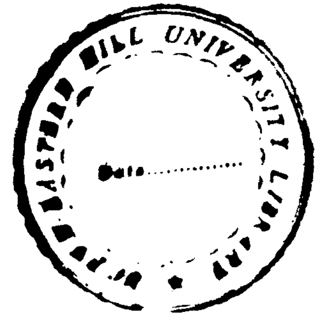
E. M. FORSTER AND THE CRITICAL TRADITION



JOHN JOY APPATHARA

Submitted In fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG : INDIA

MAY 2003

Thesis

NEHU LIBRARY
Acc 103775
6-9-07
15/04/08
Enter b

DS
822.09
APP

Department of English
North-Easter Hill University
Shillong

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the thesis entitled **E.M. FORSTER AND THE CRITICAL TRADITION** is the record of research work done by John Joy Appathara under my supervision. The candidate has been duly registered as a Ph. D student under this university and his work or portion thereof has not been submitted for any research degree in this or any other university.

Date 1 June, 2003
Place Shillong

(Prof. Noorul Hasan)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lord has done a marvelous thing for me, Great is His name. For me, one of the surest proofs of the existence of God is this thesis. I thank and praise Him with all my heart.

This work would not have been possible without the constant, inspiring and loving guidance of my supervisor, Prof. Noorul Hasan who has been much more than just a research supervisor to me. His patience with me has been phenomenal. I am deeply indebted to him. My wife, Shirly, has been a constant support all through this project as she always is in life's arduous journey. I am grateful to my colleagues in the English Deparment of St.Anthony's College for their ungrudging co-operation which in a way has contributed to the fulfillment of this project. I am particularly grateful to my friend and colleague, Mandakini for all the help and support which she so readily rendered at different stages of this project. Dr. Basil Koikara of St.Anthony's College did a wonderful job in formatting and printing this thesis. My heart goes out to him in gratitude. I am also grateful to my respected teachers of the Department of English, NEHU, for their ever encouraging and supportive attitude. I cannot just forget the timely kindness of Rev.Sr.Mary Thadavanal, who, among her many kind gestures to me, also allowed me to use her Personal Computer for my work. T.J. Joseph, Lecturer, Department of English, St. Edmunds College, has been helpful in many ways and I now acknowledge his kindness. To the ever increasing goodwill of these people, and to the fond memories of my departed parents, I now dedicate this thesis.

Shillong
15.05.2003

(John Joy Appathara)

List of Abbreviations Used

AH	:Abinger Harvest
TCD	: Two Cheers for Democracy
Aspects	: Aspects of the Novel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter One : INFLUENCES ON FORSTER	12
Chapter Two : FORSTER'S WORLD VIEW	50
Chapter Three : QUEST FOR 'DIAGONALS' – FORSTER'S THEORY OF ART	112
Chapter Four : FORSTER'S LITERARY CRITICISM - A PLEA FOR IMAGINATION	173
Chapter Five : A RAINBOW VISION – FORSTER'S AESTHETICS OF FICTION	252
Chapter Six : 'CRITIC -AS – FRIEND' - FORSTER ON NOVELS & NOVELISTS	321
CONCLUSION	362
BIBLIOGRAPHY	368

INTRODUCTION

Forster's *inability* to write novels after A Passage to India (1924) is *an* interesting phenomenon in the history of Modern English fiction. He voluntarily ceased to be an artist and became a spokesman for art. P.N. Furbank, using Freud's terms, describes Forster's inability to write novels as being "wrecked by success." Attributing superstitious fears to Forster's otherwise rational temperament, Furbank explains his situation as "experiencing irrational fears at the realization of very deep wishes." [1] *A Passage to India* closes with the denial of human relationship in the face of hard irrevocable social realities.

> 'Why can't we be friends now?' said the other, holding him affectionately. 'It's what I want. It's what you want.'
>
> 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 yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there.'[2]

This seems to be the saturation point of Forster's artistic vision and the liberal humanist when confronted with realities realizes that the glorious ideals he visualized as an artist have failed. In an interview with David Jones in 1959 Forster remarked: "I somehow dried up after Passage. I wanted to write but did

---

1. Furbank. P.N., E.M.Forster: A Life (Oxford University Press, 1979) p. 131.
2. A Passage to India (London, Penguin Books, 1924) p. 316.

not want to write novels."[3] He dared not experiment in fiction with the continuous failure of his ideals in the human sphere nor did he want to write novels with heterosexual love stories as themes. Social realities need stronger and more direct representation and articulation than the fictional medium permits and so the novelist becomes critic and cultural historian. Forster's silence after A Passage is an interesting instance of unintended similarity to the modern theory's notion of 'will to unmaking' and continuous denial, and it is symbolic. His awareness of the insufficiency of the novel form to express his vision of life made him take upon himself the role of a critic, that of a tough-minded, sensitive commentator on the modern condition. This situation of heroic unmaking is a consistent quality in both modernism and postmodernism[4] and it is a strong argument for Forster's relevance as a critic in the contemporary debate between modernism and postmodernism. The characteristic looping together of unmaking and heroic recreation in his career as a writer – unmaking so far as his art is concerned and heroic recreation in his non-fictional writing – makes him increasingly topical in the postmodern situation.

Forster's artistic disability can be interestingly seen in terms of modern theory's formulations about 'silence' the principle of which is to be found in the alienation from reason, society, nature and history alike, the repudiation and subversion of language, convention and artistic form, the exploration of ecstasy, trance and other extreme states of feeling, the turning of consciousness upon

---

3. Advani, Rukan, E.M.Forster as Critic, (New Delhi, Select Book Syndicate, 1985) p. 3.
4. Steven Connor, pp. 109-110.

itself, as well as in the intense awareness of imminent apocalypse.[5] But he continued using his creative force in a new way. Contemporary theorist Ihab Hasan speaks of the legendary Orpheus to describe the notion of unmaking and recreation. According to Greek legend Orpheus was married to Eurydice, a nymph who after being bitten by a poisonous snake died and was sent to the underworld. Orpheus followed her and charmed Pluto, ruler of the underworld with his lyre. Pluto allowed Eurydice to return to the upper world with Orpheus on condition that Orpheus was not to look back at her during the journey back to the upper world. But he yielded to the impulse and looked back, and his beloved Eurydice vanished for ever to the underworld. Grief-stricken he wandered everywhere and fell in with a band of maenads, female worshippers of Bacchus. Later they tore him to pieces when he refused to join in their orgies. But his severed head went on singing with the severed hands playing on his lyre. An interesting analogy can be made between Forster and Orpheus. Forster, the modern Orpheus, in spite of his unmaking as an artist, continues to be creative as though he is singing in the affirmation of a new creative force. This new creative force - his criticism - the unity of which can be systematically traced in his essays, reviews and broadcasts reflects, like his novels, the central conflict between fact and feeling, between the world of matter and the sphere of the heart. This is in direct consonance with the clash and conflict between the Benthamite and the Coleridgean cultures which caught the educated imagination of the nineteenth century England. These two philosophic positions relate to the

---

5. Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards a Postmodern Literature*, 2nd edn.(NY:OUP,1982), p. xvii

earlier dialectic between Plato and Aristotle. In the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*,[6] Bentham advanced utilitarianism as the only basis for reform. He claimed that one could scientifically ascertain what was morally justifiable by applying the principle of utility. Actions were morally right if they tended to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Happiness was equivalent to pleasure. Through a kind of moral-mathematical calculation of pleasures and pains, one could tell what was a right or a wrong action. If all pleasures and pains were of the same order, then a utilitarian evaluation of moral, social, political, and legal activities would be possible. Also, Bentham argued, if values were based on pleasures and pains, then theories of natural rights and natural law were invalid. Bentham was the leader of the radical group of thinkers which included James Mill and John Stuart Mill and other Utilitarians. Diametrically opposed to this position was the Romantic-idealist position which was termed by Wilfred Stone as the Coleridgean Culture. This was championed by Jean Jacques Rousseau, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the other romantics all over Europe, and was characterized by a more or less exclusive reliance on the imagination and subjectivity of approach, freedom of thought and expression, and an idealization of nature.

Rousseau flagged off this movement by his slogan: "I felt before I thought", and thus established the cult of the individual and championed the freedom of the human spirit. This was meant to counter the grossly selfish and materialistic

---

6. Richard H. Popkin, ***Bentham***, ***Jeremy***, MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia (1993 – 96)

Benthamite slogan: "Every man is nearer to himself than he is to every other man." Forster was an implicit Coleridgean who earnestly undertook the task of restoring the nymphs who had departed from the human scene in the midst of the industrial milieu, the "dark Satanic Mill" of William Blake. He feared man's alienation from the "springs of imagination", the power-house which provides a milieu with its cultural symbols and sources of inspiration.

Both in his art and criticism, Forster felt the need to join poetry and prose for the sake of a mature and more integrated approach to life's many problems. Margaret Schlegel in Howards End articulates this Forsterian obsession with completeness: "Only connect the prose and the passion and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer."[7] This illuminates the dialectic of Forster's life and art which essentially is a conflict between a mechanical and an organic view of life. An ardent anti-Benthamite both in his art and criticism, Forster pleads for a wholeness of vision which can be achieved only by joining poetry and materiality, emotion and intellect, and feeling and reason. His novels, especially *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* are experiments in 'connection' with a view to convey the sense of wholeness which was essential to his artistic vision.

Forster's predicament both as novelist and critic reflects the contemporary crisis which centered around the question how to make sense of the world in the

---

7. *Howards End* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1973) p. 188.

changed situation of flux and impermanence. This was a crisis of relationship between knowledge and experience, between past and present, between fixity and transcience. Forster inherited the legacy of Victorian tradition and values which formed a sort of totality and fixity as a standard of literature and life. But in the modern context of flux and change these standards set by tradition had to be reviewed. Old standards hold good no more in the context of what Virginia Woolf said about the change of human character in or around 1910. Hence the main argument of this study is that Forster is our liberal humanist contemporary and to know him as a contemporary involves a kind of conceptual readjustment and some critical re-orientation. Roughly Forster can be described as a traditionalist Modern. He himself declared that he belonged to 'the fag end of Victorian liberalism'. Being firmly rooted in a Cambridge begotten liberal academic tradition Forster the thinker and seer was ever open to new ideas and new experiments in the realm of art. He was not temperamentally antithetical to modern and modernist trends. He was intensely sensitive to the problems in the world and was hyper conscious about the duties of the artist towards society. His involvement in socio-political issues reflects the characteristically modernist trend of narrowing the boundaries between high culture which had traditionally become the preserve of universities and mass culture. It also reflects the postmodernist trend of involving the academic-humanities as the most representative forms of contemporary culture. So it can be rightly argued that Forster's critical writings indirectly bring about the expansion of culture by their queer mixture of academic high culture with popular issues in the world. His criticism thus elevates cultural

documentation to a higher level by involving the literary attitude in its representation. This has a transforming impact on mundane matters. The broad spectrum nature of Forster's critical writings yields the vision of a cultural 'heterotopia', which has no edges, hierarchies or centre, and which is similar to the concept framed by Postmodern theory. This theory while being authoritative favours a disavowal of authority. It contradicts it everywhere, in a pervading inclusiveness. This theory in its critical discourse reflects a tendency to push language beyond itself.[8] It is this very spirit of inclusiveness which makes Forster's critical formulations tellingly contemporary. Forster greatly valued Einstein's theory of relativity and underscored its crucial relevance to modern life. Nazism and Fascism repulsed him and so did totalitarianism and absolutism in the field of art. He greatly valued democracy in the political sphere and cherished democratic principles in the realm of letters. Hence his role and attitude as a literary critic was characterized by a broad and liberal tolerance which in his scheme of things evolved into a sort of imaginative sympathy.

Forster always found himself in the centre of some conflicts the most crucial of which can be theoretically termed as the conflict between experience and knowledge. He intensely experienced the realities of life and found them in conflict with the given forms and structures of knowledge, philosophy, ethics, religion. The difficulty of experiencing life and at the same time understanding it was one of his central problems. This is the reason why Forster has no system to

8. Steven Connor, p. 19.

advance, no comprehensive theory to offer, no movements to pioneer, no single gospel to propagate. This difficulty also defines and distinguishes what is normally called modernism and Forster was in the centre of this modernist dilemma of self-conflict. He was intensely aware of such conflict. Strong symptoms of this brand of modernism in the realm of letters can be found in Baudelaire who called for an art which would register the passing moment without doing violence to its fleeting transcience. Walter Pater who urged us to snatch moments of intensity from flux, Henri Bergson who convinced a generation of a need for representations which would not falsely spatialize the purely temporal flow of consciousness, and Virginia Woolf who sought an art which would record the intensity of inner experience on its own terms, are similar instances of such literary modernism. Forster too can be clubbed with these artists in so far as he argued for establishing the condition of music in fiction so that instead of closing and rounding off it expands and opens out.

Modernism is characterized by the attempt at "discovery or rediscovery of those real intensities of experience which had for so long been concealed or distorted by false structures of understanding." It must, therefore be grasped "not just in terms of the way it experienced itself, but also in terms of its own modes of self-understanding – the ways it thought it was experiencing itself."[9] Forster was an avid discoverer and observer of experiences. His self-consciousness invaded his experience and the result was his critical formulations which were

---

9. Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1989), p.4.

characteristically avant-garde. His was a sensibility – liberal humanistic – characterized by a sense of the urgent, painful gap between experience and consciousness and the desire to replenish rational consciousness with the intensities of experience. His criticism arises from the split between experience and self-understanding and is an imaginative attempt at coming to terms with this characteristically modernist predicament of fragmentation which reflects our contemporary culture. Postmodern theory also celebrates contemporary culture and advances the claims for the existence of a widely diverse social and cultural phenomenon within and across a number of different cultural areas and academic disciplines, in philosophy, architecture, film studies and literary art. Similarly Forster's treatment of literary and non-literary subjects in his criticism reflects this variety and his persistent refusal to be isolated along with his natural propensity to be involved in the affairs of the world links him to this postmodern trend which offers "an adequate representation of the objects and practices of contemporary culture." Contemporary writing and culture formed the object of analysis for postmodern forms of theoretical criticism and postmodernist works were represented, and came to represent themselves, as self-conscious, quasi-critical activities.[10] So is most of Forster's non-fictional writing – they celebrate a curious kind of easy-going, agnostic, pragmatism and they can be described in modern theory's parlance as 'metafictional musing' and 'cultural documentation.'

---

10. Ibid. pp. 6-7.

Forster's critical formulations reflect a mid-way between pure academic criticism and populism. His sympathies were decidedly with the common man and with the lot of the poor working classes. He was an ardent supporter of democracy, but he fervently believed that the ultimate well being of society depended on a small aristocracy. Thus his attitude to the world order was an eclectic mixture of aristocratic inclination and working class sympathies. This attitude strongly resembles postmodern theory's emphasis on the changing relationships between cultural and academic-critical activity, and on self-reflection which brings about a healthy fusion between contemporary culture which it describes and its critical theorizing. "Postmodernism finds its object neither wholly in the cultural sphere, nor wholly in the critical-institutional sphere, but in some tensely renegotiated space between the two."[11] Forster the critic can be said to operate from this space. His critical formulations are distant from the uncompromisingly universal horizons of modernism, "the purblind logocentric past, expressive as it is of a totalitarian will to absolute power."[12] They resonate with an attitude of amused agnostic pragmatism. His mission of connecting the prose with passion, life with poetry, reason with imagination chimes in with the postmodern tendency to understand the complex relationships of an essentially pluralist reality.

This survey with all its obvious constraints will look into the different aspects of Forster's criticism in order to establish its contemporary relevance. Forster's

---

11. Ibid. p. 7.
12. Ibid. p. 112.

understanding of and his relevance to the modernist predicament can be meaningfully linked to the postmodern situation. This is strongly in evidence so far as the notion of 'critical discourse' is concerned. This argument becomes more and more convincing as we examine, in the different chapters of this thesis, the influences on Forster, his worldview, his theory of art, his literary criticism, his aesthetics of the Novel, his views on Novels and Novelists.

CHAPTER ONE : INFLUENCES ON FORSTER.

1. Family : Coddled among the 'old cats of women'.

Forster's father's family as well as his mother's family was dominated by colourful women, and their menfolk had a more or less steady reputation of being either largely ineffective or quite out of the scene.[1] His paternal great-aunt, Mary Thornton had a great influence on his career and he very dearly loved her memory. [2] He never saw his maternal grandfather, Henry Mayle Whichelo, who died when his mother was twelve. But he knew him to be, by reports, "unselfish, considerate, sensitive, handsome, cheerful, and alive to scenic and architectural beauty."[3] His wife, Louisa Whichelo, Forster's grandmother, who survived her husband for more than forty years, was a favourite with Forster. Though she was "a terrible snob", she was sensible, breezy, witty and had a great zest for life. She brought up a family of ten children which was famed to be "a good-looking family, with vivid, clear-cut, Italianate features". The Whichelos were out-of-the-ordinary with "no enthusiasm for work, ... were devoid of public spirit, ... were averse to piety, ... But there were good looks about them and good taste and good spirits."[4] Alice Clara (Lily), Forster's mother was the third child and the eldest girl of the Whichelos. Self-reliant and intelligent, she was the 'solidest' of

---

1. It is interesting to note that most of Forster's male ancestors, including his father, were outlived by their womenfolk.
2. The last published work of Forster was her Biography, Marianne Thornton: 1797 - 1887 (London, Edward Arnold, 1956)
3. Furbank, P. 2.

the lot and naturally assumed the responsibility of mothering her brothers and sisters. By a stroke of good fortune, Lily acquired a rich benefactress in Marianne Thornton who took charge of her future.[5]

Mingling with the Thornton relations, first as a poor relative and then on a more equal terms, Lily, with her charms, liveliness, good looks and sense of humour, met and married Edward Forster, one of Marianne Thornton's nephews. He was a practicing architect, good-looking, impractical, impatient and had a pleasant sense of sarcasm. They led a short married life under the constant and needling patronage of Marianne Thornton (Monie). Their first child died at birth and on 1 January 1879 Forster was born. He was registered as 'Henry Morgan Forster' to the great pleasure of Monie, who wished the little infant would be a "burning shining light", an "olive branch, or rather a bud", the "hopes and fears of future years ... to connect me - a decreipt old root - with a fresh generation." [6] Monie's enthusiasm for the child was shared by Maimie, the widow of Inglis Synnot and a childless hanger-on of the Thornton circle who gave Lily the love and support she needed after the death of Forster's father in 1880. So the infant Forster was the lifeline of two shipwrecked women (Lily & Maimie) a situation which gave him a halo of extraordinary importance and coloured his own sense

---

4. Ibid. The Whichelos prided themselves to be the successors of the famed 'Richelieu' family.
5. This happened through the good offices of Dr. Tayloe who was the family doctor of both Marianne Thornton and the Whichelos, and who introduced Lily to the Thornton matriarchs.
6. Furbank, P.9. Two months later at Forster's baptism, his father absent-mindedly told the verger that the name was 'Edward Morgan', and so to the horror of all the ladies, the infant Forster was christened 'Edward' though he was registered 'Henry.'

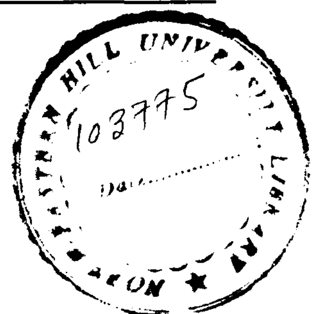
of himself during his childhood.[7] Added to this was Monie's extravagant concern for the 'Important One' whose dispositions and temperament were diagnosed by her with prescience. She observed his "intense enjoyment of this world and all it contains and his proportionate misery when anything is withheld from him. He seems to have the attachment of grown up people for each other, for inanimate objects, ...[8] Forster the infant was a demonstrative child, prone to violent passions of love or fury.[9] Monie feared he would grow an idolater and observed that for him "any pleasure I am sure is double what it is to other people."[10] When they moved in to 'Rooksnet', their new house in 1883, Forster grew to love the house and eternalised its significance in his novel, Howard's End and he wrote later: "The house is my childhood and safety. The three attics preserve me."[11] Certified 'delicate' by the family full of women who mollycoddled him completely, the young Forster, who was never allowed out even in the slightest rain, and always heavily muffed up in woolen clothes, imbibed the anxiety himself and thought himself as extremely frail and likely to develop consumption. But late in life he realised that he had an excellent constitution. Tormented by the aggressive attentions of admiring females around him, he became extremely precocious. He was evidently fond of things which promote happiness. He loved and cherished the happy boys in Swiss Family Robinson, and prefers it to *Robinson Crusoe* because Crusoe was always in fear of the cannibals. He was

---

7. Ibid. P. 11.
8. Ibid. P. 15.
9. Ibid. P. 14.
10. Ibid. P. 15.
11. Ibid. P. 16.

afraid of Monie's influence over him and remarked: "I realised without being told, ... that I was in the power of a failing old woman ..." His experience with male cousins and friends was less happy for he always got into trouble because of his acquired sense of being 'The Important One.' Though Lily would be cross with him for being a cry-baby, Monie, old-fashioned (Georgian?) in her idea of manliness, was indulgent towards his molly-coddle characteristics. But her legacy of 8000 Pounds to Forster "represented his financial salvation, enabling him to travel and to write." Lily, whose legacy was 2000 pounds considered it as a "stumbling block" because she had to "pay, pay, pay", and was extravagant in generosity to her relations which Forster was later to learn from her.[12] Of his three Whichelo aunts, Georgiana Louisa Whichelo(1856-1917), Mary Eleanor Whichelo and Rosalie Whichelo, Forster's favourite was Rosie, who was a simple, affectionate woman with a queer abrupt way of speaking, chronically tactless and perpetually relating something, choking with laughter. She always called him 'Morgie'. Of his four Whichelo uncles, Horace, John, Phil and Harry, Forster loved and hero-worshipped Harry who told him stories about "explorers and bucking broncos." Forster and his grandmother, Louisa Whichelo, adored each other. She was a shrewd, downright and joyful creature, "someone who knew how to live", and she "formed an alliance with him against all old cats of women" in a fatherless, husbandless and brotherless household. Forster often sought refuge in the company of the garden-boys and played with them. He grew

12. Ibid. Pp. 23 - 25.



to like Ansell, 'a snub-nosed, pallid, even-tempered youth', and Forster clung to this idyllic, happy friendship.[13]

2. School : Of gangsters and bullies.

Brought up as a VIP at home, the first experience of Forster at his first school, Kent House, was "what it was to be unpopular." Snubbed and cold-shouldered, jeered and nick-named, Forster worked hard at friendships and "did everything he could think of to win acceptance."[14] In his first published letter to his Aunt Laura from Kent House Forster expresses his discomfort at his privacy being invaded by his school mates and writes: "I cant write very well as boys are looking over the letter while I write. They have stopped now, so I can write in comfort."[15] There is a vague reference, in another letter, to his being bullied during his visit to the baths.[16]He also complains about one Mr. W.S.Hatch, one of the masters, who "tried to be funny, pinching me under the bedclothes, and he gave me my book and dropped it to be funny on me and the corners went on my arm. It did hurt but is all right now."[17] Pathos becomes uncontrollable at unguarded moments of honesty, and this is visibly evident when he writes:

> ... I feel so very nervous somehow, ... perhaps it is excitement, but lately I have always been taking the dark side of things.... It is very much

13. Ibid. Pp. 23 - 25.
14. Ibid. P. 34.
15. Letter to Alice Laura Forster, (Sept.1890?): Selected Letters of E.M.Forster Vol. 1, Ed: Mary Lago and P.N.Furbank (London, Collins, 1983) P.5.
16. Letter to Alice Clara Forster, (late Sept. 1890) Ibid. P.6. "... then they made me dip my head, which I did not like..."
17. Letter to Alice Clara Forster, (Before 26 Nov. 1890) Ibid P.10.

> like despondency.... The worst of school is that you have nothing and nobody to love....[18]

Inspite of the raw deal and the chronic lovelessness that he encountered at Kent House, he topped his Christmas exams in 1892 and left school later, to be sent as a weekly boarder to one Mr. Seager's local school, 'The Grange'. He was very violently bullied and his stay there was brief and disastrous. His mother withdrew him from this school, and later sent him as a day boy to Tonbridge School. There he spent the most unhappy time of his life wounded by the general atmosphere of unkindness and the horror of gangs who persistently bullied him. He could only recover his balance by "mentally resolving the gang back into individuals." Having chosen the classic side, he was captivated by his classics master, Isaac Smedley, a militant agnostic, who insisted that the classics were enjoyable literature like the English literature. He made Forster realize that Plato and Virgil were men who lived and wrote for living men. But the school made him "muted and subfuse, timid and buttoned-up in manner". He became a "sharp-eyed observer, with an adult sureness in judging character." His demureness which seemed natural was only an alibi he used to cover himself from the world. He was excitable and skittery, almost an imbecile at home. He was tormented by a secret but uncontrollable longing to be noticed and loved, and to this end he was ready to abandon all sense of shame. His mother intuitively realised this, rejected proposals of marriage and made him more and more the centre of her

---

18. Letter to Alice Clara Forster, (Dec. 1890) Ibid. P.11.

life.[19] It was Aunt Laura who provided the County element in Forster's early experience. She outlived most of her brothers and sisters and settled down to a busy County existence in her house, West Hackhurst, around which she wove all sorts of sentimental tradition. Forster loved and respected her, though he was aware of her weaknesses. He could never stand up to her in her house. He felt moused by her presence and could not get over the sense of being 'an eternal nephew' even after he inherited the house.[20] At Tonbridge he made his presence felt by exhibiting his possession of a wider range of ideas than most other boys, acquired a little coterie, enjoyed the reputation as a talker, had some academic success, won prizes for a Latin poem and for an English essay, and largely had 'made good'. But he always felt a grievance against his schooldays and he could not quite get rid of this notion.[21]

3. Cambridge .

In October 1897, Forster joined King's College, Cambridge. He chose Classics and studied under John Edwin Nixon and Nathaniel Wedd and became very friendly with the latter who advised Forster to consider writing as a career.[22] Cambridge mesmerized Forster and transformed him. He gladly and confidently imbibed the spirit of Cambridge and "... fell in love with Cambridge .... He 'found himself' there, ... and his Cambridge acquaintance widened, and cushioned, his existence ever afterwards." He discovered that "it was the place where things

19. Furbank. Pp. 40-44.
20. Ibid. Pp. 45-47.
21. Ibid. Pp. 47-48.

were valued for what they were in themselves, not for what use you could make of them." The epigraph to G.E.Moore's *Principia Ethica*, 'Everything is what it is, and not another thing', inspired and propelled his own idea of Cambridge 'truth', though Moore's influence on Forster is grossly exaggerated by many critics.[23] Along with the Cambridge truth he also acquired Cambridge prejudice that Britain is ruled and run by scholars and bureaucrats, and not by business men. He had come up to Cambridge 'immature, uninteresting, and unphilosophic, but earnestly disposed', but soon warmed up to the general atmosphere at King's College, which was a forward-looking, reform-supporting, cosy and intellectually not very strenuous institution. One of its usually eccentric dons, M.R.James, who encouraged good conversation, was reported to have exhorted the undergraduates during a discussion of a philosophic problem with: 'No thinking, gentlemen, please!'[24] The "energetic, preposterously snobbish, most ignorant, ... most far-seeing, don", Oscar Browning became very fond of Forster and he was often waylaid by Browning with hospitality and conversation. The one-handed and one-eyed J.E.Nixon, fond of saying, "I threw up my hands in amazement," and who "moved about in a fury of self-generated activity", greatly and fondly inspired Forster. Nathaniel Wedd who was a "small, thick-set and ferrety, ... warm-hearted, pugnacious, hypochondriacal character, militantly egalitarian, and with a passion for bad language", greatly and profoundly influenced Forster who

---

22. Selected Letters, Vol. 1. P. 15.
23. Furbank, p. 49. Furbank writes that Forster never read Moore.
24. Ibid. Pp. 50-53.

owed his own awakening to him,[25] like Immanuel Kant who was awakened from his "dogmatic slumber" by David Hume. Forster attended Lord Acton's lectures on the French Revolution, Prof. Waldstein's on Flemish painting, and Roger Fry's on the Venetian painters. These were lasting influences on his life and art. During his second year at the King's where he had his rooms, he was in a sanguine mood and began to enjoy the ambience of the place, making the best of the people he came across. He found it easier to make friends and "was on chatting terms with half King's."[26] But he shied away from any exclusive coterie or 'set', whether aesthetic or otherwise, thinking that these created unnecessary animosities. He visualised only two sets in King's, the exclusive and the excluded. He belonged to the latter by inclination because they were unconventional in their dress and behaviour and they disliked champagne breakfast and race-meetings. Forster believed that any form of exclusiveness in social behaviour would naturally lead to an undesirable and dangerous aesthetic attitude in art. This belief was largely due to the influence of Wedd who was a virulent anti-cleric and 'set' critic. Wedd blasted the idea popularized by the "stuffy hot house parasites", that art was only for the few, and he found it a gross aberration of decency and morality to despise the rest of mankind for not being included in this elitist few. The photos of Italian paintings and architecture which Forster found in Wedd's room and their discussions about Italy influenced Forster to visit Italy later. He also drew close to the orbit of Goldsworthy Lowes

---

25. Ibid. Pp. 53-55.
26. Ibid. P. 57.

Dickinson, a man of great zeal and good-will, an exponent of liberal virtues of reason, decency and a Cambridge brand of Hellenism. His circle was an 'advanced' one and had a "fondness for blasphemous or slightly *louche* jokes." Forster soon became a member of Dickinson's Discussion Society, and progressed towards a very productive friendship with him.[27]

Forster's friendship with fellow-undergraduate, H.O.Meredith, was a very significant one. For Meredith Cambridge was a revelation and he decided that for him good life was there and there only. He was restless, high-spirited, intellectually impressive and quiet-voiced, an intellectual romantic with some new key to the problems of the universe. He sincerely believed that the rest of humanity were "fated to misery and banality; ... were the foredoomed victims of priestcraft and plutocracy."[28] Meredith was largely, if not singly, responsible for demolishing Forster's 'Christian beliefs which were not very deep. Catching the virus of Cambridge scepticism which infected the higher intellectual circles, Forster began to think for himself about religion and galvanised by Meredith's atheistic ministrations, gladly abandoned his Christian faith. "He disliked the personality of Christ" who "was lacking in humour", and who "surrounded himself with disciples;", and who "seemed to welcome pain;" His mother considered it as repetition of history because his father too mislaid his faith and then retrieved it after some time, and she allowed his absence at family prayers.[29] Meredith

---

27. Ibid. Pp. 58 - 60.
28. Ibid. Pp. 60-61.
29. Ibid. Pp. 62-63.

introduced Forster to his own circle of friends, all doctrinaire agnostics and fervent Moor-ites. George Barger, the half-Dutch, unsentimental science student, and A.R.Ainsworth, a voluble, untidy, disputatious classics scholar and philosopher. Forster was very defensive of Meredith whose arrogance was much noticed and resented at the King's and somehow he was in sympathy with Meredith's "knowledge that he is immeasurably superior to it (the world) and that it is (in a way) unworthy of his notice ..."[30] He completed his second year at Cambridge, much friended and full of new possibilities for the future. He competed and won half-share of the College Prize on an English essay on "The Novelists of the 18th century and their influence on those of the 19th." He was all triumph when he wrote to his mother about it:

> There now! After all I have got an English Essay prize- .... There were, you know, three subjects - Montesquieu, The Future of Africa and the Novelists. The two best essays were on Montesquieu, ... so gave a prize to one on Montesquieu, and recommended the other to an extra prize .... but when they decided to whom to give the other half of the real prize, they had to choose between me and the Africa man ...[31]

Forster, in his third year at Cambridge, was "just right." He felt himself in his elements and experienced a new expansive power within his soul. He revelled in "the idyllic, sociable, intelligently idle undergraduate existence" which, according to him, was "something only Cambridge could provide."[32] Thus wheeling about

---

30. Ibid. P. 63. Furbank quotes from Forster's unpublished letter to Barger on July 27th (1899).
31. Letter to Alice Clara Forster (Cambridge, 3 December 1899) Sel. Letters. Vol.1. P. 37.
32. Furbank, P.69.

blissful and busy, Forster met G.M. Trevelyan at a paper session at Dickinson's Political Society. Invited to lunch by Trevelyan, a vociferous champion of new Liberalism, Forster got himself introduced to Lytton Strachey whose voice and his earnest masculine talk abashed him.[33] On many occasions he played host to his visiting mother and aunts at Cambridge, and sentimentally cherished these visits. He wondered at the extraordinary way in which time stood still on such family visits. In a little article titled 'A Long Day', he wrote:

> Of all days a long day is the longest, ... a day that is when friends or relatives arrive by the first train in the morning and stop till the last train at night ... A long day does not bow to the rules of nature. The sun stays in his path, neither does the evening come.[34]

Forster got an upper second class in his classics tripos, and he along with Meredith decided to stay on for a fourth year to read history. Oscar Browning's insisted that Forster worked under him. He had also earned a certain reputation in Cambridge through his little articles.[35] He also began working on a novel which remained without a title. Forster's comment on this maiden attempt was :

> This wasn't writing .... The apparatus was working, not inaccurately, but feebly and dreamily, because I wasn't sure it was there."[36]

---

33. Ibid. Pp. 69-70.
34. Ibid. P. 72. This article appeared in the first number of *Basileona*, a King's College magazine launched in 1900
35. Ibid. Pp. 72 - 73. The Cambridge had selected 'A Tragic Interior' as the best burlesque of the Greek play.
36. Ibid. P. 75.

In his fourth year at Cambridge he was elected to the 'Apostles', the exclusive intellectual coterie which was originally and officially called 'The Cambridge Conversazione Society'. Founded in 1820 by Henry Tomlinson, the purpose of this society was 'the pursuit of truth with absolute devotion and unreserve by a group of intimate friends.' According to the tenet of this society, worldly success counted for nothing and 'reality' existed solely within the society and the rest of the universe was merely 'phenomena' living in the 'world of appearances.' It was influenced by G.E.Moore who became a self-styled prophet with a mission to liberate philosophy from two thousand years of mystification. His theory of ethics that the only things of intrinsic value were good states of the mind, the most important of which were 'the pleasures of human intercourse' and 'the enjoyment of beautiful objects' was becoming very popular. The prominent members of the society at Forster's time, Ralph Hawtrey, A.R.Ainsworth, G.H.Hardy, Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes and H.O.Meredith were all under the strong influence of Moore. But he was not a Moor-ite and believed himself incapable of abstract thought.[37] The society maintained critical scepticism of all institutions with their rituals, but it was itself an institutions with its own rituals[38]. Forster loved the society and all the friendship part of it and its mixture of intimacy, honesty and uncompromising intellectuality, but he was weary of its exclusiveness. He also enjoyed the "experience of deep male friendships which complemented the

---

37. Ibid. P. 75 - 77.
38. Undergraduate members were called 'Active Brethren', and senior members were called 'Angels', early defectors were subjected to a formal 'curse.' Gillie, Christopher, A Preface to Forster (Longman, 1986) P.21.

female overbalance of his childhood."[39] Irremediably unaverage, turned from a volatile, beautiful, eloquent child into an awkward, diffident, repressed adolescent by his school education, Forster was helped by Cambridge to go forward and overcome such a disjunction in himself. He developed "a skeptical but caring disinterestedness towards all systems of value, especially towards any systems which projected themselves as absolute and final."[40] In his biography of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, he nostalgically reminisces the benign influences he experienced at the King's:

> As Cambridge filled up with friends it acquired a magic quality. Body and spirit, reason and emotion, work and play, architecture and scenery, laughter and seriousness, life and art - these pairs which are elsewhere contrasted were there fused into one."[41]

He celebrated this fusion through the freedom of friendships for which the 'Apostle' connection offered great opportunities. Forster lavishly basked under the typically King's College attitude of tolerant acceptance and positive appreciation of all individuals and spoke of any violation of this attitude always with evident grief.[42] Cambridge, King's, the Apostles opened to Forster new vistas of human relationship and they naturally drew him into 'Bloomsbury.'

---

39 . Ibid. P.22.
40. Ibid. P.20.
41. Ibid.

4. BLOOMSBURY.

Forster, it may be rightly pointed out, never truly left Cambridge. His personal relations formed there were never interrupted and they "continued in his London milieu, known in cultural history as 'the Bloomsbury Group'."[43] Though he was troubled by the exclusiveness of the Bloomsbury Group, he cherished and enjoyed the honesty and the relationship which the group emphasised most. This was a climate of cultural opinion which had weightage and prestige in the first quarter of the twentieth century, and though he was in the list of the original members, it was among the fringe that Forster was usually included. This group was of a more amorphous nature than the Cambridge 'Apostles', though it predominantly reflected the Spirit of the 'Apostles'. Michael Holroyd has disentangled the origins of Bloomsbury from its retrospective reputation and traces its source to the group of friends surrounding Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf and Thoby Stephen and who considered "... any girl (who was not also a sister) might, ... have been a species of creature belonging to some other planet".[44] With the inclusion of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, whom Clive Bell describes as "the heart" of Bloomsbury,[45] and who were its natural custodians, the male exclusiveness of Bloomsbury was disbalanced. The house at 46 Gordon Square, in which they settled down with their two brothers, Thoby and

42. Ibid. P.22. This is diametrically opposed to the Trinity College attitude that unreality of most individuals make significant relationship with them impossible. These two attitudes were first distinguised by John Tresidder Sheppard in a paper presented to the 'Apostles.'
43. Ibid. P. 25.
44. Michael Holroyd. P. 20. Old Friends, Pp. 129-30. quoted.
45. Ibid.

Adrian, which Strachey called 'the Gothic mansion',(the two sisters referred to as 'Visigoths) became the centre of the group.[46] Taboos in discussion were removed, equal freedom was proclaimed and emancipation rang in the air of the Bloomsbury climate. Piqued at the philistinism of the English society which subjected its values to the dictates of the commercially rich, Bloomsbury stood for independence of mind and culture, for the liberation of the critical faculties, for 'civilization', and arrogantly made a willfull attempt to sustain itself in a world of massive antagonistic forces. It advocated refinements and intellectual and witty conversation. Holding out an invitation to congenial friendship and conversation, it was also marked by a "gaucherie" of a Woolfian variety which was "tempered into what was later to be recognized as the Bloomsbury manner." [47] This group met on Thursday evenings at Fitzroy Square(where Virginia and Adrian moved from Gordon Square after Vanessa married Clive Bell), and these meetings became a tolerable substitute for the delights of Trinity and King's. It was more or less a talk-shop. "Talking, talking, talking, ... as if everything could be talked - the soul itself slipped through the lips in thin silver discs which dissolve in young men's mind like silver, like moonlight", was the comment of Virginia Woolf.[48] There was a strange conviviality and kindred spirit among the friends, which was further augmented by the usual diet of whisky, buns and cocoa, and talk. This "Cambridge garrison of Bloomsbury, a civilized fortress", had at first an air of austere scholasticism which marked their "Cambridge dialectics", and which was

46. Ibid. P. 18.
47. Ibid. P. 30.
48. Ibid. P. 32.

later lightened by the infiltration of feminine society. It functioned in isolation amid the hostile population of London but quite "immune from the vulgar assaults of ignorant masses."[49] Its spirit was founded on a "superfine mixture of arrogance and diffidence, of ambitious talent and crippling shyness."

The 'Bloomsberries', as this group was derisively called by suspicious contemporaries, were the denizens of "a semi-precious, brittle form of mock-Hellenic culture, encased in a Gallic frame", and Virginia Woolf was termed as 'the Queen of Bloomsbury'. This group shared "an identical system of aesthetics, the same philosophy and values, all of which stem from *Principia Ethica* and that unsuspecting G.E.Moore." Leonard Woolf pointed out that most of the members specially MacCarthy, Lytton, Saxon Sydney Turner, Forster, Keynes and himself "had been permanently inoculated with Moore and Moorism." Disliked by contemporary writers for their "socially secure antecedents and inherited financial independence, the Bloomsberries were said to represent "a new exclusive movement, an avant-garde fashion of superior, voluntary ostracism from life."[50] This "queer tribal faction", in which "all the couples were triangles and lived in squares", envisaged the greatest freedom about sexual generalities. But in the eyes of Forster, it "would have shrunk from the empirical freedom which results from a little beer." Frank Swinnerton says that the Bloomsbury voice, its free speech, which was modelled on the "infectious Strachey falsetto",[51] had the

---

49. Ibid. P. 33.
50. Ibid. P. 37
51. Ibid. P. 40.

dangling "charms of lasciviousness, the filth of Petronius, the romance of the Arabian Nights". Love was rumoured to be uninhibited and free, and E.W.Fordham despairingly wrote in the *New Statesman* about Bloomsbury atmosphere : "Here verse and thought and love are free; / Great God ! Give me captivity."[52] Osbert Sitwell criticizes the "meaningless syncopation" which passed off as Bloomsbury means of communication.[53] Its unhealthy and almost incestuous mutual patronage and self-admiration was ridiculed by Roy Campbell thus:

> Of all the clever people round me here
> I most delight in me -
> Mine is the only voice I hear,
> And mine is the only face I see.[54]

Bloomsbury extended its aegis to the propagation of Literature with the setting up of the Hogarth Press by Leonard and Virginia Woolf . This press was a progressive force in contemporary literature. Stephen Spender calls it a "tendency ... to be agnostic, responsive to French impressionistic and post-impressionistic painting ... with slight leanings towards socialism ... the last kick of an enlightened aristocratic tradition." Feeling guilty about their inborn and untouchable snobbery, the 'Bloomsberries' tended to be very tolerant and flirted with left-wing politics.[55] Bloomsbury attracted various degrees of hostility from

---

52. Ibid. P. 39.
53. Ibid. P. 40
54. Ibid. P. 42.
55. Ibid. P. 45.

various literary personalities like Wyndham Lewis, L.H.Meyers, F.R.Leavis and D.H.Lawrence. Wyndham Lewis wrote : "I met Forster ... the 'Bloomsbury novelist.' A quiet little chap of whom no one could be jealous, so he hit it off with the 'Bloomsburries,' and was appointed male opposite number to Virginia Woolfe(sic). Since then he has written nothing. But the less you write, in a ticklish position of that sort, the better."[56] He describes the whole group as "a select and snobbish club comprising a disarray of catty, envious and shabby potentates .... Making a cultural stronghold of the Victorian hinterland where they resided, ... these freakish monsters ... had managed to set up a *societification* of art, substituting money for talent as the qualification for membership", and thus they presented "a curious spectacle of a group of financially secure men and women, 'drifting and moping about in the untidiest fashion'."[57] In a witty statement *Times Literary Supplement* (17 June 1949) commented thus on Bloomsbury:

> ... the Bloomsbury world is like the memory of a legendary great-aunt ; a clever, witty, rather scandalous great-aunt, who was a brilliant pianist, scholar and needlewoman, who could read six languages and make sauces, who collected epigrams and china and daringly turned her back on charity and good works. .... Religion was covered by a belief in the importance of human relationships, and the belief seems reasonable enough, though one gets the impression that the milk of human kindness was kept in the larder and that the tea was usually served with lemon.[58]

---

56. Moore, Geoffrey: "The Significance of Bloomsbury", The Kenyon Review, Vol. XVIII, Winter, 1955, No. 1. P. 126.
57. Holroyd. P. 40.
58. Quoted by Michael Holroyd in Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury Group (Penguin, 1971) p.17.

Forster, though he believed in the 'elect', did not consider Bloomsbury as the sole source of the 'elects'. He was influenced more by his relationship with some of its members rather than the circle itself. He was inspired by Roger Fry who, according to him, set up a standard for cultured liberalism. He greatly admired Leonard Woolf but was reserved with Virginia Woolf though he shared a professional bond with her. He expressed his initial feeling for Bloomsbury in a letter to W.J.H. Sprott in 1931:

> Oh the Bells, the Woolves – or rather Virginia, for I do like Leonard! Oh how do I agree, and if to become anti-Bloomsbury were not to become Blooomsbury, how I would become it! (Selected Letters 2, p. 105)

He found Lytton Strachey enlivening though disconcerting at times, and like Risley in Maurice, Strachey was 'at play, but seriously'.[59] Forster remained friends with Maynard Keynes at a distance. Upholding and extending Cambridge values, Bloomsbury always remained alive for Forster as a formative and formidable influence. Though he disclaimed any influence of G.E.Moore, this "realisitic philosopher was of the greatest importance to him as a young man." Moore and Plotinus evidently had a hold on Forster's fictional imagination, and this is clearly seen in the "juxtaposition of the irrefragably concrete and the intensively ineffable in A Passage to India."[60] A group of twentieth century intellectuals who were friends and adopted common views on many subjects, as

---

59. Maurice. Ch.5. P.
60. McDowell, P.W.Fredrick, "Recent Treatment of Forster and of Bloomsbury", English Literature in Transition, Vol. 23. 1980. P. 201.

Bloomsbury can be roughly described, was marked by the exclusion of Forster because he led some of his life at a physical remove from theirs. But Forster as a distant disciple of Moore, was "by Gestalt if not by biographical fact certainly in and of Bloomsbury."[61] McDowell criticizes the exclusion of Forster from the Bloomsbury Group by Leon Edel in his book, Bloomsbury : A House of Lions, and bravely describes Forster's The Longest Journey and Howards End as "quintessentially Bloomsbury documents".[62] In his book , Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf, David Dowling, treats all of Forster's novels as "fine-art aesthetics", and asserts that "Forster's novels embody his attraction to G.E.Moore's emphasis on friendship". And Diane F. Gillespie in her review of Dowling's book speaks of Forster's interest in people and in the creative process, and thus he makes his readers actually relive his creative acts.[63] In his review of J.K.Johnstone's book The Bloomsbury Group, titled "The Significance of Bloomsbury", Geoffrey Moore calls it a "particular sample of English intellectual life" which had its hey-day in the 'twenties'. He quotes Alan Pryce : "It had become a kind of sixth-form, with special privileges, special tuition, and a special sense of community", and states that it "had its ramifications in most branches of English cultural life. A socio-literary-intellectual phenomenon, it had a powerful influence in the between-wars period". It opposed the Victorian spirit represented by its "sanctified effigies", - religion, materialism, hypocrisy,

---

61. Ibid. P. 203.
62. Ibid. P. 204
63. Gillespie, F. Diane, "Bloomsbury, Forster and Woolf", *English Literature in Transition*, Vol.28, No.3. P. 313.

smugness and upper class snobbery,- and its undergraduate side was exemplified by Lytton Strachey. Being the first symptom of the "University-intellectual-intelligence", Bloomsbury's favourite epithet was 'amusing', and it fostered the noble ideal that people should be given the opportunity to experience the best things and ideas in life. Its spirit led the intellectuals to dominate the Labour Party with their doctrinaire socialism, and much resentment was generated by the "cultural domination of the great Public School and University group", by its "waspishness and lack of humility", by its "conscious artiness", by the "lofty assumption of an artistic superiority", by its "lack of warmth ... (&) heart", by its "thinness of style", by its "constant twitter of words and notions", and by what Keynes describes as its "brittleness". Bloomsbury believed in good taste which was its religion, a legacy of Sir Leslie Stephen's and of the later Apostles' high-minded agnosticism.[64]

This notion of good taste which was in evidence in Clive Bell's household hospitality is thus described by David Garnett, who was to join the informal circle of friends; "When the door was opened, a warm stream of Clive's hospitality and love of the good things of life poured out, as ravishing as the smell of roasted coffee on a cold morning."[65] But it had all the air of a coterie of Liberalist-humanist Neo-Brahmins fired by idealism but evidently out of touch with the

64. Moore, Geoffrey, Op. Citra., Pp. 120 - 26.
65. Michael Holroyd, Op. Cit. P. 29.

harsh realities of the world. Its esoteric stand-offishness is described thus by Noel Annan in his book, ***Leslie Stephen*** :

> It was exclusive and clannish. It regarded outsiders as unconverted ... and was contemptuous of ... opinions. .... they criticized each other unsparingly but with affection. ... naturally repudiated the moral code of their forefathers. The doctrine of original sin was replaced by the eighteenth-century belief in man's fundamental reasonableness, sanity and decency. They violently rejected Evangelical notions of sex, tossed overboard any form of supernatural belief ... and set their sails in the purer breezes of neo-Platonic contemplation .... personal salvation ... meditation and communion among intimate friends.'[66]

The Greek ideals of civilization were made more worldly and sophisticated and were "translated into a neo-Greek cult of friendship, donnish rather than Hellenic."[67] But Bloomsbury was dominantly inspired by the Greek example and its idea of independence was founded on the Hellenic model. It tried to shed the 'dry Victorian ectoderm' and basked in the shining, hopeful and reforming spirit of 'neo-Platonism', which, spreading from Cambridge to the literary salons of London, became "the distinctive religion of Bloomsbury."[68] Deeply loyal to the beauty and emotional flavour of London, celebrating "the play of mind with mind on literary and other topics", Bloomsbury was "bound together by intense and enduring personal relationships which ... were managed in a very civilized way." This "collective literary voice" as F.L.Lucas describes it, was "shepherd's piping

---

66. Ibid. Pp. 29-30
67. Ibid. P. 49.
68. Ibid. P. 50.

in Arcadia", and allergic to the humdrum of real life, these "romantic academics and quietists" were, in the words of E.M.Forster, "full of the wine of life without having tasted the cup - -the teacup - of experience."[69] Permeated with the same intuition, fired by a desire for partial independence from the Victorian smugness, vehemently opposed to the religious and moral standards of Victorian orthodoxy, these dreamy reformers, described by Roger Fry as "the last of the Victorians", represented the "culmination and the ultimate refinement of the aesthetic movement" [70] in the twenties.

