lack of deep thought as found in Ansell and Rickie matters, readers may find an answer in George Emerson who stops brooding on life and enjoys it as it is.

Forster has shown that life depends on passion but culture furnishes man with the ability to enjoy life more deeply and more happily both as an individual and also as a member of human society. On the latter point man enjoys his fellowmen's works which are produced to entertain and improve them.

Moral Irony

Forster believes in struggle. He expresses this belief directly in some articles. He says

Sooner
 "I would be a swimming rat than a sinking ship"

(Two Cheers for Democracy: p. 103)

In another essay he says:

"The people I admire most are those who are sensitive and want to creat something or discover something."

(Two Cheers for Democracy: p. 79.)

In one of his short stories—The Point of It, he has glorified a death from struggling against the mildly honouzed life of respectable compromise.

His novels too are about people who struggle to live the life they want. In Howards End for instance Margaret Schlegel fights to get the man she admires and to maintain the happiness of family life in spite of all discouraging circumstances. Through hard effort with the help of understanding and tolerance she succeeds. Struggle and understanding lead to success. But Forster has not forgotten the fact that accidents play an important role in every man's life. Sometimes man's limited power may bring out an ironical result for his effort.

In A Passage to India, Adela Quested goes to India with the intention to meet the man she expects to marry. She wants "to see the real India", partly because of her inquisitiveness and partly because she expects to settle down there with her future husband. With all good intentions, Adela is crushed by the country.

In the court she speaks out the truth, and all her friends except Ronny and Fielding desert her. Aziz who profits from the virtuous action of Adela is no less hostile to her than he was at first when he was arrested.

Aziz and Fielding try to build friendship in spite of all hindrances. When the time seems more amenable both of them feel that they can no longer be friends.

In Howards End Helen Schlegel tries to assert justice for Leonard Bast. Her action ironically becomes a mere foolishness. Henry Wilcox is morally wrong yet he deserves kindness for his business ability and the good he does for his country.

In Where Angels Fear to Tread, the rescue party think the baby will be happier with them in England. Stealing it from the father results in the death of the child, in an accident.

In The Longest Journey, Stephen Wonham is more on the side of life while Rickie is more dead than alive. Ricky is usually tired, gloomy, and lost when problems arise in front of him. Stephen is spontaneous and full of life, and worries about nothing. At the railway crossing where Stephen has once saved a child's life, Stephen himself is saved by Rickie. The lively one is saved by the lifeless. Rickie saves his half-brother's life but does not save his own.

As has been mentioned, Forster respects the spirit of struggle. Success is not as important as the fighting. But the best fighters seem to be those who can laugh at the ironical outcome.

Melodrama

Here and there in his works we find some aspects of melodrama. This really forms a contrast with the philosophical realistic parts.

The theme of A Room with a View is melodramatic to some extent and in different ways. The love between Lucy and George is romantic. After one short embrace love lights up in their hearts. George cannot resist Lucy's tempting beauty and kisses her, saying nothing because then Miss Bartlett appears at the moment. A long time afterwards they meet again and marry after Lucy's hesitations have been overcome.

There are also a stabbing on the street, blood on Lucy's postcards, and old Mr. Emerson's long speech persuading Lucy to consider the heart not culture.

In Where Angels Fear to Tread, Lilia's character and her abrupt death is rather sensational. The baby stealing, the accident that kills it, the torment Gino inflicts on Philip, their drinking milk from one same jug, and the reverence Miss Abbot inspires Gino, are all sentimental.

In The Longest Journey, Gerald suddenly dies in a football match. Some children are killed at the railway crossing and finally Rickie himself dies there.

In Howards End Leonard's death is unexpected though the author gives some hint in his weak health. Helen's intercourse with him is absurd.

A Passage to India is the only novel that can escape from the tendency of melodrama.