IMPASSIONED SEARCHER AMONG PEOPLE AND PLACES

> "Man's life is a day. What is he, what is he not?
> Man is the dream of a shadow. But when the god-given
> brightness comes
> A bright light is among men, and an age that is gentle
> comes to birth."[71]

These lines from Pindar, a curious mixture of darkness and light, were like a charm for Forster and it guided and goaded him in his quest for affinities and relationships. Forster gave supreme importance to the affections of the heart which was for him the "god-given brightness" which flames into the "bright light" signaling the birth of "an age that is gentle". Forster shares Roger Fry's firm belief that man can be rational and that "the mind can and should guide the passions towards civilization."[70] This rational optimistic humanism made Forster see life as

---

69. Ibid. P. 52.
70. Ibid. P. 53.

complex, as "whole", and not as a subject for abstract philosophising. He was ardently sceptical of "all theory, all systems, all Faiths and Causes", and eagerly sought pleasure pastures in the realms of the private, the personal, the poetic, in "what's small and immediate", and was compelled "to adopt values."[71] He entirely relied upon human imagination to provide personal values and thus to construct smaller realms of order in the midst of the vast disorder. It is in this missionary spirit that Forster undertakes his voyages out and into people and places. Furbank writes about his "habit ... of working hard at friendships; he listened so attentively; he invested so much concern in the other's affairs and wrote so many letters. It had nothing flirtatious about it, for in matters of affection he always intended permanency".[72] This posture is far different from fleeting attachment and neurotic infatuation which would naturally end in frustration and rejection. He had experiences of being romanticized by those eager for his friendship, and also the experience of romanticizing those he was eager to befriend.[73] Encounter with people made him abandon his illusions about his friends and widened the prospects of further braver relationships:

> How small is **our** country where things have an objective value: - e.g. my Cambridge friends.
>
> How immense the countries around, into which we are impelled by curiousity or passion.

---

71. A quotation from Pindar's Eighth Pythian Ode - a maxim for Forster. Furbank, P.N. E.M.Forster: A Life, p – 101.
70. 'Roger Fry : An Obituary Note', AH p – 51.
71. Advani R., pp – 22 – 23.
72. Furbank, p – 166.
73. Ibid, - the case of R.B.Smith and that of Gaunt.

> It is too sad, or I could write down a list of peoples & places whom I have transfigured, and
> know at the bottom of my heart not to be what I pretend. One's comfort is that the transfigured
> is the real perhaps, and that indifference is blind, not love.[74]

Forster's optimism grew as he freely moved among real people and real places. People and places infected him and he was grateful for that. Any parcel of human nature drew his attention. He was never at a loss for words when it came to describe people and their locale. This prospect transfigured him and he transfigured what he saw and liked. While on a tour of Italy with his mother, bored by the scenery which was 'curiously drowsy and unreal', they zestfully engaged themselves in the "sport of dissecting their fellow-travellers." It was in Milan, among the galleries, that Forster took his stand "on the paramountcy of human value in art".[75] While in Florence, at the house of the art-scholar R.H. Cust, Forster enjoyed the circle of young art-historians talk on art, though "he thought the 'viewy young men' awful."[76] Five weeks spent in Florence seeing "the orthodox Baedeker-bestarred Italy" delighted him so much that he felt that he could well afford to leave "the Italian Italy for another time".[77] In Sicily he began to wake up to the inspirational charms. He wrote some sentimental articles about "Southern warmth and love of life as against the ghosts and glooms, the self-denial and self-consciousness, of the Gothic north." This Italy-inspired mood saw Forster waxing eloquently on the importance of the body and the Greek belief:

---

74. Ibid.
75. Furbank, p. 82.

"cherish the body and you will cherish the soul". He also began to dwell more bravely on friendship: "human affection need not be confined to the home circle or extended to the harem."[78] In Naples he had ardent dreams of friendship and experienced the wonderful strength of feelings. He dared to experiment with 'imagination pure and simple' and pleads for the role of 'sentiment' where knowledge and poetic genius have failed to create. At Ravello he was inspired by the spirit of the place and produced the fruits of what Italy had done for him.[79] Italy was a revelation to him. He was able to respond to the greatness of life and his writings acquired a strange vigour and largeness. Italy released him from being 'charming, old-maidish, a little ineffectual', and taught him "that one could live in the imagination".[80] She caused his arrival as a writer. Inspired by a new found confidence he wrote about himself: "I can't think of anybody who is in a better position for making new friends & keeping old ones".[81] And this he thought was "a characteristic reason" why he should like to be a don. Counseled by Trevelyan to "know more people, and all the rest will be added unto you", he traveled briskly to discover the 'Italian Italy' and began 'steadily committing noble thoughts to green paper'.[82] Though during this first visit to Italy he did not make any Italian friends and never entered an Italian home, it had warmed him with a vision and it would haunt him as 'The beautiful country where they say "yes",' and

---

76. Ibid., pp 84 - 85
77. Letter to Wedd (1 December 1901), Ibid p 85.
78. Ibid, p. 90.
79. 'Story of a Panic' which was the result of imagination-pure-and-simple experiment. Ibid P.92
80. Ibid, p. 92 – 93.
81. Letter to Dent (11 May 1902) Selected Letters Vol. 1. P – 55.
82. Furbank, pp. 94 – 95.

the place 'where things happen.'[83] Italy haunted him intermittently and made him nostalgic especially during his visit to the ***Venice by Night*** exhibition at the Empress Hall in 1904.

His Greek cruise in 1903 in the company of E.A.Gardner and Nathaniel Wedd began on a cold note because he came over-prepared for many sights. But gradually Greece took possession of him in Cnidus and Demeter of Cnidus, his "benevolent mother-deity", who represented for him the reconciliation of male and female in his own nature." This experience was deified by him as one of the "monuments of our more reticent beliefs" in ***The Longest Journey***. The whole of his short story, ***The Road to Colonus*** was inspired in the vicinity of Olympia. He was awakened to the prospect of "swimming with the tide of one's own being, getting in touch with the manifold 'greatness', the depths and splendors of life."[84] He came back from Greece, "his private stronghold for sentiment" with the air of being reawakened in sentiment after 'the sleep of a drunk at Troy, and in the Castalian Spring".[85] The English landscape, discovered during his solitary journeys and walking tours, developed his sense of the bone-structure of England, its rock formations, hill and river systems. At Figsbury Rings he met a lame shepherd boy who was "friendly". The boy offered him a smoke of his pipe and refused Forster's gift of sixpence. Forster visualised the boy as "one of the remarkable human beings he had ever met", admired "his enormous wisdom",

---

83. Ibid. p. 96.
84. Ibid, pp 102 – 103.
85. Ibid pp 110 - 111

and went on to infer "that the English ***can*** be the greatest men in the world". He eagerly rated the shepherd boy "miles greater than an Italian" and earnestly decided that "The aesthetic die away attitude seems contemptible in a world which has such people." This was Forster's great discovery in his own land, and the boy's father discovered six days later leaves him with "the same impression of a human being with his 'head out of the water'."[86] One is at once reminded of the "leech gatherer" whom Wordsworth discovered on the lonely moors.

Forster's German interlude in 'Elizabeth's German Garden' in Nassenheide was equally memorable to him. A few hours in Berlin, "a terrible city, dirty, ugly, mean, full of unhappy soldiers", on the way to Nassenheide was trying for him. He could not warm to Germany : "It's got no charm, like Italy....". And as to the Germans: "I don't make out the Germans .... They terrify me." But he found himself in the thick of family life in Elizabeth's establishment, admired the good deal of jollity of the children and "had rapidly made himself at home, a thing he was adept at doing." He found his patroness, Elizabeth, 'a delightful character' and her cryptic and abrupt opinion about church-going: "After all our beliefs all lead to the same thing in the end"-- intrigued him. His comment was:

> her attitude to literary and spiritual questions is that of ours to food, which depends not on the food but on the state of the stomach. I hope

86. Ibid, pp- 116 – 117.

that I shall never again be depressed when she thinks me rot – and more difficult – elated when she praises me."[87]

But later he admits that "a hard tight indestructible little spiritual existence seemed to bob up and down(in Elizabeth): hard, yet if I ever I cracked it I should expect to find a spot of chocolate cream at the core". And he left Nassenheide in glory leaving Elizabeth more or less 'uncracked.'

In 1912 Forster and his friend Dickinson came to India in a mood of optimism, still believing in the power of disinterested social criticism. Dickinson came as a political commentator and was duly appalled by India's "muddle and squalor and indifference to human life", the " 'senselessness' and 'horribleness' of its sculpture and architecture". He found India "such a contradiction of the Greek ideal" that he could "make no sense of it and felt no Westerner could", and he went off to China with relief. But Forster arrived there drawn by the affections of the heart and quickly found himself at home in India and led the life he led anywhere, "a life of mild human contacts and awakened imagination." He was rewarded for his wise investments in "private life and private virtues". He felt like a native and did "break, or slip through national barriers with remarkable success." He achieved this "by means of his courtesy, his inconspicuousness, his desire to be liked, his willingness to be bored".[88] India, visualised as "a queer red series of hills a little disquieting, as though Italy had been touched into the

---

87. Ibid, pp – 125 – 131.
88. Ibid, p – 222.

sinister", began with a muddle for Forster. His first servant in India, Baldeo who had been commissioned to carry his luggage to the hotel disappeared for two days and slipped into the hotel looking "twenty years older". The sense of drift in Indian politics seen at M.A.O. College Aligarh, the easy emotion among Masood's friends and their public exhibition, a Muslim wedding conducted on rational lines, the 20 orthodox Muslims doing their evening prayers to the accompaniment of 'I'd rather be busy with my little Lizzy' from a gramophone, the quirky philosophy of the Maharaja of Chhokrapur, the shapeless landscapes of Ujjain, the different meaning of time and history in India, the 'old-fashioned'-phobia of the Maharaja of Dewas, the tradition of the third stream at the Ganges – Jamuna junction at Allahabad, the gentle oriental confusions illustrated by the Finance Minister and Saeed Mirza, the amazing cave-temples of Ellora, and the accounts of friends "written in the heart", were permanent inspirations to Forster.[89] The liberal humanist in him embraced this "muddle" and it broadened and matured him thus distancing him from his youth.

Forster's memorable tryst with India was in fact an attempt to expand and explore his love for Syed Ross Masood. His voyage out to India was to attempt a geographic extension of his oriental predilections and inclinations which were largely inspired by Masood. Masood's arrival in his life in 1906 was a very crucial turning point for Forster. He experienced a sort of emotional resurrection from the academic morass that enveloped his inner life. Masood's oriental magnificence,

---

89. Ibid, pp – 225 – 254.

his grandiose mannerisms, emotional extravagance and gregariousness filled Forster with admiration. He was released from the cold intellectual idealism and he was electrified by Masood's ruling passion for friendship. Masood lambasted Forster's "horrid English formality", and quite dramatically taught him that "personal relations come first." He was woken up from his "suburban and academic life" and was released from the Meredith-infected defeatism and negativity.[90] His eyes and heart were opened to a new Masood-inspired "civilization" which implied giving up duties for the sake of friends. This vision of a new civilization, and the confusion it illustrated in the "Oriental states", appealed to Forster. This inspiration was behind the positive and pro-active stance which Forster declared for himself in his letter to Malcolm Darling two years later :

> "I am so glad that you see I'm not a cynical beast. .... I can't write down 'I care about love, beauty, liberty, affection, and truth', though I should like to." [91]

He prized Masood as the greatest of his "Inward events", and notes in his diary: "He and Italy – that is really all. .... Public affairs interest me more, especially when they touch Italy, Germany and India ...." During their 1910 trip to Paris Forster was in for more self-discovery and "returned in a glow of love and dazzlement and incomprehension". He found the enigma in Masood's nature an oriental version of his very own. He discovered and was puzzled by the distance

---

90. Ibid, pp – 143 – 146.
91. Letter to Malcolm Darling (12 December 1908)

between them: "... on one side beauty and tradition; on the other a 'bourgeois cuteness' wanting to know where it stood". And his mind, moved by love and the desire for self-improvement, declared itself in a sort of plaintive anthem:

> Oh love, every time thou goest out of my sight, I die a new death.' How can I keep quiet when I read such things? My brain watches me, but it's literary. Let me keep clear from criticism and scheming. Let me think of you and not write. I love you, Syed Masood; love.[92]

It was this love for the enigma which drove Forster to India – "the place where he would complete his understanding of Masood and find a new opening for imagination."[93] Masood, in his turn, found in Forster a very rare power of understanding the Indian soul, the power of true and real sentiment. He loved Forster for being "an oriental with an oriental view of life *on most things*".[94] This relationship, with all its frustrations, sustained Forster and gave some meaning to his life. Though sensitive but not responsive to his love, Masood had dispelled the still lingering 'frost' in Forster. It was a very sad and sombre Forster, reacting to Masood's marriage in 1915:

> He stands at the close of my youth. I wish very much he had felt, if only once, what I felt for him, for I should have no sense of wasted time.[95]

---

92. Furbank, pp – 180 – 181.
93. Ibid p – 184.
94. Ibid, p – 194.
95. Ibid, Vol. 2 P – 4.

India always remained a permanent influence both on his literary genius and on his world-view. India, in its multiplicity, variety, confusions, mystery and benevolent anarchism provided for him some sort of a metaphor for the greater mysteries of life and human relationship.

In 1915 Forster was freed from his recent "most awful gloom" and was given an unexpected enlargement at his first meeting with D.H. Lawrence. Forster found him "really extraordinarily nice",[96] and his views "wonderfully attractive", and thought him "so human, so personal" and one "who *lived* his views" without posing any philosophical detachment of the Cambridge variety. But he was alarmed at the fierce proselytizing mood of Lawrence who was on a recruitment spree for his new utopia, Rananim. Lawrence was tired of people who were childish and greedy seeking ***immediate*** desire and expressing the ***particular*** outlook without any conception of the ***whole*** horizon wheeling round. He thought that Forster had reached "the limit of splitness" with his 'Only Connect' motto,[97] and hoped to see him "pregnant with his own soul". He wrote to Bertrand Russell:

> Forster ... is bound hand and foot bodily. Why? Because he does not believe that any beauty or any divine utterance is any good any more. . . . . Will all the poetry in the world satisfy the manhood of Forster, when Forster knows that his implicit manhood is to be satisfied by nothing but immediate physical action. He tries to dodge himself - . . . . Why can't he act? . . . . Because he knows that self-realization is not his ultimate desire. His ultimate desire is for the continued action which has been

---

96. Letter to Forrest Reid (23 January 1915), Selected Letters, 1, P - 217
97. Furbank, P.N., Vol. 2, p - 8

> called the social passion – the love for humanity – the desire to work for humanity.[98]

Forster in his turn thought Lawrence too "un-self-aware" or "deliberately self-blinding" which caused the absurdity in their relations and Forster, as a result of the collision with Lawrence, resolved "to be more open in expressing feelings."[99]

In 1915 Forster set sail for Egypt as a hospital 'searcher' recruited by the Red Cross. He was excited at thee prospect of seeing Egypt but was disappointed by the Egyptian landscape which seemed to be "a feebler India, as flat without the sense of immensity". An uneasy sense of mud, "the mud of the Nile, and moral 'muddiness' were always to figure in his vision of Egypt."[100] He enjoyed his own serviceableness to the soldiers and admired their matured attitude of tolerance to their enemies. He was experiencing a sort of moral freshness and wrote to Leonard Woolf : "I am here become cheeriness itself and run from one little deed of kindness to another all day".[101] Being thus busy and useful, he was settling down to the prosaic Alexandria. It was in this mood he wrote to Masood :

> All one can do in this world of maniacs is to pick up the poor tortured broken people and try to mend them, and the Italian Ambulance Unit would give me an opportunity to do this.[102]

---

98. Ibid., PP – 10 – 11.
99. Ibid., P – 13.
100. Ibid. PP – 22 – 23.
101. Letter to Leonard Woolf (12 February 1916) Ibid., P – 25.
102. Letter to Syed Ross Masood (29 July 1915) Selected Letters 1. P – 225.

He breathed the fresh air of humanity and even found himself inspired by his experience in an hashish den.

> I felt curiously at ease in that haunt of vice, and didn't even realize I was behaving priggishly till afterwards. So perhaps I wasn't a prig really.[103]

He met the Greek poet C.P. Cavafy who impressed him by telling:

> Pray that you – you English with your capacity for adventure – never lose your capital, otherwise you will resemble us, restless, shifty, liars . . ..

Being quite caustic about the Greeks, Cavafy liked to be called 'Hellene' rather than a Greek and Forster thought he had found the epitome of Alexandria in Cavafy, in his vision, in his "disbelief in racial purity and high valuing of 'bastardy' in civilization".[104] His adventurous affairs with Mohammed el Adl, the tram-conductor, led to the realization of all his secret ambitions; he was able to break through the barriers of colour and class and for the first time he could "feel a grown up man".[105] Elated by his achievement in 'athletic love', and feeling a sense of his inner development Forster felt spiritually alive. He also developed the power of adaptability, and learned to come to terms with the horrors of the war atmosphere in Alexandria. Mohammed had "fallen like some lovely cloud between himself and the war", he wrote to Florence Barger, "were he to rise I

---

103. Letter to Edward Carpenter (18 May 1916) Ibid P – 30.
104. Ibid. P – 33.
105. Letter to Florence Barger (1 June 1917), Selected Letters I. P – 257.

should see it again."[106] He began to feel a sense of alienation from his own class and to declare his 'love' for the lower class. "Middle class people smell", he wrote to Dickinson,[107] and began to realise that "to be trusted, and to be trusted beyond the barriers of income race and class, is the greatest reward a man can receive".[108] Though he was weary of the actual Alexandria, staying there meant adding new friends to his little circle, and he managed to sustain the vision of ancient Alexandria. He could not and did not respond imaginatively to Egypt, found it hard to like the Egyptians. This dislike was largely an aesthetic not a personal one. In a letter to Masood he wrote:

> I was telling you how much I disliked the Egyptians and how inferior to the Indians I have found them, both in charm, intellect and morality. . . . . Here there is only the pseudo-East – the pretentious, squalid, guttural Levant – and I shut my eyes to it on purpose, lest it spoil my pleasure in the true East, to which I shall one day return".[109]

Forster never learned to love Egypt or Alexandria which were small parodies of India which undoubtedly was his ideal. This intuitive preference for India and the Indians gets expressed in another letter to Masood:

> But what I have seen seems vastly inferior to India . . . where I still hope to die. It is only at sunset that Egypt surpasses India – at all other hours it is flat, unmysterious, and godless. . . I feel as instinctively not at

106. Letter to Florence Barger (14 May 1918) Ibid. P – 49.
107. Ibid. P – 41.
108. Letter to Florence Barger (18 July 1917) Selected Letters 1. P – 263.
109. Letter to Syed Ross Masood (29 July 1916), Ibid. PP – 27-28.

home among them (Egyptians) as I feel instinctively at home among Indians."[110]

While in Egypt he found consolation in looking at a little Mughul figure which a friend had given him; "it takes my thoughts away from the war and also from this pseudo-orientation of Egypt, which I greatly dislike."[111] This feeling of aversion is expressed in stronger terms to Malcolm Darling:

> . . . my idealisation, . . . of India, mounts and mounts and mounts. Egypt feeds it by contrast. I hate the place, or rather its inhabitants. This is interesting, isn't it, because I came inclined to be pleased and quite free from racial prejudices, but in 10 months I've acquired an instinctive dislike to the Arab voice, the Arab figure, the Arab way of looking or walking or pump shitting or eating or laughing or anythinging - . . . . Now and then I have a hideous fear. Will this sojourn in the spurious East put me against the true East – Dewas, Aurangabad, Jodhpur?[112]

But he was never to lose his love for India. In fact he grew steadily in love with India and the Indians. India was for him a permanent inspiration, - her hundred voices always beckoning him to hearken to her. He loved these hundred voices and they largely sustained and supported his vision of life.

110. Letter to Syed Ross Masood (29 December 1915), Selected Letters 1. P – 233.
111. Letter to Syed Ross Masood (28 September 1916), Selected Letters 1. P – 242.
112. Letter to Malcolm Darling (6 August 1916), Selected Letters 1. PP – 238-239.

CHAPTER TWO : FORSTER'S WORLD VIEW.

Optimist in Life

It was during his interlude in Germany as a tutor to the children of 'Elizabeth' (Countess von Arnim, later Countess Russell) that Forster first took his stand on optimism as against the *fin-de-siecle* attitude to life. The spring had arrived in Nassenheide and the place was bathed in beauty. The grass was tulip-spotted and pancy-strewn, the meadows coloured by kingcups, cowslips and yellow anemones. Blown uphill in his mood by this natural luxuriance, Forster wrote: "You cannot imagine the radiance that descended upon that flat iron-coloured land in May", and in that radiant idleness an extraordinary current of optimism was running through him which made him note in his diary on 27th February, 1905: "A taste for cheap tragic effects in life seems to be the penalty paid by those who have no taste for tragedy in Art, ... Those who like tragedy in art are somewhat brutalized to it in life."[1] Disliking the stench of death and of wounded flesh which Pater's Marius the Epicurean (which he then was reading) was reeking with, Forster turned to the letters of Keats who "shows a perfect attitude towards his art: absolutely serious but genial." Certifying Keats as "the best person in the world", Forster enthusiastically notes: "He has seized upon the supreme fact of human nature, the very small amount of good in it, and the supreme importance of that little. He is contented with his stuffy set, as he would

---

1. Furbank, P.N. E.M.Forster A Life, P. 132.

have been contented with anyone whom he knew long enough." Feeling a sense of parity with Keats so far as his aim in life was concerned, Forster's mind was troubled by the question :

> He who loses his own soul for men's sake shall he find it? To be enthusiastic & sentimental over the picturesque poor is no difficulty. One doesn't face the question till it comes to the vulgar and genteel. To know and help them are we to lose our souls – or how much of them?"[2]

Forster's life was one long articulate attempt to address himself to this central question. In other words, the question was whether he had faith in human life in general. At this point in his life, in 1905, in Nassenheide, Germany, Forster felt he had this faith : "The conditions are appalling: poverty, matrimony, much of family life all work against love and clear vision: and to these are added the rules of the game – death and decay. Yet people contrive to get in touch – I believe because they are radically good."[3] It is here that the study of Forster as the seer and critic of the world should begin.

Thirty five years later, in 1940, after the two World Wars, Forster then an aged celebrity of a broadcaster, expressed his reflections on Nazis and Nazism in his 'Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts',

> My belief is that if the Nazis won, culture would be destroyed in England and the Empire... In Hitler's war Germany is not a hostile

2. Ibid. P. 133.
3. Ibid. Shortly after this resolution Forster left Nassenheide in good spirits.

> country, she is a hostile principle. She stands for a new and a bad way of life and, if she won, would be bound to destroy our ways.

Nazi Germany was dangerous as an absolutist principle, not the expanse of natural beauty and optimism as he looked on it years ago in Nassenheide. Germany systematized culture into a 'governmental' idea whereas culture in England is "national: it springs naturally out of our way of looking at things ... It has developed slowly, easily, lazily; the English love of freedom, the English countryside, English prudishness and hypocrisy, English freakishness, our mild idealism and good-humoured reasonableness have all combined to make something ... unusual."[4] It is in this contrastive cultural context that Forster examines the role of freedom. Whereas the Nazis condemn freedom Forster as a writer not only asserts the necessity of freedom for culture to flourish but cites three reasons for his firm belief in freedom. The fundamental feeling of freedom which is necessary for the writer to exist as a writer should be accompanied by a functional freedom for the writer to tell others what he feels. These two are imperative for any cultural existence, and the third concerns the public; it must be free to read, to listen and to look. In the absence of the third, the public remains immature and Forster says, "... immaturity is a great characteristic of the public in Nazi Germany." Freedom, according to Forster, is a formative factor of growing up and is necessary for any culture to assert itself meaningfully. Thus freedom, and the spirit of it, enables a national culture to grow and expand and become a super-national culture which fosters the general good of humanity. Being beyond

---

4. "Culture and Freedom", EMF: TCD(1951) P. 41.

the political and geographical boundaries, this super-national culture "gives and takes. It wants to give and take. It has generousity and modesty.... It expands wherever human beings are to be found."[5] The golden milieu which this attitude would have created was ruined by Nazi Germany which, with its "governmental culture", instead "ordered an age of bloodshed." It could thus never contribute to the good of humanity, never become super-national. "Germany is to be German for ever ..." and, "To be German is – to be German"; thus fed by empty exalted slogans Germany pressed herself on to "the goal of a fool", that is, "Germany for ever", which really means "Gangsterdom for ever", and it is "an uneducated official's dream." This dream led the Nazi to demolish culture, and destroy "variety, spontaneity, anything different from themselves".[6] While Forster considers the Nazi revolution "a revolution of the soul", revealing "the power of the soul and sentiment", he wonders why the soul always requires a machine gun?" "Why does the instinct instinctively persecute? Why does the sentiment mean insensitiveness?" Nazism is the symbol of intolerance and cruelty and it considers it a crime to think.[7] Forster fears a political domination of Germany over England because the Nazis "would twist our minds through our own national literature if they got into our country" because "destruction of national culture is part of their programme of conquest." They would also "alter our civilization until it is in line with their own." They would institute a culture which would be like "a pyramid of appetites on a foundation of stupidity", which would kill the impulse to create. His pacifistic tendencies are obvious when he prophetically asserts: "...

---

5. Ibid. Pp. 42 – 43.
6. Ibid. Pp. 44 – 45.

violence has so far never worked. Even when it seems to conquer, it fails in the long run." His faith in the general goodness of man and his enthusiasm for optimism in life are reasserted even in a catastrophic prospect of doom: "Man ... refuses to live by bread alone, and is the only animal who has attempted to understand his surroundings."[8]

At the same Forster does not believe in freedom for freedom's sake. In the socio-political and cultural context of the modern times freedom should not be looked upon as a burgeouis luxury. It must not be an attractive decoration, but a decent, delicate and sound investment for human happiness. In a review of a volume of Marxist criticism Forster asks:

> Freedom? But freedom to do what? How pat the dreary question fails! .... Freedom to injure others? Freedom to starve? Freedom to feed while others starve? ... Freedom, like God, melts when we ask her to give an account of herself. But she has the power of re-forming behind our back or when we look away, so that suddenly, in the midst of ourratiocinations, we exclaim 'She exists! I know she exists! I must win her! All men must win her too!"[9]

Forster pleaded for the recognition of Freedom as a primal human impulse before its utilization in socio-political context. This impulse, given the right guidance, gives rise to socialistic co-operation which in its turn is responsible for

7. "What Has Germany Done to the Germans", TCD, p. 46.
8. "What would Germany do to Us?", TCD, pp. 49 – 53.
9. Forster's 1939 review of A Handbook of Freedom, "Freedom for What", The Listener, 1 June 1939. –quoted by R.Advani, p. 38.

material freedom and facilitates the existence of creative individuality and spiritual liberation. Firm in his liberal convictions, Forster places freedom along with love as a constitutively human instinct. As a fundamental aspect of the human spirit, freedom enables man to create aesthetic, socio-political and religious orders which bring out the true freedom within, that is, 'pure liberty'. This liberty leads men to "the land beyond logic, to the Beloved Republic which feeds upon freedom and lives, to the Good Place which is every poet's dream."[10] This was the dream of Ronald Kidd in whom Forster recognizes "the Ancient Roman, the Tribune of the People, who contends that the ***Res Publica*** should be the possession of all." Kidd's life was a "service of the elusive principle which we call liberty, ... in which we all believe", and he "did, literally, die that we might be free." Eulogizing Kidd as a prophet of freedom Forster goes on to say:

> I know the political and philosophical difficulties in this idea of freedom: freedom for what : freedom to do what : freedom at whose expense, and so on. As a conception it is negative: but as a faith it is positive, and Ronald Kidd upheld it till his dying day."[11]

Forster considers freedom 'as a faith', as an aspect of the unseen, an integral component of the human spirit. He admired Milton's ***Aeropagitca*** as a protest against the suppression of British freedom of thought and expression and also as "a disturbance of our self-complacency" though Milton ""exalts our national character in splendid words" and was "intensely patriotic". According to Forster

10 . Ibid. p. 39.
11 . "Ronald Kidd", TCD., pp. 58 – 59.

Aeropagitica highlights "not tyranny abroad but the need, even in wartime, of liberty at home." [12]

The Nineteenth century Western outlook on the human condition was strongly influenced by Christianity, and had a dualistic nature. The society was fundamentally split. Moral communication broke down and man was tragically separated from his traditional roots and values because of the sef-division of the age. In England, which J.S.Mill saw as "two nations", great artists lived "double lives, torn between their public and private roles".[13] There was a fundamental rupture "between faith and knowledge, between religious or poetic truth and scientiific or rational truth" which reflected the modernist infection of "split consciousness"(Carl Justav Jung), "Dissociation of Sensibility" (T.S. Eliot), and devotion to "things as opposed to values"(Alfred North Whitehead). Stone baptizes this fundamental conflict, attributed by Mill to Bentham and Coleridge, as the profound and complex contrast "between a mechanical and an organic view of life, between analysis and creative synthesis. ... between rationalism and romanticism, Utilitarianism and anti-Utilitarianism. .... between the practical and the ideal."[14] This characterised the split personality of the age which witnessed "the revolt of the human mind against the philosophy of the eighteenth century". It was the protest of the 'ontological' against the 'experimental', 'conservative' against the 'innovative', the ''religious' against the 'infidel', the 'concrete and

---

12. "The Tercentenary of the 'Aeropagitca.', TCD., pp. 60 – 64.
13. Wilfred Stone, The Cave and the Mountain : A Study of E.M.Forster(1969), p. 3.
14. Ibid. p. 4.

historical' against the 'abstract and metaphysical', and the 'poetical' against the 'matter-of-fact and prosaic'.[15] The essential dialectic of Forster's life, thought and art, his liberal-humanist quest for joining poetry and prose,[16] is directly derived from this central Millite socio-political dialectic of the Benthamitie-Coleridgean cultures. Forster' liberalistic-optimistic-realistic view of life is inspired by the Platonic-Coleridgean-Arnoldian-Spirtualistic-Idealistic axis which stands for culture, inner life, individual, human relationship as against the Aristotlean-Benthamite-Utilitarian-Materialistic Axis which over-emphasizes the role of a political economy in ordering society and human affairs.

Liberalism promotes a benevolent optimism in spite of the liberal mind's perception of the hard realities of material life. Forster's world-view is characteristically complex and typically dialectical. This makes his brand of liberalism very intractable. Lionel Trilling describes Forster as "at war with the liberal imagination."[17] Early nineteenth century thought of a liberal "as a revolutionary thinker, more usually known as a 'radical' because he attacked social institutions at their roots".[18] The mid-Victorian period saw liberalism springing out of its radical exclusiveness and becoming a guiding political philosophy of the industrial and commercial middle classes. Adopted by the *Whigs* as their moving principle, this liberalism became social, political, parliamentary, reform-seeking and progress-loving. It was the main reason

---

15. J.S.Mill – quoted by Stone, p. 5.
16. Stone quotes from a 'modern poet' who defines poetry as "language married to music, reason embraced by imagination, intellect in the clasp of emotion, the outer world and the inner life united in metaphor." Pp 5 – 6.
17. Lionel Trilling, <u>Liberal Imagination</u>

behind the mid-Victorian complacency and optimism. Enmeshed with politics, liberalism lost its original idealism. Chartered by economic organisation, boisterously supported by politicans, and institutionalised by lazy minds, liberalism lost its human touch and became increasingly impersonal and indifferent to the enterprising individual. Diluted and laced by currents and cross-currents of Reformism, Fabianism, Socialism, Marxism, Conservatism, Evangelical Ethics and so on, Liberalism degenerated into a trite slogan. Moving around in this circle Forster felt both the 'wingedness' and the 'groundedness', the Utopian idyllic achievement and the hard scientific truth, which Liberalism held forth at that time. Untinged by political bias Forster's first formulations of Liberalism began to express themselves hesitantly through the *Independent Review* which he described as "decency touched with poetry", "a light rather than a fire, but a light that penetrated the emotions".[19] He always concentrated on what the politicians ignored.

Neo-Platonic-Coleridgean Idealist.

It is interesting to examine the direct and indirect influences of what Carlyle calls the "Sign of the Times" on Forster's receptive mind. "To be sensitive to what is going on", is Forster's credo for a critic, and so he could not have been cognitively or intuitively blind to what was going on in the intellectual traditions of the past. Forster's liberal mind did not fight shy of being influenced. He was a

18. A Preface to Forster, p. 50.
19. Ibid. Pp. 51 – 54.

very grateful legatee of his intellectual heritage evidently derived from the central Platonic-Coleridgean-Arnoldian tradition.

At the heart of Plato's philosophy is his theory of Forms, or Ideas. Ultimately, his view of knowledge, ethics, psychology, the state, and art must be understood in terms of this theory. Influenced by Socrates, Plato was convinced that knowledge is attainable and it has two essential characteristics. First, knowledge must be certain and infallible. Second, knowledge must have as its object that which is genuinely real as contrasted with that which is an appearance only. Because that which is fully real must, for Plato, be fixed, permanent, and unchanging. He identified the real with the ideal realm of being as opposed to the physical world of becoming. So Plato rejected empiricism which claimed that knowledge is derived from sense experience. He thought that propositions derived from sense experience have, at most, a degree of probability. They are not certain. Furthermore, the objects of sense experience are changeable phenomena of the physical world. Hence, objects of sense experience are not proper objects of knowledge. In the ***Republic***, Plato distinguishes between two levels of awareness: *opinion and knowledge*. Claims or assertions about the physical or visible world, including both commonsense observations and the propositions of science, are opinions only. Some of these opinions are well founded; some are not; but none of them counts as genuine knowledge. The higher level of awareness is knowledge, because there reason, rather than sense experience, is involved. Reason, properly used, results in

intellectual insights that are certain, and the objects of these rational insights are the abiding universals, the eternal Forms or substances that constitute the real world. Plato describes individuals as chained deep within the recesses of a **Cave**. Unable to see one another, they can only see the wall of the cave upon which appear shadows cast by models or statues of animals and objects that are passed before a brightly burning fire. One of the individuals escapes from the cave into the light of day, and he sees for the first time the real world and returns to the cave with the message that the only things they have seen heretofore are shadows and appearances and that the real world awaits them if they are willing to break their bonds. The shadowy environment of the cave symbolizes for Plato the physical world of appearances. Escape into the sun-filled setting outside the cave symbolizes the transition to the real world, the world of full and perfect being, the world of Forms, which is the proper object of knowledge.

Plato's theory of Forms may best be understood in terms of mathematical entities. A circle, for instance, is defined as a plane figure composed of a series of points, all of which are equi-distant from a given point. No one has ever actually seen such a figure, however. What people have actually seen are drawn figures that are more or less close approximations of the ideal circle. Mathematicians define a circle in terms of logical points, not spatial points. Although the Form of a circle has never been seen - indeed, could never be seen - mathematicians and others do in fact know what a circle is. They can

define a circle and they know what it is. For Plato, therefore, the Form "circularity" exists, not in the physical world of space and time, but as a changeless object in the world of Forms or Ideas, which can be known only by reason. Forms have greater reality than objects in the physical world both because of their perfection and stability and because they are models of ordinary physical objects. Circularity, squareness, and triangularity are excellent examples, then, of what Plato meant by Forms. An object existing in the physical world may be called a circle or a square or a triangle only to the extent that it resembles ("participates in" is Plato's phrase) the Form "circularity" or "squareness" or "triangularity."

Plato extended this theory beyond the realm of mathematics to the field of social ethics and explained how the same universal term can refer to so many particular things or events. The word justice, for example, can be applied to hundreds of particular acts because these acts have something in common, namely, their resemblance to, or participation in, the Form "justice." An individual is human to the extent that he or she resembles or participates in the Form "humanness." If "humanness" is defined in terms of being a rational animal, then an individual is human to the extent that he or she is rational. A particular act is courageous or cowardly to the extent that it participates in its Form. An object is beautiful to the extent that it participates in the Idea, or Form, of beauty. Everything in the world of space and time is what it is by virtue of its resemblance to, or participation in, its universal Form. In Plato's hierarchy

of Forms, the supreme Form is the Form of the Good, which, like the sun in the myth of the cave, illuminates all the other Ideas and represents his movement in the direction of an ultimate principle of explanation. Ultimately, the theory of Forms is intended to explain how one comes to know (theory of knowledge) and also how things have come to be as they are (theory of being).. Plato's ethical theory argues that virtue is knowledge and can be taught, and knowledge of the Form of the Good is the source of guidance in moral decision-making. Plato also argued that to know the good is to do the good, and immorality is due to ignorance. Plato's conviction that the moral person is the truly happy person, and his belief that individuals always desire their own happiness, they always desire to do that which is moral, makes his philosophical formulations optimistic.

Plato had an essentially antagonistic view of art and the artist, although he approved of certain religious and moralistic kinds of art. Again, his approach is related to his theory of Forms. A beautiful flower, for example, is a copy or imitation of the universal Forms "flowerness" and "beauty." The physical flower is one step removed from reality, that is, the Forms. A picture of the flower is, therefore, two steps removed from reality. The artist, therefore, is two steps removed from knowledge, and, indeed, Plato's frequent criticism of the artists is that they lack genuine knowledge of what they are doing. Artistic creation, Plato observed, seems to be rooted in a kind of inspired madness.[20]

20. Adapted from "Infopedia 2.0", "Philospy & Religion – Plato."

This stream of Great Greek Philsophy, crystalline in its open and untrammelled thought, flowed through five centuries, via Plotinus, its "second founder", to the romantic age and with its extravagance of constructive ideas and free spirit made its impact on the sensitive mind of Coleridge. Coleridge set out to purify and reconstruct these Hellenic Dogmas with "a liberty of speculation which no Christian can tolerate".[21] The main issue of the Coleridgean Metaphysics was to formulate a stance that founds itself on the idea of the Absolute as Will, the primal basis of his "voluntaristic form of idealistic philosophy."[22] Disillusioned by Schelling's *Nature Philosophy* which he termed as "spiritless Pantheism", Coleridge stands for a more comprehensive attitude to Nature as a living and creative principle, - *natura naturans*, as against *natura naturata*, - nature as a finished and dead product. His platonism makes him an ardent supporter of the Dynamic Philosophy of Nature which pleased his dream of finding the expression of an idea both in the material and the spiritual world. This Organic Nature tends to Individuality which commences in Man. Nature for Coleridge was a progressive system of dynamic and individualizing activities connected with the idea of Life as "the principle of Individuation." He distinguished between mechanism and life and says : "... whatever is organized from without is a product of mechanism; whatever is mechanized from within is a production of organization."[23] In this organization Coleridge finds the essence of romance which is a kind of faith in man and

---

21. John Henry Newman , Essays, Vol. 1. P. 269. –quoted by John H.Muirhead, Coleridge As Philosopher, (1970) p. 116.
22. Ibid. p. 117.
23. Ibid. pp. 118 – 119, 127.

some sense of the inherent greatness of his soul. Coleridgean emphasis is visibly on the value of human life;

'I did but see her passing by, /And yet I love her till I die'.

The romantic spirit values the sense of the Infinite which is implicit in human life and which is the source of the deepest human experiences, sometimes expressed in the "still sad music of humanity". This Presence manifests itself in finite life both through wit which is "the sense of the littleness of that seem great" and humour which is "the sense of the greatness of things that seem little".[24] Coleridge tried to humanize the hard philosophical idealism of Plato by appealing to what Wordsworth calls "a few strong instincts and a few plain rules" in the formidable face of "the pride of intellect and thought" which Platonism stood for.[25] His nature is deeply religious. This is evident in his quest for a personal relation with a Mind and Will as the source of all reality and a living presence in the soul. Coleridge's voluntaristic idealism, or his and the other romantics' firm belief in the native goodness and goodwill of man, can be said to have inspired Forster via Mathew Arnold's socio-cultural criticism.

Mathew Arnold who like Forster abandoned creative art and devoted his later life to literary, social and religious criticism was painfully aware of the

24. Ibid. p. 28.
25. Ibid. p. 29.

drought of the age and of the "strange disease of modern life", - "the ratiocination, the morbid seriousness, the intense and unremitting self-analysis", which while paralyzing the moral dynamism of his age also paralyzed his "poetic nerve."[26] He transformed the central Benthamite-Coleridgean contention into a cultural struggle. Highly critical of the English Machinery-Culture which extended its influence from the factories to the souls of men and their personal relation, Mathew Arnold lambasted the English for their slavery to what they considered as precious ends in themselves – "Freedom, population, coal, wealth, religious organization". He proposed Culture as the "final and all-embracing absolute".[27] He makes culture a synonym for perfection, "of harmonious perfection ... which consists in becoming something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit", and defines the idea of perfection "as a general expansion of the human family" as against "strong individualism", undue emphasis on "the individual's personality", the popular maxim of "every man for himself", "want of flexibility", the tendency to see only "one side of a thing"[28] and the obsession with particularity and specificity of pursuit. He posits Culture as the "ultimate Coleridgean synthesis" and advances its claim of "doing humanistic service in lieu of Christianity." Diagnosing the malady of the modern age as "so deprived" and perceiving himself as "self-divided", Mathew Arnold is the legitimate cultural ancestor of "Forster's dialectic of experience",[29]

---

26. Wilfred Stone, Op. Cit. P. 9.
27. Ibid. p. 10.
28. Mathew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy , P.
29. Wilfred Stone, p. 11.

as Plato's dialectic of reality was the ancestor of his own cultural, idealistic humanism. Forster's own words are evidence for this Arnoldian heritage:

> Mathew Arnold is of all the Victorians most to my taste: a great poet, a civilized citizen, and a prophet who has managed to project himself into our present trouble{1944}, so that when we read him now he seems to be in the room.[30]

In the whole scheme of Forster's creative and the critical thinking one can see the working of Hegelian dialectical method. Hegel's aim was to set forth a philosophical system so comprehensive that it would encompass the ideas of his predecessors and create a conceptual framework in terms of which both the past and future could be philosophically understood. Such an aim would require nothing short of a full account of reality itself. Thus, Hegel conceived the subject matter of philosophy to be reality as a whole. He referred to this reality, or the total developmental process of everything that is, as the Absolute, or Absolute Spirit. According to Hegel, the task of philosophy is to chart the development of Absolute Spirit. This involves (1) making clear the internal rational structure of the Absolute; (2) demonstrating the manner in which the Absolute manifests itself in nature and human history; and (3) explicating the teleological nature of the Absolute, that is, showing the end or purpose toward which the Absolute is directed. Concerning the rational structure of the Absolute, Hegel, following the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, argued

---

30 . EMF, "Mathew Arnold",

that "what is rational is real and what is real is rational." This must be understood in terms of Hegel's further claim that the Absolute must ultimately be regarded as pure Thought, or Spirit, or Mind, in the process of self-development. The logic that governs this developmental process is *dialectic*. The dialectical method involves the notion that movement, or process, or progress, is the result of the conflict of opposites. Traditionally, this dimension of Hegel's thought has been analyzed in terms of the categories of *thesis, antithesis*, and *synthesis*. Although Hegel tended to avoid these terms, they are helpful in understanding his concept of the dialectic. The thesis, then, might be an idea or a historical movement. Such an idea or movement contains within itself incompleteness that gives rise to opposition, or an antithesis, a conflicting idea or movement. As a result of the conflict a third point of view arises, a synthesis, which overcomes the conflict by reconciling at a higher level the truth contained in both the thesis and antithesis. This synthesis becomes a new thesis that generates another antithesis, giving rise to a new synthesis, and in such a fashion the process of intellectual or historical development is continually generated. Hegel thought that Absolute Spirit itself (which is to say, the sum total of reality) develops in this dialectical fashion toward an ultimate end or goal. For Hegel, therefore, reality is understood as the Absolute unfolding dialectically in a process of self-development. As the Absolute undergoes this development, it manifests itself both in nature and in human history. Nature is Absolute Thought or Being objectifying itself in material form. Finite minds and human history are the process of the Absolute manifesting

itself in that which is most kin to itself, namely, spirit or consciousness. In *The Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel traced the stages of this manifestation from the simplest level of consciousness, through self-consciousness, to the advent of reason.[31]

Forster, though not very fond of the Hegelian Absolute, simulates Hegel's method of dialectic to make sense of this world. In his own admission he is incapable of "abstract thought."[32] His characteristically liberal temperament makes him mildly sceptical about all theory, all systems, all Faiths and Causes. It also prompts him to steer a middle-course away from both the anarchic subjectivity celebrated by the Romantics and the inflexible objectivity with which truth was conceived by orthodox Belief. Not wishing to propound or adopt any systematic Philosophy, Forster stands for a complex attitude to Life, Nature and Man drawing his inspiration from many philosophies. Forster browsed through many books of his contemporaries on Science, on the Nature of the world and the cosmos. These light musings on the world made him "concentrate upon what's small and immediate" which compelled him to adopt, not an Absolute theory or system, but values", small, finite and useful.[33] He was not enamoured by the scientism of some of his contemporaries. But his interest in *scientific ideas* was genuine. He was equally indifferent to the tall claims of the mystic

---

31. "Hegel, G(eorg) W(ilhelm) F(riedrich)," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
32. Furbank, p. 77.
33. Commonplace Book, P. 290.

thinkers of the time. opposed to all that was fashionable and popular in his time, Faith, Scientism, Racial loyalty, Forster's new attitude was one of mild decent scepticism towards cosmic social order juxtaposed by a predilection for the inner life of the individual. It was a delicate mixture of open-minded empiricism, which reflects his attitude to science and history, and a reliance on individual human imagination to provide personal values. This eclectic attitude distanced Forster from the more pronounced liberal-humanist tradition of hostility to Science.[34] Thus Forster's method resembles Hegel's in its attempt to adopt and cherish an all-comprehensive, all-inclusive vision of the Universe.

Forster's idealism, born of Cambridge-high-brow-elitism, after being enmeshed in the complexities of the war years, became a pragmatic-imaginative one. It was baptized in the fire of the world-crisis of the mid-thirties, the Economic Depression, the rise of Fascism, Communism, Grunyism, bureaucratic encroachment, censorship, conscription and the increased marginalisation and enervation of the human individual and human values. These socio-political interventions cannot redeem the situation as they are hell bent on persecuting the "God's elect, the electorate." Chained by the tyrants who themselves are in chains, the twentieth century man has suffered many disillusions, the most recent being the disillusion over democracy which followed the earlier disillusion over peace in 1914. This tyranny and the tyrants have become the norm. In the midst

34. This tradition roughly incldes Mathew Arnold, I.A.Richards and F.R.Leavis who vehemently opposed the 'scientific oulook' popularized by some of their contemporaries.

of all these, Forster feels that freedom must be "discovered, not recovered."[35] He disagrees with Gerald Heard who is of the view that tyrants could be "got at" by the "neo-Brahmins", people with integrity and spiritual authority, the "psychological supermen who will eradicate conflict by disseminating inner harmony."[36] Even a Hitler could "be made to catch the boat", claims Gerald Heard. But Forster disagrees with Heard and says: "Tyrants have seldom listened to sages for more than a minute or two, and they have seldom done more than listen."[37] His 1941 essay on 'Tolerance', though enthusiastic about the practical compulsions of "reconstruction" after the war – "a hard scientific truth", lays emphasis on the "sound attitude of mind, a right psychology". He discards the claims of Love as impractical in public life. "The idea that nations should love one another, ... is absurd, unreal, dangerous. It leads us into perilous and vague sentimentalism." He suggests, "something much less dramatic and emotional" for the practical need of rebuilding civilization, namely, Tolerance, "the quality which will be most needed after the war, ... the sound state of mind ... the only force which will enable different races and classes and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction." Affirming his faith in democracy, and asserting that the way of tolerance is the way of democracies, Forster promotes tolerance as the most harmonious way and spirit by and in which "a civilized world may be built." He calls it a "desirable spiritual exercise" wanted in all aspects of modern civic life. Distinguishing tolerance from weakness, Forster

---

35. "The Menace to Freedom", TCD, pp. 21 –22.
36. R. Advani., p. 33.
37. "Geraldl Heard", TCD., P. 38.

suggests that it is only when practical tolerance has completed building the house that "love will enter it, and the greatest force in our private lives will also rule in public life."[38]

This plea for intelligent-imaginative tolerance in public life is in tune with Forster's temperamental individualistic inclinations. He strongly believes in the supreme importance of personal relationships and private life. "I have no mystic faith in the people", Forster says. "I have in the individual. He seems to me a divine achievement and I mistrust any view which belittles him .... You are important because everyone else is an individual too".[39] As a schoolboy at Tonbridge Forster had undergone untold miseries from the horror of the gangs, and even then whenever he was bullied "... he recovered his balance best by mentally resolving the gang back into individuals."[40] This over-emphasis of the role of the individual is symptomatic of the apprehension that human freedom is menaced "because a million years ago Man was born in chains." He hopes that after the present tournament of tyranny, violence and aeroplanes is over, "a new creature may appear on this globe, a creature who, we pretend, is here already : the individual."[41] Forster's stand for the support and empowerment of the individual in the modern world which is strongly organized against the individuals makes him bravely ask: "When there is a collision of principles would you favour the individual at the expense of the community as I would? Or would you prefer

38. "Tolerance", TCD., pp. 53 – 57.
39. "The Challenge of our Times", TCD, p. 66.
40. P.N.Furbank, pp. 42 – 43.
41. "The Menace to Freedom, TCD, pp. 21 – 22.

economic justice for all at the expense of personal freedom?"[42] Not answering this semi-rhetorical question Forster tries to hint at how a world of individuals and personal freedom would go on. He pins his hopes on a "something" which will be born from the union between man's desire to be free and his wish to love. This something, the fruit of the marriage between the desire to devote oneself to another person (Love) and the desire for personal liberty, according to Forster, might remove the fundamental menace to freedom which the modern age holds forth, thus enabling "Love to come back to it is proper level and ... steady civilization".[43] This sentimental belief in love may be inspired by the Bloomsbury creed of intimate friendship which Forster also enjoyed at Cambridge as an Apostle. He posits love as an antidote to fear which deprives man of his freedom and is firmly convinced that salvation is possible only by a better use of man's innate capacity for love, and his better realization of his latent moral resourcefulness.[44] This may also be inspired by his much beloved friend Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson who considered love as "something which gives us ... an idea ... of what we might mean by a perfect Good."[45] These inspirations made Forster realize that his faith is in the effective combination of inner love and freedom and not in the new faiths of Marxism, Scientific Socialism and Mysticism. He ardently believed that in the conflict between Liberty and Equality the only possible resolution lies in the moral faculty of the individual. A good government consists in the best compromise between the competing ideal of Liberty and

---

42. TCD, p. 67.
43. "The Menace to Freedom", TCD., pp. 22 – 23.
44. "Some Books", King's College Manuscripts, - quoted by R.Advani, p. 34.
45. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson: The Meaning of Good (1901), p. 188.

Equality. A true Liberal becomes "the man in the middle".[46] Forster prefers to be in the middle and stands for a harmonious compromise between these more extreme positions. In one of his reviews he declares : "I myself am a sentimentalist who believes in the importance of love" because the desire to love and the desire to be loved are the twin anchor ropes which keep the human race human."[47]

Declaring that he belonged "to the fag-end of Victorian Liberalism" which practised "benevolence and philanthropy, was humane and intellectually curious, upheld free speech, had little colour prejudices, believed that individuals are and should be different, and entertained a sincere faith in the progress of society", Forster found fault with his education which made him 'soft', and his economic situation which was the result of "exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward classes abroad". The dialectical mysticism of his views can be inferred from his plea for mixing "the new economy with the old morality" and in his realization of the "split in one's loyalties". Forster recognizes the need to maintain the sense of tradition of many generations represented by the old farmsteads. He is also aware of the need to provide houses for the growing population by building satellite townships and commandeering large areas of county land. Hence the necessity of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning is felt by the liberalist Forster. But he is honest to admit his difficulty in equating the problem,

---

46. R. Advani, pp. 38 – 39, - quoted from Ronald Dworkin's essay, "Liberalism" in Private and Public Morality.
47. "A Clash of Authority", The Listener, 22 June, 1944. Pp 685 – 6. Quoted by R.Advani, Pp. 30-31.

and "cannot free myself from the conviction that something irreplaceable has been destroyed, and that a little piece of England has died as surely as if a bomb had hit it." He feels that no compensation is equal to the loss, - "the life of tradition." He is also not sure whether the modern era of planned life and planned change will further a "sphere both for human relationships and for the despised activity known as art."[48] If the artist is allowed his "ivory tower" and to plan for our minds, the scientist, subsidized by the terrified governments, who is temperamentally unfit to enter into people's feelings, should come out of his "ivory laboratory" and "plan for our bodies" in order to realistically face the "challenge of our times."[49] Forster claims that "personal relationships" provide "something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty." This solid factor is in conflict with "something incalculable in us, which ... rise to the surface and destroy our balance." Forster's position is that for the sake of living we have to "assume that the personality is solid and the 'self' is an entity". Thus one can start getting a little order into the contemporary chaos.[50] We, therefore, must be fond of people and trust them, and must be as reliable as possible. It is an affair of the heart and must be supported by a semi-mystic warmth which will, under favourable conditions, be transformed into faith. In this modern world of causes it is possible that "love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the state". Forster then would take a tough stand in support of the individual: "... if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I

---

48. "The Challenge of Our Times", TCD., p. 68.
49. Ibid. p. 69.
50. "What I Believe", TCD, pp. 75 – 76.

should have the guts to betray my country."[51] This is possible only in Forster's "Beloved Republic", the humanist's mystical Atlantis, "the City of God" to be reached through a liberalist's dream.[52] The kind of humanism which Forster stands for primarily recognizes the complexity and variety of human life; it has progressive tendencies in tandem with modernity. It stresses man's uniquely 'human' self which must not be destroyed in the interest of a just socio-economic and political order.

As a Liberal humanist Forster is also supportive of other virtues which he believes contribute in constituting the human spirit. While praising his ancestor Henry Thornton who was "only a successful banker, an extensive philanthropist, a devout Christian, and affectionate husband and a judicious father, a loyal friend, an upright citizen, an incorruptible M.P", and who reminded him of "an age when to get rich and to be good were harmonious", he says that the great defect of his great-grandfather's sect was its indifference to "a touch of mysticism, a sense of the unseen, and a capacity for martyrdom." Lacking these soul-purging impulses which lift one "into a region outside money", and indifferent to "poetry, mystery, passion, ecstasy, music", his ancestors could not make a bigger name in history.[53] While basking in this hallowed region or the spiritual dimension, Forster does not deny the claims of the body. While admiring ascetic qualities if they do not deny the human spirit, he is thoroughly convinced that "a denial of

---

51. Ibid. p. 76.
52. The Menace to Freedom", TCD., P.23.
53. "Henry Thornton", TCD., pp. 196 – 201.

the body is a denial of human life".[54] He is suspicious of the tall claims of asceticism which advances the spirit over the body because, as he puts it in 'What I Believe', "bodies are the instruments through which we register and enjoy the world". He, therefore rejects 'renunciation' as a means to fulfilment and social equality and says that it would evolve "a curtailed, denuded, castrated individual who would have aroused the contempt of the Ancient Greeks."[55] Again elsewhere he observes: "Christians and Pantheists may insist that the soul is separate from the body, but this is not true. There is a live body, that is all."[56]

This empirical-materialism which makes Forster believe that his treasures are in this world though it is not exactly his 'home', is counter-balanced by a semi-mystic, casual otherworldliness. He criticizes the acquisitive instinct which utilizes power and force and which inhibits the human spirit, destroys relationships and prevents spiritual fulfillment. Attributing caution, stolidity and lack of imagination to property owners, Forster says that the acquisitive instinct prevents toleration of other individual owners and the right to freedom of others. The human spirit is caught in the vicious grip of "a sinister trinity" formed by "Creation, property, enjoyment". And property takes over the places of creation and enjoyment, thereby enervating and emptying the life of the spirit.[57] He exposes the evil attributes of money, which Tolstoy describes as "evil and immoral" and its

---

54. R.Advani., p. 43.
55. "Poverty's Challenge: The Terrible Tolstoy" – quoted by R.Advani, pp. 44 – 45.
56. Ibid. –quoted from Commonplace Book, p. 240.
57. "My Wood", Abinger Harvest, p. 36.

possession as "one of the chief causes of evil"[58], and its vicious grip on the human mind :

> One of the evils of money is that it tempts us to look at it rather than at the things that it buys. .... That is the fundamental deceitfulness ofriches which kept worrying Christ. That is the treachery of the purse, the wallet and the bank-balance ... . They were invented as a convenience to the flesh, they have become a chain for the spirit.[59]

This treacherous trinity along with the "Devil", the Benthamite creature, "blinded by arithmetic, deaf to the warnings of poetry",[60] has dominated the twentieth century urban life thereby making it an arid desert.

Aristocracy in the midst of Democracy: Forster & Politics.

It is natural that such a temperament as Forster's would turn to Democracy to help in the reconstruction of the human society. But democracy is not an end for Forster, nor is it the most ideal situation for human life. The ideal is the semi-utopian Republic of Love in which Love will reign supreme both in the private and public lives of human beings. Democracy is only the preparatory step, nay, the only preparatory step, towards that Forsterian *Sumum Bonum*.

Democracy is not a Beloved Republic really, and never will be. But it is lessm hateful than other contemporary forms of government, and to that extent it

58. What, Then,Must We do, - quooted by R. Advani, p. 44.
59. "The Last Parade", TCD., p. 18.
60. EMF. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, p. 241.

deserves our support. It does start from the assumption that the individual is important, and that all types are needed to make a civilization.

Unlike the efficiency regimes democracy does not divide people into the "bossers and the bossed." According to Forster, sensitive people have their best chance in a democracy as it "allows them most liberty" to express themselves and to be creative. Democracy allows criticism, and thus makes possible the active existence of the Press and Parliament. Forster believes in the Parliament "because it is a talking shop", "because it criticizes and talks", and also in the "Private Member who makes himself a nuisance" because "he does expose abuses which would otherwise never have been mentioned." So Forster proposes "Two cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism."[61]

From this intermediate belief in twice-cheered democracy, Forster the semi-mystic liberal moves higher. For him this tolerant democracy is not an ideal, but an intermediate expression of love and freedom. That is why he allows only two cheers for this democracy and reserves the third cheer for his idealist Republic in which freedom feeds love and love lives on freedom. Discarding force on which all society rests, while cherishing the intervals from force as creative moments which he calls "civilization', citing the 'Valkyries' as symbols of courage, intelligence and the human spirit, and Brunhilde's hymn as signaling the "recurrence of love", Forster eagerly proclaims "the love which is eternally

triumphant and feeds upon freedom and lives." He calls the absence of force 'civilization.' Rejecting all universalist claims, Forster believes that nothing, - millennium, movements, religions, conversions or convulsions, - will be able to "bring peace to the world or integrity to the individual". This pessimistic realization is tempered by the small consolations of life, "creativeness", "friendship and loyalty". He refuses to take refuge in hero-worship and greatly dislikes that gross aberration of nature called the "Great Man" who is "an integral part of the authoritarian stock-in-trade". Hero demands worship and this is a favourite arrangement for the timid and the bored who, after "bowing down, feel exalted and strengthened."[62] Great Men strive for and achieve success which, by being an absolute and a fixity, is a negation of the dynamic force of creation. This leads Forster to believe in aristocracy, an aristocracy of the "sensitive, the considerate and the plucky."[63] This aristocracy which represents the true human tradition has a secret understanding among its members. These people cannot be organized and labelled. They are slippery and largely intractable. Their temple is "the Holiness of the Heart's Affection" and their kingdom is "the wide open world." It is from this aristocracy that the Saviour of the future will spring up who, without preaching a new Gospel but with "a new technique", will make effective the existing "goodwill and the good temper", and thus order the world.[64] This will be a

61. "What I Believe", TCD., pp. 77 – 78.
62. Ibid. p. 80.
63. Ibid. pp.
64. Ibid. pp. 81 – 82.

quiet solitary labour like some rare bird "pecking away at the stony ground and finding all kinds of private succulent things where others find only grit."[65]

Forster's preference of this enlightened aristocracy who will, if given a chance, rule and order the universe in the true liberal-humanist and democratic spirit, can be attributed to the influence of Plato via Plotinus and Coleridge. Plao's ***Republic***, is concerned with questions of justice, just state" and "just individual". The ideal state, according to Plato, is composed of three classes : the merchant class, the military class, and the philosopher-kings according to the education of the different individuals, and their interest and ability. Those who complete the entire educational process become philosopher-kings who are able to grasp the Forms and, therefore, to make the wisest decisions. Indeed, Plato's ideal educational system is primarily structured so as to produce philosopher-kings. Plato associates the traditional Greek virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance with the ruling, the military and the artisan classes respectively, and the virtue of justice characterizes society as a whole. The just state is one in which each class performs its own function well without infringing on the activities of the other classes. Similarly Plato divides the human soul into three parts: the rational part, the will, and the appetites. The just person is the one in whom the rational element, supported by the will, controls the appetites. In the same way

65. Norman Shrapnel's review of TCD in Manchester Guardian, 6 November 1951, 4 – quoted in Philip Gardner, ed., E.M.Forster: A Critical Heritage (London and Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 411.

enlightened philosopher-kings, supported by the soldiers, govern the rest of society.

Coleridge humanised the idea of Oligarchic-Monarchy. He admired Godwinian Communism, went through many adventures like emigration to America, an unhappy marriage, had visions of himself as "a servant of mankind". He mocked both orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, subscribed to Burke-inspired undergraduate brand of Political romanticism, inclined towards mysticism against the gross and unimaginative mechanisation of the universe, and finally arrived at an "alloy of Radicalism with faith". Seeing the path of possible perfection strewn with infinite complexities and confusions, Colelridge resigned himself "to that Being Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof, tremble". "Talk not politics. Preach the Gospel", was his advice to any "friend of universal equality".[66] He was convinced that the reforms of machinery were irrelevant without a change of heart and wrote in 1798, "Governments are more the effect than the cause of that which we are." And in a letter to his brother, expressing his disagreement with the eighteenth-century belief in man's natural goodness he wrote: "I wish to be a good man and a Christian, but I am no Whig, no Reformist, no Republican." Realizing the complexities of the circumstances Coleridge favoured dealing with the immediate problems empirically, while respecting the spiritual aspects of a secular society. Influence of the German Idealists became the true foundation of his political speculations and contributed to his towards

conservatism. Fired by Platonism he maintained that an institution was an embodiment of an idea and if its idea be good, an institution is worth maintaining.[67] Platonism helped Coleridge to realize that the romantic temperament such as his should find an outlet for its expansive emotions in the idea of humanity and then in a sense of community, that is, England. This was because of the new situation in which the rights of man changed into the rights of nations, Pantisocracy changed into patriotism, and brotherhood of man turned into geographic nationalism. This, for him, is the "sublime of man / ... to know ourselves / Parts and proportions of some wondrous whole! / This fraternises man." This sense of the "whole" is made into "one Self" which keeps on "spreading still" "far diffused as fancy's wing can travel!"[68] With this poetic conviction he went on to demand of all political systems, whether Radicalism or Toryism, a government according to ethical principles and the conduct of secular affairs *sub specie aeternitatis.* Caught between the dialectic of the idea of permanence represented by the landowners, and the idea of progress represented by the mercantile capitalists, Coleridge proposed a harmonious balance between the two. He repudiated both democracy and absolutism as ideal systems for the governance of mankind and conceived of society as a "corporation of major interests" consisting of family, community and the nation. Rejecting the empirical atomism of Hobbes and Locke, he supported an organic view of the society thus allowing multiplicity and variety in its make-up. Believing

---

66. Harold Beeley, "The Political Thought of Coleridge", in Coleridge : Studies by several hands on the Hundredth Anniversary of his Death, edited by Edmund Blunden & Earl Leslie Griggs (New York, Russell & Russell, 1970) p. 154.
67. Ibid. pp. 155 – 157.

in the duality of an individual, - the *idem*, the self, and the *alter*, the otherness, - Coleridge's position is one of "synthesis of *alter et idem*, myself and my neighbour." He also a posits two counterweights to prevent the excesses of both the modern commercial spirit with its mad race for gain and the conservative agricultural tradition with its poise and security and claims of permanence. They are a powerful aristocracy whose attachment to their estates is stronger than mere lust of money, and who, therefore, are inclined to be more committed and saner in their view of national well-being than the merchants and the traders who only seek profit in all their endevours. This aristocracy will, according to Coleridge, counteract "the superstitions of wealth" by the "more delicate superstitions of ancestry"[69] and thus provide a "social conscience" to the nation. Believing in the supreme importance of education and of the educated in the affairs of an ideal state, Coleridge enthusiastically proposes the establishment and maintenance of a pastor and a schoolmaster in every parish, and both groups together forming the "clerisy" which would include "the learned of all denominations." This "permanent, nationalised, learned order, a national clerisy or Church is an essential element of a rightly constituted nation", and Coleridge considers the clergyman as "a neighbour and a family man, whose education and rank admit him to the mansion of the rich landholder, while his duties make him the frequent visitor of the farmhouse and the cottage."[70] This idea of a learned order, permanently endowed and dispersed throughout the country, and

---

68. Coleridge, Religious Musings
69. Coleridge, Essays on his Own Times, 1, p. 185.
70. Church and State, p. .78. – quoted by Harold Beeley, p. 170.

spreading the "germ of civilization", is Coleridge's major contribution to political theory. One need not try hard at all to see the striking similarities of views of Coleridge and Forster in respect of an ideal political system.

This Coleridgean "germ of civilization" must be socially manifested in an ideal socio-political order. Forster argues for its increased role in ordering human affairs. He connects the basic human impulses to their corresponding social behaviour, - fear is connected to materialism, tyranny and orthodoxy, and love and freedom are linked to personal relations, creativity in private life and critical responsibility in public life. Forster is severely critical of any dogmatic and totalitarian ideology that unilaterally claims to order the society. Blind adherence to such faith or ideology, for him, is like an addict's abject dependence on drug. It will stifle the creative freedom and the ebullient freshness of what imagination can do for the flowering of the human personality. So a social order cannot be a prescriptive straitjacketed ideology-machine, but a loosely knit, flexible framework which allow breathing and breeding space for personality and imagination to flourish. Criticising the unimaginative and mechanistic attempt to herd humans together with bullying regulations in the interest of a social order, Forster argues his way through asserting the uniqueness and the irrevocable singularity of human individuals and the possibility of love and loyalty among them, to a larger possibility of creating a meaningful order among them which will be based , not on the drug of faith or belief, but on their primarily human and fundamentally personal inclination to creativity. This order will have a quiet birth and slow popularity, but it will be the only lasting order which will survive all

human failures and triumphs, all human excesses and exaggerations, and which will establish an integrated social order on this disordered planet. This will be an organic and dynamic spiritual order because it is "... evolved from within, not imposed from without ... an internal stability, a vital harmony".[71] It is this spontaneous formation which will be the corner stone of Forster's "Love, the Beloved Republic which feeds upon Freedom and lives."[72] Realizing the historical impossibility of such an order which has been posited by liberals like J.S.Mill who emphasised the supremacy of ahistorical and transcendent personal values over social order, and L.T.Hobhouse who viewed the outer order as merely facilitating the growth of personality which grows from within, Forster gives importance to social order only as an instrument which invigorates individuality and the inner order of the mind. This order operates naturally and evolves gradually with sure momentum and under no external compulsions, thus vindicating the claim that "Individuality is an element of well-being."[73] Forster's idea of order is misunderstood by some liberal critics as similar to a purely poetic sense of order which is "all-inclusive" and which "cannot be stated in political terms".[74] But Forster does not seem to subscribe to such ultra-poetic, utopian idea of order. As a realist he accepts a larger and more relevant idea of a social order which has implications beyond individuality and personal life. That the personal order must be made compatible with social order is implicit in the Forsterian scheme, and he believes in a valuable and inevitable combination of idealism and realism. In this

---

71. The New Disorder, p. 7 – quoted by R.Advani, p. 55.
72. "What I Believe", TCD, p. 78.
73. Alan P. Grimes Introduction to Liberalism(1964), p. 76 –quoted by R.Advani,, p. 56.
74. Kemp & Riding, The Left Heresy in Literature and Life, p. 87 – R. Advani, p.. 56.

liberalist chemistry lies the salvation of humanity from the modern malady of chronic and tragic fragmentation. Forster admires Edward Carpenter's idea of democracy as an extension of love into the practical and public affairs of men. Carpenter blamed Christianity and Commercialism for the failure of love and the failure of society, and in his Towards Democracy makes democracy transform itself from a mere "political term" into "a synonym of love."[75] But Forster the realist is aware of the limitations of such political idealism. The New Jerusalem which Edward Carpenter saw was seen as nice from far, but ".... When the armies of the downtrodden enter its gate ... the New Jerusalem becomes a more ordinary city, where the party leaders book the best rooms."[76] The dialectic of Christianity and Commercialism, between God and Mamon, can be resolved by a harmonious synthesis of idealism and realism. Forster always tries to reconcile the claims of private creativity with "a larger non-autocratic social order." That love should dwell in each, in all individuals is good enough for Forster when he says:

> Love is a great force in private life; it is indeed the greatest of all things: but love in public affairs simply does not work. It has been tried again and again: by the Christian civilizations ... and also by the French Revolution ... which reasserted the Brotherhood of Man .... it has always failed .... The fact is we can only love what we know personally. And we cannot know much. In public affairs, in the rebuilding of civilization, something much less dramatic and emotional is needed, namely tolerance.[77]

---

75. R. Advani quotes from Hynes' The Edwardian turn of Mind, (p. 150 – 1), p. 57.
76. "Edward Carpenter", TCD., p. 217.
77. "Tolerance", TCD., p. 54.

Though it is a "dull virtue" and means passive putting up with people and being able to stand things, it is the quality which is most suited to help "different races and classes and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction."[78] Tolerance is the Forsterian synthesis in the dialectic between private life and public role of an individual, between love and social indifference or irresponsibility. He states: "If you don't like people, put up with them as well as you can. Don't try to love them: you can't, you'll only strain yourself. But try to tolerate them. On the basis of that tolerance a civilized future may be built."[79] This emphasis on tolerance as the most useful, perhaps the only viable, peace-time virtue posits the liberal standpoint that violence and force do not always pay, and if one wants any semblance of civilization, nay, a meaningful and imaginative civilization, tolerance is indispensable. He enlists the Buddhist Emperor Asoka, the Dutch scholar Erasmus, the Frenchman Montaigne, John Locke, Sydney Smith, Lowes Dickinson and Goethe to testify the claim of tolerance as the means of "salvation of this crowded jostling modern world."[80] Tolerance is the modern measure by which a community's civilized human nature is to be ascertained. The opposite of tolerance,- fear, force, belief and totalitarianism,- makes a community anti-human and primitive. He also cites the evils of powerful governments which even within democracy crush individuality with the help of "an omniscient bureaucracy". This "Fabio-Fascism" which had alarmed all liberal thinkers of the time and is a cultural cousin of Benthamism, stands for a despotic power placing the government above the Parliament and law courts. This

---

78. Ibid. p. 55.
79. Ibid.

dangerous phenomenon of Fabio-Fascist bureaucracy regulates personal life, destroys spontaneity and creativity, perverts the spirit of democracy by marginalising the individual, and finally, turns modern civilization into a prison, all in the name of social order. This soul-less galvanising apparatus, the inexorable rule-machine, levels human society like a powerful bull-dozer and destroys all chances of the spiritual development of the individual and of society. Administration, legality, regulations, economic development, industrial progress, Grants commission, Planning commission – an impressive list of social amelioration cliches – they hinder spirit of individualism, creativity and liberty, and establish a "chartered", standardized civilization. This Commissar Culture with its veritable red-tape is the modern devil, the evil legatee of the Benthamite Culture bent upon destroying the spirit of laissez-faire, which, according to Forster, "is the only one that seems to work in the world of spirit" because "if you plan and control men's minds you stunt them".[81] This is the danger into which democracy can, with the help of a bureaucracy, degenerate. This danger will destroy human tradition. Hence Forster's ardent faith in Aristocracy in the midst of Democracy, an intelligent Minority influencing the rule by Majority, "a secular intelligentsia"[82] promoting the emotional, intellectual and spiritual development in the society. This enlightend tribe of what Mill calls "the leading intellects of the age",[83] "the

---

80. Ibid. p. 57.
81. "The Challenge of our Times", TCD. P. 66.
82. R. Advani, p. 61.
83. "Civilization"(1836), in Mill's Essays on Literature and Society, ed. J.B.Schneewind, - R.Advani, P. 61.

salt of the earth"[84] will be indispensable for organising human life and for protecting humanity from the bestial Benthamite, de-humanizing forces.

Forster's aristocracy can look back and find its immediate ancestor in Mathew Arnold's "cultured Minority", his substitute for the clergy. The Arnoldian notion of culture places human perfection as an internal condition, as a natural growth of our humanity asserting predominance over our animality. This idea of perfection and humanity is not a democratic one. All men do not carry "the kingdom of God" within them; only a cultured few have this privilege or burden. Arnold explains:

> Natures with this bent emerge in all classes, ... And this bent always tend to take them out of their class, and to make their distinguishing characteristic not their Barbarianism or their philistinism, but their *humanity*. They have in general a rough time of it in their lives; but they are sown more abundantly than one might think, they appear where and when least expects it, they set up a fire which enfilades, so to speak, the class with which they are ranked ...[85]

This notion of Liberal Socialism of a semi-esoteric kind in which a synthesis is attempted between liberty and equality by bringing an enlightened aristocracy reflecting the co-existence of both liberty and control, of liberal humanism and rational altruistic self-control, is also reflected in the works of L.T.Hobhouse who criticizes the social order which "'cramps the personal life and the spiritual order", and in T.H.Green who visualised a liberal social philosophy which harmoniously

---

84. J.S.Mill, On Liberty, P. 129 – quoted by R. Advani, p. 61.
85. J.S.Mill, Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Social and Political Criticism (1869), p. 93. – R.A.62.

balances the traditional liberal value of "creative individualism" and the topically important expedient of a "just and better planned economic order." This liberalist positing of an ideal stressing spiritual freedom and diversity (the liberal thesis) contrasted with the economically deterministic and materialistic imperative of equality and social welfare (the socialist antithesis) is reconciled by the notion of 'Liberal Socialism' (the humanist synthesis). Unconvinced by the socialist claim that a desirable moral and spiritual atmosphere will emerge out of a planned economy and a regulated social life, Forster is unrelenting in his continual stress upon "moral values and the legislation of the spirit"[86] in his quest for a desirable state of life. One cannot ignore the tinge of the Cambridge-Apostolic "state of mind". His view of social order as of any value only if it provides opportunities for human self-development and of the artists and the creative individuals as important and indispensable contributors to the real well-being of the society smacks of an elegant mixture of poetic mysticism and socio-human realism which is central to Forster's attitude and his works. His attachment to democracy for its predominantly human characteristics, his ardent faith in his aristocracy which stands for "the true human tradition" of soul-enriching spiritual values, and his hope that the human scene can be ordered by human efforts and human evil can be counterbalanced by innate human goodness, places him in the role of a modern prophet of optimism. His aristocracy symbolises "the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos" and is counted among " a few (who) are great names."[87] While distancing himself equally from populist

---

86 . R. Advani, pp. 62 – 63.
87 . "What I Believe", TCD, P. 81.

excesses and vulgarities which are the evils of an intolerant democracy, and from the snobbish 'touch-me-not-ism' or 'holier than thou', 'Ivory Tower' attitude of the upper classes, Forster concerns himself with "the problem of value, the problem of maintaining and extending ***aristocracy in the midst of democracy***."[88] (emphasis mine) It is around this aristocracy that Forster's essential criticism of society and politics hinges. His fundamental concern as a critic is to advance the claim of this aristocracy in social reconstruction, and its crucial role in protecting the human values of personal freedom, human relation, creative individualism, and imaginative moralism. This "invincible army, yet not a victorious one, the aristocrat, the elect, the chosen, the Best People"[89] is to fight the social evils of ignorance, poverty, militarism and imperialism in a specific movement of liberal thought with the weapons of creativity, imagination and example, and by appealing to the supreme value of the *civilized individual.* The only meaningful, effective and enduring social direction is towards the pluralization of this Civilised Individual. Uniform codes, social regulations, moral laws, economic planning, ideologies, reform movements, spiritual renewals, and, even, religious worship will not found the kingdom if they do not primarily recognize the supreme importance of the Individual and promote his survival and welfare. Concern for the barest human needs of the Individual should be the first step to be taken towards any civilization,[90] and the socio-moral and spiritual welfare of this

---

88. Advani quotes from "The 5th Anniversary of the 3rd Programme", The Listener, 4 Oct., 1951. p. 63
89. "What I Believe", TCD, p. 81.
90. One of the reasons why Forster "scrapped" the all important mystery of the Incarnation of Christ was that "the main aim of the Incarnation was not to stop war or pain or poverty, but to free us from sin ..."- quoted by Furbank from Forster's "Presidential address to the Cambridge Humanists", Summer 1959, Op. Cit. P. 62.

individual is the crowning glory of human civilization. Thus benevolently positioned in the society and basking under the glorious reign of human ideals, the Individual will express his creative urges, and in his creations lies the real achievement of any civilization worth the name. From this view of society, at once individualistic and pluralistic, homocentric and socially coloured, admitting atomism and creative variety, Forster takes the one forward step towards an eclectic, enlightened and vibrant aristocracy. Rukan Advani gives an impressive list of Forster's assorted aristocracy: "artists (from Shakespeare to Roger Fry), historians (Voltaire, Gibbon), scientists (James Simpson), theologians (Clement and Origen), thinkers (Plotinus, Lowes Dickinson), and even a god (Krishna)." These exemplify "diverse ways of fulfillment". They are intensely human, intricately complex, "mixtures of good and evil in whom the good predominates". They are not paragons of virtues or "symbols of perfection". Forster is "deliberately irreverent" towards them, aware of their "fallibility as human beings". These heroes are "human rather than mythical or heroic". These Forsterian heroes are found across the "whole stretch of human history", and according to him, "salvation lies only in remembering, assimilating, cherishing and personally expanding the values of (this) aristocracy".[91] The "saviour of the future will utilize this aristocracy" if and when he comes, in his mission of actuating "the goodwill and good temper which are already existing."[92] This is the semi-prophetic, semi-apocryphal hope of an agnostic humanist in real earnest to do something for the contemporary chaos prevailing in the modern age. His optimism that the Elect

---

91. R. Advani, P. 68.
92. "What I believe", TCD, p. 82.

(Aristocracy) and the Electorate (Democracy) together will found the Kingdom, nay, "Love the Beloved Republic" in which the "Unquenchable lights of my aristocracy" and the "Signals of the invincible army" will forever hold out an invitation: "Come along – anyway, let's have a good time while we can."[93]

There is no fixity about who belongs to Forster's aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Forster is quite haphazard in including and excluding people in this loose formation. Sometimes he includes the landed aristocrat in this group by virtue of his "connection with the land". The Duke of Portland was included because he "inherited and enhanced a great name", "does not like the present day", but is "too good a sportsman to grumble", and firmly believes that "the new world ... holds just as many possibilities of happiness, good fellowship, and enjoyment of life ...." Forster admires such attitude and certifies that people with similar views make him feel that "the landed aristocrat seems the only democrat, and our hearts go out to him." Forgiving arrogance in the Duke as unconscious, Forster says that the aristocrat in the Duke "does practise ... the art of switching off when a person or a situation incommodes him."[94]

Forster's sensitive mind also took stock of the class stratification which gathered round his notion of aristocracy. He distinguishes the three social classes in terms of three drawers, the top drawer, - the aristocracy, the middle

93. Ibid.
94. "A Duke Remembers", TCD, 300.

drawer, - the merchant and the government officials, and the bottom drawer, - the working class. Speaking of "Mrs. Miniver, the gifted heroine of Miss Jan Struther's sketches", he says that she belonged, not to the top drawer as she is "certainly not an aristocrat" because of something that she had not got – "some grace or grandeur, some fierce eccentricity, some sense of ancient lineage or broad acres lost through dissipation" –, because "disitnction does not course in her blood", but to the middle drawer, that is, to the class "which strangled the aristocracy in the nineteenth century, and has been haunted ever since by the ghost of its victim .... and has come into power consequent on the Industrial Revolution and Reform Bills and the Death Duties." This class "has never been able to build itself an appropriate home". It still thinks that the Englishman's home is his 'castle' and "still hanker(s) after the feudal stronghold which (is) condemned as uninhabitable", and thus it is twice removed from reality and nobility. The working classes, which hoot this middle class occasionally in order "to clear their chests and to get rid of their feeling of incompetence", have "spontaneity, natural gaiety, recklessness" which the aristocrat once had and the middle class never had. Forster sees a strange spiritual affinity between the noble aristocrats and the naturally sincere working classes.

> There is a natural sympathy between the top drawer and the bottom. The 'castle' and the 'hovel' have understood one another, and have even approximated in type. Those who had everything have felt easy in the presence of those who had nothing.[95]

---

95. "Mrs. Miniver", TCD, pp. 301 – 303.

Forster hopes to find a spiritual harmony in "the fabric of England" in this spiritual *entente cordiale* between the top and the bottom drawers of the social strata. This reinforces Forster's political preference of aristocracy in the midst of democracy. In Forster's scheme of things educated idealism will lead the natural vibrant recklessness of popularism to establish a political order in which *vox populi*, when inspired and led by the snobility, will become *vox dei*. This will be an improved version of democracy which Aristotle derisively described as "a drunken clown followed by a yelling mob."

Agnostic Humanist in Religion.

Forster is convinced that man has miserably failed to organize and distribute his own native goodness in this messy world of force and violence. Man's "divine creativeness appears as a trivial by-product" too feeble to face the drum-beat of force, violence and war. During the crisis of the thirties when religious belief was becoming increasingly popular, Forster criticized the irrational obsession with "blind belief in belief".[96] While the sign of the times was for faith and for more faith, Forster was convinced that "what our tormented planet most needs at the present moment is not more but less faith. People believe much too ardently, and consequently desire to kill those who differ from them."[97] Faith, strong because it was blind, was only contributing to the modern mess. It was becoming more and more intolerant and, thereby, inhuman. Its exclusiveness was something soul-

---

96. Forster angrily retorted to Arnold Toynbee's talk on "Post-war Paganism versus Christianity" which was published in the Listener(20 Jan. 1937) - R.Advani, p. 77.
97. Ibid. Advani quotes from 'Church, Community and State' Listener, 27 Jan. 1937.

denying. In Alexandria, he speaks about the jews of Jerusalem who migrated to Alexandria and who when they got into touch with Alexandrian Hellenism, became "more and more conscious of the churlishness and inaccessibility of {their} national God."[98] He also admires the Alexandrian Jews for making Jehovah more human and accessible and for thinking of 'Sophia', wisdom, as the link between man and God. This, according to Forster, is a significant departure from *dogmatic conservatism* in favour of a tolerant and *eclectic humanism*. He also admires the Jewish belief in "man's capacity to realize God within this world", wisdom being the "messenger who bridges the gulf and makes us friends of God."[99] Forster sees no help from Christianity which largely depends for its impact on money, and not any more on its spiritual appeal. The "Gold and silver have I none" days of Christianity are over and it cannot, Forster feels, make humanity "get up and walk".[100] He rejects Christianity's claim to be the "spiritual force" which it once was, and says that the "indwelling spirit will have to be restated ... in a non-Christian form." Admitting that his faith is "a very small one", Forster "an individualist and a liberal", not ashamed to see liberalism crumbling beneath him, desperately holds on to the view that human salvation should be engineered by human individuals.[101] His imaginative agnosticism is evident in the prophetic beginning of his illuminating essay, "What I Believe": "I do not believe in Belief. But this is an Age of Faith." This pronouncement also reflects the

---

98. Alexandria, P. 55.
99. R. Advani, pp. 78 – 79.
100. "Acts", 3: 6 –7. The Jerusalem Bible (Popular Edition, Darton, Longman & Todd, London,1974) P. 159. St. Peter's words to the crippled beggar at the entrance to the Temple at Jerusalem.
101. TCD, pp. 83 – 84.

dialectical nature of Forster's thinking. He describes faith as "a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible." Finding the old creeds as a defense mechanism against mental chaos, Forster is not averse to form a creed of his own with Erasmus and Montaigne as his "law-givers" and the "Elysian Field where even the immoral are admitted" as his temple. His motto too reflects the soul-searching agony of a sensitive agnostic: "Lord, I disbelieve – help thou my unbelief."[102] He expressed this religious dilemma in a 1940 review more bluntly: "One must believe something, I am told. Why? Why should one need a belief?[103] For Forster religions have value if they facilitate and inspire personal fulfillment, social harmony. He distrusts the ascetic otherworldliness and the unquestioning faith which the traditional religions place above self-development and earthly pleasures. He sees all religions "as external impositions which seek to control and subdue individuality."[104] Opposed to religious mysticism and beliefs, Forster's humanism makes him admire the mystic experience because it is an intense personal experience, and because it is akin to a humanist's ecstatic pleasure derived from his experience of the beauty of the external world. But he accepts the possibility of the divine order, connects deep feeling with spiritual life and holds that the experience of the divine comes from "an intensified sense of life."[105] Man has to perfect his humanity before he can be said to experience the divine.

102. Ibid. P. 75.
103. Rukan Advani, E.M.Forster as Critic (Select Book Syndicate, New Delhi, 1985) p. 77 – quotes from 'A Bed-side book', The Listener (7 Nov. 1940.)
104. Ibid. p. 72.
105. Ibid. p. 73.

Forster's preoccupation with 'connection' as an ideal achievement towards possible human perfection has its impact on his religious criticism. The problem of religion, for him, also boils down to a problem of "how the human and the divine could be connected and brought close together."[106] Admiring Philo's idea of 'logos' or 'word' as an intermediary between man and God which made Hebrew Jehovah intelligible and acceptable to the Alexandrian Jews, Forster cherishes the emphasis upon "mystic vision (rather than worship) as the path to the divine."[107] Philo Judaeus conceived of God as a being without attributes, better than virtue and knowledge, better than the beautiful and the good, a being so exalted above the world that an *intermediate class of beings* is required to establish a point of contact between him and the world. These beings he found in the spiritual world of ideas-not merely ideas in the Platonic sense, but real, active powers, surrounding God as a number of attendant beings. All these intermediate powers are known as the *Logos*, the divine image in which persons are created and through which they participate in the deity. An individual's duties consist of veneration of God and love and righteousness toward others. Humans are immortal by reason of their heavenly nature, but just as degrees in this divine nature exist, degrees of immortality also exist. Mere living after death, common to all humanity, differs from the future existence of the perfect souls, for whom paradise is oneness with God.[108] Philo's idea of the "intermediate beings or powers known as Logos is in tune with Forster's recurrent theme of

---

106. Ibid. p. 79.
107. Ibid
108. Adapted from 'Infopedia 2.0' (The Ultimate Multimedia Encyclopedia and Reference Libirary): "Philosophers, Philo Judaeus"

'Connection.'[109] He also admires Plotinus's view of religion which bridges the gulf between a religious outlook and a humanist outlook, which for him becomes a very powerful humanist argument that "the whole universe has an inclination towards good ... and man's goal is to become actually, as he is potentially, divine", thereby transforming the Christian promise that a man shall *see* God into the neo-Platonic or the Indian promise that "he shall *be* God."[110] Plotinus spoke on Pythagorean and Platonic wisdom and on asceticism; such was the impression made upon his hearers that some of them gave their fortunes to the poor, set their slaves free, and devoted themselves to lives of study and ascetic piety. Plotinus's system was based chiefly on Plato's theory of Ideas, but whereas Plato assumed archetypal Ideas to be the link between the supreme deity and the world of matter, Plotinus accepted a doctrine of emanation. This doctrine supposes the constant transmission of powers from the Absolute Being, or the One, to the creation through several agencies, the first of which is *nous*, or pure intelligence, whence flows the soul of the world; from this, in turn, flow the souls of humans and animals, and finally matter. Human beings thus belong to two worlds, that of the senses and that of pure intelligence. Inasmuch as matter is the cause of all evil, the object of life should be to escape the material world of the senses, and hence people should abandon all earthly interests for those of intellectual meditation; by purification and by the exercise of thought people can gradually lift themselves to an intuition of the ***nous***, and ultimately to a complete

109. Howards End. P.
110. Alexandria, p. 59.

and ecstatic union with the One-that is, God.[111] As a liberal humanist Forster's sympathies are naturally with the thinkers who do not narrow religion into a rigid order and who are more concerned with making salvation more easily accessible. According to him a more humane and enlightened spirit should inform all views of religion if religious philosophy were to have any significant human relevance.

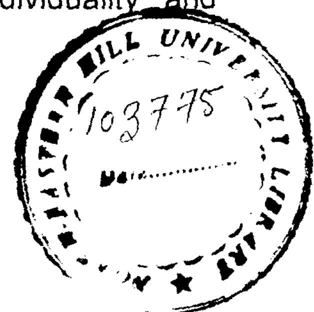
It will be interesting to examine the influence of Coleridge's Philsophy, both positive and negative, on Forster's Criticism of Religion. Coleridge's whole philosophy was a Philosophy of Religion, a Theosophy, and even a Theonosy – a knowledge of God. He looks upon all other knowledge as leading up to this knowledge of God. Religion for Coleridge is the "highest exercise of the human spirit",[112] which he proclaims as:

> ... the flower and crowning blossom of the plant, formed of whatever was most vital in root, stem, and leaf, by the gradual separation and deposition of whatever was earthly and crude ... it unites in its purposes the desiderata of the speculative and the practical being: its acts, including its events, are truths and objects of philosophic insight, and (its) truths are to be considered as acts and manifestations of that being which is at once the power and the truth.[113]

Coleridge concerns himself with a general interpretation of the meaning of religion, the nature of belief, the nature of God, the destiny of the human soul,

111. Adapted from 'Infopedia 2.0': "Plotinus".
112. Muirhead, p. 217.
113. Coleridge, MS. BIL. – quoted by Muirhead, pp- 217 – 18. .

and the role of the Christian religion. In his attempt to humanize the divine, Coleridge looked upon religion as a means to satisfy the human heart's demand for fellowship with God. A faithful friend to his friends, he sought friendship and faithfulness in God. Criticising Kant's idea of religion for its stoical abandonment of affections and for the role it assigned to God, that of a trader who exchanges virtue for happiness to his earthly customers, Coleridge viewed the essence of religion as Communion with God through 'prayer', "the very highest energy of which the human heart was capable." For him one of the striking problems concerning religion was the destiny of the *individual as capable of showing God's eternity* which was as important as the belief in the reality of sin and redemption. He viewed faith as the ""synthesis of reason and the individual will", as a total continuous energy related to the whole moral man. He looked upon God as a personality, - as a "Personeity", what is "at once personality and more than personality ... super-personal (which) must include the best we understand by personal." In all his deliberations about God, poetical or philosophical, Coleridge talks too frequently of "Personality" and "Individual". To his primary concept of the Absolute as Will Coleridge added the idea of God as a *Personal* Being who is the giver of Life, therefore of *Individuality.* These two concepts, which are more human than speculative, and Coleridge's use of them in his philosophical musings on religion, anticipate a religious idealism of a later English philosophy which was fashionable in Forster's time. Coleridge interprets personality as "a circumference continually expanding through sympathy and understanding, rather than as an exclusive centre of self-feeling", and individuality and



uniqueness as "something to be won". [114] The acts of expanding and winning give an organic contour to these ideals which are in thematic consonance with Forster's own views. Coleridge defines faith as the Fidelity of the personal will in each of us to the moral reason – "reason in the form of conscience, conscience in the light of reason."[115] This faith, according to Coleridge, is independent of any belief and is identical with pure act of will which naturally gravitates to something that can be described as Will and Good and also as Supreme Reason. One cannot but see the Coleridgean meaning of faith in Forster's "Lord I disbelieve, help thou my unbelief". Coleridge looks upon faith as transcending the merely permissive faith in God which leads the faithful to petition Him for favours. For him faith is the trancendent union of the worshipper's finite will and goodness to God's infinite Will and Goodness. Prayer, therefore, is the effort to live in the spirit of the Whole and its highest achievement is the acceptance of God's will. Coleridgean idea of prayer is, therefore, more a belonging than believing. This Coleridgean Religious idealism must have filtered, via Mathew Arnold, into the psyche of Forster who seemed more inclined to the semi-radicalism of the romantics than to the vulgar Victorian faithfulness of the orthodox.

Mathew Arnold began his criticism of the society by his strong conviction that the religious organizations have miserably failed to subdue the animality in man. Stating that the English impulse for perfection has its strongest manifestation in Puritanism which itself found its most powerful expression in the religious

114. Muirhead, pp. 222 – 29.
115. Ibid. p. 230.

organization of the Independents whose motto was : "The Dissidence of the Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." This for Arnold seems to be the grand beginning of perfection. But men by habit do give to the language of religion a tone of mere jargon and are blind to the shortcomings of their religious organizations which the religion itself condemns. They "cheat themselves and ... explain this condemnation away." While he is tolerant towards these religious organisations and admired "the good and the happiness which they have accomplished", he is frightfully honest in admitting their much too evident defects:

> ... their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of the Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it – so I say with regard to other religious organizations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the Non-conformist – a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons, and think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light and perfection![116]

Arnold criticises this complacent Puritan force, the ruling force of the Victorian age which is exclusive in its "care for fire and strength, strictness of conscience, Hebraism, rather than the care for sweetness and light, spontaneity of consciousness, Hellenism." This perfect Puritan, swelling with pride because of his supposed possession of the *unum necessarium*, the one thing needful,

116. "From *Culture and Anarchy*", The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Fifth Edition, Ed., M.H.Abrams, New York, London, W.W.Norton & Company, 1987, pp. 2165 – 66.