It is strange that melodrama should be mixed up with philosophical realism. But consider his conception of the importance of instinct and nature, this mixing is not unreasonable. Death, violence, and passion are all natural. They are beyond man's controlling power and beyond any estimation. In real life such things happen and we recognise them as natural, but in novels we often feel they are contrived—and so, unlikelike—thus melodramatic. Anyhow the ability to fit these events in the stories very suitably makes these melodramatic parts contribute to the whole works instead of spoiling them. Especially the ideas behind these melodramatic parts are interesting and clear when exemplified by these events.

Respect for Personal Relationships and Inner Life

"Most of life is so dull that there is nothing to be said about it and the books and talk that would describe it as interesting are obliged to exaggerate, in the hope to justify their own existence."

(A Passage to India: p. 139)

Forster is here making an honest admission: we can not live on the "peaks" all the time. This the common sense Forster speaking—warning us that life is not like a novel, not continuously melodramatic.

Nevertheless he feels that life should be fully enjoyed. In his effort to live fully he finds his hope in inner life and personal relationship. In his writings we shall see that this tendency always exists.

We have to recall the fact that we actually live a double life—the outer life when we work and are in contact with other people and are almost not ourselves—and the inner life when we enjoy ourselves, rest from tiredness and are ourselves.

The two lives are closely connected and so have influence on each other. Forster thinks of them as "the warp and the woof of life" When being asked if money was the warp of life what should the woof be, Margaret Schlegel answers:

"Very much what one chooses"

(Howards End: p. 137)

Of course what one chooses is one's picture of his inner life.

Leonard Bast cannot enjoy, or more exactly, cannot bring the blue print of his private life into realization. Poverty hinders him. Henry Wilcox for all his wealth feels that his life is empty because he has ignored his inner life.

"It was hard-going in the roads of Mr. Wilcox's soul. From boy hood he had neglected them. 'I am not a fellow who bothers about my own inside'. Outwardly he was cheerful, reliable, and brave; but within, all had reverted to chaos, ruled, so far as it was ruled at all, by an incomplete asceticism"

(Howards End: p. 197)

We will understand Henry's innerside better when we think of Gerald's state of mind before his death. It is full of fear mixed with loneliness, a real panic, the kind of feeling that strikes Helen Schlegel when she listens to Beethoven Fifth Symphony, and the kind of feeling that strikes Mrs. Moore in the echo from the Marabar Caves.

These examples have shown that to achieve happiness a person must arrange properly his two lives--the outer, and the inner. If only one of them is successful, it is not enough. Margaret Schlegel realizes this fact so she tries to keep both of them. She does not sacrifice one for the sake of the other. She forgives Henry Wilcox but she will not allow him to spoil her inner life. She must have her own way too. But when a crisis occurs and ^{she} has to keep only one and spare the other, Margaret chooses her inner life. Seeing that she cannot make Henry a better man, she coolly decides:

"I am going to Germany with my sister. I must tell you now that I shall make it my permanent home. Our talk last night was more important than you have realized. I am unable to forgive you and am leaving you."

(Howards End: p. 352)

Forster himself chooses the inner life. Another evidence is the retiring of Rickie from Agnes and Herbert Pembroke. Forster does not merely show which is better but proves it. Rickie suffers

when he lives with the Pembrokes. He is drawn down to becoming a Sawstonian. He cannot write. He feels that:

"..... the heart of all things was hidden. There was a password and he could not learn it, nor could the kind editor of the 'Holborn' teach him. He sighed, and then sighed more piteously. For had he not known the password once—known it and forgotten it already?"

(The Longest Journey: p. 166)

When **Rickie** has lost his inner life, his **outer** life is unbalanced. For some people it is the **finer** life that sustains the **outer** life. Rickie is one of them. In The Eternal Moment Miss Raby finds that one event has become an eternal moment from which she has drawn "..... unacknowledged power and imagination just as trees draw vigour from a subterranean spring." Moreover she realizes that:

"there was more reality in it than in all the years of success and varied achievement which had followed, and which it had rendered possible."

(Collected Short Stories of E.M.Forster: p. 216)

Some of us may think that this idea belonged to Forster when he was young or at least before he had become so famous, but if we notice one little fact in Howards End we will change our mind.

At the end of the story Margaret finds out Henry's affair with Mrs. Bast, and she feels that Mrs. Wilcox must have known it too.

"She knows everything. She is everything. I cannot believe that knowledge such as hers will perish with knowledge such as mine. She knew about realities. She knew when people were in love, though she was not in the room. I don't doubt that she knew how Henry deceived her"

(Howards End: P. 331)

If it is so how can Mrs. Wilcox endure to live and be pleasant with Henry? In fact she is completely different to those Wilcoxes. Only because ~~inner~~ life is more real than the ~~outer~~ life, Mrs. Wilcox, with the comfort of Howards End and life in the fields, can put up with the Wilcoxes. This conclusion may perhaps explain Mrs. Moore's nonchalance to all people after the echo experience. She feels her life with them is unreal. She even feels that though people are important their relations are not.

"She felt increasingly (vision or nightmare?) that, though people are important, the relation between them are not and that in particular too much fuss had been made over marriage; yet man is no nearer to understanding man."

(A Passage to India: P. 141)

We must remember that not very long before, she was eager to understand the Indians. That is one part of her own inner life -- to understand people. Finding that her idea about man understanding his fellow-beings is merely a dream she loses her heart. In this state of mind, since only inner life really matters, she does what seems neglecting a friend-- Aziz, while she is fighting hard within her mind to assert the value of life against her vision. People in fact live in what they think, what they choose, what they value-- their inner lives.

When we talk about happiness we can not leave out personal relationship. A French existentialist said that man's "hell" is his own fellow men. Agnes is "hell" for Rickie, and Miss Quested for Aziz. But at the same time Rickie and Aziz have others which are "heaven" to them. Relationship can bring happiness or misery. Perhaps this is why when people want to seek serenity or peaceful happiness, they usually retreat to nature or unhaunted lands to avoid "hell" as well as "heaven".

Whether man can shun relationships and has no way to make his fellow beings his "heaven", Forster has already shown in his works. First of all he has shown that relationships are essentially needed by all human beings. The essential need of friendship is in our instinct. In The Longest Journey, Rickie as a child plays Halma against himself. It is unlikely that Rickie should need anything rather than only a friend whom he can talk to. Even such a bully as Gerald, when death approaches, shows his longing for companionship and his panic which is aroused by the loneliness

in his heart. In A Passage to India, Aziz and his friends think that friendship with Englishmen is impossible, yet Aziz becomes a friend of Mrs. Moore and Fielding. The instinctive desire for friendship drives man to making friends. Friendship destroys the loneliness in man and it is an outlet for man's good-will towards his fellow beings. Rickie has depicted this truth to us.

"Once when his mother killed a ghost in the passage by carrying him through it in her arms. There was no ghost now; he was frightened at reality; he was frightened at the splendour and horrors of the world."

(The Longest Journey: p. 70)

This fear in Rickie's mind is gone when he saves Stephen's life at the railway-crossing. He himself wants to pour out what is best in himself before Anges. She is not worth it and so Rickie changes his mind. This is why later he puts all his hope in Stephen--or the memory of his mother in Stephen body. Naturally Stephen cannot stand the burden.

Personal relationships are needful to man and they also influence him. Rickie, living with the Pembrokes, is drawn towards the edge of an abyss. He becomes a martinet. He cannot write, and lives from day to day with no joy of life. Lucy Honeychurch almost becomes one of

"The benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain, and march to their destiny by catch-words"

(A Room with a View: p. 214)

She almost makes a great mistake because she is influenced by Charlotte Bartlett.

Ronny Heaslop is convinced by the former Anglo-Indians that he should be remote and superior to the natives. An Indian tells Aziz and some other friends that

"The red-nosed boy has again insulted me in Court. I do not blame him. He was told that he ought to insult me. Until lately he was quite a nice boy, but the others have got hold of him."

(A Passage to India: p. 12)

Mrs. Moore says to Ronny

"You never used to judge people like this at home"

(A Passage to India: p. 36)

This is the influence of relationships that can change a man to a better or a worse personality.