"thinks he has now knowledge and henceforth needs only to act, and, in this dangerous state of assurance and self-satisfaction, proceeds to give full swing to a number of the instincts of his ordinary self." This proud, vulgar religious spirit, in other words, fanaticism, makes him a "victim of Hebraism, of the tendency to cultivate strictness of conscience rather than spontaneity of consciousness."[117] Thus Arnold rejects the claims of religion to be the 'stay secure' for the human race because being nothing more than a received tradition, it is sure to dissolve. In his essay, "The Study of Poetry", this conviction of the growing irrelevance of religion as the "ever surer and surer stay" is more powerfully argued:

> Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. .... The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry.[118]

Thus Arnold proposes that religion, having failed in fact and feeling, parading mere evidences and empty slogans fit only for the popular mind, should be replaced by poetry which is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." The specific function of poetry is to spread *Culture* which is Arnold's ultimate Coleridgean synthesis and a humanistic surrogate for Religion as was *Art* for Forster. Poetry popularizing Culture, and Culture, "full of contradictions and impossiblities as the Christian Trinity", doing the exalted and "humanistic service in lieu of Christianity"[119], is the Arnoldian proposition for a desirable order. This is a strong inspiration for Forster to dissociate himself from received religion and

117. "From Chapter 5. *Porro Unum Est Necessarium*, The Norton Anthology, pp. 2170 – 71.
118. The Norton Anthology, p. 2171.

plunge into agnostic, imaginative, humanism in lieu of the unimpressive, unimaginative and riddle-ridden Christianity.

Forter's disavowal of the Christian faith happened in Cambridge under Meredith's ministrations. The enthusiastic scepticism which was in vogue in Cambridge during Forster's time was a precursor to this Arnold-inspired agnostic humanism. His faith was very shallow and "religion hardly figured in his life".[120] In his 1959 Presidential address to the Cambridge Humanists, he earnestly admitted that the idea of Trinity was very odd to him, "like an unmanageable toy", and its removal "jeopardised the stability of the Incarnation." He was initially overwhelmed by the "idea of a god becoming a man to help men". But "when I realised that the main aim of the Incarnation was not to stop war or pain or poverty, but to free us from sin I became less interested and ended by scrapping it too."[121] He found serious faults with the personality of Christ – lack of humour, passion for disciples and predilection for pain. This forbidding figure of Christ disturbed the mild tolerant temperament of Forster, and he is only too eager to admire those religious thinkers who present a milder and more gracefully human version of the Christian Religion. Significant among the early theologians whom Forster admires is Clement of Alexandria. Many scholars regard Clement as the founder of the Alexandrian school of theology, which emphasized the divine nature of Christ. It was

---

119. Wilfred Stone, Op. Cit. P. 11.
120. Furbank, EMF: A Life, P. 62
121. Ibid.

Alexandrian theologians such as Saint Cyril and Saint Athanasius who took the lead in opposing Adoptionism and Nestorianism, both of which emphasized Christ's humanity at the expense of his divinity. According to Clement's system of logic, the thought and will of God exhorts, educates, and perfects the true Christian. This process is described in *A Hortatory Address to the Greeks, The Tutor,* and *Miscellanies,* Clement's major works.[122] According to Clement, the life that now is, is as important as the life to come. It is a happy pilgrimage which prepares the mind and body for the divine pleasures in the next life. This enlightened tradition was continued by Origen, Clement's pupil, who is regarded as the father of the allegorical method of scriptural interpretation. He taught the principle of the threefold sense, corresponding to the threefold division of the person into body, spirit, and soul, which was then a common concept. He was a Platonist and endeavored to combine Greek philosophy and the Christian religion. He developed the idea of Christ as the Logos, or Incarnate Word, who is with the Father from eternity, but he taught also that the Son is subordinate to the Father in power and dignity.[123] This attempt at humanising Christ appealed to Forster who considered Origen as the last of Christianity's tolerant spokesman in Alexandria. Origen's benevolent Christianity allowed scope for variety and personal creativity, and was tolerant and eclectic. For the same reasons Forster admires Arius, the fourth century theologian, who tried to elevate man towards God by presenting Christ as more

---

122. "Clement of Alexandria," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia.* © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
123. "Origen," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia.* © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

human than divine. He taught that "Jesus Christ was not coeternal with God but was created by God and thus was inferior to him."[124] Arianism was popular because "by making Christ younger and lower than God it brought him nearer to us – indeed it tended to level him into a mere good man ..."[125] Forster was of the view that religion should deal with genuinely spiritual concerns and should not dabble in doctrinal absurdities. He is quite disgusted with the Christian missions and wrote : "I should be grieviously sorry if all the world became Christians".[126] He admires the Alexandrian philosophy of religion for its serious flirtation with the idea of love. He is eager and very enthused at the prospect of a loving god, the god who loves and not the god who judges.

A highly institutionalised and rigidly organised Christianity frightened Forster and won him over to the milder, more humane, oriental versions of Christianity. He would like to recognize God as "a man of my own sort" living in the sky and that "the Kingdom of God is within us." He at times flirted with the idea of "a purely humanistic religion, personal, fraternal and sentimental."[127] He would be thrilled if he could reconstruct the idea of Christ "as the young carpenter who would smoke a pipe with me in his off time and be more frightfully kind."[128] Forster was drawn to the real oriental religions, namely, Islam and Hinduism. As was his wont he arrived at them through oriental friends whom he had

---

124. "Arianism" in New Standard Encyclopedia Vol. 2 (Standard Educational Corporation, Chicago,) p. A558.
125. Advani R. P.81 – quoted from 'St.Athanasius' in Pharos and Pharillon.
126. Letter to Malcolm Darling (26 June 1910) Selected Letters 1. P – 109.
127. Furbank, p. 162
128. Ibid, p. 163.

strongly decided to like. Forster's intuitive sympathy with, not outright admiration of, Islam is due to his friendship with Syed Ross Masood and other Muslims. Masood woke him up out of his suburban and academic life and showed him new horizons and a new civilization and released him from that negativity and defeatism with which he was infected. He got an intuitive insight into the so called Oriental states and felt their confusion because "to them personal relations come first." He came to India because he was "drawn there by friendship and imagination." He was ready and was eager to accept "whatever the country might offer." Islam's stress on personal relationship and the brotherhood of man further endeared itself to the humanist in Forster to whom people mattered first, feelings for them next, and systems, very little. He loved India and on his very first visit he wanted to know and discover the Indians. Unlike the Anglo-Indian imperialists Forster did not think about the Indians as a problem. He was very pleased with himself among Masood's friends and "congratulated himself on landing so promptly in the midst of Indian life." Masood was a blazing Muslim patriot and Forster, when he fell in love with Masood, fell in love with Islam too. His Muslim friends were full of praise for him and one of them declared that "if more Englishmen were like him all would be well with the world." His love for Islam evolved from his love for the Muslims. While in the midst of a *Nautch* appreciating and appraising the dancers, Forster felt that he "could easily 'lapse' into an oriental."[129] It was a discovery for him, the discovery that emotion can arrive through the harsh voice and music, through the thundering drum-beats and through the plaintive posture of the

129. Ibid, pp 222 – 229.

scarlet clad singer. The Islamic tenets of Equality and Peace and the absence in it of priestly hierarchy also appeal to Forster. The mosques do not hold out any illusion of sanctity other than "what is conferred by the presence of the devout."[130] The central Islamic tenet that "there is no God but God and that even Mohammad is but the Prophet of God" which Forster found architecturally enshrined within the mosque moves him to a strange "sense of arrival".[131] During his first visit he keenly experienced and enjoyed the 'gentle oriental confusion', took in the "muddle" that India presented to him, was convinced that "India attracts affinities", and "plunged deep into the East". While at Mount Abu visiting the Jain temples, observing the statues of the Tirthankaras, the founders of the Jain religion, Forster commented: "the Indian gods have an air of confabulation; they were talking just before one walked in."[132] Forster's positive attitude towards India and the Indians made him appreciate the religions and customs of India as part of the muddle. He came to India as a friend of the Indians whom he knew and loved in England. He did not come as a collector of ideas or as a curious tourist, but as an ardent explorer who is ever ready to discover and admire. He did not have faith in any god, but his enlightened paganism and his faith in human goodness made India and the Indians, its many gods and religions, dear to him. He was a cheerful agnostic adrift in the land of religions. It was in this spirit that Forster made his observations on Hinduism. He admired Hinduism because it encourages fun

---

130. 'The Mosque' in Abinger Harvest, p
131. 'The Last of Abinger', TCD, p.
132. Furbank, pp 250 – 252.

and playfulness. It stresses the diversity as well as the unity of individuals. It mirrors the heterogeneous as well as the composite culture of India and abundantly contributes to the 'muddle' which Forster adores. He cherishes Hinduism as a constitutive factor of his inspirational metaphor for life, India. Krishna is Forster's symbol of Hinduism and also his favourite god. Krishna is a fun-loving god as well as a champion of truly human values, a god of man, the *Narayana* of the *Nara*. He promptly enlists Krishna in his aristocracy of "the considerate, the sensitive and the plucky." However Forster values Hinduism not as a superior way of worship but as a more attractive and human way of life. It is his seemingly wayward, playfully agnostic, but seriously humanistic temperament which draws him to Hindu culture. His is no philosophical quest for religion, but a liberal soul's quest for spirituality and in India and her many faiths he found abundant pastures that are greener than the Western Christian cultures. He discovered in Hinduism a celebration of life and its positive values whereas doctrinaire Christianity dwells on man's sinful nature, his desperate need for redemption and drowns itself in abstractions, renunciation and otherworldliness. Hinduism promotes life but Christianity seeks to correct and improve life. Forster is sceptical of the latter because "it is useless trying to touch anything you don't want to touch: that is why all attempts to 'improve' people are in vain."[133]

133. Ibid, p. 34. Letter to Edward Carpenter, 23 April 1917.

Forster's world-view, an eclectic mixture of many influences, has contributed significantly to the stance he takes as a literary critic. This comprehensive world-view has enabled him to take a genial, tolerant and sympathetic view of literature, litterateurs and their problems as we shall see in the forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER THREE : QUEST FOR 'DIAGONALS' – FORSTER'S THEORY OF ART.

"Not looking at art leads to one goal only. Looking at it leads to so many."[1]

This remark of Forster can be used as a starting point for a study of his views on Art and its function. The one goal sans art is the pragmatist materialist's dream and it is also the goal cherished by the mystic-ascetic's vision, the infamous 'single vision' from which Forster prays for deliverance. It is not only the beast's heaven, but the monk's paradise as well. Margaret Schlegel wanted the death of both the beast and the monk in order to advance the claim of love and show it in its true heights.[2] This goal reflects the total blindness to the light of life brought about by seeing only the beastly or only the monkish values of life. This is a unicorn-attitude which will destroy everything that makes this life and this world beautiful by keeping the beast a beast forever, and the monk, a monk for ever. It promotes a milieu in which fragmented people live fragmented lives. Whereas "Looking at" art leads to variety and multiplicity. It provides expansion of one's spiritual vision and widening of one's horizons. It signifies the breaking loose of one's chains into which man was born millions of years ago. It symbolizes humanity's stepping out of Plato's Cave of darkness into the pure ethereal light of civilization. Looking at art gives colour to one's dreams if one has

---

1. "Not Looking at Pictures", TCD, p. 140.
2. Howards End, p.

dreams, and induces one to dream, when one has no dreams. The prospect of looking at art teaches one to get oneself "out of the way a little, and to be more receptive".[3] This tendency to soft-peddle and be out of the way for the sake of being "receptive" characterizes Forster's criticism of the arts and literature. This critical attitude is a "combination of courage and modesty" which Forster himself prescribes for any one who wants to look at the pictures at the galleries. This attitude expresses the liberal humanist attitude of tolerance rather than a dogmatic, isolated critical attitude. It is a simple attitude of keeping one's eyes and ears open and speaking out in a disinterested spirit with no ulterior motive whatsoever. This attitude is flexible and it cannot be easily defined in terms of any established system. Nor is Forster interested in formulating any system of doctrine of art. But his focus on multivalence which art effects – looking at art leads to so many goals – seems to be in consonance with the postmodern trend which rejects the principle of univalence in architecture, art and culture. In Postmodern theory univalence and identity are replaced by the principles of multivalence or plurality; and this brings about a shift from heroic individuality to collaborative authorship.[4] Thus Forster seems to have unconsciously pioneered the cause of the anti-universalist spirit of postmodernism. Postmodern theory reproduces everywhere, and everywhere with increased allure and potency, the story of the dissolution of the universal perspective. The problem faced by postmodernist theory is how to speak of and bring plurality into being, in a way that it does not itself limit and neutralize that plurality. Forster's view of art also

3. "Not Looking at Pictures", TCD, p. 140.
4. *Steven Connor, p. 75.*

stresses the essential plurality of the nature of reality and everywhere he breaks down universalist, absolutist and totalitarian tendencies and trends. A general survey of the origin of Aesthetics and its evolution down the different intellectual eras of history will be useful in establishing its essentially pluralist nature.

Aesthetics is a branch of Philosophy concerned with the essence and perception of beauty and ugliness. It also deals with the question of whether such qualities are objectively present in the things they appear to qualify, or whether they exist only in the mind of the individual; hence, whether objects are perceived by a particular mode, the aesthetic mode, or whether instead the objects have, in themselves, special qualities—aesthetic qualities. This branch of Philosophy also discusses the difference between the beautiful and the sublime. *Criticism* and the *psychology of Art*, although they are independent disciplines, are related to aesthetics. The psychology of art is concerned with such elements of the arts as human responses to color, sound, line, form, and words and with the ways in which the emotions condition such responses. Criticism confines itself to particular works of art, analyzing their structures, meanings, and problems, comparing them with other works, and evaluating them.

The German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten introduced the term aesthetics in 1753,[5] but the study of the nature of beauty had been

---

5. Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb (1714-62), German philosopher. Baumgarten, the first modern philosopher to approach the question of beauty systematically, introduced the term

pursued for centuries. In the past it was chiefly a subject for philosophers. Since the 19th century, artists also have contributed their views.

The first aesthetic theory of any scope is that of Plato, who believed that reality consists of archetypes, or forms, beyond human sensation, which are the models for all things that exist in human experience. The objects of such experience are examples, or imitations, of those forms. The philosopher tries to reason from the object experienced to the reality it imitates; the artist copies the experienced object, or uses it as a model for the work. Thus, the artist's work is an imitation of an imitation. Plato's thinking had a marked ascetic strain. In his *Republic,* Plato went so far as to banish some types of artists from his ideal society because he thought their work encouraged immorality or portrayed base characters, and that certain musical compositions caused laziness or incited people to immoderate actions. Aristotle also spoke of art as imitation, but not in the Platonic sense. One could imitate "things as they ought to be," he wrote, and "art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish." The artist separates the form from the matter of some objects of experience, such as the human body or a tree, and imposes that form on another matter, such as canvas or marble. Thus, imitation is not just copying an original model, nor is it devising a symbol for the original; rather, it is a particular representation of an aspect of things, and each work is an imitation of the universal whole.

---

aesthetics and defined the experience of beauty as the sensory recognition of perfection. In 1750-58 he issued two volumes of his Esthetics. He also wrote Ethics (1740), Natural Law (1765), and General Philosophy (1770). – (Adapted from Infopedia)

Aesthetics was inseparable from morality and politics for both Aristotle and Plato. The former wrote about music in his *Politics,* maintaining that art affects human character, and hence the social order. Because Aristotle held that happiness is the aim of life, he believed that the major function of art is to provide human satisfaction. In the *Poetics,* his great work on the principles of drama, Aristotle argued that tragedy so stimulates the emotions of pity and fear, which he considered morbid and unhealthy, that by the end of the play the spectator is purged of them. This catharsis makes the audience psychologically healthier and thus more capable of happiness. Neoclassical drama since the 17th century has been greatly influenced by Aristotle's *Poetics.* The works of the French dramatists Jean Baptiste Racine[6], Pierre Corneille[7] and Moliere[8] in particular, advocate its doctrine of the three unities: time, place, and action. This concept dominated literary theories up to the 19th century.

The 3rd-century philosopher Plotinus, born in Egypt and trained in philosophy at Alexandria, although a Neoplatonist, gave greater importance to art than did Plato. In Plotinus's view, art reveals the form of an object more

---

6. Racine, Jean Baptiste (1639-99), French dramatist, considered the greatest writer of French classical tragedy. Racine was born Dec. 22, 1639, in La FerteMilon. The intellectual, rigorously moralistic Jansenist philosophy became one of the greatest influences in Racine's life. Another influence was the Greek and Latin classics. (Ibid)
7. Corneille, Pierre (1606-84), French dramatist, whose plays are masterpieces of classical French literature. Corneille was born on June 8, 1606, in Rouen, Normandy. His finest tragedies, after Le Cid, are Horace (1640), Cinna (1641), and Polyeucte (1643), all set in ancient Rome. These four plays, imbued with strength, dignity, and elegance, created the standards of French tragedy, which (Adapted from Infopedia)
8. Molière, pseudonym of Jean Baptiste Pouquelin (1622-73), French dramatist, and one of the greatest of all writers of comedies. His universal comic types still delight audiences. Molière was born in Paris on January 15, 1622. In 1643 he joined a theatrical company established by the Bėjarts, a family of professional actors. (Adapted from "Moliere", by Robert J. Clements, in MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia)

clearly than ordinary experience does, and it raises the soul to contemplation of the universal. According to Plotinus, the highest moments of life are mystical, which is to say that the soul is united, in the world of forms, with the divine, which Plotinus spoke of as "the One." Aesthetic experience comes closest to mystical experience, for one loses oneself while contemplating the aesthetic object.

Art in the Middle Ages was primarily an expression of religion, with an aesthetic principle based largely on Neoplatonism. During the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries, art became more secular, and its aesthetics were classical rather than religious. The great impetus to aesthetic thought in the modern world occurred in Germany during the 18th century. The German critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing[9] in his *Laokoon* (1766), argued that art is self-limiting and reaches its height only when these limitations are recognized. As a critic Lessing is noted for his writings on drama, literature, art, archaeology, and theology. His *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767-68; trans. 1879) is one of the earliest modern treatises on the craft of the playwright. His literary criticism is best represented by the essays in *Briefe;* by the essay on the fable that forms the preface to *Fabeln* (3 vol., 1759); and by *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Contributions to History and Literature, 1773-81). The German critic and

9. Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim (1729-81), German dramatist and critic, who was one of the leaders of the Enlightenment. Lessing was born January 22, 1729, in Kamenz. From 1748 to 1755 he lived in Berlin, where he was a drama and literary critic and wrote several plays, including *Der Freigeist* (The Freethinker, 1749) and *Die Juden* (The Jews, 1749). –Adapted from MS Encarta Encyclopedia.)

classical archaeologist Johann Joachim Winklemann[10] maintained that, in accordance with the ancient Greeks, the best art is impersonal, expressing ideal proportion and balance rather than its creator's individuality. The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte[11] considered beauty a moral virtue. The artist creates a world in which beauty, as much as truth, is an end, foreshadowing that absolute freedom which is the goal of the human will. For Fichte, art is individual, not social, but it fulfills a great human purpose.

The 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant[12] was concerned with judgments of taste. Objects are judged beautiful, he proposed, when they satisfy a disinterested desire: one that does not involve personal interests or needs. It follows from this that beautiful objects have no specific purpose and that judgments of beauty are not expressions of mere personal preference but are universal. Although one cannot be certain that others will be satisfied by objects he or she judges to be beautiful, one can at least say that others ought to be satisfied. The basis for one's response to beauty exists in the structure of

---

10. Winckelmann, Johann Joachim (1717-68), German classical archaeologist and art historian, born in Stendal, and educated at the University of Halle. In 1755 he published his first major work, an essay entitled *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture). – Adapted from MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
11. Fichte, Johann Gottlieb (1762-1814), German philosopher and educator, proponent of an idealist theory of reality and moral action. Fichte was born on May 19, 1762, at Rammenau in Saxony. He anonymously published an essay Critique of All Revelation (1792; trans. 1978). Fichte's works include The Science of Knowledge (1794; trans. 1970), The Science of Rights (1796; trans. 1869), The Science of Ethics as Based on the Science of Knowledge (1798; trans. 1907), The Vocation of Man (1800; trans. 1956), and Addresses to the German Nation (1808; trans. 1922). – Adapted from Infopedia.
12. Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804), German philosopher, considered by many the most influential thinker of modern times. He was born in Konigsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia), April 22, 1724. – Infopedia.

one's mind. Art should give the same disinterested satisfaction as natural beauty. Paradoxically, art can accomplish one thing nature cannot. It can offer ugliness and beauty in one object. A fine painting of an ugly face is still beautiful.

According to the 19th-century German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel,[13] art, religion, and philosophy are the bases of the highest spiritual development. Beauty in nature is everything that the human spirit finds pleasing and congenial to the exercise of spiritual and intellectual freedom. Certain things in nature can be made more congenial and pleasing, and it is these natural objects that are reorganized by art to satisfy aesthetic demands. Another German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer[14] believed that the forms of the universe, like the eternal Platonic forms, exist beyond the worlds of experience, and that aesthetic satisfaction is achieved by contemplating them for their own sakes, as a means of escaping the painful world of daily experience.

Fichte, Kant, and Hegel are in a direct line of development. Schopenhauer attacked Hegel but was influenced by Kant's view of disinterested contemplation. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzche[15] followed

---

13. Hegel, G(eorg) W(ilhelm) F(riedrich) (1770-1831), German idealist philosopher, who became one of the most influential thinkers of the 19th century. Hegel was born in Stuttgart on August 27, 1770.
14. Schopenhauer, Arthur (1788-1860), German philosopher, who is known for his philosophy of pessimism. Born in Danzig (now GdaNsk, Poland), Feb. 22, 1788 – Infopedia.
15. Nietzsche, Friedrich (Wilhelm) (1844-1900), German philosopher, poet, and classical philologist, who became one of the most provocative and influential thinkers of the 19th century. Nietzche was born on Oct. 15, 1844, in Rocken, Prussia. – Infopedia.

Schopenhauer at first, then disagreed with him. Nietzsche concurred that life is tragic, but thought that this should not preclude acceptance of the tragic with joyous affirmation, the full realization of which is art. Art confronts the terrors of the universe and is therefore only for the strong. Art can transform any experience into beauty, and by so doing transforms its horrors in such a way that they may be contemplated with enjoyment.

Although much modern aesthetics is rooted in German thought, German thinking was subject to other Western influences. Lessing, a founder of German romanticism, was influenced by the aesthetic writings of the British statesman Edmund Burke.[16]

Traditional aesthetics in the 18th and 19th centuries was dominated by the concept of art as imitation of nature. Novelists such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens in England and dramatists such as Carlo Goldoni[17] in Italy and Alexandre Dumas *fils* (the son of Alexandre Dumas *père*) in France presented realistic accounts of middle-class life. Painters, whether neoclassical, such as Jean Auguste-Dominique-Ingres,[18] romantic, such as Eugene Delacroix,[19] or

---

16. Burke, Edmund (1729-97), British statesman and orator, who championed many human rights causes and brought attention to them through his eloquent speeches. Burke was born in Dublin and educated at Trinity College. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
17. Goldoni, Carlo (1707-93), Italian playwright, considered the founder of modern Italian comedy. He was born in Venice. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
18. Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique (1780-1867), French painter, who was a leading figure in the neoclassical movement. Ingres was born in Montauban, France, the son of an unsuccessful sculptor and painter. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
19. Delacroix, (Ferdinand Victor) Eugène (1798-1863), French painter, whose work exemplified 19th-century romanticism, and whose influence extended to the impressionists. Delacroix

realist, such as Gustave Courbet,[20] rendered their subjects with careful attention to life-like detail.

In traditional aesthetics it was also frequently assumed that art objects are useful as well as beautiful. Paintings might commemorate historical events or encourage morality. Music might inspire piety or patriotism. Drama, especially in the hands of Dumas and the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen,[21] might serve to criticize society and so lead to reform.

In the 19th century, however, avant-garde concepts of aesthetics began to challenge traditional views. The change was particularly evident in painting. French impressionists, such as Claude Monet,[22] denounced academic painters for depicting what they thought they should see rather than what they actually saw—that is, surfaces of many colours and wavering forms caused by the distorting play of light and shadow as the sun moves.

---

was born on April 26, 1798, at Charenton-Saint Maurice, and he studied under the French painter Pierre Guérin. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

20. Courbet, (Jean Désiré) Gustave (1819-1877), influential and prolific French painter who founded the mid-19th-century art movement called realism. Courbet, a farmer's son, was born June 10, 1819, in Ornans. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
21. Ibsen, Henrik Johan (1828-1906), Norwegian dramatist, whose well-constructed plays dealing realistically with psychological and social problems won him recognition as the father of modern drama. Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, and schooled in Skien. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
22. Monet, Claude Oscar (1840-1926), French impressionist painter, who brought the study of the transient effects of natural light to its most refined expression. Monet was born on November 14, 1840, in Paris. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

In the late 19th century, post-impressionists such as Paul Cezanne[23] Paul Gaugin[24] and Vincent van Gogh were more concerned with the structure of a painting and with expressing their own psyche than with representing objects in the world of nature. In the early 20th century this structural interest was developed further by cubist painters such as Pablo Picasso,[25] and the expressionist concern was reflected in the work of Henri Mattise and other Fauves and by the German expressionists such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.[26] The literary aspects of expressionism can be seen in the plays of August Strindberg,[27] and Frank Wedekind.[28]

Closely connected with these relatively nonrepresentational approaches to art was the principle of "***art for art's sake***," which was derived from Kant's view that art has its own reason for being. The phrase was first used by the French philosopher Victor Cousin, who, believing that no single philosophical system is entirely correct, combined aspects of idealism, materialism, mysticism, and

---

23. Cèzanne, Paul (1839-1906), French painter, often called the father of modern art, who strove to develop an ideal synthesis of naturalistic representation, personal expression, and abstract pictorial order. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
24. Gauguin, (Eugène Henri) Paul (1848-1903), French postimpressionist painter, whose lush color, flat two-dimensional forms, and subject matter helped form the basis of modern art. Gauguin was born in Paris on June 7, 1848,
25. Picasso, Pablo Ruiz y (1881-1973), Spanish painter and sculptor, generally considered the greatest artist of the 20th century. He was unique as an inventor of forms, as an innovator of styles and techniques, as a master of various media, and as one of the most prolific artists in history. He created more than 20,000 works. Born in Malaga on Oct. 25, 1881, Picasso was the son of Jose Ruiz Blasco (1840-1913), an art teacher, and Maria Picasso y Lopez (1855-1939) – Infopedia.
26. Kirchner, Ernst Ludwig (1880-1938), German painter, who was one of the leading practitioners of expressionism (q.v.). – Infopedia.
27. Strindberg, (Johan) August (1849-1912), Swedish dramatist, who is often considered the greatest figure in Swedish literature. Strindberg was born in Stockholm on Jan. 22, 1849,
28. Wedekiind, Frank (1864-1918), German playwright, whose experiments with unusual themes and stage effects made him an important forerunner of expressionism in Germany. He was born in Hannover.

skepticism into an eclectic system of his own in 1818.[29] This doctrine, sometimes called aestheticism, was espoused in England by the critic Walter Horatio Pater,[30] by the Pre-Raphaelite painters, and by the expatriate American painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler.[31] In France it was the credo of such symbolist poets as Charles Baudelaire.[32] The "art for art's sake" principle underlies most of avant-garde Western art of the 20th century.

Four philosophers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries have been the primary influences on present-day aesthetics. In France Henri Bergson[33] defined science as the use of intelligence to create a system of symbols that supposedly describes reality but actually falsifies it. Art, however, is based on intuition, which is a direct apprehension of reality unmediated by thought. Thus art cuts through conventional symbols and beliefs about people, life, and society and confronts one with reality itself.

---

29. Cousin, Victor (1792-1867), French philosopher and educator, regarded as the founder of the modern philosophical school of eclecticism. He was born in Paris, and educated at the École Normale, University of Paris. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
30. Pater, Walter Horatio (1839-1894), English essayist and critic, born in London, and educated at the University of Oxford. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
31. Whistler, James Abbott McNeill (1834-1903), American painter and etcher, who assimilated Japanese art styles, made technical innovations, and championed modern art. Many regard him as preeminent among etchers. Whistler was born on July 10, 1834, in Lowell, Massachusetts. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
32. Baudelaire, Charles-Pierre (1821-1867). French poet. Successful as art critic and as translator of tales of Edgar Allen Poe. Regarded as the earliest and finest poet of modernism in French, harbinger of later Symbolists. – Infopedia.
33. Bergson, Henri-Louis (1859-1941). French philosopher. Developed a humanistic philosophy of process to counter positivism; writing notable for grace and lucidity. – Infopedia.

In Italy the philosopher and historian Benedetto Croce[34] also exalted intuition, but he considered it the immediate awareness of an object that somehow gives that object form. It is the apprehension of things before one reflects about them. Works of art are the expression, in material form, of such intuitions; but beauty and ugliness are not qualities of the works of art but qualities of the spirit expressed intuitively in these works of art.

The American philosopher and poet George Santayana[35] argued that when one takes pleasure in a thing the pleasure may be regarded as a quality of the thing itself, rather than as a subjective response to it. Just as one may characterize some human act as good in itself, instead of calling it good merely because one approves it, so one may say that some object is beautiful, not merely that one's aesthetic delight in its color and form leads one to call it beautiful.

John Dewey,[36] the American educator and philosopher, viewed human experience as disconnected, fragmentary, full of beginnings without conclusions, or as experiences deliberately manipulated as means to ends. Those exceptional experiences that flow from their beginnings to

---

34. Croce, Benedetto (1866-1952), Italian philosopher, historian, and political leader, born at Pescasseroli, Aquila, and educated in Roman Catholic schools and at the University of Rome. – Infopedia.
35. Santayana, George (1863-1952), American philosopher, poet, and novelist, whose wide-ranging philosophical speculation was expressed in a style of great literary distinction. Santayana was born in Madrid, Spain, December 16, 1863. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
36. Dewey, John (1859-1952), American philosopher, psychologist, and educator. Born in Burlington, Vt., - Infopedia.

consummations are aesthetic. Aesthetic experience is enjoyment for its own sake, is complete and self-contained, and is terminal, not merely instrumental to other purposes.[37]

Though he was sensitive to all these theorizings of art and criticism, Forster did not approve any theoretical approach to art. He is not a systematic critic. But he does have a loose framework of opinions on the subject of Art and the function of art in the modern world. His popular essays, articles and reviews "touch upon theory", but he himself did not "fashion any firm set of standards."[38] Of all the orders he sees in the modern age, Forster most values the ***Aesthetic Order***. He is mildly disappointed by the ***Socio-Politicial Order*** which he considers as 'relative disorder. He is baffled by the ***Astronomical Order*** which is questioned by Science and the Theory of Relativity. He is almost appalled by the ***Religious or Divine Order*** which has reasonably contributed to the modern faithlessness and vulgarity. Great epochs and grand programmes, serious planning and radical reforms, by themselves, would not necessarily lead to human or cosmic redemption:

> Programmes mean pogroms. Look to the rose or the toad or, if you think them more significant, look to art or literature. There, in the useless, lies our scrap of salvation.[39]

---

37. "Aesthetics," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia.* © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
38. Frederick P.W. McDowell, "E.M.Forster's Theory of Literature", Criticism, a Quarterly for Literature, Vol. VIII, No. 1 Winter 1966. P. 19.
39. "George Orwell", TCD, p. 70.

This hesitant reliance on the "useless" springs from Forster's sensitive appraisal of the age and of the problem how a writer, "who also cares for men and women and for the countryside, must be feeling in the world today", - "uncomfortable", "miserable and indignant". Forster's critique of programme is a criticism of modernism. According to Steven Connor, "what holds modernism together in art is a programme or ideology, rather than any particular, identifiable form of practice; correspondingly, what underlies debate about postmodernism is a shift in this programme." Artistic modernism is thus defined at some point between practice and theory whereas postmodernism makes this interrelationship more complex.[40] Forster's distrust of programmes and unilateral ideology somehow links him to the contemporary postmodern position though he himself was not aware of this trend. He bravely faces the problem and also in the process gives a provisional definition of the role of art:

> What ought the writer, the artist, to dowhen faced by the Challenge of our Time? Briefly, he ought to express what he wants and not what he is told to express by the planning authorities. He ought to impose a discipline on himself rather than accept one from outside. And that discipline may be *aesthetic*, rather than social or moral; he may wish to practise art for art's sake. That phrase .... indicates that art is a self-contained harmony. Art is valuable not because it is educational (though it may be), not because it is recreative (though it may be), not because everyone enjoys it (for everybody does not), not even because it has to do with beauty. It is valuable because it has to do with order, and creates little worlds of its own, possessing internal harmony, in the bosom of this

40. Connor, op.cit., p. 81.

> disordered planet. ... It is the activity which brought man out of original darkness and differentiates him from the beasts...(italics mine)[41]

This autonomous view of art has strong resemblance to modern art theorist's formulations. Clement Greenberg, the American art theorist and an influential legislator of artistic modernism, is of the opinion that art is to be understood primarily "not as an expression of the turbulence of the new technological world, nor as a movement of political renewal, nor again as a return to 'primitive' truths about the function of art, but as nothing less than art's discovery of itself, as form, subject and practice."[42] Clive Bell argued for the radical separateness of the aesthetic from life and says:

> What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? ... significant form... lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life.[43]

Forster prescribes the practice of art for the sake of leading the modern man out of "the darkness of today." This conviction is the outcome of an artist-critic's survey of the post war modern scene. The Modern instruments of civilization, - Politics, Governments, Ideologies, Reforms, Economy and Religion, - have all failed to bring order to the modern times. In his essay, '*Art for Art's Sake*', Forster believes this much abused and misused concept as having great importance,

---

41. "Challenge of Our Time", TCD, 68.
42. Connor, op.cit., p. 81.
43. 'The Aesthetic Hypothesis'(1914) in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, ed, Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (London: Harper and Row open University press, 1982), p. 68.

"eternal importance". But he does not buy the idea that only art matters. Art is "merely one of the things that matter". Going into the specific meaning of Art for Art's sake, he cites Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, which, besides being valuable on many other counts, "is ... a world of its own, created by Shakespeare and existing by virtue of its own poetry." Thus we can think of a "*Macbeth* for *Macbeth's* sake." Evolving thus from a particular example, Forster arrives at the idea of art as autonomous, and, order as internal :

> A work of art - ... is a self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator. It has internal order. It may have external form. .... Order, I suggest, is something evolved from within , not something imposed from without; it is an internal stability, a vital harmony, and in the social and political category it has never existed except for the convenience of historians.[44]

Forster is nearly pessimistic while surveying the socio-political scene of the modern age. He is convinced that "the past is really a series of disorders" which in spite of scientific discoveries and human effort, still remain disorder. As an artist, therefore, he hopes for a disorder which will be more beneficial to artists than the present order which has miserably failed to provide artists with fuller and deeper inspiration, better material conditions and more self-respect. Forster's imaginative apprehension of the crisis of modern culture and his view of art in its relation to culture connects him thematically to the problem of postmodernism which is at one and the same time an aesthetic and a political one. His critical

---

44. "Art for Art's Sake", TCD, pp. 97 – 98.

formulations regarding art are not isolated ones but are firmly founded in his socio-political standpoint and they articulate his visions of history. They are mildly avant-garde and are totally free of 'camp' sarcasm. He nostalgically cherishes the "advantageous disorders in the past" like the ancient Athens, Renaissance Italy, 18th Century France, cultural interludes of Persia and China, and he is nearly desperate that peace and the promised order of the League of Nations did not materialize due to "the implacable offensive of Science", which through its discoveries and the applications of those discoveries destroyed "the arrangements which were based on more elementary discoveries." Exploiting men's preference for power over knowledge, Science has pushed mankind's destiny too dangerously near the precipice to make any stable "order based on vital harmony" a near possibility. He sums up the instability of the human predicament quite prophetically :

> Science ... gave us the internal combustion engine, and before we had digested and assimilated it with terrible pain into our social system, she harnessed the atom, and destroyed any new order that seemed to be evolving. How can man get into harmony with his surroundings when he is constantly altering them?[45]

Being placed in this precarious predicament, Forster says that the human race can have a meaningful future only in "apathy, uninventiveness, and inertia", and prescribes "Universal Exhaustion" for facilitating a "Change of Heart" which is the primal need of the hour. This semi-utopian attitude may triumph where reckless

---

45. Ibid. p. 98.

industry, inexorable inventiveness and mad competition have failed. This uncertain optimism develops into a strong conviction that "order in daily life and in history, order in the social and political category, is unattainable under our present psychology." Hence the Forsterian hope of an aesthetic order, "the order which an artist can create in his own work". This high hope in a work of art, which is a "unique product", which is "the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony", defines Forster's view of art as the modern means of human salvation. "History develops" and decays, he says in his Aspects of the Novel, but "Art stands still"; [46] it "stands by itself".

> Ancient Athens made a mess – but the *Antigone* stands up, Renaissance Rome made a mess – but the ceiling of the Sistine got painted, James 1 made a mess – but there was *Macbeth*, Louis XIV – but there was *Phedre*.[47]

This humanist-artistic counter-positing of Art against the confusions of History, is Forster's direct affront to the nineteenth century conception of the artist as an "outsider", a "Bohemian" full of "idiosyncrasy and waywardness". It is also a dig at the attitude of the modern age which treats the artist as a "bright government advertiser... friendly and matey with his fellow citizens", who can be maintained on state subsidy and be made to work on orders from the authorities. An artist thus activated and "seduced by mateyness", according to Forster, will have "no traceable connexion with the creative impulse". He is no more a creator of order but a contributor or, to use a modern commercial term, an order- supplier to the

---

46. Aspects of the Novel, p.

present disorder. A true artist on the other hand, "does not consider ... what his relations with the society may be" and is "aware of something more important ... namely the invitation to invent, to create order". He may be marginalized in the modern milieu of Science and may be referred to by such terms as "the Bohemian, the outsider, the partisan, the rat" and Forster metaphorically describes his preference to remain in such a group :

> It may not be dignified to be a rat, but many of the ships are sinking, which is not dignified either – the officials did not build them properly. Myself, I would sooner be ***a swimming rat than be a sinking ship*** – at all events I can look around me for a little longer - ....[48]

This instinct for looking around him reveals the avant-garde in Forster and it leads him to describe "the various beautiful and interesting objects which men have made in the past and handed down" to the present generation which in its turn is hoping to hand on to the next, and, which he summarily calls 'Culture.' The cultural stuff, which disgustingly occupies a lot of room and time, is largely ignored and is on the verge of being jettisoned in a new world "which has been wiped clean by science and cannot profit by tradition."[49] It is excess baggage in a "civilization of luggage"[50], which has been taught to be competitive and to travel light. Those who carry it along have to pay extra. Forster is quite alarmed at the hostility shown to it in the modern times. It has been derisively cliched as "the old stuff" which "is not merely books, pictures and music, but the power to enjoy and

47. Art for Art's Sake, TCD, pp. 98 – 100.
48. "Art for Art's Sake", TCD, pp. 100 – 101.
49. "Does Culture Matter?", TCD, p. 108.

understand them". This power is acquired through tradition and is the same power which Dante placed along with "wisdom and love of God" that made "the gates of Hell." In spite of the ability of the trained imagination to reach the essential, Forster is anguished at the disappearance of culture symptomatically reflected in the giving up of Dante by the moderns:

> If they are giving him up it is a sign that they are throwing culture overboard, owing to the roughness of the water, and will reach the farther bank sans Dante sans Shakespeare and sans everything. ... on that farther bank .... work and play will be split; the work will be mechanical and the play frivolous. If you drop tradition and culture you lose your chance of connecting work and play and creating a life which is all of a piece. .... Life on that farther bank might not be a nightmare, but some of us would prefer the sleep that has no dream.[51]

Forster is not surprised at the rarity of cultivated persons who "are a drop of ink in the ocean." Culture is not a defense from the vulgarities of the mob nor is it a ladder to climb up to aristocracy, but "the growth of the idea of enjoyment." He notices that no one clamours for culture, and describes the contemporary attitude to this "forbidding thing":

> People today are either indifferent to the aesthetic products of the past (that is the position both of the industrial magnate and of the trade unionist) or else (the Communist position) they are suspicious of them, and decline to receive them until they have been disinfected in Moscow.

---

50. Howards End, p.
51. "Does Culture Matter?", TCD, 110 – 11.

> In England, still the abode of private enterprise, indifference predominates.[52]

It is against this indifference that Forster formulated his critical pronouncements. He is not interested in any theory and is suspicious of any theory of art.

> If we wheel up an aesthetic theory – the best attainable, and there are excellent ones – if we wheel it up and apply it with its measuring rods and pliers and forceps, its calipers and catheters to (works of art), we are visited at once by a sense of the grotesque.[53]

In spite of this attitude to theory Forster's understanding of the modern times is in perfect agreement with what postmodern theory has formulated about the modern condition. It readily admits to a "certain exhaustion, diminution or decay." Many versions of the postmodern stress a dominant sense of decline. Irving Howe sees it as a failure of nerve, intelligence and commitment. Arnold Toynbee, reportedly the first to use the term, 'Post-Modern', uses it to characterize the decline of Western civilization into irrationality and relativism since the 1870s.[54] This attitude to aesthetic theorizing is in direct contrast with Mathew Arnold's 'Touchstone-theory.' Arnold in his compulsiveness to wheel up an aesthetic theory and with his obsession with intellectual idealism, "a sense for the best, the really excellent," put up the classical authors and their works as criteria for judging the worth of a new work of literature. He quotes selected lines from "the

---

52. "Does Culture Matter", TCD, pp. 111 – 12.
53. "The Raison D'etre of Criticism in the Arts", TCD, p. 123.

great masters" and proposes to apply them as "an infallible touchstone for the presence or absence of high poetic quality".[55] His choices are M.Vitet, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. The examples from these masters are "enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgements about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimate of it, to conduct us to a real estimate."[56] The idea of "a real estimate" borders on the "grotesque". To avoid this dangerous sense of the grotesque which a formal serious criticism brings about, Forster proposes courage and sincerity while appreciating works of art. Courage is required to come to terms with the kind of truth which a work of art seems to suggest, and, sincerity, to acknowledge that the arts do surprise and it is good to be surprised. It is in the essence of art to surprise and to influence.

> A work of art is a curious object. Isn't it infectious? Unlike machinery, hasn't it the power of transforming the person who encounters it towards the condition of the person who created it? .... We – we the beholders or listeners or whatever we are – undergo a change a change analogous to creation. We are rapt into a region near to that where the artist worked, and like him when we return to earth we feel surprised.[57]

According to Forster, a work of art calls us out of ourselves and enkindles us in the mental and spiritual state of the artist. It makes us enter into "an unusual state" which can be entered only "through love." Critical faculty, training and knowledge cannot help us to this state of love for art and of cooperation with the

---

54. Steven Connor, Postmodernist Culture An Introduction to theories of the Contemporary, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers,, 1984) P.65
55. "The Study of Poetry", The Norton Anthology of English Literature (1987), p. 2174.
56. "The Study of Poetry", The Norton Anthology, p. 2176.
57. "The Raison D'etre of Criticism in the Arts", TCD, p. 124.

creator of arts. This suggests that any appreciation of art is possible only when there is love for the art, and this love is impossible without the desire to enjoy a work of art. Critics and criticism can only give general preparation to appreciate a work of art. They help us to be sensitive and receptive to works of art just as good education and training make us polite, tolerant and considerate to our fellow men. But art calls for deeper emotions of affection, imaginative sympathy and love for its own appreciation. It is said that the road is never too long when it leads to the home of a loved one, so it is with a work of art. The world is never too strange if it is created by the art or the artist that we love. We are immediately admitted to this world, to the gates of heaven, whereas the great ones with great minds, but who never loved, are left behind "pottering about with theories and influences and psychological and historical considerations".[58] "Love, only love, is the way": seems Forster's advice to those who really want to be benefited by art. Citing the case of *Dante* (Pilgrim), from whom *Virgil* (wisdom) withdraws on the summit of Purgatory, and who goes to heaven (Paradise) in the company of *Beatrice*, - "his intercessor in the *Inferno*, his goal in travelling through *Purgatorio*, and his guide through *Paradiso*",[59] - Forster is insistent on the role of love in the realm of art :

> With the coming of love, we have to rely on Beatrice, whom we have loved all along, and if we have never loved Beatrice we are lost.[60]

---

58. Ibid.
59. "Beatrice", in Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature, p. 115.
60. "The Raison D'etre of Criticism in the Arts", TCD, p. 124.

Having associated true art with love and its accompanying power and virtues symbolised by Dante's Beatrice, Forster considers its other aspect of freshness and says "it presents itself as eternally virgin." It draws afresh each time from "a great reservoir"[61], and acts as "a transmitting medium between the artist's subconscious nature and our own".[62] This is what gives it the unique attraction like that of a new love story with a magical power over us. It makes us discover hitherto unknown possibilities of life just as the love story discovers for us the infinite possibilities of love. What a true artist discovers through his work is a hidden fountain of love and sympathy within his own lower or deeper personality. He is given a vision of his own capacity for love and out of this love, nay, from its overflow, he creates his work. So art for Forster is "a spilling over of love for life and of sympathy with living things"; it is "a manifestation of the human capacity to love, an appeal to the spirit which makes man human." Therefore, "to create art and respond to it is a natural expression of the fact of being human."[63] True love has a sense of everlasting freshness about it, because love, at its best, is mystifying. So is the case with a work of art :

> It expects always to be heard or read or seen for the first time, always to cause surprise. It does not expect to be studied, still less does it present itself as a cross-word puzzle, only to be solved after much re-examination. If it does that, if it parades a mystifying element, it is, to that extent, not a work of art, not an immortal Muse but a Sphinx who dies as soon as her riddles are answered. The work of art assumes the existence of a perfect spectator, and is indifferent to the fact that no such person

---

61. Charles Mauron, The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature, - quoted by R. Advani, p. 97.
62. Roger Fry, "Art History as an Academic Study", Last Lectures, - quoted by R. Advani, p. 97.
63. R. Advani, p. 99.

exists. It does not allow for our ignorance and it does not cater for our knowledge.[64]

Thus art in its elemental and eternal freshness defies criticism but demands love like a god who demands worship. It startles the admirer like the god who fills the devotee with awe and wonder by his miracles. This is the true quality of excellence in a work of art and Forster is genuinely emphatic on this.

> Can we combine experience and innocence? I think we can. The willing suspension of experience is possible, it is possible to become like a child who says 'Oh!' each time the ball bounces, although he has seen it bounce before and knows it must bounce.[65]

This view of art reflects similarities with the Romantics' as well as modern psychological attitudes to art, while its implications of and emphasis on inner vision, progress through enlightenment, tolerance and inner cultivation are evidently derived from the broad Millite-Liberalist tradition.

FORSTER AND ROMANTIC AESTHETICS.

Forster as an artist-critic can be tentatively described as an eclectic humanist. We have traced his sense of the spiritual right down from Plato. He draws vastly from many sources. Spanning the intellectual scenes right from the Greeks to the present day modernity, Forster's view of art, also provides a tentative history of ideas. He is a trans-continental cultural cousin to many

---

64. "The Raison D'etre of Criticism in the Arts", TCD, pp. 124 – 125.
65. Ibid. p. 125.

ideologies and intellectual attitudes. Among his immediate inspiration one can easily count the ideas associated with nineteenth-century romanticism which he has either appropriated or modified in his critical formulations.[66]

Romanticism is a European and American movement in Art, extending from about 1800 to 1850. Romanticism cannot be identified with a single style, technique, or attitude, but romantic painting is generally characterized by a highly imaginative and subjective approach, emotional intensity, and a dreamlike or visionary quality. Whereas classical and neoclassical art is calm and restrained in feeling and clear and complete in expression, romantic art characteristically strives to express by suggestion states of feeling too intense, mystical, or elusive to be clearly defined. Thus, the German writer E. T. A. Hoffmann[67] declared "infinite longing" to be the essence of romanticism. In their choice of subject matter, the romantics showed an preference for nature, especially its wild and mysterious aspects, and for exotic, melancholy and melodramatic subjects likely to evoke awe or passion.