Realizing their importance, man attempts to achieve successful relationships. Yet it is not to be taken for granted that relationships

can be achieved at any time. Rickie's mother tries to attain intimacy with her son, but she feels it is a hard work to do. Agnes wants to be friends with Ansell but the philosopher-to-be runs away. Fielding and Aziz for all their good will and desire to become friends cannot maintain their friendship. The difficulty of achieving a successful personal relationship does not come out from the author's intention to discourage his readers but to tell the whole truth, to stress its significance. He gives us a key which will enable us to approach successful relationships, to act not a "hell" but a "heaven" to other people. That key is the ability "to connect" things. Margaret Schlegel says to Henry Wilcox:

"You shall see the connexion if it kills you. Henry! You have had a mistress--I forgave you. My sister has a lover--you drive her from the house. Do you see the connexion?--a man who insults his wife when she's alive and cants with her memory when she's dead. A man who ruins a woman for his pleasure, and casts her off to ruin other men. And gives bad financial advice, and then says he is not responsible. These men are you. You can't recognize them because you cannot connect."

(Howards End: p. 287)

But Henry does not appreciate what Margaret says to him. He sends her, with his answer, to frustration.



"Margaret was silent. Something shock her life in its inmost recesses, and she shivered"

(Howards End; p. 362)

Margaret herself connects things and therefore she accepts fact— the fact that she can not expect more of Henry than he has to offer. If Rickie has accepted Stephen, Rickie will not be killed but he will live on happily with his loving brother. Margaret forgives Henry for his capacity to enable many other people to enjoy life though he himself is morally weak— and also because of her own love for the man, and finally because of the pity she feels towards a defeated man.

Greek Element

Rickie writes a number of short stories which he intends to group together under the title of "Pan Pipes". There are many other references to the Greeks. This tendency when connected to his admiration for physical beauty, philosophy, youth and strength, and his casual way of treating death, reveals the Greek element in the author.

His short stories are mostly based on Greek myths. There are gods, sirens, fawn, a maid who runs away from a man and disappears among the trees. In A Curate's Friend a faun appears and talks to the curate. He also changes the curate into a more natural man.

"(The faun) gave a joyful cry, 'Oh, now you really belong to us. To the end of your life you will swear when you are cross and laugh when you are happy!'"

(Collected Short Stories: p. 92)

In Other Kingdom Miss Beaumont sings "Ah you silly ass, gods live in the wood!"

"She flung her arms up above her head, close together, so that she looked like a slender column. Then her body swayed and her delicate green dress quivered over it with the suggestion of countless leaves."

(Collected Short Stories: p. 62)

This girl reminds us of Daphne who, running away from Apollo, turned into a tree.

In The Story of a Panis Eustace plays flute and Pan comes. Pan leaves his foot marks on the ground. Later he revenges Eustace, his worshipper, on Gennaro who betrays the boy for money. Gennaro is mysteriously killed in an absurd accident. The Road from Colonus gives us some remembrance of a Greek tragedy—"Oedipus of Colonus"

By themselves these short stories are fantasies and symbolical stories. But as a matter of fact they are early manifestations of the Greek element in Forster.

In his novels, we usually find characters who are muscular and instinctive, sometimes even brutal. We know well that the Greeks

admired corporal beauty. They had produced many works of art showing beautiful human bodies. Physical education dated from their time. In Forster's works we have Gerald, a good looking athlete at whose death women weep -- Stephen, who likes to lie naked in the sun, to smoke, to swim in the sea, and to fight. Mr. Beebe and Freddy Honeychurch swim naked in a pond. An Indian, with very little clothes on, looks like a Greek god. These characters are not produced of his love for nature alone but also of his admiration for physical beauty, youth, and strength, like the Greeks.

Forster treats sexual love freely. He does not try to pretend about this subject, but he speaks out frankly of the animality in love between men and women -- between Gerald and Agnes, Lucy and George, Lilia and Gino and, though very faint, Miss Quested and Ronny Heaslop.

Both the laxness and temperament of Rickie betrays Forster's belief in heredity. Stephen is crude, strong and in one way practical like his father. The Greeks too arranged marriages. They prepared young people to become parents of healthy and wise children.

Forster's idea of death is expressed thus:

"Death destroys a man, but the idea of death saves him"

(Howards End: p. 253)

The Greeks though they admired physical grace, had philosophical minds. They wrote about death, accepted it, but did not lose heart,

instead they lived their lives fully. Forster deals with death casually. He puts it abruptly and casually:

"Gerald died that afternoon."

(The Longest Journey: p. 61)

"But she had died giving birth to him."

(A Room with a View: p. 77)

The Greeks were well known for their love of pleasure. Forster is strongly against pretentious restrictions. Stephen drinks, Gino shouts in an opera house, Dr. Aziz does not speak the truth, though out of no ill will, sometimes. Forster makes them do these things in likeable ways.

Another notion is his admiration for philosophy--the love of truth.

"There he knew that his life was not ignoble. It was worth while to grow old and dusty seeking for truth though truth is unattainable

(The Longest Journey: p. 199)

and also

"There are other things. Truth. Our duty to acknowledge each man accurately, however vile he is. And apart from

ideals"

(The Longest Journey: p. 157)

And this is exactly what Forster does in all his novels—"to acknowledge each man accurately, however vile he is. And apart from ideals."

As for the Greeks' love of truth nothing is needed to confirm the truth. Socrates drank poison when he was no longer allowed to teach the truth.

The Greeks are the builders of modern civilization. Forster is of the opinion that

"No one can grasp modern life without some knowledge of its origins"

(Collected Short Stories: p.61)

So it is plain why Forster is so fascinated by the Greeks. Forster finds answers to many problems he is tackling in the Greeks—going back to instinct, an unselfconscious relationship with nature, beauty, unpretentious culture, spontaneous grace, and philosophy.

Tolerance

The most interesting characteristic in Forster's works is tolerance. Forster shows its contribution to mankind, and, more than that, its necessity. His tolerance, anyway, does not imply passivity.

"Tolerance is not weakness. Putting up with people does not mean giving in to them."

(Two Cheers for Democracy: p. 58)

The impulse that drives him to tolerance is the desire to better the whole world--to make mankind live more happily. The intention is so ambitious, yet it is always a goal attempted by many people.

As tolerance is not passivity, Forster sets himself against tolerance's enemies--falsity, selfishness, cruelty, and indifference. The sole symbol of all these enemies is Sawston.

"I hate Sawston, you see."

.....

"I hate the idleness, the stupidity, the respectability, the petty unselfishness"

(Where Angels Fear to Tread: p. 86)

This is the feeling which haunts Forster's mind, spoken by Lucy Honeychurch. The Sawstonians are cruel but they disguise

their vice under "rightness". Agnes does not think that Stephen has any human right to live in this world. She thinks he is "Illicit, abnormal, and worse than diseased".

"(She) had a thrill of joy when she thought of the weak boy in the clutches of the strong one"

(The Longest Journey: p. 60)

She is cruel and hypocritical for she pretends to scold Gerald who bullied Rickie in the past.

The life of a Sawstonian is shown as empty — useless. Philip Herriton looks at his mother, Mrs. Herriton and thinks

"And though she was frightening him, she did not inspire him with reverence. Her life he saw, was without meaning. To what purpose was her diplomacy, her insincerity, her continued repression of vigour? Did they make anyone better or happier? Did they even bring bring happiness to herself? Harriet with her gloomy peevish creed, Lilia with her clutches after pleasure, were after all more devine than this well-ordered, active, useless machine.

(Where Angels Fear to Tread: p. 28)

Mrs. Herriton is pretentious, oppressive, and falso. Her enjoyment is to press others down under her power. Her weapon is respectability. Her victims are her own children and especially

her daughter-in-law --- Lilia. Mrs. Herriton has her sort of people in India. In A Passage to India, Miss Derek, a former nurse, declares she would rather let an Indian patient die than having anything to do with him. Mrs. Turton hurls out to her husband while discussing the natives:

"Why, they ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an English man's in sight, they oughtn't to be spoken to, they ought to be ground into dust, we've been far too kind with our Bridge Parties and the rest."