The word *romantic* first became current in 18th-century English and originally meant "romancelike," that is, resembling the strange and fanciful character of medieval romances. The word came to be associated with the emerging taste for wild scenery, "sublime" prospects, and ruins, a tendency reflected in the

---

66. Frederick P.W. MmmcDowell, Op.Cit. p. 19.
67. Hoffmann, E(rnst) T(heodor) A(madeus) (1776-1822), *German writer and composer*, who was influential in the romantic movement in German literature. He was born in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia) – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

increasing emphasis in aesthetic theory on the sublime as opposed to the beautiful. The British writer and statesman Edmund Burke, for instance, identified beauty with delicacy and harmony and the sublime with vastness, obscurity, and a capacity to inspire terror. Also during the 18th century, feeling began to be considered more important than reason both in literature and in ethics, an attitude epitomized by the work of the French novelist and philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau.[68] English and German romantic poetry appeared in the 1790s, and by the end of the century the shift away from reason toward feeling and imagination began to be reflected in the visual arts, for instance in the visionary illustrations of the English poet and painter William Blake, in the brooding, sometimes nightmarish pictures of his friend, the Swiss-English painter Henry Fuseli,[69] and in the somber etchings of monsters and demons by the Spanish artist Francisco Goya.[70]

In France the formative stage of romanticism coincided with the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), and the first French romantic painters found their inspiration in contemporary events. Antoine Jean Gros [71] began the transition from

---

68. ROUSSEAU, Jean Jacques (1712-78), French philosopher, social and political theorist, musician, botanist, and one of the most eloquent writers of the Age of Enlightenment. Rousseau was born in Geneva on June 18, 1712. – Infopedia.
69. Fuseli, Henry (1741-1825), Swiss-born painter, whose imaginative paintings, emphasizing melodrama, fantasy, and horror, exerted an important influence on the budding romantic movement in England and on the Continent. He worked in England for most of his career.Fuseli, originally named Johann Heinrich Füssli, was born in Zürich, Switzerland. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
70. **Goya y Lucientes, Francisco José de** (1746-1828), innovative Spanish painter and etcher; one of the triumvirate—including El Greco and Diego Velázquez—of great Spanish masters. Goya was born in the small Aragonese town of Fuendetodos (near Saragossa) on March 30, 1746.
71. **Gros, Antoine-Jean, Baron** (1771-1835), French romantic painter, best known for his historical paintings chronicling the career of Napoleon I. He was born in Paris.

neoclassicism to romanticism by moving away from the sober style of his teacher, Jacques-Louis David, to a more colorful and emotional style, influenced by the Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens,[72] which he developed in a series of battle paintings glorifying Napoleon. The main protagonist for French romanticism was Théodore Géricault,[73] who carried further the dramatic, coloristic tendencies of Gros's style and who shifted the emphasis of battle paintings from heroism to suffering and endurance. In his *Wounded Cuirassier* (1814) a soldier limps off the field as rising smoke and descending clouds seem to impinge on his figure. The powerful brushstrokes and conflicting light and dark tones heighten the sense of his isolation and vulnerability, which for Géricault and many other romantics constituted the essential human condition.

Géricault's masterpiece, *Raft of the Medusa* (1818-1819), portrays on a heroic scale the suffering of ordinary humanity, a theme echoed by the greatest French romantic painter, Eugène Delacroix, in his *Massacre at Chios* (1824). Delacroix often took his subjects from literature, but he aimed at transcending literary or didactic significance by using color to create an effect of pure energy and emotion that he compared to music. Rejecting the neoclassical emphasis on form and outline, he used halftones derived not from darkening a color but

---

72. **Rubens, Peter Paul** (1577-1640), Flemish painter, considered the most important of the 17th century, whose style came to define the animated, exuberantly sensuous aspects of baroque painting. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
73. **Géricault, (Jean Louis André) Théodore** (1791-1824), French painter, perhaps the most influential artist of his time, and a seminal figure of the 19th-century romantic movement in art. – Ibid.

from juxtaposing the color's complement. The resulting effect of energetic vibration was intensified by his long, nervous brushstrokes. His *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), inspired by a work of the English romantic poet Lord Byron, is precisely detailed, but the action is so violent and the composition so dynamic that the effect is one of chaos engulfing the immobile and indifferent figure of the dying king.

German romantic painting, like German romantic poetry and philosophy, was inspired by a conception of nature as a manifestation of the divine. This led to a school of symbolic landscape, initiated by the mystical and allegorical paintings of Philipp Otto Runge. Its greatest exponent, and the greatest German romantic painter, was Caspar David Friedrich,[74] whose meditative landscapes, painted in a lucid and meticulous style, hover between a subtle mystical feeling and a sense of melancholy solitude and estrangement. In the *Polar Sea* (1824), his romantic pessimism is most directly expressed; the remains of a wrecked ship are barely visible beneath a pyramid of ice slabs that seems a monument to the triumph of nature over human aspiration.

Another school of German romantic painting was formed by the group called the Nazarenes, who attempted to recover the style and spirit of medieval

---

74. **Friedrich, Caspar David** (1774-1840), outstanding 19th-century German romantic painter, whose awesome landscapes and seascapes are not only meticulous observations of nature but are also allegories. Friedrich was born on September 5, 1774, in Greifswald

religious art; its leading figure was Johann Friedrich Overbeck.[75] Notable among later artists in the German romantic tradition was the Austrian Moritz von Schwind, whose subjects were drawn from Germanic mythology and fairy tales.

Landscapes suffused with romantic feeling became the chief expression of romantic painting in England, as in Germany, but the English artists were more innovative in style and technique. Samuel Palmer [76] painted landscapes distinguished by an innocent simplicity of style and a visionary religious feeling derived from Blake. John Constable,[77] turning away from the wild natural scenery associated with many romantic poets and painters, infused quiet English landscapes with profound feeling. The first major artist to work in the open air, he achieved a freshness of vision through the use of luminous colors and bold, thick brushwork. J. M. W. Turner achieved the most radical pictorial vision of any romantic artist.[78] Beginning with landscapes reminiscent of the 17th-century French painter Claude Lorrain,[79] he became, in such later works

---

75. **Nazarenes (art)**, group of German painters of the 19th-century romantic period, who attempted to revive in their art the ideals of medieval Christian religious feeling.
76. **Palmer, Samuel** (1805-1881), English painter, watercolorist, and etcher of visionary landscapes. Palmer was born in London and displayed such precocious artistic abilities that some of his landscape studies were exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts when he was only 14 years old.
77. **Constable, John** (1776-1837), English painter, who was a master of landscape painting in the romantic style. His works, done directly from nature, influenced French painters of the Barbizon School and the impressionist movement. Constable was born June 11, 1776, in East Bergholt, Suffolk.
78. **Turner, Joseph Mallord William** (1775-1851), English landscape painter, renowned for his vibrant and dramatic treatment of natural light and atmospheric effects in land and marine subjects, and whose work had a direct influence on the development of impressionism. Turner was born in London and studied at the Royal Academy of Arts.
79. **Claude Lorrain** (1600-1682), French painter, who ranks as one of the great masters of 17th-century ideal-landscape painting. Drawing its inspiration from classical antiquity, this school

as *Snow Storm: Steam Boat Off a Harbor's Mouth* (1842), almost entirely concerned with atmospheric effects of light and color, mixing clouds, mist, snow, and sea into a vortex in which all distinct objects are dissolved.

The major manifestation of American romantic painting was the Hudson River school, which found its inspiration in the rugged wilderness of the northeastern United States. Washington Allston, the first American landscapist, introduced romanticism to the United States by filling his poetic landscapes with subjective feeling. The leading figure of the Hudson River school was the English-born Thomas Cole,[80] whose depictions of primeval forests and towering peaks convey a sense of moral grandeur. Cole's pupil Frederick Church adapted the Hudson River style to South American, European, and Palestinian landscapes.[81]

Toward the middle of the 19th century, romantic painting began to move away from the intensity of the original movement. Among the outstanding achievements of late romanticism are the quiet, atmospheric landscapes of the French Barbizon school, [82]which included Camille Corot and Théodore

---

of painting presents nature as harmonious, serene, and often majestic. Claude, who was also known by his pseudonym Le Lorrain, or as Claude Lorraine, was born in the duchy of Lorraine (from which his name is derived).

80. **Cole, Thomas** (1801-1848), American painter, born in Bolton, Lancashire, England. He began his artistic career as a wood engraver. In 1819 he immigrated to the United States
81. **Church, Frederick Edwin** (1826-1900), American painter, born in Hartford, Connecticut.
82. **Barbizon School**, group of French painters, who from about 1830 to 1870 lived in or near the town of Barbizon, at the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau in France. There they painted the animals, landscapes, and people of the region. The group was distinguished by painting outdoors instead of in studios.

Rousseau. In England, after 1850, the Pre-Raphaelites revived the medievalizing mission of the German Nazarenes.[83]

The influence of romanticism on subsequent painting has been pervasive. A line can be traced from Constable through the Barbizon school to impressionism, but a more direct descendant of romanticism was symbolism, which in various ways intensified or refined the romantic characteristics of subjectivity, imagination, and strange, dreamlike imagery. In the 20th century expressionism and surrealism [84]have carried these tendencies still further. In a sense, however, virtually all modern art can be said to derive from romanticism, for the modern assumptions about the primacy of artistic freedom, originality, and self-expression in art were originally conceived by the romantics in opposition to the traditional classical principles of art.[85]

Though he did not fully approve of the Pantheistic euphoria of the Romantics, Forster seems to be aware of an unseen spirit which is latent in all creation. Though his Cambridge-begotten and Meredith-inspired agnostic disposition led

---

83. **Pre-Raphaelites**, a group of 19th-century English painters, poets, and critics who reacted against Victorian materialism and the neoclassical conventions of academic art by producing earnest, quasi-religious works. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was established in 1848, and its central figure was the painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
84. **Surrealism**, movement in literature and the fine arts, founded by the French poet and critic André Breton. Breton published his *Surrealist Manifesto* in Paris in 1924 and consistently dominated the movement. Surrealism grew directly out of the movement known as Dadaism, an art and literary movement reflecting nihilistic protest against all aspects of Western culture. Like Dadaism, surrealism emphasized the role of the unconscious in creative activity, but it employed the psychic unconscious in a more orderly and more serious manner.
85. "Romanticism (art)," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

him to deny an absolute God, Forster was far from denying the basic spirituality of man manifested not in worship but in native goodness and good will and the capacity to enjoy and appreciate beautiful things of the world. Just as the spirit moves man to pray and love, so does the spirit move man to create and appreciate beautiful things. This spiritual aspect gradually evolves into prominence when man develops himself into a truly civilized individual. At the crowning point of this evolutionary process is the ability to understand, appreciate and develop aesthetic form. Man can then be said to be an integrated, fully developed and civilized human being capable, through artistic creation and/or appreciation, of self-fulfillment and disinterested self-expression. Thus, the Romantic argument establishes that art is the most sublime and also the most nobly human medium of spiritual fulfillment. Coleridge, an out and out romantic, speaking of the genius of Wordsworth, another inveterate romantic, commends his friend's power of imagination which synthesizes the real with the ideal :

> It was the union of deep feeling with profound thoughts, the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; .... 'To find no contradiction in the union of old and new, to contemplate the Ancient of Days and all his works with feelings as fresh as if all had then sprang forth at the creative fiat, characterizes the mind that feels the riddle of the world and may help to unravel it. To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which everyday for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar ... this is the character and privilege of genius .... genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty while it rescues the most admitted truths from the

impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission.'[86]

This spontaneity and freshness of artistic inspiration and its associative affinity with sleep, dream, discovery and unconscious mind can be linked with the impact of the depth psychology propounded by Freud and Jung.

FORSTER AND PSYCHO-ANALYTIC AESTHETICS.

Freud's psycho-analytical aesthetics holds that dreams are the manifestations of the subconscious and unconscious mind. The desires, wishes, attitudes and ambitions which lay suppressed in the unconscious express themselves through dreams. It is the resurrection and the revelation of the hidden personality of the dreamer. Art for Freud is the 'sublimation' of the libido, the hidden, latent, sexual energies of man. It is an alternative outlet for the subconscious and the unconscious impulse-domain of man. His new theory of psychoanalysis, characterized by its stress on the unconscious and the irrational aspects of human personality, revolutionized the way we look at ourselves. He proposed a voyage of discovery into the depth of the human personality, into the unconscious realm of the human psyche. He divides this psyche into ID, EGO and SUPER-EGO. Id is the totality of the impulses and instinctual drives psychically located in the unconscious. It is primitive, unguided and uncontrollable. It seeks pleasure and urges towards the gratification of desires. It

---

86. *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter 4, in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, p. 1593.

is propelled by the Pleasure Principle.[87] Ego is that part of the Id which has been modified by the expedients of the external world and which acts through perceptual consciousness. It tries to "substitute the Reality Principle for the pleasure principle."[88] It represents reason and sanity. Super-ego or Ego-ideal is the differentiating grade within the ego[89], and it is determined by the Morality Principle. A distinction is also made by Freud between Life-instinct (Eros) and Death-instinct (Thanatos), and, life, according to him, is a conflict and compromise between these two instincts.[90]

Freud developed an aesthetic theory from his study of human behaviour in terms of psychoanalytical insights and tried to find a rational explanation for every human action. All human behaviour is a struggle of the Id or the unconscious to find an expression. Artistic behaviour is also one such struggle. Human character, compromised by this struggle, is the result of aim-inhibited or sublimated expression of pregenital libidinal Drives, of a reaction-formation against such drives or of a residue of pregenital drives.[91] Thus striving for power or any kind of self-assertion is the expression of aim-inhibited sadism, affection is the expression of aim-inhibited sex, and painting or sculpture is sublimation of anal erotism.[92] All art is explained away as the sublimation of the *libido,* the smooth flow of the drives towards socially acceptable alternative goals. 'Joke' or

---

87. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) in Great Books of the Western World, Vol. 54, Freud ed., Hutchinson R.M. (London, Encycloaedia Britannica, Inc., 1978) p. 646.
88. Freud, The Ego and the Id (1923) in Freud (1978) p. 702.
89. Ibid. p. 703.
90. Ibid. pp. 708 – 709.
91. J.A.C.Brown, Freud and the Post-Freudians, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1961) p. 111.

'wit' is one of such sublimation. It is the indirect expression of the instinctive drives, and it helps "in overcoming the internal resistance to the direct realization of the purpose and in lifting the inhibition."[93] A joke helps to avoid the psychical damming-up and gives pleasure. It originates in the human propensity to seek pleasure. Man is a "tireless pleasure-seeker" whose ancestor is the child who uninhibitedly sought pleasure. Deprived of this freedom by social and intellectual inhibitions, he is constrained to seek other means to rescue his instinct for pleasure, and joke is one such means. It is an attempt by the Id to find an outlet to the ego, of the Pleasure Principle to come to terms with the Reality Principle. Freud connects *art* with *dream* and *child-play* all of which are products of a "repetition-compulsion."[94] Child-play, the playful repetition of actual experiences, motivates the child to a state of wish-fulfillment. It contains art in its germinal form. The same repetition-compulsion motivates the adult artist to produce tragedies which are pleasurably appreciated by the adult spectators. Pleasure is effected by the repetition of disagreeable impressions experienced in childhood and, art is such a repetition and so it yields pleasure. Art is one of the ways of attaining happiness in the adult world in which the Reality Principle and the Super-ego prohibit the direct expression of the Pleasure Principle, the Id or the libidinal drives. In this prohibited area art is one of the substitute-gratifications which rescues the pleasure principle and protects the mental childhood of man. Belonging to the realm of 'phantasy' and consisting in sublimation of instincts, art,

---

92. Ibid.
93. Freud, Jokes and their relation to the Unconscious, Trans. & ed., James Strachey, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1976), p. 16.
94. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1978) Op. Cit., p. 645.

uses 'libido-displacements' and transfers "the instinctual aims into such directions that they cannot be frustrated by the outer world."[95] Art is a defense mechanism which fights and neutralizes the psychic, libidinal and spiritual discontents which civilization, with its armoury of moral inhibitions, inflicts on man. It is also similar to day-dream in which the world of phantasy takes the upper hand over the world of reality.[96] The world of reality, governed by the reality principle, curtails man's original, Pre-lapsarian freedom in real life. Art is an attempt in the phantasy zone, to regain and reassert the instinctual freedom which was lost as a result of Original Sin and of the impact of Civilization. It does not seek reality but seeks pleasure; it does not correspond to civilization but celebrates instincts and imagination. It is both a product of and a reaction against civilization which "presupposes the non-gratification (suppression, repression, etc.) of powerful instinctual urgencies."[97] Art, therefore, is opposed to life and reality in so far as it is not subordinate to the Reality Principle and the civilizational codes. The artist makes himself "independent of the external world, by looking for happiness in the inner things of the mind." Art is supportive of pleasure and instincts and negates unfreedom and unpleasure which civilization creates. It corresponds to Phantasy-pleasures which are the product of illusion. In art there is the affirmation of primitive freedom. Art says 'No' to reality and 'Yes' to pleasure. It says 'No' to intellect and 'Yes' to instinct. It rejects the language of the conscious and embraces the language of the unconscious. It denies time order because its

---

95. Freud, Civilisation and its Discontents, in Freud (1978), p. 773.
96. Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming" in Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics, ed., Tillman and Cahn, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 19669) p. 441 - 449.
97. Freud, Civlisation and its Discontents in Freud (1978) p. 784.

source is in the Id in which there is no time order. Emphasis in art therefore, is on the surrealistic content and the atonality, and not really on the realistic content. The novels of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf and the poetry of Eliot and Pound are examples of this art. Art creates its own forms and its own norms of truth and goodness. The artist, being defeated by the reality principle, creates his own world and satisfies his own urges. Moved and excited by the Pleasure Principle, he creates his own freedom and, for the sake of aesthetic considerations, reconciles himself to reality. Art is an attempt at the restoration of man's original freedom without visibly disturbing the reality principle. This restorative act is done with the help of 'phantasy' or imagination which is the sublimated activity of the conscious mind. Free from the trammels of the reality principle, imagination works on the raw material, that is, Id, the Unconscious. Freud repeatedly reiterates that there is a relation between art which is the product of imagination and sex which is the dominant feature in the Unconscious. According to him, all artistic pleasure is the sublimated form of sexual pleasure. It springs from man's seeking for compensation for the renunciations he is forced to make in deference to the reality principle. It is the outcome of a transaction in which the abandonment of socially forbidden pleasures is traded for a form of existence in which imagination sets these pleasures free from "the claims of reality and of what we call reality-testing." Art is similar to neurosis. The artist, according to Freud, when frustrated in his desire to win honour, power, wealth, fame and love of women by lack of means "turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and his libido too, to the wishful construction of his world of phantasy, whence

the path might lead to neurosis."[98] Art, therefore, is an auxiliary construction which alleviates the miseries of life. The libido when repressed by reality retreats into phantasies like a frightened child to its mother. Thus reinforced it emerges and takes "a path that leads back from phantasy to reality - the path that is of art", and finds a healthy release from its "repressed fixation". Art is thus also a remedy for the possible attack of Psycho-neurosis.

Jung, while he is critical of his master's attempt to invest the world, life and art with sexual symptoms and neurosis, holds that art is basically connected with the artist's unconscious life and personality. This hidden treasure of spiritual knowledge and energies are socialized and christened by Jung as the "Collective Unconscious". Jung broadened Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical approach, interpreting mental and emotional disturbances as an attempt to find *personal* and *spiritual wholeness.* With the publication of *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912; trans. 1916), however, Jung declared his independence from Freud's narrowly sexual interpretation of the libido by showing the close parallels between ancient myths and psychotic fantasies and by explaining human motivation in terms of a larger creative energy. Jung views the unconscious not predominantly as a sexual drive but as "a composite of all creative instincts and impulses and the entire motivating force of human

98. Freud, "The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms", Lectture XXIII in The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Tran. & ed., James Strachey (New York, W.W.Norton & Company Inc., 1966) pp. 370 – 376.

conduct."[99] In 1921 he published a major work, *Psychological Types* (trans. 1923), in which he dealt with the relationship between the conscious and unconscious and proposed the now well-known *personality types*, extrovert and introvert. He later made a distinction between the personal unconscious, or the repressed feelings and thoughts developed during an individual's life, and the collective unconscious, or those inherited feelings, thoughts, and memories shared by all humanity. The collective unconscious, according to Jung, is made up of "archetypes," or primordial images. These correspond to such experiences as confronting death or choosing a mate and manifest themselves symbolically in religions, myths, fairy tales, fantasies, and art. Jung's therapeutic approach aimed at reconciling the diverse states of personality, which he saw divided not only into the opposites of introvert and extrovert, but also into those of sensing and intuiting, and of feeling and thinking. By understanding how the personal unconscious integrates with the collective unconscious, Jung theorized, a patient can achieve a state of individuation, or wholeness of self.[100] Forster's view of art, while it shares the Jungian concern at the fragmentation of the human personality, also reflects the Jungian notion of archetypes or primordial images. The Forsterian notion of art as 'discovery', 'dream' and 'sleep' reflects the Jungian notion of art as manifestation of archetypes. The Forsterian 'bucket-dipping' into the subconscious resembles Jungian 'Collective Unconscious' or the 'latent memory' from which the artists

---

99. "Psychoanalysis," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia.* © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

reproduce or recover primordial images. Art as viewed by Forster can thus be instrumental in achieving a 'state of individuation or wholeness of self' which is the Jungian ideal achieved by the integration of the personal unconscious with the collective unconscious. The supreme function of Forster's connecting 'diagonal' is the achieving of this 'wholeness.'

An artist draws from this collective and cumulative fund of wisdom of the ages, from the "precious residuum which is peculiar to no individual"[101], from all those "potent and mighty thoughts without which man ceases to be man"[102] and creates the work of art which thus becomes the "anonymous product of the whole human race".[103] This view reiterates the human value of art and so is consonant with Forster's view of art. According to him art is the material legatee of a common human heritage of the ages, and so it is the product of an "archetypal undercurrent which unites, all men ...(who) are also subconsciously similar in possessing a spirit which transcends the limits of selfhood."[104] Beauty and the vision of it are possible only after this transcendental transformation of the artist by the spirit of inspiration, the *Muse.* Thus true enjoyment of the truly beautiful, which is unknown to beasts, is a typically human privilege and the indwelling spirit which propels the expression of this beauty is equivalent to the mystic's vision of God. And the semi-mystic, ecstatic and aesthetic felicity obtained from

---

100. "Jung, Carl Gustav," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia.* © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
101. R. Advani, p. 97 – quoted from John Livingstone Lowes, The Road to Xanadu.
102. Ibid – quoted from Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology.
103. Virginia Wolf, "Robinson Crusoe", Collected Essays Vol.
104. R. Advani, p. 98.

this is equivalent to the eternal joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. The only passport to this philanthropist-humanist's heaven is Love. Love is the power and art is the way. Other things – social, political, moral, religious considerations – may interfere and interrupt but the path that leads to heaven is the path that art takes. This harmonious blend of mysticism with aesthetics, while carefully and sensibly avoiding the pitfalls of both, is a significant characteristic of Forster's (un)Theory of Art. The influences of Romantic Expressionism and Modern Psychology ring loud and clear in the Forsterian formula of the process of artistic creation:

> In it a man is taken out of himself. He lets down as it were a bucket into the subconscious, and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach. He mixes this thing with his normal experiences, and out of the mixture he makes a work of art ... it will have been compounded in this unusual way, and he will wonder afterwards how he did it. .... And when the process is over, when the picture or symphony or lyric or novel (or whatever it is) is complete, the artist, looking back on it, will wonder how on earth he did it. *And indeed he did not do it on earth.* (italics mine)[105]

In the modern parlance this miraculous alchemy can be called 'Out of the Body Experience'(OBE). So in the Forsterian scheme of the creative process the artist is transported to a different region of existence, to an otherworldly wonderland. He creates his art there, "finds himself in an unknown world, where he understands nothing"[106], and then returns to this world like a mystic returns after having had his vision. While he creates he seems to be in a mystical merry-

---

105. "The Raison D'etre of Criticism in the Arts", TCD, p. 121.
106. Ibid. p. 118.

go-round and what he has created like Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, thereby belongs to another world. Forster reiterates this :

> The creative state of mind is akin to a dream.... . even Jane Austen, looking back upon Emma, could have thought 'Dear me, how came I to write that? It is not ill-contrived.' There is always, even with the most realistic artist, the sense of withdrawal from his own creation, the sense of surprise.[107]

V

Art is an esoteric activity which requires a mixture of the capacity to *dream* and the capacity to be *realistic*, the capacity to be *otherworldly* and the capacity to be *surprised*. Artistic inspiration is a divine gift. It takes place deep down in the core of the heart where the creative impulse resides. This spark like the electric spark, is produced by the contact of the divine terminal with the human terminal. The energy thus produced is called 'Inspiration'. Forster's view of the process of artistic inspiration, -

> The mind as it were, turns turtle ... and a hidden part of it comes to the top and controls the pen. It ... is the process termed by the ancients 'inspiration'..."[108], -

is similar in nature and function to a mystical séance. Intellect has not much of a role in this process, in this "queer catastrophe" that happens inside the artists.

---

107. Ibid. pp. 121 – 122.

The soul, animated by the spark of heaven, dominates and dictates, and, the intellect, will and the rest of the human faculties stand to serve or stand and wait upon the creative soul. Art, therefore, is an extraterrestrial phenomenon. The artist while creating a work of art, experiences "a reality outside his ordinary self".[109] "It is as if he has walked in an unknown region and come across the little gate which belongs to the garden of a friend."[110]

This is the main reason for Forster's belief that criticism is not much of a help for the act of creation. It can "protect and encourage the artist." It can help in maintaining good standards in arts. But the only meaningful and effective *raison d'etre* for arts is love. It is the only power which, in the ultimate analysis, will determine the value of a work of art. Love will make arts meaningful as it infinitely makes life meaningful. It is of no use if one has lived in the company of angels, if one has known their dialect and has known the wondrous secrets of the stars in the heavens. These are feats indeed but are of no use to one *if one has no love.*[111] All human achievements are futile unless they are also crowned by the eternal diadem of love. Forster is no less convinced of this while he says concluding *The Raison D'etre of Criticism in the Arts* :

> However cautiously, with whatever reservations, after whatsoever purifications, *we must come back to* ***love***. That alone raises us to the

108. "Inspiration", Albergo Empedocle and other writings, - quoted by Donald Watt, Op.Cit. p. 46.
109. Ibid.
110. "Raison", TCD, p. 118.
111. Adapted from a Malayalam Devotional Hymn – ("*Maalaaghamaarude Bhasha aringjaalum / Maalaaghamaarothu jeevichaalum / Waanile waaroli thaarakal kandaalum / Snehamilengil athokke syunyam*")

> ***cooperation*** *with the artist* which is the sole reason for our aesthetic pilgrimage. That alone promises ***spiritual parity***. (Italics mine)[112]

'Love', 'Cooperation', 'Spiritual Parity', - synonyms for 'Passion'(poetry), 'Tolerance'(social ideal), and 'Religion', in other words, the entire realm of human involvement, is necessary for an effective appreciation of the arts. The origin of art lies in the realm of the spirit where the human and the divine intersect, where the water and wine are ritually mixed and the secret human waters sacramentally transformed into divine wine, the recondite truth. Every artistic creation is, therefore, a miracle. It is the fruit of love made flesh in paint, wood, structure, design, music or words with the purpose of dwelling forever in human hearts in love. Art, for Forster is , so to speak, a sacrament of love which can only be understood and appreciated by a similar, reciprocal love.

According to Forster artistic creation is an activity associated with sleep. The vision of the beautiful comes to the artist in the form of trance and Forster further explains:

> I mean by creation an activity, part of which takes place in sleep. It has ... its wakeful alert side, but it's rooted in the region whence dreams also grow. .... Creation is an activity which selects and ***connects*** the image found in sleep. It is a universal activity. The great writer differs from the rest of us because he selects and connects properly.(Italics mine)[113]

---

112. "The Raison ", p. 129.
113. King's College Ms., titled 'Miscellaneous' – quoted by R. Advani, p. 96.

When the mind turns turtle, the artist becomes unaware of his everyday self and a deeper consciousness looms large before him, and, he willingly suspends his surface personality and submerges himself into his spiritual self. He is under the control of an unknown "involuntary memory"[114] which just happens, and resurrects images and ideas from the past. Forster's attitude to art thus smacks of the view of ***artist as dreamer*** of which Marcel Proust is his example.[115] Dreams for Forster recollect essential past and they are an aspect of the more remote, impersonal and subconscious self. He praises Proust's power of resurrecting and regaining all childhood with the help of very commonplace experiences and objects. All men are alike when they sleep and dream that "life was beauty". They become different only when they wake and find that "life was duty". Dreams and the spirit establish a subconscious unity among all men whereas duties of the flesh and the conscious, personal identity tragically separate men from one another. Parodying Freud who said all dreams have sexual meaning except the ones that are primarily sexual we can say with regard to Forster's concept of the artist as dreamer that all dreams have artistic overtones except those which are precisely artistic – they have socio-cultural significance. Speaking about the "lower personality" into which the artist dips a bucket in order to produce first-class work, Forster comments:

> There is something general about it ... It has something in common with all other deeper personalities, and the mystic will assert that the common quality is God, and that here, the obscure recesses of our being,

---

114. Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory (1896) – reference made by R. Advani, pp. 96 – 97.
115. R. Advani, p. 96.

> we near the gates of the Divine. ... As it came from the depths, so it soars to the heights, out of local questionings; as it is general to all men, so the works it inspires have something general about them, namely beauty.[116]

Art unites what life has put asunder. "All through history writers while writing have felt more or less the same."[117] This is the most useful *raison d'etre* for arts in the modern world.

Forster is no formalist so far as the form and technique of the works of art are concerned. His theory of art is not a theory of forms. He believes in a sort of psycho-spiritual dynamics that animates artists, inspires their work and gives a refreshingly organic twist to their art. Artistic creation is in itself absolute legislation because artists, like poets, are "the unacknowledged legislators of the world".[118] The artist without proposing to pass any laws legislates through creating :

> And he creates through his sensitiveness and his power to impose form. Without form the sensitiveness vanishes. And form is important today, when the human race is trying to ride the whirlwind.[119]

A genuine work of art is law unto itself. It orders itself and is its own order in the midst of all the muddles and riddles of the world. But Forster is no anarchist nor is he a diehard theorist of form so far as the form of art is concerned. He

---

116. "Anonymity : An Enquiry", TCD, pp. 91 – 92.
117. Aspects of the Novel, p.
118. "Defence of Poetry", p.
119. "Art for Art's Sake", TCD, p. 101.

does feel the need of some sort of discipline to order a work of art. Aesthetic theories according to him should not function like "travelling laboratories, beds of Procrustus whereon Milton is too long and Keats too short", but "a theory *may be helpful* and *stimulating*, particularly to the sense of form."[120](Italics mine) This Forsterian sense of theory is an *(un)theory*, and may border on licentiousness in the eyes of traditional theorists. Gracefully distancing himself from both the romantic extravaganza of free expressionism and the custom-formed manacles of formalism, Forster says:

> Form is not tradition. It alters from generation to generation. Artists always seek a new technique, and will continue to do so as long as their work excites them. But form of some kind is imperative. It is the surface crust of the internal harmony, it is the outward evidence of order.[121]

From this observation and its tone it is abundantly clear that for Forster the idea of form is a dynamic and organic one – not a static and dogmatic idea, and to him the excitement of the artist over his work matters more than mere formats and techniques. If it deadens or stunts the excitement of the artist and of the art, it has no use for Forster. The Forsterian 'imperative' of form is not imperious, but important only when it animates and accentuates the sensitiveness of the work of art and thus supplements the internal order which the work creates. So for Forster (the artist) art for art's sake is the creed, but for Forster (the critic) Form for Form's Sake is anathema. So are the ideas of Theory for Theory's sake and Aesthetics for Aesthetics' sake. He is evidently alive to "the danger that training

---

120. "The Raison" , TCD, p. 116.

(and theorizing) may sterilize the sensitiveness that is being trained; that education may lead to knowledge instead of wisdom, and criticism to nothing but criticism; that spontaneous enjoyment ... may be checked because too much care has been taken to direct it into the right channel."[122] At the same time he knows the opposite of this, namely free expressionism and untrained impressionism, are also equally dangerous:

> The objection to untrained appreciation is not its naivete but its tendency to lead to the appreciation of no one but oneself. Against such fatuity the critical spirit is a valid corrective.[123]

This selfish tendency is unhealthy as it depreciates the value of Art for Art's Sake and also downplays the value of criticism by lowering it to Criticism for Self's Sake. Forster's dislike of theories and systems and his conviction that in the modern situation they are increasingly irrelevant are strongly in evidence in the following observation :

> ... a theory in the modern world has little power over the fine arts, for good or evil. We have no atmosphere where it can flourish, and the attempts of certain governments to generate such an atmosphere in bureaus are unlikely to succeed. The construction of aesthetic theories and their comparisons are desirable cultural exercises: the theories themselves are unlikely to spread far or to hinder or help.[124]

---

121. "Art for Art's Sake", TCD, p. 102.
122. "The Raison", TCD, p. 115
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid. p. 116.

Forster calls himself 'an amateur' in criticism and makes that word imply 'love'. This love when "clarified and controlled to give full value"[125] becomes the cornerstone of his criticism of the fine arts. He has a very keen "sense of pitch"[126] which is very alive to the notes of music. This musical sense to the sounds can be applied, he believes, to his criticism of the arts. He also believes that "music is the deepest of the arts and deep beneath the arts".[127]

This musical overtone of his criticism provides an interesting study. It brings about the 'miracle' which criticism ought to effect, that is, "to combine Mephistopheles with the archangels, experience with innocence."[128] Forster's scheme of art involuntarily tries to make other arts approximate to the effects made by music. Firmly convinced that music is primarily about itself, Forster makes a confession: "The nice sounds make me think of something else."[129] This ambivalent attitude is evident in his classification of music into two categories: "music that reminds ... of something" and "music itself". Effectively applying his own brand of amateur-love attitude to music he steers himself towards the view of music as self-discovery.

> With Wagner I always knew where I was; he never let the fancy roam; ... he was as precise in his indications as an oriental dancer. ... I thought that music must be the better for having a meaning. I think so still, but am less clear as to what 'a meaning' is. ... When music reminded me of something which was not music, I supposed it was getting me

125. Ibid. p. 114.
126. "The C Minor of that Life", TCD, p. 130.
127. "The Raison ", TCD, p. 114.
128. "The Raison", TCD, p. 126.

somewhere. ... I translated sounds into colours, saw the piccolo as apple-green, and the trumpets as scarlet. *The arts were to be enriched by taking in one another's washing.*[130](italics mine)

This is the liberal humanist's assertion of the role of tolerance and cooperation in art, for which he pleaded in the socio-political sphere. Art, though it stands still all by itself, though it is conceived in the 'ivory tower', does not flourish in isolation. Its temple stands in the boisterous midst of humanity. Its progress becomes rapid in an atmosphere of harmonious cooperation among its devoted practitioners. The more it gives, like love, the more it gets.

This is an open-minded, nearly democratic attitude to art and artist. Art is a spontaneous outburst of the human spirit taking its source from the universal fountain of inspiration embedded in the depth of every man's subconscious. This view suggests that every man is potentially an artist, or an artist in waiting. So the artist cannot claim any superiority to the ordinary person. He does not have a super-human status as all men have something of the artists in them. The distinction of the artist lies in his paying unusual attention to his inner life. Like Blake Forster never supposes "creation is the prerogative of the small minority" and believes that "everyone can create", that the "imagination ... waits within us, ready to redeem from inertia and chaos, and lead us through action to our eternal home", and that "the poet ... only ... reminds average men of the salvation they are neglecting."[131] But like Blake, Forster tends to believe that the genius which

---

129. "Not Listening to Music", TCD, p. 133.
130. Ibid. p. 134.
131. R. Advani, p. 100.

is present in every man is eternal and universal. This genius makes every man a unique creature and when this creature expresses his 'genius' he becomes a creator. This infection of genius is also contagious and it awakens the 'genius' in other people.[132] This is what music does and to reach the effect of music is the end surely of any true work of art. Though Forster puts up music as the ideal for other arts, his attitude to music is not reverential. He is slip-shod when he speaks of music, and sometimes arbitrary. While dealing with music his problem is

> Is there any absolute difference between keys - a difference that is inherent, not relative? Have they special qualities, and, if they have, can the qualities be named ...[133]

Admitting that this problem is "one of those solemn mystifications which are erected by ignorance", and not very eager to explain away or theorize or solve this problem, Forster makes some semi-arbitrary statements regarding the different keys and notes of music. He considers *C major* the most "straightforward, nurserified, unassuming", *A flat* "delicate, suave gracious intimate refined", *E major* too brilliant, F major as having the lyric quality of A flat, *C sharp* as having a more marked brilliancy than that of E. But he hits upon ***C minor*** as appealing more readily to the "sense of pitch", and promptly elects it as his favourite vide Beethoven who has "invested in it deeply."

> If we lost everything he wrote except what is in this key(C minor), we should still have the essential Beethoven, the Beethoven tragic, the

---

132. John Beer's remark on Blake – adapted from Advani's notes, p. 117.
133. "The C Minor of that Life", TCD, p. 130.

> Beethoven so excited at the approach of something enormous that he can only just interpret and subdue it.[134]

Drawing up a list of Beethoven's works in C minor, Forster goes on to make a generalization that it is in this key that "Beethoven has found himself, that he is where he most wanted to be, that he is engaged in the pursuit of something outside sound – something which has fused the sinister and the triumphant."[135] The feeling that it is more than just sound that animates Beethoven's music underlies this observation. The magical quality of music not only to transport the listeners to a state of catharsis, but also its prophetic quality in bouncing the temperament into something totally unexpected are demonstrated in the works of Beethoven. Beethoven seems to be guided by some unknown and unseen spirit when he attempts a new key. After he has established the new key firmly and warmed himself with it, something mystical or mysterious takes place -

> ... - and then out of it there soars a new tune, a tune in octaves, not loud, not elaborate, but tearing down the curtains and letting in the unknown lights. As it sings itself out, the triplets get something to do which is worth doing, and when it ends and the banging chords re-enter, they talk sense.[136]

This is the quality of C minor at the hands of Beethoven. Music, especially Beethoven's C minors, facilitates mystical, expansive expeditions into the unknown and eventually bounces itself into the actual. This attitude to the art of

---

134. Ibid. pp. 130 – 131.
135. Ibid. p. 132.
136. Ibid.

music is characteristic of Forster's open non-doctrinaire temperament as a critic. He is appalled by the attitude of the purists and the vulgarity of their obsessed one-sidedness. As a contrast to this stiff, purist attitude to music Forster bravely comments :

> ... music reminds me of something non-musical, and I fancy that to do so is part of its job. Only a purist would condemn all visual parallels, all emotional labelling, all programmes.[137]

This argues for a human, even sensuous and matter of fact attitude of an admirer as against a formal, purist attitude of a theorist. Music reminds or brings into perspective, paints, colours, sounds, names, feelings, human plans and programmes. In other words it '***connects***', connects harmoniously by threading the multiplicity of life with its rhythms of sorrow, fear, pity and of course, love. It scrounges across the sordid human scene and "sees life steadily, and sees it whole."[138] It surprises and then satisfies, but leaves us craving still. "Fate knocks at our door ; but before the final tap can sound, the flimsy door flies into pieces, and we never learn the sublime rhythm of destruction."[139] Music gives much and has much more yet to give. Thus the symphonies of Beethoven, Forster's "music in itself", make hungry where they most satisfy. And Forster is against skipping the repeats of Beethoven's piano sonatas because they bring out "what the dullish stuff means."[140] Music thus has infinite possibilities of expansion and that was how Beethoven, using the C minor, both key and attitude, "prospected the

---

137. "Not Listening to Music", TCD, 135.
138. Howards End, p.
139. "The C Minor of that Life", TCD, pp. 131 – 132.

wildest and most wonderful land of his empire."[141] This is also the key to Forster's criticism with which he has prospected a vast area of literature, life and arts. His is the same quest, in C Minor, for introducing harmony of music to the arts and thus enable art to order the universe. ***The C Minor of that quest*** is diffident in tone and temperament, but has a delicate insistence of something or someone in brave, sincere, love. 'Love is patient and kind' so is Beethoven's music; more so is Forster's criticism of the arts. It (love) is the emphatic, ever dynamic diagonal which mystifies matter and materialises the spirit and "which no emotion breaks." As an artist-critic Forster looks for the "diagonal" which "slopes" and "vibrates with power"[142], the invisible power of love, the power of charity which covereth the multitude of human events. Disclaiming any academic mastery of musicology, Forster let loose the measure of personal preference for the musician and also for the key, - for both man and method, - and becomes sentimental about Beethoven:

> It would be a pity to lose a Beethoven unbuttoned, a Beethoven yodelling, but this musician excited by immensities is unique in the annals of any art. No one has ever been so thrilled by things so huge ...[143]

Forster looks upon music as the purest of all the arts but he never gives in to the argument that it is abstract in nature. Good music distracts the listener and reminds him of something else. It has a bouncing effect. It takes us to "the centre of reality." He nearly assumes the role of an idol-worshipper when he says :

---

140. Ibid. p. 132.
141. Ibid.
142. "Not Looking at Pictures", TCD, p. 138.

> Music .... seems to be more 'real' than anything, and to survive when the rest of civilization decays. In these days I am always thinking of it with relief. It can never be ruined or nationalized.[144]

This sounds like the convinced voice of a faith-addict which in religion Forster never was. But the devotion is the same considering the immense investment of hope Forster makes in music which is "untrammelled and untainted by reference".[145] A good tune, for Forster, is a joy for ever. Music civilizes ; it softens and rediscovers the latent rhythms of the soul. It elects the lonely individual to the celestial choir, and he is introduced to the sphere where the Muses are spirited and the spirits are musical. It recovers for us our long lost but essential spirituality. It is insistently and rhythmically revitalizing, and is "trying to push at us something which is neither an aesthetic pattern nor a sermon."[146] Apart from this mystical circus, music, particularly the *C Minor Beethoven*, for Forster, gives a "***physical approach*** to Beethoven which cannot be gained through the slough of 'appreciation'."(emphasis mine)[147] This idea of 'physical approach' underlies the whole aesthetics of Forster and it is to be gained through a daring intimacy.

Forster values music for its tremendous vivifying power which can embrace the whole universe. Because of its redoubtable capacity to provide the listener with the 'vision of the whole', music is the purest and the most powerful manifestation and expression of the indwelling spirit. Its composition implies "a

---

143. "The C Minor of that Life", p. 131.
144. "Not Listening to Music", TCD, p. 135.
145. Ibid. p. 135.
146. Ibid. p. 136.
147. Ibid.

diagonal line" which connects the conflicting human emotions into a thematic wholeness. This idea of an alluring diagonal line in every work of art is implicitly suggested in Forster's aesthetics. This knack for identifying diagonals rather than an aesthetic temperament characterizes Forster's view of art. In his essay "Not Looking At Pictures", Forster disclaims any aesthetic attitude but makes a statement which can be taken as the manifesto of his aesthetic pilgrimage:

> ... ***I look for diagonals everywhere***, and if I cannot find one think the composition must be at fault. It is a word which I have learnt – a solitary word in a foreign language.(emphasis mine)[148]

This "solitary word in a foreign language" with its tendency to draw straight line connecting things that exist at different spheres and latitudes, may be called upon to define the otherwise not-so-easily-definable aesthetics of Forster. He, therefore, can be described as a solitary critic in a familiar language. The diagonal syndrome which characterizes Forster's aesthetics seems to reflect the strand of postmodernism which is called 'critical-pluralist' which "aims to preserve some of the oppositional, exploratory ethic of suspicion which characterized many forms of modernism and avant-garde practice." His passion for 'wholeness' in art reflects postmodernism's distrust of the modernist aesthetic of exclusion and its critical embrace of stylistic diversity. Postmodernism breaks down the self-generated integrity of style which the artist claims and encourages multiplicity of style and method.[149] Forster's aesthetics is not an aesthetics of

148. Ibid. pp. 138 – 139.
149. Steven Connor, pp. 88-89.

isolation or alienation. He does not consider art as shut up in an ivory tower but art is considered socially productive and ideologically effective. So there is an attempt to integrate art and life in Forster's scheme of things. This points to aspects of the postmodernist debate which corresponds to the de-politicized bureaucratic society "where all seemingly cultural positions turn out to be symbolic forms of political moralizing, except for the single overtly political note, which suggest a slippage back into culture again."[150] Similarly Forster's aesthetic pronouncements have deep cultural ramifications and his political statements are made largely in the interest of an eclectic, humanistic and liberal culture. This inclusive spirit reflects modern theory's attempt at establishing a paradoxical relationship between alienation and authenticity. In the postmodern situation "there is no longer any subject to be alienated and nothing to be alienated from." Postmodernism resembles a grisly parody of socialist utopia, having abolished all alienation at a stroke. William Morris proclaims the creed of late capitalism by dreaming that art might dissolve into social life. This capitalism proclaims that if the artefact is a commodity, the commodity can always be an artefact. 'Art' and 'life' indeed interbreed – which is to say that art models itself on a commodity form which is already invested with an aesthetic allure, in a sealed circle. So social reality, by being textured, fetishized, libidinalized, is already 'aesthetic', and so for art to reflect reality is then for it to do no more than mirror itself in a cryptic self-referentiality which is indeed one of the inmost structures of

---

150. Frederic Jameson, "The politics of theory: Ideological positions in the postmodernism debate", David Ladge, ed., Modern Criticism and Theory A Reader (London, Longman, 1988) p. 383.

commodity fetish.[151] This view succinctly resembles Forster's view of aesthetic order which can lead us out of the darkness of the modern world. By saying this he somehow established a strong connection between art and life and this idea of connection has taken interesting dimensions in the postmodernist debate.

The style and tone of Forster's aesthetic pronouncements have a mousy air of cautious carelessness about them. He begins like a mouse, but a mouse who knows where it is, careless but observant, familiar but diffident. In little sharps and trebles the mouse bubbles the half familiar but friendly territories, making itself audible, then noticeable, then visible and then large and vastly familiar with an air of belonging to the place. It pops out its head and squeaks : "Do you like to know who a book's by?", "I Believe in art for art's sake.", "A great deal has been said about the duty of the artist to society.", "Culture is a forbidding word", "Believing as I do that music is the deepest of the arts ...", "Listening to music is such a muddle ...", "Pictures are not easy to look at.", and "Does 'Three Blind Mice' sound different when it is played in different keys?" : – these are the opening statements of some of Forster's essays on arts in general. One can notice a mixture of insolence and pathos in the tone of these statements. But ensconced in the C Minor key, the mouse takes a sudden flight from its proper mode and assumes such loveable immensities which are difficult to be run down. Can these immensities be called a system? No. Are they anarchic and imbecile? No. Like the Pied Piper or the super-mouse, Beethoven, Forster the mouse

151. Terry Eagleton, "Capitalism, modernism and postmodernism", David Lodge, pp. 386-87.

chose to have a fondness for a particular key and thought that "there was something in a key" and was "put into a particular mood after choosing it."[152] The coddling, sensitive, softness is the "something" in Forster's key and the "particular mood" is for harmony, the rhythm which gently but persistently asserts its right to rule the hearts of men. Can he play this in a different key? Much of what Forster is has to be sacrificed before we can hear him in a different key.

152. "The C Minor of that Life", TCD, p. 133.