(A Passage to India: p. 225)

The system of the public school is also attacked. It merely tries to fill students with wrong ideas—to take a public school for the great world for instance, it assimilates children from their individuality, and at last sends those students out with undeveloped hearts and pride.

Ronny Hearlop woks hard all day long, but he behaves to the Indians differently from he used to do when he was in England. His reason is "India is not home". In another novel, Howards End, Henry Wilcox cannot apprehend that he has done wrong to his own wife, his acquaintance, and a woman whom he casts out when he is tired of her. Henry's heart is undeveloped.

Forster is bitter against these people because he feels that

life is hard enough. It is unpredictable. It can't be rehearsed; because accidents, in spite of all man's caution, can easily alter a way of life. When life is already very hard how can a man like Forster or any of us tolerate the Sawstonians' cruelty? For some people, life is only a struggle to live. The Bastis live in a squalid condition. The poor in India live in a distressful state.

"... people who wore nothing but a loin cloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives in knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll - humanity grading and drifting beyond the educated vision, until no earthly invitations can embrace it."

(A Passage to India: p. 40)

As human beings have already a burden--to travel on their long journey of life. Their fellow men's cruel oppression is really intolerable.

Another force that sets him against oppression is his respect for individuals which in turn draws him closer to tolerance. Stephen for instance holds the opinion that one cannot own people. He says to Rickie:

"But Rickie, mightn't I find a girl-- naturally not too refined and be happy with her in my own way? I would tell her straight I was nothing much - faithful of course, but she should never have all my thoughts. Out of no disrespect

to her, but because all one's thoughts can't belong to any single person."

(The Longest Journey: p. 301)

Fielding, a school master, is himself at any price. He does not care a pin what the Anglo-Indians will think of his familiarity with the Indians. He sides with Aziz in the cave case. Fielding respects his friends' opinions in spite of his self-belief. He listens to Miss Quested who understands human nature very little; he listens to Dr. Aziz who adores the Mogul Emperors; he listens to Dr. Godbole of whom Dr. Aziz does not want to talk.

Forster believes that the work for the multitude starts from individuals. Since generally man is more or less deficient. An intellectual cultured man such as Ansell is deficient in vigour and passion. Stephen is strong, vital, but naive. Margaret does not want to have a child. Helen does not love a man. Henry Wilcox is clever in business but weak in morals. So

"How dare Schlegels despise Wilcoxes, when it takes all sorts to make a world?"

(Howards End: p. 109)

So here the point is. Howards End will not last if Henry Wilcox has not rescued it. The cultured type cannot fully enjoy life if they have no business people to do the work they cannot do.

Besides Forster thinks

"Our business is not to contrast the two, but to recancile them."

(Howards End: p. 109)

Mr. Failing always says that

"We are all much more alike than we confess."

(The Longest Journey: p. 114)

Of course we cannot have one sort perished so the other can live. Then what shall we do? Fielding in A Passage to India considers the trouble between the Anglo-Indians and the Indians, and thinks

"The world is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can but do so by the help of good-will plus culture and intelligence."

(A Passage to India: p. 65)

Before we can help people we must first tolerate them — tolerate their weakness, not ignore it, or else the help will never start.

Forster has also warned against going to extremities.

"The sense of purity is a puzzling, and at times a fearful

thing. It seems noble, and it starts at one with morality. But it is a dangerous guide, and can lead us away not only from what is gracious, but also from what is good"

(The Longest Journey: p. 159)

We have a good example in Helen's feeling against Henry. She takes the Bastis down to Henry's country house. She thinks she is asserting justice for the miserable couple, but her action is more an action of malignity.

Forster thinks it is dangerous to embrace some doctrines blindly. Man must be aware that there are exceptions for all rules.

"Fish manage better; fish, as the tanks dry wriggle into the mud and wait for the rains to uncake them. But men try to be harmonious all the year round, and the results are occasionally disastrous."

(A Passage to India: p. 183)

It is with good will plus culture and intelligence that man can help others.

Forster, who preaches tolerance and acceptance of fact, really practises what he preaches. For all the hatred he bears the Sawstonians and the public schools he admires them for business capacity and worldly wisdom.

Mrs. Herriton forces the outcome of Lilia's marriage to Gino.

"No one realized that more than personalities were engaged; that the struggle was national; the generations of ancestors, good, bad, or indifferent, forbade the Latin man to be chivalrous to the northern woman, the northern woman to forgive the Latin man. All this might have been foreseen; Mrs. Herriton foresaw it from the first."

(Where Angels Fear to Tread: p. 74)

Ronny Heaslop in spite of his ignorance and pride, the results of public school education, performs his duty with every desire to serve his country.

"He spoke sincerely. Everyday he worked hard in the court trying to decide which of two untrue accounts was the less untrue, trying to dispense justice fearlessly, to protect the weak from the less weak, the incoherent against the plausible, surrounded by lies and flattery."

(A Passage to India: p. 54)

Cecil Vyse, though unlovable, has some grace although he seldom shows it.

"..... for all his culture, Cecil was ascetic at heart and nothing in his love became him like the leaving of it."

(A Room with a View: p. 213)

Rickie Elliot with all his weakness and priggishness, has a will to do right. His sensitiveness is sympathetic.

"It's not what people do to you, but what they mean, that hurts."

(The Longest Journey: p. 192)

Some characters in his novels are atheists as Fielding and Stephen. Some believe very deeply in God. Some characters are of other religions as Prof. Godbole and Dr. Aziz. Forster accepts all religions as more or less are equally good. Atheists are also accepted.

Although he often speaks of nature, philosophy, and instinct, he is not a scientific minded atheist.

"The soul has her own currency. She mints her spiritual coinage and stamps it with the image of some beloved face the face however beloved, was mortal, and as liable as the soul herself to err.

There is, indeed, another coinage that bears on it not man's image but God's. It is incorruptible, and the soul may trust it safely; it will serve her beyond the stars."

(The Longest Journey: p 255)

Forster is a believer although his theory is different from the authorized version. He preaches tolerance whereas the Church

preaches love and forgiveness, and the Primal Curse for Forster is not the knowledge of good and evil but the knowledge of good-and-evil.

The tolerance Forster has for people he cannot love — the Sawstonians, sometimes causes a misunderstanding. D.S. Brewer catches the admiration Forster has for the good points of some Sawstonians. But the same scholar mistakes Forster's tolerance and his acceptance of facts for a divided mind.

"He gives Sawston its due, as he sees it. He praises the incorruptible honesty, the energy, the concern with order. But he also shows very clearly the panic and emptiness which lies within, and which subtly corrupt even the virtues."

(Protans: p. 215)

Then D.S. Brewer goes on

"... and look at his attitude more closely we are bound to conclude that he himself is Sawstonian, at bottom, as any of his most disliked characters.

(Protans: p. 219)

The criticism Mr. D.S. Brewer gives is interesting. He has also with this criticism reminded readers to study the author too and not merely give themselves away to the pictures brought before

their eyes. But is it so strange that a man values one thing and yet tolerates another thing? Does it mean one glorifies business people like the Wilcoxes to admit that "it takes all sorts to make a world?"

Perhaps Forster has made himself clearer in his articles. In "What I believe" he puts down

"What is good in people — and consequently in the world — is their insistence on creation, their belief in friendship and loyalty for their own sakes;"

(Two Cheers for Democracy: p. 81)

And again

"One must be fond of people and trust them if one is not to make a mess of life, and it is therefore essential that they should not let one down. They often do."

(Two Cheers for Democracy: p. 78)

The last sentence is a sign of Forster's stoical faith, a faith which is all the more durable for being based on a clear-eyed, unsentimental observation of human behavior. He cannot be an optimist, but he will not be a pessimist.