CHAPTER FOUR : FORSTER'S LITERARY CRITICISM – A PLEA FOR IMAGINATION

Forster's critical attitude appears to be a half-serious and half-casual one. It is not doctrinaire or dogmatic. He dislikes systems. According to him, criticism discloses rhythms, not patterns. It should take us to the heart of the art, not to any formal, academic considerations of it. It should stimulate and awaken us to the beauty and wonder of the world. His criticism expresses a vision of artistic and humanistic values. Criticism, for Forster, is a passionate plea of an artist for values that would give a meaningful humanistic touch to his work. It is a plea for poetry and imagination which would, in the long run, establish and humanize values in the new world order. He is an evangelist for Art, his religion. This religion is a fusion of the seen and the unseen, public affairs and private decencies. Another name for this religion is humanism.[1] His criticism is a sort of humanistic sermon reflecting the qualities of tolerance and balance, sensitivity and common sense, and a loathing for everything dogmatic. It is a dialogue of the self with itself. Forster often uses 'art' "as a rubric to include a wider range of aesthetic manifestations than the literary."[2] Forster was wearied of the intellectual tradition of Europe. He fervently believed in being "sensitive to what is

---

1. Wilfred Stone, The Cave and The Mountain : A Study of E.M.Forster, pp. 18-19
2. Frederick, P.W. McDowell, "E.M.Forster's Theory of Literature", CRITICISM, a Quarterly for Literature, Vol. VIII, No.1 Winter 1966, p. 19.

going on,"[3] and this was his dominant passion as a critic. His writings after 1924 show a continuing effort to sensitize the world, to advance the claim of poetry and art, and to plead for the role of the "aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate, and the plucky."[4] His problem as a critic was "how to maintain beauty, space and human dignity in a leveling world, how to preserve the treasures of the privileged without sinking them in the anonymity of the insatiable mass."[5] Poetry was the only answer, and the way of art, however short-lived, was the only way. This 'force' of poetry which, according to Samuel Johnson calls new powers into being, which embodies sentiment and animates matter, was for Forster the ultimate criterion to test the worth of a piece of literature. Modern theorist of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida[6] also speaks of '*Force et signification*' which means a realization of 'a certain pure and infinite equivocality leaving no respite, no rest to the signified meaning, engaging it in its own economy, to make a sign again and to differ. His '*force*' implies a 'generalised textuality'. When he says "there is no outside-text" – he does not mean everything is language but that language is always everywhere already and the reference is always immanent within textuality, writing, *difference.* Force which characterizes a literary work thus comes from the reading of it in a fully literary or

---

3. "English Prose between 1918 and 1939", TCD, p. 288
4. "What I Believe", TCD, p. 82
5. Wilfred Stone, Op.cit, p. 7.
6. **Derrida, Jacques** (1930-), French philosopher, whose work originated the school of *deconstruction,* a strategy of analysis that has been applied to literature, linguistics, philosophy, law and architecture. In 1967 Derrida published three books—*Speech and Phenomena; Of Grammatology;* and *Writing and Difference,* which introduced the deconstructive approach to reading texts. Derrida has resisted being classified, and his later works continue to redefine his thought. (MS Encarta Encyclopedia, 1997.)

textual manner, that is, by attention to language, rhetoric, figure, trope, to the *text as such*.[7] What according to Forster makes literature alive is the power of poetry which in contemporary theory has been christened as 'textuality' the practice of which makes literature literary. Forster distanced himself from any established critical principle or theoretical system of critical discourse and loosely generalized on the presence or absence of what he considers as poetry in a literary work of art in order to evaluate its merits. Forster's position as a critic can be seen in the context of modern literary theory as 'pro-literary and anti-theory' with touches of liberal tolerance thrown in. He characteristically remains at a slight angle to both traditional literary canons and the modern literary theory. In his essay, "The Raison D'Etre of Criticism in the Arts" Forster says:

> Except perhaps in Russia, ... a theory in the modern world has little power over the fine arts, for good or evil. We have no atmosphere where it can flourish,.... The construction of aesthetic theories and their comparison are desirable cultural exercises : the theories themselves are unlikely to spread far or to hinder or help.[8]

Forster's liberal, tolerant, irreverent attitude to literary criticism and to traditional canons for evaluating literature seems to be in tune with postmodern trends and theories. While he himself remained distrustful of any theory he seems to have an attitude of bemused tolerance, not of strong resistance, to theories and his criticism inspires and invites radical re-imagining of past

---

7. Stephen Heath, "Modern literary theory", Critical Quarterly, vol 31, No.2. p. 36
8. TCD, p. 116

literature which is what the modern and postmodern theorists have been trying to do in so many different ways.

Forster's love for the personal, the passionate and the poetic is the mainspring of his critical formulations and pronouncements. His strong distrust of designs and abstractions in literature is evident in his declaration : "Manifestos belong to abroad."[9] He would not approve of any inflexible standards which would sap the vitality of literary art and compromise its human relevance. He is only too ready to abandon any moral or aesthetic standard at a pinch. He believes that the moment of inspiration, unclouded by any design, is the vital force behind any work of literature.[10] His approach to literature is predominantly personal and it is characterized by an impulse to celebrate whatever brings literature alive and to denounce whatever deadens the imagination. This can be described as avant-garde and amateur approach which does not readily warrant criticism in the usual sense of the word. According to Forster, "the word amateur implies love", and so this should be the predominant attitude to literature. But he does not subscribe to blind love: "Love has to be clarified and controlled to give full value, and here is where criticism may help. But one has to start with love;..."[11] He is emphatic when he says in an address on "The Feminine Note in Literature" to the Friday Club in 1910, "There is only one note in literature – the

9. E.M.Forster, Abinger Harvest, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1967) p. 163.
10. Donald Watt, "Artist as Horseman : The Unity of Forster's Criticism", Modern Philology, Vol. 79, No.1, August 1981 p. 45.
11. TCD, p.114

personal."[12] "Reverence is fatal to literature" he declares in his essay, "Anonymity: An Enquiry".

> My plea is for something more vital: ***imagination***. Imagination is as the Immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion (Shelley). Imagination is our only guide into the world created by words.[13]

Imagination that guides us into the world created by words and helps us to approximate to the state in which they are written must necessarily or predominantly be one in which linguistic elements have a vital role to play. Forster is indirectly and unconsciously endorsing the modern theorists' attempt at reading the literary work as text as such by employing linguistic techniques to effect a "reinscription of the text", a purist view of "the work as text".[14] Though he himself describes his approach to literature as a "shy crablike sideways movement",[15] it conveys an overwhelming sense of the inner life. Though shy like the crab, Forster the critic knows where he is going. While Forster was in his third year in Cambridge, this crab-syndrome seems to have developed. He was troubled with vast but vague tremblings in his soul. People who knew him were puzzled about him. Other people found him hard to place and they tended to think of him as someone else's friend. Like the crab, he went his own way, with fierce determination and exasperating slowness. Lytton Strachey coined a name

---

12. Ibid. p. 46
13. TCD, p. 95
14. Stepehen Heath, p. 36
15. E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1978) p. 152.

for him,- 'the taupe', mole. Apt, drab-coloured, unobtrusive and coming up in odd places and unexpected circles, there was something flitting and discontinuous about him, something freakish and demure, but earnest and direct, as if vast issues hung upon simple truth-telling. His friends likened him to Henry VI, and could not decide whether he was naive or sophisticated. He was too fond of little contremps and whimsicalities and there was a queer sureness about him, a super quick sense of immediate situations and an extra-ordinary sweep of human understanding. His remarks expanded in the mind and revealed a clear grasp of human reality.[16] This quality of tolerant understanding and his attitude of enlightened and detached liberalism give a "remarkable intellectual consistency" to his literary criticism[17], and make his "critical ground remain steady."[18] His critical writing represents an important manifesto of taste.

*"If there is on earth a house with many mansions, it is **the house of words**"*, Forster declares in his 1925 essay, *Anonymity : An Enquiry.*[19] And all of his literary criticism can be described as singing the praises of this house and colouring it always, and repairing it at times. Art, that is, literature, opens the mind to infinite possibilities and so does criticism open the doors to many mansions of meanings and feelings. So in the house of words there are innumerable mansions to which is admitted all "humanity grading and drifting

16. P.N.Furbank, pp. 67 – 68.
17. Frederick, P.W. McDowell, Op. Cit., p. 20.
18. Donald Watt, Op.Cit., p. 45.
19. TCD, p. 88.

beyond the educated vision, until no earthly invitations can embrace it."[20] Forster's theory of words suggests that words have the power to create 'atmosphere', the power to raise our emotions or quicken our blood. "It is also something else, and to define that other thing would be to explain the secret of the universe. This 'something else' in words is undefinable. It is their power to create not only atmosphere, but a world, which, while it lasts, seems more real and solid than this daily existence of pickpockets and trams."[21] This notion of word creating 'atmosphere' reflects the Postmodern theorist's notion of 'literature as the integration of language' in which "the various elements and components of the text are brought into a complex relation." In literature we look for and exploit this relation "between form and meaning or theme and grammar and, attempting to understand the contribution each element makes to the effect of the whole, find integration, harmony, tension, or dissonance."[22] Forster's comprehensive vision of the house of words thus in the Postmodern theorist's experimental vision boils down to a consideration of literature by looking above all at the organization of its language, not reading it as a representation of the author's mind or as the reflection of the society that produced it. Shunning all extraneous implications the Postmodern theorist studies a literary text in its linguistic purity, and reconstructs a whole new universe of meanings. According to Norse mythology, the house of *Thor* had six hundred storeys.[23] This implies

---

20. Forster, E.M., A Passage to India(London, Penguin Books, 1989) p. 58.
21. "Anonymity : An Inquiry, TCD, p. 89
22. Jonathhan Culler, Literary Theory A Very Short Introduction (Oxford, 1997) pp. 29-30
23. **Thor**, in Norse mythology, the god of thunder, eldest son of Odin, ruler of the gods, and Jord, the earth goddess. Thor was the strongest of the Aesir, the chief gods, whom he helped

the Scandinavian suggestion that a man's house, aye, his heart should have six hundred storeys. Nothing and no one should be excluded from it. Literature thus is the house of words which has more mansions than 'our Father's house.' This is suggested in the typical Forster style in a passage from A Passage to India:

> In our Father's house are many mansions, they (old Mr. Graysford and young Mr. Sorley) taught, and there alone will the incompatible multitudes of mankind be welcomed and soothed. Not one shall be turned away by the servant at the veranda, be he black or white, not one shall be kept standing who approaches with a loving heart. Why should the divine hospitality cease here? Consider, with all reverence, the monkeys. May there be not a mansion for the monkeys also? Old Mr Graysford said No, but young Mr Sorley, who was advanced, said Yes ; he saw no reason why the monkeys should not have their collateral share of bliss, and he had sympathetic discussions about them with his Hindu friends. And the jackals? Jackal were indeed less to Mr Sorley's mind, but he admitted that the mercy of God, being infinite, may well embrace all mammals. And the wasps? He became uneasy during the descent to wasps, and was apt to change the conversation. And oranges, cactuses, crystals and mud? And the bacteria inside Mr Sorley? No, no, this is going too far. We must exclude someone from our gathering or we shall be left with nothing."[24]

From the gathering at the house of words no one and no things are excluded. Literature embraces everything and everyone. It is elemental in its reaches. It respects no geographic boundaries and social regulations, but legislates for the

---

protect from their enemies, the giants. He had a magic hammer, which he threw with the aid of iron gloves and which always returned to him. Thunder was supposed to be the sound of the rolling of his chariot. Thursday is named for Thor. – adapted from MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

24. A Passage to India, p. 58.

whole universe. A work of literature, a book or a poem or a novel, stands by itself without a signature or a label. It is its own passport and citizenship, and stamps its own visa to universal readership. That is why the *Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens* whose author is not known can be called 'a poem', and the *Ancient Mariner* , whose author "signed other poems and knew other poets", "ran away from Cambridge", enlisted as a Dragoon under the name of Trooper Comberback", "fell so constantly from his horse that it had to be withdrawn from beneath him permanently", "married Southey's sister, and gave lectures", "became stout, pious and dishonest, took opium and died", is called 'a poem by Coleridge'.[25] Anonymity provides an elusive sense of expansiveness to a work of art whereas knowledge about the author constricts the work. Biography delimits what anonymity gives wings to. This view connects aptly with the postmodern view of *literature as fiction*. Literature projects a fictional world that includes speaker, actors, events, and an implied audience. Forster's idea of anonymity and the Postmodern idea of 'fictionality' tend to elevate literature towards a state of expansiveness. The fictionality of literature separates language from other contexts and leaves the work's relation to the world totally open to interpretation.[26] Similarly Forster's idea of anonymity separates the work from its author and leaves it in an open field for interpretation. Great literature takes us back to the origin of inspiration and effects our tryst with recondite truth.

25. "Anonymity: An Enquiry", TCD, p. 85.
26. Culler, pp. 31 - 32

> What is so wonderful about great literature is that it transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of the man who wrote, and brings to birth in us also the creative impulse. Lost in beauty where he was lost, we find more than we ever threw away, we reach what seems to be our spiritual home, and remember ***that it was not the speaker who was in the beginning but the Word.*** (emphasis mine)[27]

Forster's theory of the ultimate effect of great literature, as reflected in the emphasized section above, clearly anticipates the subtle working of modern literary theory. Stephen Mallarme, the French symbolist poet substituted language itself for the writer who was supposed to be its owner. He argued that ***it is language which speaks, not the author***, and to write is to reach that point where only language acts, performs, and not 'me'.[28] Postmodern theorists of deconstruction by their emphasis on work as text and by the purely textual reading of literary texts try to revert back to the origin of meaning. Jacques Derrida, chief among the deconstruction theorists further develops on the thesis of structuralism that anything reasoned is never universal, timeless and stable and any meaning or identity is provisional and relative. He says meaning is never exhaustive. It can always be traced back to a prior network of differences, and further back again ad infinitum or the 'zero degree' of sense. Thus deconstruction peels away the layers of constructed meanings. In this process it also reveals the underlayers of meanings in a text that were suppressed or assumed in order for it to take its actual form, its presence. According to this

---

27. TCD, p. 92
28. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the author", David Lodge, p. 168

theory texts are not simply unitary in meanings but include resources which are either above or not in parity with their assertions or their author's intentions.[29] Deconstruction is an attempt to go beyond the surface, unitary and obvious significance of a text and thereby to reach unto deeper significances, the ultimate truth or the Primordial Word. Forster's view that

> Anonymous statements have, ... a universal air about them. ***Absolute truth, the collected wisdom of the universe, seems to be speaking, not the feeble voice of a man.***[30]

Forster reaches the idea of the Word by means of recognizing the 'creative impulse' while Derrida tries to reach it by systematic deconstruction of constructed presence or meaning. Forster's attitude to critical studies implies a playful tolerance when he says:

> ... but I do enjoy following particular examinations so far as an amateur can. It is delightful and profitable to enter into technicalities to the limit of one's poor ability, to continue as far as one can in the wake of an expert mind, to pursue an argument till it passes out of one's grasp. And to have, while this is going on, a particular work of art before one can be a great help. Besides learning about the work one increases one's powers. Criticism's central job seems to be education through precision.[31]

---

29. Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt, Post Modernism For Beginners (Icon Books, Cambridge, 1995) pp. 79 - 80
30. TCD, p. 94
31. TCD, pp. 116-117

This passage seems to be an oblique endorsement of what goes in modern times in the name of Critical Theory. One can see the apt similarity of this position with that of Paul de Man who, in his famous essay, "The Resistance to Theory", endorses the deconstructionist argument of the impossibility and also the inevitability of pinning down truth in language in a spirit of stoical irony.[32] The other deconstructionists take this as a license to pursue meaning as far as their own hermeneutic ingenuity will carry them. But de Man believes that the main theoretical interest of literary theory consists in the impossibility of its definition and describes contemporary literary theory as one more chapter of the infinitely prolonged discourse of endless frustration involving grammar, rhetoric and logic. Literature which flaunts its rhetoricity avoids the bad faith of other discourses that try to repress or deny it – including the discourses of traditional literary criticism and literary history. Resistance to theory, to which traditional scholars are naturally inclined, is a built-in constituent of theory itself. It is an attempt to displace the deeper contradictions in theory itself. But he values doing theory for its academic merits and is tolerant of its inherent contradictoriness when he says:

> To claim that this would be a sufficient reason not to envisage doing literary theory would be like rejecting anatomy because it has failed to cure mortality.[33]

---

32. Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory", David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory A Reader*, pp.354-371
33. Ibid., p. 363

Forster likewise acknowledges the general usefulness and educative value of critical theory while remaining distrustful of its central relevance as an effective approach to literature.

Forster's survey of the literary scene is done, not in the dogmatic style of a learned critic, but more in the spirit of an enthusiastic but intelligent fan who watches his favourite game played by those whom he has decided to like and admire. Literature to him is a "man-to-man business," which is presided over by the heart. And so the test of Forster's criticism is the condition of Forster's heart, which though a sensitive organ, has the shortcoming of hearts generally: a tendency to indulge prejudices, to play favourites, to ignore evidence, to be soft on the young, and to prefer the familiar. Still, it is a good and often a strong heart. When it cooperates with Forster's fine literary intelligence, we have criticism of the first order.[34] He was an expert reader. He studies and evaluates literature of all ages in general and English literature in particular with a very conscious emphasis on its personal, human relevance. His literary yardstick is expressed in simple terms. According to him the stimulating quality in books and music is their power to give pleasure and where there is intense enjoyment, grave or gay, thence will proceed the help which every individual needs.[35] This echoes the postmodern obsession with the idea of ***literature as aesthetic object***. According to Immanuel Kant aesthetics is an attempt to bridge the gap

34. Wilfred Stone, p. 366
35. "A Note on the Way", *Abinger Harvest*, p. 87

between the material and the spiritual world, between a world of forces and magnitudes and a world of concepts. Aesthetic objects with their combination of sensuous form (colours, sounds) and spiritual content(ideas), illustrate the possibility of bringing together the material and the spiritual. So a literary work is an aesthetic object because it engages the readers to consider the interrelation between form and content. It has 'purposiveness without purpose'.[36] A literary work though autonomous in itself does exert influence by virtue of its dynamic forces. The aesthetic impulse may not be immediately or directly useful in itself, but the objects engendered by it, according to Forster, have helped "to lead us out of the darkness."[37] Thus the beautiful words in a poem of William Davenant are lovely in their little way and they promote the "general belief in loveliness which is part of our outfit against brutality." They have gone down "to a region in me which Mathew Arnold and Beethoven have also reached."[38] Books had helped Forster in the 'great' war and he lists the people he clung to during the war crisis. They were Blake, William Morris, the early T.S.Eliot, J.K. Huysmans, Yeats. Mathew Arnold whose poetry "is both an armoury and an enchanted garden" and he by "the allusive wisdom of his lyrics" deposits grains of strength in a period of great crisis. Thus he inspired Forster because "he can give us calm."[39]. Forster further sought solace in the writer's ability to create something better than the bloodshed and dullness which the world has been witnessing. In

36. Culler, p. 33
37. "The Claims of Art", Listener, XXVI, - quoted by McDowell, p. 22
38. "A Note on the Way", AH, pp. 87-88
39. Ibid, pp. 88-89

an age which could not produce a Shakespeare or a Jane Austen or a St.Augustine, a world in which there was not much opportunity to look within and create because of the great war outside, writers like Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D.H.Lawrence and T.E.Lawrence looked outside and found their material lying about in the world. They arranged it and re-created it from within. Forster's literary criticism has no predetermined scope and limit. He attributes literary qualities to non-literary authors and their works. This tendency has direct connection to what 'theory' and theorists have done according to Culler:

> ...writings from outside the field of literary studies have been taken up by people in literary studies because their analyses of language, or mind, or history, or culture, offer new and persuasive accounts of textual and cultural matters. Theory in this sense is not a set of methods for literary study but as unbounded group of writings about everything under the sun...[40]

Forster's argument reflects the superior claim of the literary narrative to effect intelligibility not only in literary texts but other texts as well. Similarly recent theorists by their textual or literary reading have demonstrated "a powerful literariness at work in supposedly non-literary texts". They have shown how rhetorical figures shape thoughts in non-literary discourses also and have thus complicated "the distinction between the literary and the non-literary."[41] Literary

40. Culler, p. 3
41. Ibid p. 19

qualities are considered crucial to non-literary discourses and the postmodern theorists adopt a similarity of approach for the study of literary and non-literary texts. Literature, on the other hand, is "displaced, fragmented, removed from any separate essence of identity, plunged into textuality, and brought back in that very textuality, the literariness, the madness of words." This implies deconstruction and the elaboration of new canons, poetics, structuralist or other, but also "the dissolution of the literary into the cultural, cultural studies."[42] Forster's appreciative, sympathetic and imaginative reading of authors whose works are not literature in the strict sense of the term seems to have an unconscious inclination to what *theory* terms as literary or *textual* reading. In his scheme of things too the borderline between literary and non-literary discourses seems to be blurred. Thus Lytton Strachey, who "has revolutionized the art of biography" through his *Queen Victoria*, and who has "managed to get inside his subject",

> makes his people move; they are alive, like characters in a novel: he constructs or rather reconstructs them from within.... That was his great contribution. He was a historian who worked from within....What matters is good work, and *Queen Victoria* is a masterpiece.[43]

Forster' admiration grows because Lytton Strachey was "a gay person who loved fun and nonsense" and he knew how to make use of them in his work to convey the sense of life. Strachey brings his audience in close touch with the

---

42. Stephen Heath, p. 47

underside of the mind. He praises Godsworthy Lowes Dickinson's attitude to biography. Dickinson "admired a biography not when it treated its subject in a reverent spirit but when it made it come alive."[44] Forster is attracted by whatever is influenced by and expresses "inner life". Dickinson was aware of "a Sacred Fire" deep within to which one can reach by means of music and poetry.[45] Forster shares this Dickinsonian sense of transformation through poetry and music, and pleads for the approximation in art to something "magical". He is only too ready to recognize the essential poetry in any human endeavour. He is constantly on the look out for it and it seldom eludes him. He laments the present indifference to contemporary poetry and considers it part of the general menace to literature.[46] According to him poetry demands a good-tempered approach and does not deserve the traditionally dutiful sneering of the critics. This sympathy with the poetic which is the elusive outcome of the marriage between music and ideas is the main thrust of Forster's literary criticism. As a literary critic Forster roughly equates this 'music-ideas' or rhythmic thoughts with the element of poetry and is in a constant quest after it in the works of different authors. Wilfrid Blunt,[47] who travelled wisely and poetically, who "was the enfant terrible in politics", who dreaded war in the east because it will enslave the conservative Oriental nations whom he loved and who loved him, is admired for his oriental sympathy as a statesman and for his diaries. Ignoring the conventions of his race

---

43. "English Prose Between 1918 And 1939", TCD, pp. 285-286
44. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (New York, 1934) p. viii – quoted by Watt, op.cit, p. 52
45. "A Great Humanist," Listener – quoted by McDowell, op.cit, p. 24
46. "An Outsider On Poetry", TCD, p. 290
47. "Wilfrid Blunt", AH, pp. 295 - 308

and rank as an English gentleman of genius, he remained an amateur – a lover of intellect, generosity, liberty and tradition, qualities which Forster prized greatly. In spite of his career which was practical he preserved his aesthetic vision, cared about earthly grace and conceived even of heaven as a garden. He wrote his diaries with both feeling and detachment which helped him to see into the mind of others.

> It is the conception not only of an 'Easterner', but of a poet. Partly by achievement and wholly by temperament Blunt is a poet, for whom graciousness and beauty are the supreme good, and squalor the supreme evil, and who yearns, ... for a world that shall be small and fruitful and clean.

Blunt records the approach of a great war with "the acuteness of a political observer and the vision of a poet" in his diaries. They are a celebration of wit, imagination, warmth of heart, courage, generosity, acuteness of judgement with little irritable patches of vanity and dilettantism. Though at times he seemed to draw up an imposing syllabus the diaries do "express the emotional attitude of the moment." And there are passages in the diaries which are good examples of "the pictorial power which would have made Blunt's fortune as a novelist." Blunt tries to bring his essential poetry alive in his writings and the freedom he celebrates as the child of the age of independent travel attracts Forster's attention as a critic. Forster's evaluation of Blunt can be instanced as a postmodern reading of a non-literary text as a cultural study attributing literary

qualities to that text. Blunt is temperamentally a poet, his pictorial power would have made him a novelist, but what he has written are diaries whose literariness as texts makes them subjects of cultural studies in the theorist's parlance. Lack of this essential poetry makes the autobiography of Girolamo Cardano[48] plain and vapid: "there is nothing very attractive about him; there is certainly nothing poetic." But Forster sees the redeeming quality in his book : "He is so supremely interesting to himself that he cannot but interest others; and his little book ranks among the great autobiographies of the world." Aldous Huxley is mildly admired and his *Texts and Pretexts* is recommended because it is "a personal book, the fruit of an unusual personality."[49] Forster considers the ability of a writer to uncover his hidden mind in his work as the test of his greatness. He criticizes Sir Sydney Lee's biography of King Edward VII saying : "This book is dead". Lee uses words "without vision, without music, without feeling" and his "officialism has destroyed his scale of values".[50] Forster admires Marianne Thornton, his Great aunt for her capacity to be poetic in her description of things, even of machines. He writes in his biography of her: "Marianne describes it from her own point of view and with more poetry than usual; with a touch indeed of the magic of Thomas Hardy."[51] Carlyle and Macaulay are praised in a BBC talk on October 3, 1943 because they "get close up to their characters."[52] But *Marco Polo* " is not a first-rate book, for the reason that its author is interested in novelties, to the

---

48. "Cardan", AH, pp. 208 - 221
49. "Side Dishes", Listener 8 (1932) – quoted by Donald Watt, Forster's Criticism, p. 46
50. "Edward VII", *Calender of Modern Letters*, - quoted by Donalld Watt, p.47.
51. *Marianne Thornton: A Domestic Biography* 1797 – 1887 (New York, 1956), p. 223
52. Watt, op.cit, p. 52

exclusion of human beings....he could not differentiate between men and make them come alive ... they never fascinated him".[53] Similarly Rudyard Kipling was blind to the world of beauty and Forster in his review of Kipling's *Letters of Travel* in 1920 entitled "The Boy Who Never Grew Up", attributes to him "the mentality of a Boy Scout." Years later he is still more vitriolic in his criticism of Kipling: "Immaturity underlies both his imagination and his effrontery."[54] Kipling does not deny the inner life but he pushes it far into the background and brings material strength and material organization, that is the Empire, to the front. Similarly H.G.Wells is chastised for his adoration of science and his blindness to the limitations and the defects of science in his book *The Outline of History*. In contrast Forster finds pools of imagination and beauty in the memoirs of Emperor Babur[55] whose "career was not only successful, but artistic!" Babur fulfilled the whole nature of man and his energy and ambition were touched with "sensitiveness". The sentences in his Memoirs "jostle against one another like live people in a crowd". Babur's "warm heart" invites the modern reader naturally to accompany him "if he cares to come." There was essential poetry in Babur which could connect the practical and the poetic in his life and so he could convey an attractive sense of wholeness.

---

53. "Marco Polo", AH, p. 318
54. Watt, op.cit, p. 53
55. "The Emperor Babur", AH, pp. 319 - 323

Forster praises Gibbon's monumental work, *The Decline and Fall*,[56] "the great history which has made his name immortal." Though Gibbon is "a great navigator of the sea of history", and his book has "the majesty, the precision and the reliability ...(and) almost ... the poetry and the beauty of a ship", though he is read because of his "accuracy of fact and his sound historical judgement", though he "never developed his emotions", though he achieved stateliness and accuracy by "curtailing his passions", he "remains an attractive character, despite his formalism and worldliness." Forster classes Gibbon's genius as an extinct species under the modern conditions.

> We could not have a Gibbon today. Our conditions forbid it. The war says no. Totalitarianism says no. The social conscience says no.

Forster values Gibbon's contributions as literary because for Gibbon "study and amusement were ... the same thing : he did not split his life into 'work' and 'recreation'", because he has the stateliness and sanity of the admirable

---

56. **Gibbon, Edward** (1737-1794), the greatest English historian of his time and author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788). Despite the availability of new factual data and a recognition of Gibbon's Western bias, which placed moral judgments on the material decadence of Roman times, *Decline and Fall* is still read and enjoyed. In 1764, while visiting Rome, Gibbon decided to write about the city's history. In another two years his project was clear, and he began to set down on paper 1300 years of history. The first volume of *Decline and Fall* appeared in 1776. Gibbon was praised for the sk ill and beauty of his writing. He ignored outcries against his religious skepticism (he had dealt rather coolly with early Christianity), but he stoutly defended all attacks on his facts. The next two volumes, which bring to an end the period of the Western Empire (to about AD 480), came out in 1781. The final 1000 years of the empire in the East unfold in his last three volumes, completed in Lausanne in 1787 and published in 1788. Gibbon was often ridiculed for his vanity, style of dress, and physical appearance. London's intellectual circles, however, admired his clear mind and absolute control of emotion. *Memoirs of My Life* and *Miscellaneous Works* were published posthum ously in 1796. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

eighteenth century, because he "never fusses", because he "is an aristocrat". He is singularly admirable though he "was not an ardent character", though he "disapproved of enthusiasm", though he "disliked religion" and considered love and lovers as contemptuous.

> Our historians are either fanatics or scientists, and he was neither. *He was a **man of letters***, equipped for evoking and interpreting the past. The great ship of his genius ploughs seas which, according to theorists, should lie beyond his range, and we can only thank the human star that this is so, that he lived, and lived just when he did.(italics & emphasis mine)

Gibbon's great history is great literature because in it there is "great English, and a great rounded life", and he "is a landmark and a signpost – a landmark of human achievement : and a signpost because the social convulsions of the Roman Empire as described by him sometimes pre-figure and indicate these convulsions which shake the whole world today."[57] Forster greatly admires Voltaire who symbolizes eighteenth century Europe for him. He selects Shakespeare and Voltaire as the two spokesmen for Europe at the Last Judgment. Shakespeare is chosen for his creative genius and Voltaire for his humanity and critical genius. He readily discovers his similarity with Voltaire:

> Voltaire and I do speak the same language; vast though be the difference in our vocabularies, we are both civilized... we belong to the cultural interlude which came between the fall of barbarism and the rise of

> universal 'education' ... we believe in reason, I pity, and in not always coming out right.[58]

Voltaire was passionate, tolerant, liberal eclectic and he sincerely believed that politics was a philosophy of the second best. He was not a consistency fanatic and was not at all interested in system building. He hated religious fanaticism and strongly defended civil liberty. These are the very values which Forster championed as an artist as well as critic. Forster's criticism blossoms when he finds himself sharing a fellowship with the author he discourses on and he brings out the best that is within himself. "Voltaire cared for the truth, he believed in tolerance, he pitied the oppressed and since he was a forceful character he was able to drive his ideas home. ***They happened to be my own ideas.***"[59] He sees Voltaire as the moral antithesis of Fascism and restructures him after his own moral outlook.

> ... if a man believes in liberty and variety and tolerance and sympathy he cannot breathe the air of the totalitarian state.... Voltaire kept faith with the human spirit. He fought its battle against German dictatorship two hundred years before our time.[60]

57. "Gibbon and his Autobiography", TCD, pp. 167 – 171.
58. Commonplace Book, , c, 1935, p. 103 – in R. Advani, p. 175.
59. "Voltaire and Frederick the Great", TCD, p. 172
60. Ibid, pp. 175 - 176

This is similar to what a structuralist critic does, that is, building ideological castles out of the debris of a discourse and producing his own work out of this meaning.[61]

The realm of the letters in which Forster equates history with literature and study with amusement thus becomes a colorful stadium having many tracks, – history, biography, Letters, Memoirs, Travelogues, – a comprehensive and eclectic site for what the postmoderns call 'cultural studies'. According to Culler, theory is not the theory of literature but of culture in the broadest sense. Theory and cultural studies go together : 'theory' is the theory and cultural studies is the practice.' *Cultural studies is the practice of which what we call 'theory' for short is the theory.*[62] Forster's appreciative interpretation of non-literary texts and his analysis of literary texts for their human values is conducted in a very casual, informal and non-theoretical manner. In fact he creates literature out of history and history out of literature. This approach links Forster's critical temperament with the spirit of the modern theorists. He may not share their vital enthusiasm for the meticulous methodologies but is largely in sympathy with their general view that truth is multi-faceted and the Truth is yet to be attained. He is an avid searcher of the 'poetic quality' in works of art, and this quality extends beyond the realm of verse and thus becomes synonymous with the unpredictable, personal, even fantastic play of the creative imagination.

---

61. Levi Strauss – quoted in Gerard Genette, "Structuralism and criticism", David Lodge, p. 64.
62. Culler, p. 43

In his imaginative excursion into works of literary authors he is intensely on the look out for this poetic quality which enables the artist to go beyond the hard confines of facts and common sense. Great poets contradict the facts of life as Shelley, Dante and Keats have done. He calls them "greatest of all men" because of their poetic power to contradict common sense. His plea for imagination becomes the central critical emphasis when he says that to write good books,

> Imagination is needed, but not the imagination that opens the gates of fairyland – gates which I would indicate but not attempt to enter. The land inside them belongs to the poet, whose privilege it is to contradict the facts of life, to make the impossible the inevitable, to alter the whole course of nature, until the sun rises in the west, as it did for Shelley, and the heavens open as they did for Dante and Keats. These men are the greatest of all men. But they contradict the facts of life, they do not falsify them. For the men who falsify life, who profess to be accurate and give us inaccuracy, no blame can be too strong.[63]

Forster does not believe in absolute accuracy of literary interpretation and the license to poetry to defy common sense accords with the postmodern trend and theory whose main effect "is the disputing of 'common sense': common-sense views about meaning, writing, literature, experience." Theory questions the conception that the meaning of an utterance or text is what the speaker had in mind; it questions the idea that the truth which a text expresses lies outside, and

63. Forster Papers – quoted by Watt, p. 48

also the notion that reality is what is 'present' at a given moment.[64] Literature should spring surprises and Forster praises Wordsworth for this quality of springing surprises. "He seems often to versify trifles and twaddle, he has defects of style and temper, but constantly when we do not expect it, he looms up" and has the power to obscure our horizon with inexpressible thoughts". Forster is overwhelmed by "not what he thought but what he felt."[65] He quarrels vehemently with the eighteenth century English poetry even as an undergraduate because of its characteristic refusal or incapacity to feel. In his essay written probably in 1897 he accuses Pope and Dryden for giving "a disastrous impulse to English poetry". Dryden is seen as the corrupter of English Poetry" with his conservative talent, and Pope brought poetry so far away from Milton and the Elizabethans and thereby crushed "all that was spontaneous and hearty in the poetry of the time and degraded it to a dreary level of artificiality and mechanical rhetoric." He calls them clever men but not poets.[66] In his lecture, "Creator as Critic", Forster says that there is a lack of human warmth in Dryden's poetry and he finds him lacking in "the central spot".[67] But this defect, this central vacuum makes Dryden a good critic because the passionate nature very vital to the artist was absent in Dryden. He is all "jokiness and decentralization" and is never dogmatic. Forster thinks that greatness in literature depends largely upon the creative force or vitality of the writer. Thus A.E.

---

64. Culler, p. 4
65. *Forster Papers – quoted by Watt, p. 48*
66. Ibid p. 49
67. R.Advani, p.176

Houseman is successful as a poet. His poems are not scholarly exercises but "the vibrations, the motions of the heart."[68] Cowper, on the other hand, did not reach greatness because he lacked the energy to add to his knowledge. But he has merit because he had genuine instinct within his own sphere, "inside his cocoon".[69]

John Skelton,[70] the clergyman-poet is seen as "extremely strange" because the age of the 'early Tudors' in which he flourished is "difficult to interpret." That is why when we have read him we will get the feeling that we have been "in contact with someone unusual." But as Forster goes on discussing Skelton and quoting from his poems this sense of remoteness assumes a familiar note. Skelton becomes as solid as the 'Diss church' which stands upon a hill, adequate, dignified and commodious, asserting "its pre-eminence over its surroundings." Skelton who wrote lengthy poems "helps to emphasize the difference in taste and in style between the sixteenth century and our own. His world is infinitely remote; not only is it coarse and rough, but there is an

---

68. "Ancient and Modern", *Listener*, XVI – quoted by McDowell, p. 25
69. "William Cowper, An Englishman," *Spectator*, CXLVIII – quoted by McDowell, p. 25
70. **Skelton, John** (1460?-1529), English poet and satirist, born probably in Diss, Norfolk, and educated at the University of Cambridge. He was a tutor to Prince Henry, later Henry VIII. *The Bowge of Court* (1498) was a satire of court politics that Skelton wrote just before stepping out of court life and becoming a clergyman. He did not stay out of court long, however, returning to serve in various capacities. Skelton was ordained a priest in 1498 and became rector of Diss about 1502. He was also adviser to Henry VIII. He is best known for his satirical poems attacking the court and the corruption of the clergy. Skelton's verse is written in a unique style known as Skeltonics: short, alliterative lines with a persistent repetition of the same rhyme that maintain a vernacular tone, the repetitive rhymes giving the lines a "breathless" rhythm. His poems include *Collyn Clout* (1522) and *Why Come Ye Not to Court?* (1522), both attacks on Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, and corruption in the church. Skelton was admired by W. H. Auden and Robert Graves for his unique voice and innovative meter. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

uncertainty of touch about it which we find hard to discount. Is he humorous? Undoubtedly, but where are we supposed to laugh? Is he being serious? If so, where and how much? .... Skelton belongs to an age of break-up .... He belongs to a period when England was trying to find herself - ... He is very much the product of his times – ". Forster quotes some of Skelton's lines as example of the weight and thoughtfulness which are "unusual" in him.

> Though ye suppose all jeopardies are passed
> And all is done that ye looked for before,
> Ware yet, I warn you, of Fortune's double cast,
> For one false point she is wont to keep in store,
> And under the skin oft festered is the sore;
> That when ye think all danger for to pass
> Ware of the *lizard* lieth *lurking in the grass*. (italics mine)
> ('Philip Sparrow')

The menace of the lizard is a challenge to the complacency born of the secure solidity in which the English temperament revels itself. Forster prescribes 'caution' and 'courage' against this snobbish attitude. The same is true also of his critical attitude which disclaims authority and proceeds cautiously, finding courage in the rhythm of the movement. Like Skelton's "fearless and abusive character" into which "tenderness" also entered, Forster's criticism, too, has the spirit of the *Redcross Knight,* - "not the dying tradition of chivalry", but "something personal." Like Skelton who "who can show genuine emotions at moments, both about this world and the next", and who "may have had the right on his side and

... courage and sincerity" too, Forster's literary criticism touches our hearts, and provides "a curious impression of gaiety". We have the same feeling as we have had when we read the story of the curate in Skelton's 'Ware the Hawk', the feeling of having had "a good time". Skelton, both in his life and in his writing, has been "thoroughly happy",[71] and we find the same felicity of sentiments and expression we find in Forster's critical appraisal of him. Forster admires Skelton because he was "anti-dogmatic and sturdily independent of both court and church, yet combined his private existence with a strong social conscience."[72] He fought against ecclesiastical corruption which Cardinal Wolsey's "luxury, immorality and business" symbolized.[73] He was a keen observer of life and was avidly worldly in his attitudes. "As a priest, he was not and could not be married, but he regarded his mistress as his legal consort".[74] This feeling of tenderness for women makes him more human and his poetry rich in emotional material. He has "a feeling for rhythm and a copious vocabulary. Sometimes ... he is tender and charming, occasionally he is devout and very occasionally he is wise. On the whole he's comic – a proper comic, with a love for improper fun, and a talent for abuse. ... he sings the material of laughter in a harsh voice .... He has indeed our national fondness for grumbling". Forster leaves him on a musical and nostalgic note. The musical note is the lambasting of the kitchen-boy-turned-pretender to the English throne whose musical incompetence Skelton exposed in

71. "John Skelton", TCD, pp. 141 – 158.
72. R. Advani, p. 170.
73. "John Skelton", TCD, p. 151.
74. Ibid. p. 148.

a satire called 'Against a comely Coistroun', a poem full of wordy blows. The nostalgic note is in Forster's wish that the pretender-musician as well as the curse-screeching poet "might have revived for us that past which is always too dim, always too muffled, always too refined."[75] The Diss Church rector-poet was great fun and Forster goes all out to make the most out of such fun which is rare and unusual in the modern fun-less world.

The same enthusiasm for fun informs his views on Shakespeare. "Shakespeare is fun", he says in his 1942 essay "Julius Caesar". He "never grumbles. He denounces life but he never complains of it; he presents even tragedies for our enjoyment." *Julius Caesar*, "the play lives" just as the ghost of Caesar "walks abroad", and is "part of the civilization of England and of all who read English." Though not included in Shakespeare's great plays, *Julius Caesar* is "a typical example of his genius", and we "are excited when the curtain rises." This capacity to excite by its "three well-timed explosions", - the murder, Antony's funeral speech and the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius in the battle camp, - is according to Forster, the reason for its popularity. From this levity and excitement Forster goes on to make generalization about Shakespeare.. "Shakespeare often does not mind about his people" he says, and finds a great deal of Shakespeare criticism "invalid" because "it assumes that his characters are real people". He suggests that the "play's the thing", and it lives because it is full of real people. From this assertion of the organic autonomy of the play itself,

75. Ibid. pp. 158 – 159.

he goes on to detect "a contemporary voice" in it, that is, Mussolini's, which has been responsible for the production of the play "as a study of Fascism." But the Forsterian plea for imagination also detects that Caesar has not been presented "sympathetically" by Shakespeare which contradicts his earlier stance that Shakespeare did not treat his characters as real prople. Sympathy, or lack of it, is a conscious feeling and it cannot be attributed to one who does not care about people. Forster's tolerant and expansive critical mind does not hesitate in contradicting itself. His final appraisal of the play also hinges on its human qualities.

> Excitement – and enough real people. Here are two of the reasons why Julius Caesar lives...[76]

Mixing reality with excitement is the very life of literary art, and when Shakespeare the Elizabethan artist does that, Forster the modern artist-critic would eagerly notice it. Shakespeare is great as well as 'fun' because he effects the "connection" between fact and fiction. But Forster was visibly disturbed and disapproved of the fanatic "worship of Shakespeare", though he did not hold himself mentally aloof along with the "graver and grander minds of the epoch". He ridicules the Shakespeare celebration in which "the Jubilee Stakes" was won by a Jockey "who admitted that he had no great taste for reading". It was organized at Stratford by the leading actor of the day, Garrick with a view to

---

76. "Julius Caesar", TCD, pp. 159 – 163.

"place the bard's fame and his own upon a permanent and mutual basis".[77] He posed as a Shakespeare expert and "had improved the last act of *Hamlet* almost out of recognition, besides transfiguring *Romeo and Juliet.*" And Forster's comment on the whole pageant is: "All – all was English". This mild temperamental disapproval turns into tolerant admiration of Garrick's *Dedication Ode* which "*is an empty piece of writing, but its tone is significant ; it blends the* exalted and the intimate", and of Garrick's portrait done by Gainsborough who depicted him "with his arm round Shakespeare's waist – if a bust can be said to have a waist". The bust certainly does not have a waist and Garrick's sticking to the waist of Shakespeare's bust was some loyalty which "it is pleasant to recollect that Shakespeare did not betray". But it was a commercial, useful and beastly loyalty which got Garrick "his money back, and more than back". Garrick's Shakespearoltry was vulgar because it was self-advertisement, and commercial because of monetary considerations. Forster speaks of its unholy precedent – "the festivities of 1746" – "...held in a meadow near the church for

---

77. **Garrick, David** (1717-1779), British actor, theatrical manager, and playwright, regarded as one of the greatest actors of the British theater. His appearance in London in the year 1741in the title role of *Richard III,* by Shakespeare, scored a sensational triumph. During the following six months Garrick appeared in 18 different roles and rapidly established himself as one of the best actors of the time. Between 1742 and 1747 he acted at the three principal British theaters, the Drury Lane Theatre and the Covent Garden in London, and the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin, Ireland. As a theatrical manager, Garrick worked to make the plays of Shakespeare popular in 18th-century England, producing 24 of them. He was also instrumental in reforming a number of stage traditions, particularly in ending the practice of permitting privileged persons to sit on the stage during a performance. Garrick was equally skilled in tragedy, comedy, and farce. His acting was noted for its naturalness, vivacity, and power of characterization. His wide repertoire included 17 Shakespearean roles, among them the title roles in *Hamlet, King Lear,* and *Macbeth,* as well as Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing.* Garrick also wrote and staged several adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, including *Catharine and Petruchio* (1754), from *The Taming of the Shrew;* and *Florizel and Perdita* (1756), from *The Winter's Tale.* In 1831 the Garrick Club, named in his honor, was founded in London; its members include many leading actors and writers. – MS Encarta 97.

the purpose of restoring Shakespeare's monuments, and brought in (12) Pounds 10s., not a large sum, but sufficient to do considerable damage." Forster thus unconsciously criticises the present day waist-clutching tactics of publishing businesses which vulgarize the truly literary values of works of art. They are not very different from 'Garrick's Vagary', his three days' Shakespeare Jubilee for the autumn of 1769 "which should include almost everything except the performance of a Shakespeare play".[78] Forster's essay "Shakespeare and Egypt', written in 1916, shows Shakespeare as representing the transcendent and international ethic of art. The appeal of Shakespeare is so universal that the whole universe should with one voice worship him. Yet he is admired for local and fugitive reasons but not for serving narrow political ends. *Henry V* is admired in England for its "recruiting quality", 'Othello' is a favourite in Italy, *Hamlet* sells high in Denmark, and *Antony and Cleopatra* is over-focussed in Egypt. But Forster, having had an encounter of an emotional kind with Egypt, finds that Shakespeare's treatment is far from perfect as he never got the feeling of Egypt as a real geographic locale. "Shakespeare sees only the triple-turned whore whose flight brings disaster to her lover and herself." This casual treatment of Egypt is because Shakespeare's "interest in human dimension ... prevented him from recording anything authentic about the culture of ancient Egypt", thereby making *Antony and Cleopatra* more a tragedy than a history. But his use of the image of the Nile which for Forster acts "as a sort of Wagnerian or Proustian

---

78. "The Stratford Jubilee of 1769", TCD, pp. 164 – 167.

rhythmic thread" running through the play and making it recognizably Egyptian, and which like "an aspic's trail" leads the play into a cave of tragedy.[79] Forster also suggests that the symbolic significance of the play must not be stressed too far lest the universal Shakespeare be destroyed. Forster's criticism of the play reveals his typical preferences as a critic. He likes to dwell on the poetic process having its genesis in the poet's mind, namely, the bucket-dipping exercise. He admires Shakespeare's interest in the emotional life of his characters. He focuses on a recurrent and pre-dominant image – the Nile, which 'connects' the Roman and Egyptian civilizations. It is also the venue of conflict between these two cultures. Forster combines psychology, humanism and realism in his critical evaluation of Shakespeare. By using these and his own romantic feeling for nature, he discovers spiritual rhythms which semantically unify Antony and Cleopatra. Forster was also aware of the spiritual and intellectual inadequacies of the Elizabethan period in which Shakespeare lived and wrote, suffering from "the surrounding impoverishment as he pegged away at his thirty seven plays."[80]

'Connection' with the land is Forster's criterion for evaluating the skill and genius of George Crabbe[81] and his poem 'Peter Grimes.' The sombre and

---

79. R. Advani, pp. 171 – 172.
80. "Peeping at Elizabeth" – quoted by Advani, p. 173.
81. **Crabbe, George** (1754-1832), English poet, born at Aldeburgh, Suffolk. He practiced medicine from 1774 to 1780, when he went to London to try to make a living by writing. The statesman Edmund Burke helped him publish his manuscripts and to enter the ministry. Crabbe was ordained in 1781 and became rector of Aldeburgh. Subsequently he was curate at Trowbridge from 1814 until his death. His poetry, which by then was famous, was notable for unsentimental, realistic descriptions of nature and of English village life. It includes *The Village* (1783), which was admired for its realism and honesty. The poem's dark tone and lack of sentimentality were unconventional. Other works include *The Newspaper* (1785), *The*

rhythmic thread" running through the play and making it recognizably Egyptian, and which like "an aspic's trail" leads the play into a cave of tragedy.[79] Forster also suggests that the symbolic significance of the play must not be stressed too far lest the universal Shakespeare be destroyed. Forster's criticism of the play reveals his typical preferences as a critic. He likes to dwell on the poetic process having its genesis in the poet's mind, namely, the bucket-dipping exercise. He admires Shakespeare's interest in the emotional life of his characters. He focuses on a recurrent and pre-dominant image – the Nile, which 'connects' the Roman and Egyptian civilizations. It is also the venue of conflict between these two cultures. Forster combines psychology, humanism and realism in his critical evaluation of Shakespeare. By using these and his own romantic feeling for nature, he discovers spiritual rhythms which semantically unify Antony and Cleopatra. Forster was also aware of the spiritual and intellectual inadequacies of the Elizabethan period in which Shakespeare lived and wrote, suffering from "the surrounding impoverishment as he pegged away at his thirty seven plays."[80]

'Connection' with the land is Forster's criterion for evaluating the skill and genius of George Crabbe[81] and his poem 'Peter Grimes.' The sombre and

---

79. R. Advani, pp. 171 – 172.
80. "Peeping at Elizabeth" – quoted by Advani, p. 173.
81. **Crabbe, George** (1754-1832), English poet, born at Aldeburgh, Suffolk. He practiced medicine from 1774 to 1780, when he went to London to try to make a living by writing. The statesman Edmund Burke helped him publish his manuscripts and to enter the ministry. Crabbe was ordained in 1781 and became rector of Aldeburgh. Subsequently he was curate at Trowbridge from 1814 until his death. His poetry, which by then was famous, was notable for unsentimental, realistic descriptions of nature and of English village life. It includes *The Village* (1783), which was admired for its realism and honesty. The poem's dark tone and lack of sentimentality were unconventional. Other works include *The Newspaper* (1785), *The*

touching natural scene of Aldeburgh and the estuary of river Alde give a local habitation and a name to Crabbe's works. The savour and tang of Crabbe's poems lie in his typical, satirical and melancholy references to his native town. No prophet is welcomed and praised in his own land and so was Crabbe whose "antipathy to his birthplace was to play an essential part in the creation of Peter Grimes." Forster is explicit on this :

> It was not a straight-forward antipathy. It was connected with a profound attraction. He might leave Aldeburgh with his body, but he never emigrated spiritually ; here on the plane of creation was his home and he could not have found a better one. This borough made him a poet.... He remains here, however far he seemed to travel, whatever he says to the contrary. His best work describes the place directly – the village, the Parish Register, the Borough – and the atmosphere follows him when he attempts other themes .... he is in love with the scene.... The sights and sounds are not beautiful, the smells are putrid, yet ... he loves them and cannot help loving them. For he had the great good luck to belong to a particular part of England and to belong to it all his life.

This dual feeling of attraction and repulsion made him inwardly uneasy "and out of that uneasiness came his most powerful poems." Lacking the "power of harmonizing his experiences" which enabled Wordsworth to "encircle them with the sky" and "overawe them with tremendous mountains", Crabbe could only remain "down against them on the flat, amongst pebbles and weeds and driftwood, and within earshot of the sea which is no divine ocean." This "absence

---

Parish Register (1807), *The Borough* (1810), and *Tales of the Hall* (1819). Throughout the romantic movement, Crabbe maintained his realistic style and unflinching observations of

of elevation" made the best works of Crabbe remarkable. Attracted by "flatness" and not inspired by the "idea of regeneration", Crabbe "nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce, / And loved to stop beside the opening sluice ..." But Forster admires Crabbe's capacity to be in the "dream state", and his recognition of "its value for his work." More beautiful the dream the more terrible the awakening when "truth, terror, and the day" re-establish themselves and "the nightmare asserts itself". Poetry, according to Forster, should interpret human values and no one motive should, in poetry, be pushed too hard lest the fabric of the poem will rupture. When gently stressed, a motive will help our understanding. This is the reason why Forster disapproves Freudian and Marxist approaches to literature.

> The interpretations of Freud miss the values of art as infallibly as do those of Marx. They cannot explain values to us, they cannot show us why a work of art is good or how it became good. But they have their subsidiary use : they can indicate the condition of the artist's mind while he was creating ...[82]

Thus in Crabbe's drifting back in the spirit to Aldeburgh Forster sees a tendency of the poet and his creation sharing the same inner tension. But about this tendency of which there are many parallels Forster says :

> Such parallels can often be found between the experiences of a writer, and the experiences of a character in his books, but the parallels must be

---

rural life. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

> drawn lightly by the critic, for the experiences have usually been transformed out of recognition and the moral climate changed.[83]

But criticism is futile because the essence of Crabbe can only be obtained by reading his poems and so it is incommunicable in prose.[84] Forster greatly admires Blake who, in spite of the excessive mysticism and obscurity which Forster disapproved, voiced the truth that salvation is not something external but lies within man, in the creative potential of the human imagination. Blake's poetry resists criticism. "The cry that is raised by all literature – the cry of '***Read me, do not write about me**..*' rings with particular force through Blake".[85] This plea of all literature which Forster voices reveals his avant-garde tendency as a critic and connects very aptly to modern theory which triumphantly announces "the birth of the reader" which "must be at the cost of the death of the Author." Being a writer himself Forster voices the claims of the reader and thereby indirectly challenges the traditional writer-centric canons of literary criticism. Critical theory argues that a text's unity lies not in its origins but in its destination, that is, in the reader.[86] Forster's humanism naturally champions the reader's rights whereas classical criticism never paid any attention to the reader. Roland Barthes's theory of the death of the author frees a text from the interpretive restrictions imposed by the writer-inspired final signified. Traditional criticism focuses on the writer, explains the text and establishes meaning. This is the reign of the critic which is also the

---

82. "George Crabbe and Peter Grimes", TCD, pp. 176 – 192.
83. Ibid. p. 188.
84. 'Sidling After Crabbe', Listener, 9 June, 1955, -quoted by R> Advani, p. 183
85. "An approach to Blake", Spectator, 2 April 1932 – quoted in R.Advani, p. 183

reign of the author and the reader is largely marginalized. Forster's imaginative expostulation of Blake's poetic spirit signals a challenge to this systematic criticism and thus inspirationally parallels modern literary theory.

There may be similarities between the experiences and mental states of the writer and those of his character, but to say that the writer and his character are one would be untrue, though to say that the writer and character share certain psychological tensions would be quite true. Art, Forster argues, has its genesis in the creative imagination which accretes round people and transforms and transfigures them. In the act of artistic creation there is an interplay between the external world and the artist's mind. Frederick P.W.McDowell describes Forster's view of art as a modified version of the Aristotelian mimetic theory of literary criticism:

> The artist starts with the world as it is apprehended by his senses, and ... he embodies in his work, ... a reality that is in part representational. The poet is ... less bound by the social scene .... when the artist concentrates upon a single facet of his observation and experience, it may be transformed into the irridescent entity that we recognize as art.[87]

This view of the genesis of art is in consonance with Walter Pater who maintained that literature is dominated not by fact but the artist's sense of fact.[88]

---

86. Roland Barthes, "The death of the author", Dvid Lodge, p. 171
87. Frederick P.W.McDowell, Op. Cit, p. 30.
88. **Pater, Walter Horatio** (1839-1894), English essayist and critic, born in London, and educated at the University of Oxford, where he spent most of his life. He concentrated on interpreting to his age the art and literature of the Renaissance, through historical novels,

Speaking of Houseman, Forster says that the poet "hides things up and pares them away".[89] This is so not because of the refinement of the poet, but because of his intention to modify original experience to suit his method. He may also wish to stop short of total abandonment of nature by his distortions. But he must be willing to go beyond a prosaic realism and accept the world of imagination. The plain placid prosaic reality can be sharply defined and refined by a magical combination of artifice and the writer's vision. So there is in works of art a fusion between fact and fantasy which works mysteriously. The nature and method of this strange fusion cannot be scientifically explained as T.S.Eliot tried to do in his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* :

> It is in ... depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide. .... The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral and unchanged.[90]

---

stories, and, mainly, essays. His attention to elaborate, exquisite phrasing reveals his preoccupation with perfecting prose style without neglecting depth of subject matter. Pater is remembered primarily as an innovator in aesthetics who celebrated the pleasurable effects of art on the viewer or reader. – MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

89. "Ancient and Modern", *Listener*, XVI (Nov. 11, 1936), 921.
90. Eliot T.S., "Tradition and the Individual Talent", The Norton Anthology of English Literature, pp. 2538 –

Differing sharply from this 'platinum theory', Forster holds the view that the artist, while he uses his immediate knowledge of life, has also to assimilate his experiences which, heightened by his memory and imagination, are transformed into art. The artist's mind, therefore, is not merely a catalytic agent which remains unchanged like the platinum. Art, to a certain extent, reflects the artist's knowledge which is suffused and made passionate by his imagination and memory. This power of imagination enables the writer to establish 'diagonals' in his work. When the writer brings to bear his sensibility upon facts and like the Greek poet Cavafy, he will stand "at a slight angle to the universe".[91] His vision and the reality, in their fusion, thus establish the 'diagonal' which 'connects' the writer to the universe of new meanings. These notions of the 'diagonal' and 'slight angle' reflect and anticipate the modern theory's disapproval of any final, logo-centric meanings in a discourse and the subsequent attempt at decentralization and deconstruction. But Forster himself always remains at a slight angle to any literary theory. He cherished nineteenth century ideals and values such as humanism, liberalism, tolerance, democracy, spiritual value of art, natural beauty, inner life. The mainstream of the nineteenth century literary theory criticized the gross violation of human elements by the onslaught of industrialism. Standing at a slight angle to the mainstream nineteenth century literary theory, Forster provides many diagonals to modern literary theory and is, therefore, a link between literary modernism and postmodernism.

---

91. Pharon and Pharillon, p. 92.

This "slight angle to the universe" is also found in the "primeval romanticism" that lurked in Ibsen the poet.[92] Differing sharply from Ibsen critics who held that "the poetry, if ever there was any, has gone" from Ibsen, and that he "had a lyric Pegasus killed under him", Forster firmly holds the view that "Ibsen was a poet at forty .... He was a poet at sixty also." Ibsen caught the alluring mystery of nature effectively in his poetic grasp.

> His continued interest in avalanches, water, trees, fire, mines, high places, traveling, was not accidental. Not only was he born a poet - he died one, and as soon as we try to understand him instead of asking him to teach us, the point becomes clearer.[93]

Forster criticizes the didactic tendencies of Ibsen which dwell not on "any permanent view of conduct or the universe", but on "passing irritabilities" which clouded his message. He also flays Ibsen for "taking a harsh or a depressing view of human relationships" and for finding "personal intercourse sordid." His characters, therefore, form a "procession ... incapable of comradeship and ecstasy". They are heroic or happy only before the curtains rose and they survive as decay, their intercourse being "worse than unfriendly, it is petty". This is the reason why in Ibsen's plays "moral ugliness trespasses into the aesthetic" making the achievement of poetry a difficult task in his plays. When it is nearly achieved "there is always something automatic about it". Using a domestic and human analogy, Forster describes Ibsen as a father sitting at breakfast table with

---

92. "Ibsen the Romantic", Abinger Harvest, p. 101.

a newspaper revealing the defects of society to which he is very sensitive and for which he is very generous in blaming others. "Seldom can a great genius have had so large a dose of domestic irritability", Forster declares, but in the very next breath he cites this "nagging quality, this habitual bitterness" as "essential to his greatness, because they beckon to the poetry in him." Forster is glad that Ibsen was "subterranean", that he loved "narrow passages and darkness", and the "romantic intensity" arising out of this "underground" quality is "absolutely unique in literature."

> To his impassioned vision dead and damaged things, however contemptible socially, dwell forever in the land of romance, and this is the secret of his so-called symbolism : a ***connexion*** is found between objects that lead different types of existence ; they reinforce one another and each lives more intensely than before.(italics & emphasis mine)[94]

This is the diagonal syndrome which sees and establishes connections in the seemingly meaningless "mysteriousness" with the help of "an unseen power" which slips between the words. This, according to Forster, is what makes Ibsen a great artist to whom as with Beethoven "beauty comes not from the tunes, but from the way they are used and are worked into the joints of action." In Ibsen symbolism is part of the action and never stands in the way of action. Forster makes a revealing critical pronouncement on Ibsen when he says : "... Ibsen was a poet, to whom creation and craftsmanship were one." As a result, he

---

93. Ibid., pp - 96 - 97.
94. Ibid. pp - 97 - 99.

"connects the forces of nature and the fortunes of men", and "Everything rings true and echoes far because it is in the exact place which its surroundings require." This geographic harmony is due to the diagonal effect in his works which, with a slight angularity, tries to connect things with things, and mystery with meaning. This is also due to the fact that Ibsen's poetry and his view of human nature have the same source, and this harmonizes his art and gives a truly human quality to his works. The passionate intensity which he experienced in nature kept haunting him and led him to believe in the "romantic possibilities of scenery".[95]

The war and a sprained ankle in Cairo brought Forster to T.S. Eliot's early works, and he speaks of his "very personal approach"[96] to him. The early poems of T.S. Eliot were a feeble protest and sang of private disgust and diffidence in a "world of gigantic horror". Instead of facing the reality of the war Eliot "could turn aside to complain of ladies and drawing-rooms" and thus "preserved a tiny drop of our self-respect, he carried on the human heritage." Eliot has enlisted and maintained Forster's initial "fragmentary sympathy" and he reads Eliot for "the witty resentment followed by the pinch of glory." Eliot's gesture was "not a handshake" and he does not write "for the lazy, the stupid, or the gross."[97] He took literature seriously and one cannot open his book as one would a cigarette case. We are expected to co-operate and do our share. His

95. Ibid. p. 100.
96. "T.S. Eliot", Abinger Harvest, p. 109
97. "T.S.Eliot", Abinger Harvest, pp. 102-104

criticism is not less serious than his creation. His essays of criticism, especially on Hamlet, are both sensitive and lucid. When he "is wishing to instruct his prose remains lucid, considerate and assured." When he is writing for people who may answer him back he becomes wary and his writing becomes heavy. So is the case with his "Notes Towards The Definition of Culture", and Forster comments: "what cumbersome English!"[98] He connects culture with the family, with Christianity. We get a feeling "that his religious faith is more important to him than anything else, and that art and literature are only valid in their relation to it." His purposeful interest in "polemical Christianity" does not match with liberalism, the virtue much valued by Forster. So in Eliot's 'Notes' culture, though we are made to feel its importance, "has not become more accessible."[99] He is the most important author for the young and they are far better qualified to expound him but they are averse to answering some questions about the references in the poems. Forster says that "questions about Eliot's meaning are only asked by those who will never understand it." The notes given by Eliot are "an additional trap."[100] While reading his poetry "we have the sense of being outwitted".

> The verse always sounds beautiful, but often conveys nothing. The prose always conveys something, but is often occupied in tracing the boundaries of the unsaid. The more we look into the fabrics, the more intellectual and emotional reservations do we find.[101]

---

98. "Two Books by T.S.Eliot", Two Cheers, pp. 265-266
99. Ibid, p. 266
100. "T.S.Eliot", AH, p. 105
101. Ibid.

These reservations are due to the fact that Eliot wrote his poems with "so much in his bones", that is, the whole of European tradition of literature and in a state of "continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality". Therefore he "cannot speak to the reader as man to man; indeed, while he creates he has ceased to be a man in the hand-shaking sense".[102] He is imbued with something "timeless" and so relapses into mental and emotional reticence. The reader who is equipped with the same sense of the past will appreciate him. Eliot's argument does not distinguish between literary and social tradition and Forster comments: "one has a feeling at moments that the Muses are connected not so much with Apollo as with the oldest county families ... and that Mr.Eliot, like Henry James, is romanticizing the land of his adoption."[103] Another reason for his obscurity is that his poems are not products of a private whim but they "belong to the succession of Ben Jonson, Marvell, and Donne; they are a protest against the personal raptures of the Lake School." They are evasive because Eliot is following "an inner rule – some canon of wit, elegance, taste, or Divine Grace", which the indisciplined reader cannot understand. *The Wasteland* is "about the fertilizing waters that arrived too late." It is a poem of horror with "outworks and blind alleys" all over it. It is "Mr. Eliot's greatest achievement" and "it has nothing to do with the English tradition in literature, ... except incidentally, ... It is just a personal comment on the universe, as individual and as isolated as Shelley's Prometheus."[104] Eliot experienced the horror in life and continued to suffer. He "is

102. Ibid, p. 106
103. Ibid, pp. 106-7

not a mystic" and he seeks "not revelation, but stability". This accounts for the inhospitality of his writings. There is no "note of invitation" to the reader to come in and participate. "Mr. Eliot does not want us in. He feels we shall increase the barrenness."[105] This adds to the difficulty in understanding him. He seems to have seen "something terrible" and has declined to say so plainly because he may be underestimating "the general decency of his audience".[106] His preoccupation with theology makes the reader suffer while he confronts Eliot's *Cocktail Party* though it is most beautifully and lucidly written. The characters are made to suffer and successful martyrdom is gloriously analyzed. "But aesthetically, the sufferings disturb the reader and distract him. The Christian ethic of atonement...comes down with too sudden a bump."[107] In a letter to William Plomer he says:

> Eliot does care about the soul, but the question of how he handles or would handle it is, I think, an important one, which the critics ignored. One of them rightly said that The Cocktail Party is a religious play, but it is also something more specific, namely priest-ridden.[108]

But Forster pays a tribute to Eliot's linguistic and stylistic skills when he says: "T.S.Eliot can do whatever he likes with the English language."[109] Forster admires him as a poet with "more staying power" and one who did not weaken

---

104. Ibid, pp. 107-8
105. Ibid, p. 108
106. Ibid, p. 109
107. "Two Books by T.S. Eliot", TCD, p. 268
108. Selected Letters 2, p. 241
109. Two Books by T.S.Eliot", TCD, p.268

himself by "whimsies." Eliot's devotional sincerity and theological obsession wearied Forster. He was critical of *Little Gidding*, the fourth of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and wrote in denunciation of its main idea

> ... there is something specially real in pain. I believe in pain of course - ... but as an interruption not as an essential. I side with all the other animals. It takes a human animal of Christian perversity to announce that the rose and the fire are one.[110]

Great as he thought Eliot was, Forster was not enthusiastic about him because of the near orthodoxy of his religious belief which got itself laced into his later poems.

Auden is also influenced by Christian dogma. In *The Enchafed Flood* he is full of admonitory note, the professional quote, but "underlying them is imaginative passion". Forster readily admits that he is strongly influenced by Auden: "He elicits a response which I cannot always explain. Because he once wrote 'We must love one another or die,' he can command me to follow him."[111] Auden had the necessary power and "the contemporary vision" which includes the past, and so he is able to arrest the sea which is "in retreat poetically." Taking us back to the romantics with his conjuror's tricks, Auden is able to interpret for us the "trinity of Sea, Desert, City."[112] He thus succeeds with his symbolism where the age of reason had failed. "Auden is a poet, who understands what poems feel

---

110. Letter to Eric Fletcher (1963), Selectec Letters 2, p. 283
111. "The Enchafed Flood", TCD, p. 272

like as well as what they mean," and The Enchafed Flood "is itself a poem" though its tone is critical and it is constructed like a lecture course or a thesis. Auden's hope, because it is poetic, "is the world's hope and its only hope."[113] Looking at *The Ascent of F.6*, a play by Auden and Isherwood, Forster's attention is focused at four levels, heroic level, politico-economic level, character level and psychological level. This is the eclectic approach which is typically Forsterian. The play is judged as "a tragedy in a modern mode, full of funniness and wisecracks. It is not an entertainment because of its grave general plan.[114]

William Barnes is nearly worshipped by Forster because he reflects a faith in the future loveliness and kindness that will return with the next generation. He welcomes the entire human race and "to read him is to enter a friendly cottage where a family party is in full swing." Simple themes fill the poems of Barnes and he writes of matters which move everyone and in a way which everyone can understand. Speaking of 'Woak Hill' Forster says it is impossible to read that poem without tears in one's eyes. It is impossible to study and criticize him but one can only shake hands with him in one's heart. We are overwhelmed by beauty in his works. There is no head-heart dichotomy in his work. His unique achievement was that he created touching poetry employing Anglo-Saxon words. He bravely accepted the little trials of life and its deeper sorrows and firmly believed that joy will prevail, joy beyond death which his religion stood for, and

112. Ibid, pp. 271 - 272
113. Ibid, pp. 273-274
114. "The \ascent of F.6", TCD, pp. 268 - 271

joy upon earth reflected in the village life. Repudiating some critics who may call Barnes "Sunday-schoolish", Forster comments: "But a muse can attend Sunday school. She disobeys all rules." Barnes gathered up all the happiness and beauty he could see around him, he invented more. He firmly believed that "There can be no art without love".[115] Forster believes that art and love are inseparable.

The same predominance of the heart in Edward Carpenter attracts Forster and he admires him for being "absolutely selfless." He discarded his own class and gained happiness doing so and his strong heart reached out to the working class and made him a socialist. He sought to destroy landlordism and capitalism and what he offered in their place was "love." He was also a mystic and expressed ardour for a better society in a famous volume of poems, *Towards Democracy.* Written in the style and the sprit of Whitman, these poems expressed "his love for the individual and for the beauty of nature." These are the two things he cared about in all his works and he "demands from society the furtherance of these two things: all else is nonsense." His prose reveals his sensible and affectionate character." He had no racial prejudice and had looked outside his race for companionship and was obliged to look outside his race again for wisdom. Thus "he reached equilibrium." He always gives out a feeling that "he had dominated his material and knew where he was in the world and

---

115. "William Barnes", TCD, pp. 208 - 212

what he wanted." Such self-assuredness is rare and Forster is generous in his tribute to Edward Carpenter.[116]

According to Forster, "creative writers are always greater than the causes that they represent" and they cannot be interpreted in terms merely of their attitude to society. That is why Forster admires Stefan George though he was far removed from Forster's brand of humanism and adopted in fact the very antithesis of it, authoritarianism. He found a cure for the evils of his age in authority and made the mistake of thinking that when a person is exceptional he ought to be a leader. "The idea of leadership, so seductive and so pernicious both for the leader and the led, invaded this fine artist." He was patronized and exploited by the Nazis and Hitler offered him high honours as a poet in the gangster state. But he could not stand the Nazi foulness and preferred to die in exile in Switzerland. In spite of the tragedy of his life Forster finds consolation in the fact that Stefan George was "a fine lyric poet, a sincere man of high ideals and of iron will." Being a recluse by nature he wrote for a small circle of friends. He had an intense personal experience which exalted his poetry but did not improve his judgment. Assuming the airs of a priest of his circle's cult, he surrounded himself with disciples who were taught to avoid common humanity. Yet Forster praises him for being a highly gifted poet, a lofty idealist with something of a prophet's grandeur.[117] He reacted to the age of misery by his authoritarianism.

---

116. "Edward Carpenter", TCD, pp. 216 - 218
117. "Gide And George", TCD, pp. 233 - 234

Another poet and hero who was widely accepted by fascism, D'Annunzio, "a very great southerner" is passionately admired for his characteristically local and sensuous contact with life. Though D'Annunzio is a troublesome poet with no "sense of humour" and "the saving grace", though he was marred by histrionic heroism and innate caddishness, "his poetry is more poetical than Byron's", and it was saturated with "the Renaissance passion for earthly immortality." Forster lists him with Paderewski and T.E.Lawrence as "three artists who achieved fame as men of action during the 1914-18 war" and terms him "the most spectacular" of the three. "So long as Italy is Italy, he will not be forgotten." D'Annunzio belongs to the "garrulous, restless, processional Italian Renaissance" he is always heralding some sumptuous embassy of his own creation. Connection with the earthly reality strongly informs his work as is evident from the suggestion that D'Annunzio's play *The Martyrdom of St.Sebastian* was inspired not by religious mysticism but by a pair of female legs.

> D'Annunzio was full of spiritual ideas, but could not use them until he had had the good fortune to see Ida Rubinstein dancing in a ballet. Then he exclaimed, 'Here are the legs of St.Sebastian for which I have been searching in vain all these years,' and poetry poured from his pen.

This strong sense of contact served as the springboard for his art and inspired him into orations about human destiny. His aesthetic sources are lists of fruits, mottoes, scents, horses, villas, women, dogs, and though they are "defiled by his possessiveness" they were "evidently necessary for his art." Forster feels that

the graffiti at the entrance of the poet's villa, 'Beware of the dog' and 'Beware of the master', though sound funny to the northerner, is symbolic to the southerners. "It is to them a cynical proclamation of virility." And like the splendid Mediterranean, the sea of courage and splendour, D'Annunzio's courage is unquestionable urging Italy into war and fighting himself in the trenches. Forster sings a litany to D'Annunzio:

> He could write like music, like scents, like religion, like blood, like anything, he could sweep into the folds of his magnificent prose whatever took his fancy, and then assert it was sacred. There has been nobody like him.[118]

The same sense of contact characterizes the poetry of the Greek poet, C.P. Cavafy whose subject matter was his own sensations and experiences. Forster admires him for his interests in courage and cowardice and bodily pleasure. Cavafy "can give the sense of human flesh and blood continuing through centuries". He had a very small ambition, that is, "to be understood in Alexandria and tolerated in Athens". Describing Cavafy as "largely magic", Forster pays tribute to his comprehensiveness as a poet:

> For Cavafy as a historical poet, or as an erotic poet, or an introspective one, would fail to convey that Mediterranean complexity. We need all of him if we are to understand anything....Cavafy is never embittered, never the invalid. He is thankful to have lived, and 'Young men even now are repeating his verses. His visions pass before their lively eyes, and even

> now they are moved by his revelation of beauty.' He has something of the antique faith in fame.

Cavafy strongly believed that the amours of youth even when disreputable are delightful and they create the future. The greatness of his poetry was due to his desire for and the power of physically snatching the sensation of the moment. "He begins from within", but "never makes a cult of himself or of what he feels." He even employs the supernatural as in "*One of their Gods*" to enrich voluptuousness. Forster's admiration becomes unbounded in this lacing of the divine with the sensuous:

> The idea that the Divine should descend to misbehave, so shocking to the Christian, comes naturally enough to a paganizing Greek, and the poem ... sums up for me much that is characteristic.

Cavafy believed in extending the civilization in which the Greek strain prevailed and this extension which is still extending seemed "to connote the human race".[119]

If Cavafy, a paganizing Greek extended civilization to include the whole human race, Mohammed Iqbal, an orthodox Moslem, a strong oriental in culture but not a fanatic extended human boundaries by his strong belief in the Self. Man "is the vice-regent of God upon earth" and he exhorts us to fortify our

---

118. "A Whiff of D'Annunzio", TCD, pp. 240 - 243
119. "The Complete Poems of C.P. Cavafy", TCD, pp. 243 - 248

personalities and to be hard. He believed in the redemptive power of human self. "Iqbal reminds us of Nietzsche" as well as Ibsen's Peer Gynt. "Renunciation of the Self is a form of cowardice, and therefore a crime." Combining the doctrine of hardness and of the Self with a capacity for mysticism Iqbal, the remarkable poet holds on to the precept that we shall never be God. "For God, like ourselves, has a Self, and he created us not out of himself but out of nothing." Strongly disliking pantheism which was rampant in India, he held the view that it

> is weakening and wrong to seek unity with the divine. Vision – perhaps. Union - no.... is his philosophy.... It gives us a shock and helps us to see where we are. It is non-Christian. It is in a sense anti-humanitarian. It inspires him to write poems. They flow in orthodox forms, but they contain matter which is excitingly modern.

Passionate sympathy for man and strong belief in his importance inform the poems of Iqbal and Forster the religious agnostic is charmed by the poem in which Man argues with God and claims to be the better artist of the two:

> Thou didst create night but I made the lamp.
> Thou didst create clay but I made the cup.
> Thou didst create the deserts, mountains, and forests,
> I produced the orchards, gardens and the groves:
> It is I who make the glass out of stone
> And it is I who turn a poison into an antidote.

The sense of solidity or hardness we experience in Iqbal's poetry is not due to the oppressive projection of his own Self or selfishness. His superman may

come from any class of society. A strong and passionate plea for the role of the human heart is evident in his poems as in 'Loneliness': "The world has no heart, and this earthly being of mine is all heart." With such pronounced humanistic stance Iqbal is what Forster cherishes in a poet

> Mohammed Iqbal is a genius and a commanding one, and though I often disagree with him and usually agree with Tagore, it is Iqbal I would rather read. I know where I am with him. He is one of the two great cultural figures of modern India....[120]

Forster disapproves of the fever of Tagore-worship which has prevented any realistic appraisal of Tagore as a poet. He found it difficult to listen to the authentic voice of Tagore in the midst of the hysteria, the noise and the nonsense of his worshippers. "He is a good writer .... But how good?" To answer this question Forster suggests that all adoration and worship should stop and we should be able to see the Beauty lurking in his works. He examines Tagore's play, *Chitra*, which was written long before the boom of cult and worship. There is serene beauty in *Chitra*; its action is no stronger than a flower, and the fragrance of blossom clings round every phrase. There is also 'something behind' – "that something for which the worshipper pants", that is, allegories, the contrast between the material and the immaterial, between pleasure and action, the nature of wedded joy which survives beyond youth and beauty. Chitra symbolizes all these but it is not spoilt by symbolism. Forster thinks Tagore's allegories are lame and usually they walk quietly and "one's enjoyment is

120. "Mohammed Iqbal", TCD, pp. 293 – 296

increased by the sense of half-audible stirrings in the midst of the jasmine bowers." But the worshippers usually drag the allegory from its usual state of semi-retirement and proclaim its importance in itself. By doing this they "brutalize the atmosphere and pay no real honour to the author." Forster sees through the mist of such hysteria of the Tagore-fanatics and tries to place him in perspective

> Tagore is a poet who, like any other, must contrive some sub-structure on which to exhibit beauty, and, being an Indian poet, he has turned to general ideas more readily than does his English brother. That is all. He is not a seer or a thinker. He is not to be classed with Nietzsche or Whitman, or others of whom he occasionally reminds us.

Tagore's plea is the plea of a poet for beauty, an exquisite plea for "pity for things that fade and are forgotten." It is a plea for maintaining the illusion of beauty for as Arjuna tells Chitra in *Chitra*:

> Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity.[121]

Tagore has known how to hearken to beauty and the din of worshippers cannot mislead him because he has nothing in common with them. *Chitra* is admired for its bower of flowers and the exhibition of beauty born of half-audible murmurings among the jasmine flowers, but Tagore's novel, *The Home and the*

---

121. Rabindranath Tagore, Chitra, Collected Poems and Plays, p. 171

World is full of Babu sentences. Forster wonders whether it is an experiment that has not quite come off. One is "puzzled by bad tastes that verge upon bad taste." The theme is very beautiful but when it is developed one receives inappropriate emotions and gets the feeling that the contrast is "between the well-bred and the ill-bred", not between the Home and the World.

> The Home is not really a home, but a retreat for seemly meditation upon infinity. And the World – it proves to be a sphere not for 'numberless tasks', but for a boarding-house flirtation that masks itself in mystic or patriotic talk.... In spite of the beautiful writing and the subtle metaphor and the noble outlook that are inseparable from Tagore's work, this strain of vulgarity persists. It is external, not essential, but it is there; the writer has been experimenting with matter whose properties he does not quite understand.[122]

Forster also finds fault with Tagore's introduction to Kalidasa's Sakuntala because he applies the "heavy hand of the schoolmaster" to a depressing effect and is silent on "the element of faery that figures so largely in its plot."[123] Here and elsewhere Tagore is flawed by superficialities which prevent the essential contact with the deeper zones of imagination.

Forster's view of literature can be called a 'holistic' one. He does not attach himself to any rigid theoretical positions and yet his plea for imagination inspires many imaginative possibilities which are manifested in contemporary critical

---

122. "Two Books by Tagore", AH, pp. 348 - 352
123. "The Golden Peak", Athanaeum(May 14, 1920), quoted by Watt, op cit, p. 47

theories. As he was against totalitarianism in politics he was very critical of inflexible standards and canons in literature. He pleaded for humanism and human values in the socio-political sphere and for imagination in the realm of letters. This avant-garde position links him to the postmodern era. His critical postulate in his famous essay "Anonymity: An Inquiry" that literature is the *expression of the underside of the mind and therefore it is anonymous* has given birth to many critical hypotheses and theories in modern times. He maintains that without the 'lower personality' there is no literature,

> because unless a man dips a bucket down into it occasionally he cannot produce first-class work. There is something general about it....It has something common with other deeper personalities, and the mystic will assert that the common quality is God, and that here, in the obscure recesses of our being, we near the gates of the Divine.

This commonality of a literary work with other literary works makes it universal and anonymous and a signature merely distracts the reader and limits his perception. Forster is over-emphatic on this point:

> To forget its Creator is one of the functions of a Creation. To remember him is to forget the days of one's youth. Literature does not want to remember. It is alive - ....[124]

This critical postulate of Forster while generally reflecting the postmodern tendency of questioning the central principles of literature, the critical ideas about

authorship, audience, the process of reading and criticism itself,[125] particularly resembles the theory of "The death of the author" as promulgated by Roland Barthes, the champion of Post-structuralism, who declared in 1968 in an essay by the same name that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.'[126] According to Barthes "the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text ... and every text is eternally written here and now." Writing, he argues, is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. It is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative sphere where all identity is lost including that of the author. When writing begins the voice loses its origin and the author enters into his own death. Surrealism has also contributed to this idea of desacrilization of the image of the Author by the famous 'surrealist jolt', that is, by ceaselessly frustrating of expectation of meaning. The hand performs the task of writing what the head itself is unaware of. This is a sort of impersonality theory of literature which Forster approves when he finds fault with the modern critics who "go too far in their insistence on personality."[127] Paul Valery, the French poet and critic, also found the psychology of the ego as an encumbrance, constantly derided the importance of the author but stressed the linguistic nature of his work and argued in favour of the essentially verbal condition of literature. He considered the writer's interiority as a superstition. These theorists argue that literature does not need the person of

---

124. TCD, pp. 90 - 91
125. Stephen Connor, opcit, p. 113
126. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the author", David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory* (Longman, London, 1988), pp. 166 - 172
127. TCD, p. 91

the interlocutors. Forster is more or less of a similar view and says that literature is alive, it wants not to be signed. According to this linguistic theory the author is never more than an instance in writing. The ***I*** is nothing other than the instance saying ***I*** . Language knows only a subject, not a person and this subject is empty of definition and is useful only to make language hold together. Thus the author being dead and buried, the hand that writes is cut off from any voice and it merely performs a gesture of inscription, not expression. It traces the field without origin, has no origin other than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins.[128]

Forster's idea of the writer dipping the bucket down to the subconscious and creating his work while totally forgetting himself is again in tune with the modern theorist's idea of the death of the author and of the writer as mere mixer and copier from an immense dictionary. Citing the poem of Paul Claudel, *La Ville*, Forster says that the artist conceives in sleep. The poet is not sure from where he draws his breath and his breath is in fact drawn out of him in the act of creation. Forster further expands on the

> ... idea that if the breathing in is ***in***spiration the breathing out is **ex**piration, a prefiguring of death, when the life of a man will be drawn out of him by the unknown forces for the last time.[129]

---

128. Roland Barthes, op.cit, p. 170
129. TCD, p. 122

Creation and death are closely connected in this idea of Claudel, which Forster develops to describe his own idea of the creative state. But his critical position is closer to that of Michael Foucault, another post-structuralist, who, though he was not impressed by the idea of the death of the author, says that the idea of the author is not a timeless irreducible category but a function of discourse which has changed in the course of history. In his essay, "What is an author?", he argues against the universal idea about the presence or absence of the author by his typical historicizing approach. He says that the general condition of each text, its space and time should necessitate that we should situate the supposed absence of the author. We must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance. Arguing that the author's name is not just a name like the rest, it has a paradoxical singularity, it is not simply an element in a discourse but it performs a certain classificatory function with regard to narrative discourse, Foucault maintains that the author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse thereby giving it a certain status. There exist properties or relationships peculiar to discourse and these are not reducible to the rules of grammar and logic but linked to the author-function and so the relationship or non-relationship with an author constitutes one of these discursive properties. Foucault's historicizing approach while denying the death of the author also re-examines the privileges of the subject depriving it of its role as originator and analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse. He also argues that as our society changes the author-function will disappear and all discourses, whatever their status, form, value,

would then develop in the anonymity of a murmur. Undervaluing the question, 'Who really spoke?', Foucault concludes with an indifference: 'What difference does it make who is speaking?' and with a vision of a culture in which literature would circulate 'anonymously'.[130] Written sometime in the nineteen seventies Foucault's famous essay theoretically vindicates what Forster had casually expressed in his essay written in 1925.

Forster's theory of the creative state of the mind in which a man is taken out of himself has parallels in modern theory. Forster describes the creative process at length as:

> In it a man is taken out of himself. He lets down as it were a bucket into his subconscious, and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach. He mixes this thing with his normal experiences, and out of the mixture he makes a work of art.... And when the process is over, when the picture or symphony or lyric or novel (or whatever it is) is complete, the artist, looking back on it, will wonder how on earth he did it. And indeed he did not do it on earth.[131]

Instead of merely expressing himself or his self, the artist becomes a collaborator in a more sublime, almost otherworldly ritualistic process of reaching beyond himself. Similar is the view of Roland Barthes who believed that writers merely drew from a vast and infinite source of materials. So a text, according to Barthes, does not release a single theological meaning, the message of the

130. Michael Foucault, "What is an author?",, David Lodge, pp. 196 – 210

Author-God, but is a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. A text is made of multiple writings. It is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture. Writers are eternal copyists and can only imitate gestures that are always anterior, never original. The only power of the writer is

> to mix writings, to counter the one with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. Did he wish to ***express himself***, he ought at least to know that the inner 'thing' he thinks to 'translate' is itself a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explained through other words, and so on indefinitely....[132]

Forster's idea of clubbing psychology with literary creation seems to reflect the theoretical stance of Jacques Lacan whose most celebrated dictum was :'the unconscious is structured like a language', and who believed that there is no getting outside the language, that the human subject is constituted precisely by entry into language. Lacan connects linguistics with psychoanalysis and questions the arbitrariness of the traditional system of meaning thereby asserting the functional capacity of language to spring surprises. [133] The idea of the writer drawing from a well of already existing "subconscious stuff" also can be connected to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of language, Semiology, which argues that individual literary texts are manifestations of a larger literary system, and that language has a social aspect as well as an individual aspect. Linguistic

---

131. TCD, p. 121
132. David Lodge, op.cit, p. 170

structure, formed by associations of signs ratified by collective agreement, is a reality localised in the brain. Individual utterance of speech or writing is a drawing from this larger social, psychological stuff.[134] Forster's bucket-dipping creative process strongly resembles this stance of the modern linguistic theory. This also strongly resembles Harold Bloom's theory of misprision, deep poetic influence which he calls ***Apophrades*** or the ***Return of the Dead***. Bloom argues that poetic incarnation results from poetic influence which is not to be distinguished from love and poetic strength comes only from a triumphant wrestling with the greatest of the dead. Poets, as poets, and particularly the strongest poets, return to origins at the end. The poet-in-a-poet is desperately obsessed with poetic origins as the person-in-a-person at last becomes obsessed with personal origins. The poet hopes to recover the ancestry of voice. Poems are neither about 'subjects' nor about 'themselves.' They are necessarily about other poems; a poem is a response to a poem, as a poet is a response to a poet, or a person to his parent. To the poet-in-a-poet, a poem is always the other man, the precursor, and so a poem is always a person, always the father of one's own Second Birth. To live, the poet must misinterpret the father, by the crucial act of misprision, which is the rewriting of the father. A poet, Bloom goes on to argue, is not so much a man speaking to men as man rebelling against being spoken to by a dead man (the precursor) outrageously more alive than himself.[135] This theory of poetic incarnation seems to be a postmodern development of Forster's

---

133. Jacques Lacan, "The insistence of the letter in the unconscious", David Lodge, pp. 79-106
134. Ferdinand de Saussure, "The object of study", David Lodge, pp. 2-9

idea of the creative process as the individual artist drawing from the vast residue of the subconscious.

Forster likens the creative state to a dream and argues that even the most realistic artist is caught by a "sense of surprise" at his own creation. Coleridge's poem, *Kubla Khan* belongs to another world because of his connexion with the subconscious, and because after having written it he did not know how he had done it.[136] This has close resemblance with the concept of defamiliarizationm as formulated by the Russain Formalist theorist, Victor Shklovsky who argues that what startles us into a new way of seeing is a new way of saying. Habitualization reduces daily life to insignificance. Details and activities of real life are automatically performed and therefore reckoned as nothing. Art recovers the sensation of life and makes one feel things. Its function is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar' so that their perception becomes difficult, not automatic. The author's purpose is to create vision, to create things 'artistically' so that the process of perception becomes an aesthetic end in itself and it is prolonged. This is why the language of poetry is a difficult, roughened, impeded language but it gives aesthetic satisfaction which results from the deautomatized perception. Art thus is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important in itself but is removed from the automation of

---

135. Harold Bloom, "Poetic origins and final phases", David Lodge, pp. 240 - 252
136. TCD, pp. 121-122

perception.[137] Thus the principle of literariness of a work lies in its form, in the intense capacity of a literary work to meditate upon and draw attention to the qualities of its form. The reader is denied the illusion that he or she was reading about the real world for literature remorselessly 'defamiliarized' the world.[138] Shklovsky's idea of the defamiliarizing artfulness of a poem is more or less an equivalent of what Forster considers as causing the 'sense of surprise' in a poem. Literary theory in the late twentieth century revived the study of rhetoric as the structuring power of discourse. Poetry is closely related to rhetoric and a rhetorical figure has been defined by modern literary theory as "an alteration of or swerve from 'ordinary' usage with an intention to be powerfully persuasive. So poetry by making use of the rhetorical figures like metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony, the 'four master tropes' of modern linguistic theory, makes sense of experience and produces the same sense of surprise. These four tropes are basic structures of language which underlie and make possible the meanings produced in a wide variety of discourses.[139] Whereas Forster does not emphasize the means by which a literary work should surprise the reader, modern theory goes into elaborate details of devices, 'tropes', by which literary discourses surprise the reader. Literary criticism should try to establish spiritual parity with this all important element of surprise in a literary work of art. It should not abandon its central aesthetic quest and lose itself in considerations of psychological and historical influences. This would discover contacts of

---

137. Victor Shklovosky, "Art as technique", David Lodge, pp. 16-30
138. Stephen Connor, pp. 106-107

pragmatic, utilitarian kinds but would snap the essential contact with the work of art. Forster argues for the

> ... raison d'etre of criticism on a higher basis than public utility. I would like to discover some spiritual parity between it and the object it criticizes.... [140]

Contemporary theory is a grand celebration of this seemingly wayward desire expressed casually by Forster. By classifying all discourses or writings as 'texts' theory has blurred the traditional distinction between creative and the so-called critical writings and also between literary and non-literary discourses. According to Georges Poulet, a leading figure of the Geneva School of Phenomenological criticism

> ...the end of criticism is to arrive at an intimate knowledge of the reality criticized. Now it seems to me that such intimacy is possible only insofar as critical thought becomes the thought criticized, insofar as it succeeds in re-feeling, re-thinking, re-imagining that thought from the inside.... Contrary to common belief, criticism must avoid attending to any ***object*** whatever (whether it be the person of the author, considered as someone else, or his work, considered as a thing); for what must be obtained is a ***subject***, that is to say a spiritual activity that can only be understood if one puts oneself in its place and revive within us its role as subject.[141]

---

139. Culler, pp. 70 - 73
140. TCD, p. 120
141. Gerard Genette, "Structuralism ad literary criticism", David Lodge, ed, - quotes from Georges Poulet, 'Response de', pp. 69-70

This intersubjective criticism which is strongly related to modern hermeneutics is thus a theoretical manifestation of the imaginative desire of Forster for the 'spiritual parity' between criticism and the object it criticizes. Forster also makes the difference between the critical and the creative states of mind basic to his argument as an artist-critic. According to him criticism is "grotesquely remote from the works it affects to expound." He makes the distinction quite profound when he declares:

> Think before you speak is criticism's motto; speak before you think creation's.[142]

Forster thus establishes the primacy of word over thought in the act of literary creation and seems to be prophetically endorsing Jacques Derrida's position that 'language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique', that any text inevitably undermines its own claim to have a determinate meaning, and licenses the reader to produce his own meanings out of it by an activity of semantic 'freeplay'. The deconstructive argument of Derrida banishes the central Being as presence, the Centre of all origins. In the absence of the centre which was not a 'present-being' but only a function, everything became discourse, that is, a system in which the central signified is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. This absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.[143] Forster's 'speak before you

---

142. TCD, p. 123
143. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, sign ad play in the discourse of the human sciences", David

think' motto for creation is in consonance with this idea of the text and its infinite play of signification. Free play of the imagination is what he prefers in the act of literary creation which resembles the semantic laissez-faire which the modern linguistic theory advocates. Language, as it were, is freed from the tyranny of signification and ideological representation and is considered in its structural purity and function. Hence there is a new approach to literature which says:

> Literature had long enough been regarded as a message without a code for it to become necessary to regard it for a time as a code without a message.[144]

Structuralist criticism tries to rediscover the message in the code by an analysis of the immanent structures not by ideological prejudices imposed from outside. Forster's views of criticism, - "it does not let down buckets into the subconscious", "it does not conceive in sleep", it "employs some of the highest and subtlest faculties of man", "know what it has said after it has said it", it "has educational and cultural value", it "adores influences",[145] - strongly reflect the opposition of contemporary theory to the ideological prejudices imposed upon literature by traditional criticism. According to contemporary theory literary criticism, since it speaks the same language as its object, is a metalanguage, 'discourse upon a discourse.'[146] It can therefore be a metaliterature, that is, 'a

---

Lodge, pp. 108- 110.
144. Gerard Genette, op.cit, p. 66.
145. TCD, pp. 120 - 123
146. Roland Barthes, Essais critiques – quoted in David Lodge, p. 63

literature of which literature itself is the imposed object.'[147] Roland Barthes calls a critic an *ecrivain*, a writer, that is, the author of a message which tends to be absorbed into a spectacle which frustrates the meaning. This frustration of meaning is a literary function which characterizes all literature and can thus be called literariness. Thus any text may or may not be literature according to whether it is received either as spectacle or as message. Literary function can invest or abandon any object of writing, and criticism cannot univocally determine the partial, unstable, ambiguous literariness of a text. Critical thought, according to Levi-Strauss, "builds structured sets by means of a structured set, namely, the work", but makes use of it by building "ideological castles out of the debris of what was once a literary discourse." Thus literary criticism is secondary and limited in character because its material is literature where as the material of the writer, the poetic or fictional material is the universe. The writer works by means of concepts and the critic by means of signs. If the writer questions the universe, the critic questions literature, that is to say, the universe of signs. But what was a sign for the writer (the work) becomes meaning for the critic (the object of the critical discourse). In another way what was meaning for the writer (his view of the world) becomes a sign for the critic, as the theme and symbol of a certain literary nature. This is the function of the 'mythical thought' which constantly creates new worlds by reversing means and ends: 'signifieds change into signifiers and vice versa.' This interchange reflects the dual function of the critic's work, which is to produce meaning out of the work of others, but also to produce

147. Paul Valery, 'Albert Thibaudet' - quoted in David Lodge, p. 63

his own work out of this meaning. The critic speaks up through books and 'without ever completing his project he always puts something of himself into it.' In this structuralist fusion of creation and criticism one can see the flowering of Forster's idea of 'spiritual parity' between the critical thought and the object it criticizes. Structural criticism shies away from any transcendent reductions of psychoanalysis. It traverses the substance of the work in order to reach its bone-structure, the latent armature of the work. This is the principle of its objective intelligibility accessed through analysis by a geometrical mind that is not consciousness. Structural criticism thus is not a superficial examination but a sort of external, radioscopic penetration,[148] which by the externality of its method, in a sort of theoretical way, achieves what Forster calls 'the power of transforming' the critic 'towards the condition of the person who created' the work of art.[149]

Forster's casual attitude to criticism vis-à-vis creation is an avant-garde tendency which has crystallized itself, in contemporary time, into theory. His view of the work of art also reflects the tendency of the avant-garde:

> ...the work of art ... is recalcitrant to criticism. I am thinking of its freshness. So far as it is authentic, it presents itself as eternally virgin. It expects always to be heard or read or seen for the first time, always to cause surprise. It does not expect to be studied.... The work of art assumes the existence of the perfect spectator, and is indifferent to the

---

148. Gerard Genette, op.cit, pp. 63-70
149. TCD, p. 124

> fact that no such person exists. It does not allow for our ignorance and it does not cater for our knowledge.[150]

The role of traditional criticism in considering a work of art is almost irrelevant as it cannot help in achieving the "sense of co-operation with a creator" which is the supremely important step in the aesthetic pilgrimage. J. Hillis Miller, the deconstructive theorist in his essay "The critic as host" applies the analogy of parasite and host to criticism and literature respectively and says:

> The host feeds the parasite and makes its life possible, but at the same time is killed by it, as 'criticism' is often said to kill 'literature.' Or can host and parasite live happily together, in the domicile of the same text, feeding each other or sharing the same food?[151]

And by applying the deconstructive strategy of going back to the etymological root of the word he demonstrates how the word 'parasite' means 'fellow guest' and this necessarily implies a 'host' for there can be no guest without a host. All the three words, parasite, guest and host derive from the same root, and therefore, a host is a guest, and a guest is a host. A host is a host. Thus in a way deconstruction, by this system of making strangers friends, the dissimilar similar, establishes an osmotic mixing of literature and criticism and joins them in a hymeneal bond. Forster also confronts the polarity of creation and criticism, and subordinates the role of criticism to nearly that of a parasite. According to him a

---

150. TCD, pp, 124 - 125
151 David Lodge, p 278

work of art springs constant surprises and criticism of it should reproduce that sense of surprise.

> Can we combine experience and innocence? I think we can. The willing suspension of experience is possible.... The critic ought to combine Mephistopheles with the archangels, experience with innocence. *He ought to know everything inside out, and yet be surprised.*[152]

Literature suspends experience and criticism while producing a discourse on literature should promote this suspension of experience. This scheme of uniting the dual functions in criticism is for the modern theorist "an argument for the value of recognizing the great complexity and equivocal richness of apparently obvious or univocal language, even the language of criticism, which is in this respect continuous with the language of literature."[153] The New Criticism which was influential in the US and Britain in the fifties emphasized "the play of irony, tension and resolution within a text" popularized a way of reading which seemed "to deny the readers the pleasures of immediate comprehension" and demanded "a highly self-conscious attention to verbal or poetic substance over and above its meaning."[154] The deconstructionist theory produces surprise by the infinite play of signifiers. This suggestion for combining experience and innocence has in the context of modern theory taken definite steps to marginalize the traditional

---

152. TCD, pp. 125 - 126
153. Miller, "The critic as host", David Lodge, p. 281
154. Steven Connor, p. 105

distinction between criticism and literature by fusing them in one and the same linguistic exercise.

Forster's assessment of English literature is tentative, not conclusive and authoritative. He attempts a sort of generalized overview of the Twentieth Century literary scene and tries to connect the modern writers in a thematic homogeneity and their works into a general historical framework. One of the earlier attempts of this kind was in an article called '*Souvremennaya angliskaya literatura*' (1927) in a Russian journal called *Vyorsty* (translated as *Contemporary English Literature*). The English translation of this article begins – "I picture contemporary English literature as a large untidy room. Disorder is everywhere..."[155] This is the cultural symptom of the modern condition and every writer was touched deeply by this. Despair, disillusion with everything marked the tone of every writer of the twenties. All of them agreed that "they have no intention of perfecting either themselves or the world." They basked under a kind of 'observant and refined idleness'. They wanted to understand and enjoy life. Some writers of the thirties wanted to understand life for the purpose of safeguarding civilization and so they were inclined to theorize. Imaginative and affectionate sympathy marks his attitude and provides a bridge between the modernism that his age represented and the extravagant possibilities marked by postmodern theories of contemporary times. Since the 1930s there has been a systematic professionalization and academization of the study of literature. This

has resulted in a more detailed organization and dissemination of its forms of knowledge and expression. Ezra Pound's battle cry – "Make it new" – gave a shock as well as an impetus to literary studies. The avant-garde in literature considered hence as an ugly duckling "quickly transformed into a sleek canonical swan." Literary modernists like Pound, Eliot and Woolf were horrified by the automated mass culture of the twentieth century and had come to terms with "the peculiar contradiction between radical disruption of form and traditionalism of content and ideology" in their works.[156] Literary modernism was not openly iconoclastic and so the avant-garde ideals of modernism were very slow to develop theoretical positions.

Great literature reflects the wholeness of life and transcends its paradoxical nature. Art reconciles into harmony the contrarieties of experience and the conflicting forces that confuse us in life. The greatest of all literature, the Greek combined the contrasting ranges of values and reflected the wholeness of Greek civilization itself.

> Greek literature combined beauty and depth, wisdom and wit, gaiety and insight, speculation and ecstasy, carnality and spirit; it had variety; it had constructional power; it was the greatest literature the world had yet produced.[157]

---

155. R. Advani, p. 200
156. Steven Connor, pp. 103-4
157. Preface, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson's *The Greek View of Life* – quoted by McDowell, op.cit. p. 21

As a sharp contrast to this picture of perfection modern literature presented a sad plight of fragmentation, sense of despair, agony, doubt. It is a picture of perfect disorder as was the case with modern intellectual milieu. "Things fall apart, the center cannot hold", cried W.B.Yeats, "I can connect nothing with nothing", declared Eliot. These poetic statements reveal the cultural symptoms of the times. The individual man is tragically helpless in the face of such colossal chaos. In the closing section of his last novel, *A Passage to India*, Forster himself reveals the helplessness of individuals against the socio-political forces which regulate their behaviours and action against their wills and desires. Aziz and Fielding had to part in spite of their strong desire for friendship but the cosmic forces including the earth and heaven cried in their hundred voices: 'No, not yet, ...No not there.' This was Forster's literary response to the disorder he apprehended in the modern world. 'India' was his most dominant metaphor of that disorder. This situation which Forster finally and ironically comes to terms with forced him into silence as an artist. When finer things like good will, understanding, intelligence and tolerance have failed, Forster seems to have finally resorted to an ironic stance. This principle seems to have preserved the private order in himself and allowed him to go on as a spokesman of literature and its human values. He is the supreme example of a modern ironist both in his art and in his criticism. This very situation of Forster is what is termed by modern theorist as 'high' modernism. Alan Wilde clubs him with Eliot and Woolf as "more aristocratically unrevolutionary exponents of this high modernism which attempts to contain the modern disorder by that all-purpose New Critical device, the

principle of irony. This principle, according to Wilde, combines mental attitude and technique, allows articulation of opposing standpoints and facilitates contradictory literary forms together. Wilde identifies two forms of irony, the disjunctive' and the 'suspensive' which characterize modernism and postmodernism respectively. Disjunctive irony is the response to a fragmented world and it represents the desire simultaneously to be true to incoherence and to transcend it. Wilde cites the works of Woolf and Joyce where radical incoherence is not resolved or unified but controlled by being projected by means of a recognizable aesthetic shape. This principle of disjuntive irony can be exemplified by the 'mythical method' of Joyce which T.S. Eliot describes as the way of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history, "a step toward making the modern world possible for art."[158] The aesthetic and attitude hovers over the problem in the sublimity of form. Suspensive irony, on the other hand, intensifies the awareness of incoherence to the point of being uncontainable in the aesthetic shape. It downplays the need of order and organizational fervour by combining a tough-minded knowledge of the incoherence and alienation with a benignly well-adjusted tolerance towards them. It reflects a daring willingness to live with uncertainty, to tolerate and even to welcome the world's randomness, absurdity and multiplicity.[159] Forster's irony certainly does not fall in the first category. He

---

158. T.S Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order and Myth' in Selected Prose, ed. F.Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) pp.177-8.
159. Alan Wilde, Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism and the Ironic Imagination, - paraphrased by Steven Connor, op.cit, pp. 114 - 116

was much too involved and concerned with the world to seek consolation in contemplating any aesthetic shape. For him aesthetic value has less to do with shaping human material into a pattern than with the power to inform the material with intense passion. His liberal temperament along with his distrust for aesthetic formalism draws him towards the braver, postmodern version of suspensive irony. Margaret Schlegel's manifesto of "Only connect" and her courageous involvement with the Wilcoxes take the colossal incoherence of *Howards End* beyond any mere aesthetic consideration or presentation of it. The closing rhythms of *A Passage to India* do not merely reflect "a world in need of mending" but "one beyond repair", the world envisaged by postmodernism. His critical writings adopt a braver posture in directly confronting the colossal incoherence of the world. His criticism discloses the rhythmic echoes of the central paradoxes and disconnection of the modern predicament in an urbane first-person commentary employing "a gentle irony with deadly aim".[160] Like his novels Forster's literary criticism evinces a strong and warm earthiness and tries to conquer time and space, not by escaping them, but by embracing them. He has demonstrated how books and authors can be imaginatively reconstructed for the modern reader. Reading Forster's commentary on a book or an author gives one the feeling of reading a literary work of art. So much of Forster the artist goes into the working of Forster the critic. His criticism surprises and enlivens more than it instructs or explains. He mixes the functions of Mephistopheles and the archangel in his criticism. Thus he produces a criticism which is literary, and this

160. Wilfred Stone, p. 361

literariness is due to the generous deployment of creative, literary imagination for the purpose of producing critical discourses. His reading of literary texts and their authors manifests an inspired, imaginative laissez-faire, and his characteristically angular and literary commentaries make his criticism a unique genre of literature. This has connects with what postmodern theories have been doing by "crossing borders and closing gaps" and thus claiming, "criticism is literature, or it is nothing."[161]

161. Leslie Fiedler, 'Cross the Border – Close the Gap'- quoted in Peter Brooker, ed. Modernism/Postmodernism (London, Longman,1992), p. 11

CHAPTER FIVE : A RAINBOW VISION –

FORSTER'S AESTHETICS OF FICTION

Being an implicit Coleridgean by nature, liberal humanist by temperament and novelist by profession, Forster's views on the novel provide an interesting and refreshing scenario in the field of fiction criticism. He believed that the novel as a form of literature is closest to real life and human elements have a great role to play in a novel. According to him " human beings have their best chance in the novel."[1] Forster's views on the novel are characteristically wayward, half-serious and half-comic. He calls it "the inoffensive hen, poor dear novel". The idea of the novel was a wonder to Forster and he, loving the wonder, foregoes the critic's duty of attempting any seriously formed definition of it. His approach to the novel and his views on it spring from his notion of literature as a spontaneous activity. He calls it "partly a notice-board", and all those who enjoy it are well qualified to criticize it.[2] His very description of the novel in Aspects of the Novel has the air of fiction rather than critical rigour:

> ... a formidable mass, and it is so amorphous - no mountain in it to climb, no Parnassus or Helicon, not even a Pisgah. It is most distinctly

---

1. *Aspects of the Novel*, p.149
2. "Anonymity : An Inquiry", *TCD*, p. 88

> one of the moister areas in literature - irrigated by a hundred rills and occasionally degenerating into a swamp.[3]

In 1944 Forster declared : "All our criticism is or ought to be tentative."[4] He uses no learned remark nor adheres to any comprehensive system of analysis while treading casually the "spongy tract" towards the discovery of the novel. Distancing himself from the usual language of criticism he abandons all formality and seems to be speaking to the common reader. He uses the language of fiction to criticise fiction. The novel is thus

> ... bounded by two chains of mountains neither of which rises very abruptly - the opposing ranges of Poetry and History - and bounded on the third side by a sea - ...[5]

His sense of familiarity with the novel strongly resembles the tone of informal intimacy with he describes the characters in his novels. His views on the novel seem to spring as spontaneously as his characters do in the novels. In an interview with Wilfred Stone in October, 1957 Forster vehemently denied that "his writing began from any consciously realized aesthetic theory."[6] He does not contemplate forming a systematic theory for the art of fiction. He told an aspiring novelist that "it is most important that one should trust one's own inclination, instincts, and tastes, and should not go to other writers to find out what a novel is

---

3. *Aspects of the Novel* (1978), pp. 24 - 25.
4. "English Prose Between 1919 And 1939", *TCD*, p. 289
5. Ibid. p. 25.
6. *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol.43, Spring, 97, No.1, p.60

or ought to be."[7] *Aspects of the Novel*, a series of eight lectures delivered between January and March, 1927, can be taken as the basis of Forster's fictional aesthetics. These lectures were in "a Bloomsbury style – anti-academic, playful, full of odd, brilliant metaphoric flights – and he exploited his habitual simplifying technique, presenting complex matters in the homeliest and most 'bread-and-butter' terms."[8] In *Aspects* his appeal is popular, not academic, as though he is talking to the common reader who will cherish the pleasures derived from his "numerous particular judgements, instinctive rather than intellectual, that hit their nails lightly but very precisely and often wittily on the head." [9] He views the novel as a popular form of art. Forster thinks that one's approach to the novel should be predominantly personal and it is not easily subject to academic criticism because in essence it is absolutely free from rules. Absolute norms and standards do not hold good in the case of the novel.

> The novel is a literary form so wide in its range that generalizations about it are almost impossible.... The novel, in my view, has not any rules, and so there is no such thing as the art of fiction. There is only the particular art that each novelist employs in the execution of his particular book.[10]

This avant-garde formulation of Forster has inspired modern critics to create a theoretical framework for the study of fiction. And this eclectic humanist view is

---

7. Letter to Unidentified Recepient,(1930), *Selected Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 94
8. Furbank, P.M., E.M. Forster : A Life, Vol. 2, p.144
9. Oliver Stallybrass, Editor's Introduction to *Aspects of the Novel*, Pp. 17-18.
10. *The Art of Fiction* (Appendix D) *Aspects*, p.183

echoed in modern times by Walter Reed who argues that the novel is an "outsider" form, "a deliberate stranger to literary decorum," and that it "opposes the forms of everyday life to the conventional forms of literature inherited from the past."[11] The novel is "suspicious of its own literariness" and it opposes literary paradigms and canons from other areas of culture. By its very nature the novel resists the tendency toward systematisation, structuration, and canonization that a poetics properly involves. Thus the novel has a personal bias and it probes the depth of human personality. The fundamental value of Forster's fiction criticism is that it focuses on the role of the novel in communicating inner vitality. According to him the novelist has more freedom than other artists to order his art in his own way and this freedom enables him to elevate the novel from its conventional function of social representation towards a higher goal of spiritual revelation achieved by music.

With the natural impulse of a romantic enthusiast of the novel, Forster's views the novel and vision of the novel transcends the confines of provincialism, nationalism and patriotism. His criticism of the novel and of the novelists has a remarkable catholicity which is in evidence when he asserts:

> No English novelist is as great as Tolstoy – that is to say, has given so complete a picture of man's life, both on its domestic and heroic side. No English novelist has explored man's soul as deeply as Dostoyevsky. And

---

11. Mark Spilka, "Still Towards a Poetics of Fiction?" No – And Then Again Yes, *Novel* / Spring 1985, p. 204.

> no novelist anywhere has analysed the modern consciousness as successfully as Marcel Proust.[12]

Discarding all "the furniture of the method," - dates, locality, point of view, sex, tendency, which Clayton Hamilton imposes on the novel,[13] which he belittles as the method of pseudo-scholarship, Forster moves towards a vision of all the novelists writing their novels simultaneously :

> We are to visualize the English novelists not floating down that stream which bears all its sons away unless they are careful, but as seated together in a room, a circular room, a sort of British Museum reading-room – all writing their novels simultaneously. ... They are half mesmerized, their sorrows and joys are pouring out through the ink, they are approximated by the act of creation ....[14]

While trying to visualize them thus, Forster approximates to the act of creation even as a critic. A formal critic never visualizes while he is at the business of criticism. Vision belongs to the realm of creation, dispassionate analysis to that of criticism. Oliver Stallybrass calls him "a hired critic who had grave doubts about the value of criticism."[15] Forster confirms this statement when he comments on T.S.Eliot's views on the duties of a critic. Eliot in the introduction to his book, The Sacred Wood says that a critic must preserve tradition and, secondly he must see literature steadily and see it whole. Forster disclaims the

---

12. *Aspects*,P.26
13. Forster in his review of Clayon Hamilton's book, *Materials and Methods of Fiction*, calls him the American eagle scooping on "the inoffensive hen", "the poor, dear novel". *Aspects*, p. 76
14. *Aspects*, p. 27
15. Ibid. p.38

first duty and avows to try the second. Hence his proposal to visualize the novelists as seated together in a circular room and to look at them all at once in order to see them steadily and to see them whole. Forster as critic of the novel is more a synthesizer than an analyser, more a sympathiser than a scrutiniser, because he is led by a congenial vision of a circular room full of fellow novelists writing their different novels. Thus he juxtaposes Samuel Richardson and Henry James into a creative, harmonious "neighbourliness" in spite of the a hundred fifty years of time dividing them; pairs H.G.Wells and Charles Dickens and discovers their commonalities. Virginia Woolf and Sterne are seen together as fantasists with the same deliberate bewilderment in their tones. Sterne was a sentimentalist while Woolf was extremely aloof.[16]

This simultaneous approach to fiction writers of different ages characterises Forster's view of literary criticism as an organic, comprehensive and all-inclusive circular approach to the works of literary art and it strongly resembles the modern theorists' notion of 'intertextuality'. They argue that works are made out of other works. A work exists between and among other texts, through its relation to them. To read something as literature is to consider it as a linguistic event that has meaning in relation to other discourses.[17] According to Roland Barthes a text is made up of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where

---

16. Ibid. pp. 31-36
17. Jonathan Culler, p. 34.

this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader. The reader is the space on which all quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Forster's circular room approach also connects to Barthes view that **the scriptor is born simultaneously with the text and every text is eternally written *here* and *now*.**[18] Forster's is a trend-setting approach for it clubs writers together for the convenience of reading and for the reader and thus valorises the reader. Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; it was writer-centric. Modern theory has popularised the reader-centric approach to texts and thinking about the way the readers make sense of literature has led to what has been called 'reader-response criticism', which claims that the meaning of the text is the experience of the reader (an experience that includes hesitations, conjectures, and self-corrections). To interpret a work is to tell a story of reading.[19]

Forster's visionary approach to novel criticism reasserts what he elsewhere terms as "the artist's instant"[20] which enables him to "simultaneously recollect and create" his criticism of the novel. In an article on Forster's non-fiction Judith Scherer Herz has developed this point of the artist's instant which strongly marks all of Forster's critical writings and his historical writings. She says:

18. Roland Barthes, "The death of the author", David Lodge, ed, *Modern Criticism and Theory A Reader*, p. 170
19. Jonathan Culler,. P. 63
20. Proust, *AH*, p.115.

> Forster was an archaeologist of the human experience; all his writings, fiction and non-fiction alike, constitutes an exploration, a recovery, and finally the creation of the past. Forster was a memoirist of his fiction, a fiction maker in his memoirs ... all of Forster's fiction constitutes a set of memoirs – meditations and transformations of his Cambridge days; his travels in Greece and Italy, India and Alexandria; of his family memories, particularly of Rooksnest, the childhood house in Hertfordshire; and the passing generations in the Thornton house, Battersea Rise, in Clapham.... *In the essays, too, the materials of others' lives are shaped to* reflect his own.[21]

It is with this predominant artist's instant that Forster abandons all principles and systems in the criticism of fiction, and makes the human heart preside over the affair and thus stresses the "stiflingly human quality of the novel". Since the novel is "sogged with humanity" its criticism should be a "man-to-man business" and Forster prophetically declares:

> The final test of a novel will be our affection for it, as it is the test of our friends, and of anything else which we cannot define.[22]

Forster's general analysis of the different aspects of the novel in his book, Aspects of the Novel which he himself terms as "unscientific and vague" is not a formal one but "it leaves us the maximum of freedom". He is only too ready to abandon theoretical consistency in favour of his rather undefined affection for his fellow practitioners of fiction. It is no wonder F.R. Leavis was "astonished at the

---

21. "Remaking of the Past in Forster's Non-Fiction" in *TCL*, Vol.3, No.2-3 p.287
22. *Aspects*, pp 38-39

intellectual nullity that characterized" it.[23] George Rylands who attended most of Forster's lectures recalls "Forster's sly smile which quickly broke into a choking almost childish laugh."[24] One cannot but notice the mild, gentle, persuasive, almost mischievous talkativeness all through the book which defines both Forster's attitude to the art of fiction and his attitude to criticism. Forster addressed, rather talked, primarily to the common reader wilfully assigning to himself the role of a pseudo-scholar. Some critics have tried to categorize the *Aspects* more as Forster's attempt at systematising the formal aspect of the novel than as an assessment of novels and novelists. But Forster's concern was predominantly human, both as a novelist and as a critic. This can be substantiated by his various comments on the novelists during the course of his survey of the art of fiction in *Aspects*. He assesses the novel in terms of seven aspects : Story, People, Plot, Fantasy, Prophecy, Pattern and Rhythm. These seven aspects form the seven colours of Forster's vision of the magnificent "rainbow",[25] the Novel. These categories are not "evaluative" as suggested by Rukun Advani who considers these aspects as forming "a sort of neo-platonic aesthetic ladder beginning in matter (story) and terminating in the realm of intense spiritual awareness (prophecy)."[26] But Forster visualizes himself as "cataloguing the rainbow" and the culminating aspect of the novel in the Forsterian scheme is Rhythm in which the novel approximates to the spiritual

---

23. Editor's Introduction, *Aspects*, p. 13
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid p. 100
26. *E.M.F. as Critic*, p. 132

conditions achieved by music. Nor are these aspects scientific like those Clayton Hamilton describes in his *Materials and Methods of Fiction.* Forster employs these aspects in order to describe the function of a novel and its impact. His attitude to the novelk like his general attitude to fiction-criticism is mock serious and semi-comic as is evident in his attempt to provide a definition of a novel.

> Perhaps we ought to define what a novel is before starting. This will not take a second. M.Abel Chevalley has, in his brilliant little manual, provided a definition, and if a French critic cannot define the English novel who can? It is, he says, 'a fiction in prose of a certain extent'. That is quite good enough for us, and we may perhaps go so far as to add that the extent should not be less than 50,000 words....But no intelligent remark known to me will define the tract as a whole.[27]

These different aspects contribute to the inner order of the novel and they provisionally help Forster to convey the vision of his rainbow.

Story, the "low atavistic form"[28] is the fundamental aspect of the novel without which it cannot exist. It responds to the simple curiousity of the reader and represents "the life in time" in the novel. It is a narrative of events arranged in time sequence. But a good novel must also include "the life by value".[29] It must have this double allegiance to both time and value. One without the other will be a disastrous proposition. A novel, which gives only the time sequence, will certainly lead to some ragged end like Walter Scott's The Antiquary. Being a

---

27. *Aspects*, p. 25

celebration of the life in time it has led to "slackening of emotion and shallowness of judgement, and in particular to that idiotic use of marriage as a finale." So is the case with Arnold Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale in which "time is the real hero", installed "as the lord of creation". The progress of time can only lead to decay and death and so "the story that is a story ... cannot sincerely lead to any conclusion but the grave." This is the reason why The Old Wives' Tale, though "strong, sincere, sad, ... misses greatness."[30] Exclusive allegiance to life by value is equally disastrous as in the case of Gertrude Stein who "smashed up and pulverized her clock", and failed "because as soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot express anything at all", and "the novel that would express values only becomes unintelligible and therefore valueless." And yet Forster's heart goes out to her in admiration and he says: "It is much more important to play about like this than to rewrite the Waverly Novels."[31] Her experiment with "uninhibited talk" though not successful, was "influential."[32] Tolstoy's War and Peace is great success in contrast to these failures. He too celebrates time and the consequent decay of generation but it is not depressing because the novel extends "over space as well as over time, and the sense of space ... leaves behind it an effect like music." The great chords that one hears in the book do not arise from the story .... Not from the episodes nor yet from the

28. Ibid. p. 40
29. Ibid. p.43
30. Ibid. p.50
31. Ibid. pp 52-53
32. "English Prose Between 1918 And 1939", *TCD*, p. 280

characters. They come from the immense area of Russia." And with them comes a profound perception of truth and Forster is emphatic when he says:

> Very few have the sense of space, and the possession of it ranks high in Tolstoy's divine equipment. Space is the lord of War and Peace, not time.[33]

Forster's view that the story is "the lowest and simplest of literary organism", the 'wriggling and interminable, the naked worm of time ... both unlovely and dull" when separated from the nobler aspects of the novel yet it is "the highest factor common to all the very complicated organisms known as novels", reflects the preoccupation of modernist and postmodernist aesthetics in literature regarding the question of time. His disapproval of Bennett's positing time as hero and the lord of creation in *Old Wives' Tale* and his glorification of Tolstoy for installing space as the lord of *War and Peace* seems to reflect "the modernist challenge to the bourgeois clock" and the subsequent attempt at "the flattening of time into space." But his view that a novelist can never deny time, that "in a novel there is always a clock", and that "as soon as fiction is completely delivered from time it cannot express anything at all" connects him to the postmodern emphasis on "the contingent flow of temporality at the expense of the atemporal stasis of metaphysics." This idea is further explained by William V. Spanos who criticizes the metaphysical bases of modernist aesthetics and promotes the Heideggerian perspective of dynamic movement over the static

presence of pure ideas or pure being and tries to understand presence as 'being-in-the-world rather than abstract being.' Spanos opines that postmodern writing dislodges the reader from his or her position of spatializing command outside time. Postmodernism thematizes time in the breakdown of modern metaphysics following the 'death of God' and leaves the reader a naked unaccommodated being in the world where time is ontologically prior to being.[34] Eleanor Hutchens presenting an approach through temporal structure in the novel says: "Time is not mere successiveness; it is the very matrix of life", hence its central place in any poetics of the novel.[35]

The story with its sequence in time appeals to the ear, functions "as the repository of a voice", and "adds something because of its connection with a voice", and it transforms "us from readers into listeners, to whom a voice speaks, the voice of the tribal narrator".[36] This first aspect of the novel, story, which Forster incidentally connects to "voice" brings to light an aspect of Forster himself. In his fiction as well as his critical writings he was forever attempting to recognise and recover 'voice' acknowledging it as its own unique authority, thereby capable of generating its own values. Voice is immanent for Forster both in his fiction and criticism and this connects him to the modern theorists' fascination with the voice in narrative discourses. Voice reflects the open

---

33. Ibid. pp 50-51
34. Steven Connor, pp. 117 - 19
35. Bernard Duyfhuizen, "Mimesis, Authority, and Belief in Narrative Poetics: Towards a Transmission Theory for a Poetics of Fiction", *Novel*, Spring, 1985, p. 218
36. *Aspects*. pp 51-52

temporality of a text and breaks the primacy of interpretative criticism which construes the text as yielding an ultimate or single timeless meaning. Postmodern criticism views the text as 'oral speech' to be heard immediately in time.[37] Jacques Derrida regards the privileging the idea of voice as the metaphysical desire for pure meaning which is to be arrived at by deconstruction. Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin describes the novel as fundamentally representing many voices; it is polyphonic (multi-voiced) or dialogic rather than monological (single-voiced). The essence of the novel is its staging of different voices or discourses.[38] In his essay, "From the prehistory of novelistic discourse" he says:

> Literary language is not represented in the novel as a unitary, completely finished-off and indisputable language – it is represented precisely as living mix of varied and opposing ***voices*** [*raznorecivost*], developing and renewing itself.[39]

Jan B.Gordon attributes the importance of voice to humanism and speaks of Forster's constant obsession with a "voice-in-the-world that is both miraculous and subversive of a confused representational order." He elaborates :

> In Forster the intrusion of a vocalized otherness constitutes an awareness of meaning and affection, the only escape from the limitations of other forms of discourse dependent upon the representational: letters,

37. William V. Spanos, ed. *Martin Heidegger and the Question of Literature: Toward a Postmodern Literary Hermeneutics* (Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1979), p. 139
38. Culler, p. 89.
39. David Lodge, ed. *Modern Criticism and Theory A Reader*, (London, Longman, 1988), p. 131.

received opinion, telegrams, diaries, guidebooks, and gossip, none of which can effect a genuine "connection."[40]

This "vocalized otherness" – the voice helps to achieve what can be called 'Forsterian connection' both in his fiction and in criticism. Forster's characteristic pre-occupation with voice is due to his unusually great urge to listen. J.R.Ackerly speaks of Forster's great urge and power to listen with amazing patience:

> ... when I was alone with him and his unselfconscious listening attention was turned upon me – an attention which, I felt, was hearing not only the thing said but the motive in saying it – I experienced often a sense of strain, as though more and better were expected of me than I really believed myself to contain. To be really listened to is a very serious matter.[41]

Forster is a motive-seeking listener of voices and his novels are mostly voice-laden. It will be interesting to examine how from this primordial notion of the 'narrative voice' which he associates with the story, Forster moves towards greater heights of meta-narrative realization. Forster's positing of story as the first and basic aspect of the novel though in a plaintive tone – "Yes – oh dear yes – the novel tells a story" - has strong parallel in the literary theory which claims cultural centrality for narrative. Theory invests much more significance to stories and argues that stories are the main way we make sense of things both in our lives and in the outside world. Life generally follows not the scientific logic but the

---

40. "The Third Cheer: "Voice" in Forster, *TCL*, vol.31, No.2-3 pp. 315 –16.
41. J.R.Ackerly, *E.M.Forster: A Portrait* (London: Ian McKelvie, 1970) p. 10. Ibid. p.322

logic of a story, of how one thing leads to another. Theory of narrative – narratology – is an active branch of literary theory, and literary study relies on theories of narrative structure: on notions of plot, of different kinds of narrators, of narrative techniques. The poetics of narrative attempts to understand the components of narrative, analyses how narratives achieve their effects. It tries to spell out the narrative competence via linguistic competence and thus can be thought of as setting forth of an intuitive cultural knowledge or understanding. So modern theory of narrative combines what Forster calls 'life in time' and 'life by values', and demonstrates the "double allegiance" which according to him characterizes a good novel. It also explores many variables and questions such as who speaks?, who speaks to whom?, who speaks when? Who speaks what language?, who speaks with what authority? Who sees? It discusses the function of stories and says they give pleasure which is linked to desire, the desire to know, 'epistemophilia', a desire to discover secrets, to know the end, to find the truth. Theorists also ask questions about the link between desire, stories and knowledge.[42] This way modern theory of narrative combines in story the other aspects of the novel such as plot, character, fantasy, prophecy and rhythm.

From story Forster proceeds to the actors in the story who are usually human, and so he calls the second aspect, People. The strong affinity between the novelist and his subject-matter makes the novel different from other forms of art, and gives it a predominantly human emphasis. Characters in a novel are the

---

42. Culler, pp. 83 – 93.

"word-masses" that the novelist creates "in delirious excitement", and they are different from people in real life. This idea of character as word-masses aptly connects Forster's view of the novel to modern theory which claims that every narrative discourse is made up of linguistic images:

> To a greater or lesser extent, every novel is a dialogised system made up of the images of 'languages,' styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation.[43]

The chief function of the novel is to reveal character, the hidden life of its population, that is, the "romanceful or romantic side" of human nature. This is the reason why "people in a novel can be understood completely by the reader" and they "seem more definite than characters in history or even our own friends". They have no secrets and so they are free from the bond of mutual secrecy which is one of the conditions of real life.[44] The novelist, after getting into that abnormal state of "inspiration", creates his characters out of the "human make-up" which Forster describes in terms of birth, death, food, sleep and love. It is not possible to generalize on these characters, "the nations of fiction", who "come into the world more like parcels than human beings". But they "tend to behave along the same lines." Forster says that birth has been used very perfunctorily as mere means of recruitment in the novel. Babies arrive in the novel with "the air of being posted." They are displayed to the reader for a moment and are laid in

---

43. Mikhail Bakhtin, "From the prehistory of novelistic discourse" David Lodge, p. 131

cold storage till they are capable of speech or action. Hardly any novelist has tried to express the psychology of the baby's mind and the precious literary store that lies hidden there as subject-matter of his novel.[45] Death, on the other hand, offers many opportunities to the novelist.

> The doors of the darkness lie open to him and he can even follow his characters through it, provided he is shod with imagination and does not try to bring us back scraps of séance information about the 'life beyond'.[46]

Food and sleep are also used perfunctorily. "Food in fiction is mainly social" and the characters, not requiring it physiologically, "hunger for each other". There is no visible evidence of culinary aesthetic in fiction. Fiction does not make much of man as a sleeping animal and his dreams are sometimes introduced but always in relation to his wakeful purposes. But love "enormously bulks in novels". Characters in the novel are unduly sensitive to love as is not normally possible in life. This, Forster believes, is due to "the novelist's own state of mind while he composes"[47] which is an approximation to the state of being in love. The second reason is that love provides a congenial and convenient way to end a book. The illusion of permanence it wields is easily acquiesced in by the reader and gives him a sense of an ending. Homo Fictus, who is more elusive than his cousin, Homo Sapiens

---

44. Ibid pp.56-57
45. Ibid pp 60 - 61
46. Ibid p. 61
47. ibid pp 62 - 63

> ... is generally born off, he is capable of dying on ... is tirelessly occupied with human relationships.... We can know more about him than we can know about any of our fellow creatures, because his creator and narrator are one.[48]

Defoe's Moll Flanders is an excellent example of this species. "She fills the book that bears her name, or rather stands alone in it like a tree in a park, so that we can see her from every aspect and are not bothered by rival growths." The book proceeds directly and naturally out of her character. Forster connects the essential goodness of Defoe's underworld characters to "some great experience" he had while in Newgate prison and "out of its vague, powerful emotion Moll and Roxana are born."[49] Defoe has given himself over to the humour and good sense of his heroine and that is why she is so natural and gives us "the thrill that proceeds from a living being." Modern psychologists labour heavily and pretentiously over moral issues but Moll's cheating and moralizing just run off Defoe's pen. True to daily life and pleasant to read

> *Moll Flanders*, then, shall stand as our example of a novel in which character is everything and is given freest play.[50]

---

48. Ibid p 63
49. Ibid p 64
50. Ibid p. 68

Fully illuminated in her creator-narrator's knowledge she stands out, out of daily life, belonging "to a world where the secret life is visible". She is Forster's example of a real character in a book. According to Forster a character in a book

> ... is real when the novelist knows everything about it. He may not choose to tell us all he knows – many of the facts, even of the kind we call obvious, may be hidden. But he will give us the feeling that though the character has not been explained it is explicable, and we get from this a reality of a kind we can never get in daily life.[51]

The novel gives us the opportunity to know people perfectly and also with pleasure. So it is truer than history which gives only evidence. Fiction goes beyond evidence and reveals character. The easy visibility of their inner life makes the fictional characters superior to us whose secret lives are invisible. On the strength of this argument Forster declares :

> And this is why novels, even when they are about wicked people, can solace us: they suggest a more comprehensible and thus a more manageable human race, they give us the illusion of perspicacity and of power.[52]

This is made possible by the "life by value", that is, ***human values***, which a novel invariably conveys. For Forster the liberal humanist, human values were the most supreme. So a novel is a human document which is socially useful and gives us, humans, some vital lessons in mutual understanding. Characters in the

---

51. ibid p. 69

novel, though they only parallel daily life, can inspire us in our day to day life. They can give us valuable lessons in self-management by their life by values. Thus life can imitate art to a very great extent. Characters in the novel adapt themselves to the other factors in the novel according to the requirements of their creator. They operate in a complex situation and cannot be extricated from that situation. They also have to be in touch with other characters with dissimilar natures. Forster's view of fictional characters can be linked to the ideas of focalization and variation in narration which modern theorists talk about. A story with omniscient narration, detailing the feelings and hidden motivations of protagonists and displaying knowledge of how events will turn out, may give the impression of the comprehensibility of the world. Through the device of focalization stories teach us about the world, enable us to see from other vantage points, and to understand others' motives that in general are opaque to us and thus create the possibility of perfect knowledge of others.[53] Forster examines different kinds of characters and divides them into flat and round. Correspondingly he divides the novelists into imperfect novelists and perfect novelists. Dickens and Wells are imperfect novelists. Dickens' created flat characters that can be summed up in a single sentence but his novels have "this wonderful feeling of human depth". Forster analyses the reason for this:

---

52. Ibid p. 70
53. Culler, pp. 91 – 93.

> Probably the immense vitality of Dickens causes his characters to vibrate a little, so that they borrow his life and appear to lead one of their own.[54]

This conjuring trick enables him to achieve "effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow." This is in spite of the fact that he uses types and caricatures and thus ennobles flatness. Similarly Wells' characters are nearly all flat as photographs but his "deft and powerful hands ... shake them and trick the reader into a sense of depth." Adept at transmitting force both Dickens and Wells are good but imperfect novelists whose characters are convincing. As a contrast to them Richardson, Defoe and Jane Austen are perfect novelists who "pass the creative finger down every sentence and into every word." Though their work may not be great their hands constantly guide the movements of the characters. Their characters are round or capable of roundness. Jane Austen's characters give a slightly new pleasure each time they enter whereas Dickens' can give only a repetitive pleasure. Forster elaborates the reason for this:

> ... unlike Dickens, she was a real artist, that she never stooped to caricature, etc. But the best reply is that her characters, though smaller than his, are more highly organized. They function all round, and even if her plot made greater demands on them than it does they would still be adequate.... All the Jane Austen characters are ready for an extended

---

54. Ibid p. 76

life, a life which the scheme of her books seldom require them to lead, and that is why they lead their actual lives so satisfactorily.[55]

Forster's distinction between flatness and roundness is not made arbitrarily. It is only descriptive of the actual impression the characters create. A round character surprises and also convinces. A flat character never surprises. If a character is only convincing it is flat posing to be round. By using this combination of characters a novelist achieves "his task of acclimatization, and harmonizes the human race with the other aspects of his work."[56] Though Forster tries to evolve some kind of systematic classification of characters the dominant spirit behind this attempt is one similar to that of Forster's much discussed theme of "connection." The idea of flatness and roundness in Forster's aesthetics of fiction can be seen as corresponding "in the stages of its development with those of human evolution from a flat mindlessness to an intelligent roundness."[57] They are the direct off-shoots of nineteenth century realism which puts primary emphasis on character and its psychological veracity. These notions of roundness and flatness have striking parallels in modern theory. Roundness of character can be connected to Stephen Cohan's theory of readable character. Cohan says that a character is readable when it can stimulate an interaction between the text of a novel and its reader. He argues that when the text and its reader work together to promote the representational figure's transformation into a virtual existent the character becomes readable. This virtual existence of

55. Ibid p. 79
56. Ibid p. 81

character results from the construction of the figure as subject-as-object in the reader's own imaginative space.[58] Cohan's readability is more or less similar to Forster's roundness. Whereas the idea of flatness can be seen to mirror in Seymour Chatman's open theory of character which argues that the reader, reconstructs character as a psychological model, "a paradigm of traits." These traits imply the psychology of the figure organized around the revelation of behaviour.[59] Similarly Tzvetan Todorov argues that a fictional character becomes endowed with a character as soon as psychological determinism appears in the text.[60] These ideas of character as product of psychological determinism and as a paradigm of traits are strikingly similar to Forster's idea of flat characters – "little luminous discs of a pre-arranged size, pushed hither and thither like counters across the void or between the stars; most satisfactory."[61] Temperamentally an artist, Forster establishes an immediate rapport with the different characters of the novelists he discusses. A sense of intimacy informs Forster's examination of characters in a novel. He instantly recognises them, instinctively determines their flatness or roundness and seems to have an intuitive insight into their past and future. Here his "artist's instant" seems to do this conjuring trick. Human beings and their inner life were his constant preoccupation as a novelist and this seems to have extended to his criticism of

---

57. R. Advani, p. 135
58. Stephen Cohan, "Figures Beyond Text: A Theory of Readable Character in the Novel", *Novel*, vol-17, No. 1, 1983, Fall. Pp. 5-6.

59. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discouse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: \corneil University Press, 1978), p. 119, 126
60. Tzvetan Todorov, "Reading as Construction," – Stephen Cohan, op. cit. p. 6

the novel as well. This can also be connected to his special brand of humanism which while recognizing the complexity and variety of human life asserts that man's uniquely human self must not be blunted or marginalized in the process of creating an order. Thus *Aspects* is also very valuable for an interesting and inspiring insight into Forster's characteristically affectionate and intuitively sympathetic attitude to novels and novelists. This is also a central pivotal point in Forster's aesthetics of fiction. Virginia Woolf, another novelist-critic and his contemporary incidentally shares the same view of the importance of character in the novel. In her famous essay, "Mr.Bennett and Mrs Brown", which is an attempt to determine the proper stuff of fiction she says that character is the primary concern of the novelist.

> I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with character and that is to express character – not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic and alive, has been evolved.[62]

Character supplies the human aspect of the novel Forster is an ardent advocate of humanity and human interests in all his writings. This is evident in his examination of the role of the ***point of view*** in a novel. To other critics it is the fundamental device in the art of a novel. Percy Lubbock in his Craft of Fiction describes it as "the relation in which the narrator stands to the story", the method

61. *Aspects*, p. 74.
62. Woolf, "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown", *Collected Essays* 1, ed., Leonard Woolf (London, Catto & Windus, 1965), p. 324.

adopted by the novelist to tell his story. This method when developed will lead to "a sure foundation for the aesthetic of fiction" from which Forster gladly distances himself. Forster feels that the problem of the point of view in a novel is a little overstressed by critics of the novel and considers it less important than the proper handling of character which will enable the novelist to "bounce us".[63]

> ... and for me the whole intricate question of method resolves itself not into formulae but into the power of the writer to bounce the reader into accepting what he says – ...[64]

Percy Lubbock puts this factor at the edge of the problem whereas Forster puts "it plumb in the centre" of his aesthetics of fiction. Thus "Dickens bounces us in *Bleak House*", so that "we do not mind the shiftings of the viewpoint." Creation of character is the supreme function of a novelist in the Forsterian aesthetic of fiction and other functions of the novel should be subordinate to this. In a letter to Edward Garnett in 1910 Forster says: "It is devilish difficult to criticise society & also create human beings. Unless one has a big mind, one aim or the other fails before the book is finished. I must pray for a big mind".[65] So this predilection for character is born out of his own experiments with fiction.

> The novelist who betrays too much interest in his own method can never be more than interesting; he has given up the creation of character

---

63. *Aspects*, pp. 81-82
64. Ibid
65. *Selected Letters*, Vol.1, p. 117

> and summoned us to help analyse his own mind, and a heavy drop in the emotional thermometer results.[66]

Consequent upon this observation Forster lists Andre Gide's Les Faus-Monnayeurs as interesting but not vital. It can be admired as a fabric but cannot be praised unconditionally. But War and Peace is vital, bouncing up and down Russia even without a point of view. Forster disagrees with Lubbock who felt Tolstoy had not pulled his full weight and the book would have been greater if it had a point of view.

> I feel that the rules of the game of writing are not like this. A novelist can shift his viewpoint if it comes off, and it came off with Dickens and Tolstoy. Indeed this power to expand and contract perception (of which shifting viewpoint is a symptom), this right to intermittent knowledge – I find it one of the great advantages of the novel-form, and it has a parallel in our perception of life.[67]

This intermittence, that is, entering into people's minds occasionally but not always, adds variety and colour to real life's experience and so correspondingly the novelists can very well play fast and loose with their characters. Forster also envisages the extended possibility of the novel-form to capture the intricate inconsistencies in our life according to the novelist's perception of it. Here is yet another similarity of critical perspective between Forster and Virginia Woolf according to whom, "in or about December, 1910, human character changed",

---

66. *Ibid* p. 83
67. Ibid p. 83

and the traditional tools of the novelist, the Edwardian stock-in-trade of fiction was no more suitable to express it.[68] This shows the complex human situation which existed when both Forster and Woolf wrote their fiction and their criticism of fiction. Forster also feels that the novelist should not take the reader into confidence about his characters. It is detrimental to illusion and nobility. Fielding and Thackeray did this and produced "bar-parlour chattiness" which harmed their novels. But Hardy and Conrad, on the other hand, took the readers into confidence about the universe. They drew back from their characters to generalize about the conditions under which they think life is carried on. Forster quite approves of this but is wary of the novelist's confidences about the individuals.[69]

Plot, the third aspect of the novel, is the logical intellectual aspect which requires mystery. It also adds the elements of intelligence and memory to the story. It provides a kind of framework within which the action in the novel takes place according to the principle of causality. Best suited to drama, plot which should have a beginning, a middle and an end, demands that human beings be cut to its requirements. In the novel it finds the human beings to be "enormous, shadowy and intractable, and three quarters hidden like an iceberg." Forster likens plot to a "higher government official" reprimanding characters for "their lack of public spirit", and for brooding too long and wasting time "running up and

---

68. "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown", *Collected Essays* 1, p. 320
69. *Aspects*, p. 84

down ladders in their own insides". Plot demands that the characters must contribute to it.[70] This will deprive them of their natural vitality and this aversion to plot in some way reflects another aspect Forster's larger scheme of things, viz, the social problem of adjusting the individual to a larger order while allowing him to be genuine. Forster's systematic view of the plot and his iconoclastic attitude to it have strong resemblances with the formulations of modern theory of narrative. Narrative theory in its preoccupation with narrative competence also deals with the reader's ability to identify plots. It postulates the existence of a level of structure independent of any particular language or representational medium – this structure is what we generally call 'plot.' Plot has been looked at in two ways. It is a way of shaping events to make them into a genuine story. It is also what gets shaped by narratives as they present the story in different ways. In this latter sense plot or story is the given and discourse the varied presentation of it. Plot is itself the shaping of events, it can make a marriage the happy ending or sad beginning of a novel – or can make it turn in the middle. But what the reader actually encounters in a text is the discourse, the plot is something readers infer from the text. The idea of the elementary events out of which this plot was formed is also an inference or construction of the reader. According to Frank Kermode when we say that a clock sounds 'tick-tock' we give the noise a fictional structure, tick is the beginning and tock is an end. "A clock's *tick-tock* I take it to be a model of what we call a plot, an organization that

---

70. Ibid pp. 86-87

humanizes time by giving it a form."[71] Thus theory highlights the meaningfulness and organization of the plot and it is in parity with Forster's distinction between story and plot.

> A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then the queen died' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot.... It suspends the time-sequence, it moves as far away from the story as its limitations will allow. Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say: 'And then?' If it is in a plot we ask: 'Why?' This is the fundamental difference between these two aspects of the novel. (AN, p. 87)

Forster's strong sympathy for the individual against totalitarianism makes him prefer those novelists who can create intensely real characters to those who manipulate events and people into clever contrivances. Paying homage to Meredith, "the finest contriver that English fiction has ever produced", Forster analyses a Meredithian plot which

> resembles a series of kiosks most artfully placed among the wooded slopes, which his people reach by their own impetus, and from which they emerge with altered aspect. Incident springs out of character, and having occurred it alters that character. People and events are closely connected, and he does it by means of these contrivances.[72]

Meredith's novels are series of contrivances that spring from the characters and react upon them. His "attempt to elevate the plot to Aristotelian symmetry, to

71. Culler, pp. 84 – 87.

turn the novel into a temple wherein dwells interpretation and peace" fails.[73] He thus lets the plot triumph in his novels through his contrivances and makes the character suffer. The same fate greets characters in Thomas Hardy's novels in which

> Hardy arranges events with emphasis on causality, the ground-plan is a plot, and the characters are ordered to acquiesce in its requirements. ...His characters are involved in various snares, they are finally bound hand and foot, there is ceaseless emphasis on fate, and yet, for all the sacrifices made to it, we never see the action as a living thing .... In other words, characters have been required to contribute too much to the plot; except in their rustic humours, their vitality has been impoverished, they have gone dry and thin .... He has emphasized causality more strongly than his medium permits.[74]

Forster assigns the reason for this flaw in Hardy to the fact that he is essentially a poet, who conceives of his novels from an enormous height." They are tragedies or tragic-comedies coming from a poet-prophet-visualizer. Forster calls them "my home" which the work of Meredith cannot be.[75] Here the Forsterian apostrophe of personal bias or 'affection' as the criterion of judgement is strongly in evidence. Action does not express all human happiness and suffering in the novel; other means can be used and the plot "must not be rigidly canalised." But plot usually triumphs in its battle with character thereby making the novel weak at the end. In the rigid confines of the plot the characters are

---

72. Ibid p. 90
73. Ibid p. 91

deprived of freedom. When the novelist winds up the plot, - as he must,- they go dead. And "our final impression of them is through deadness."[76] This is because logic dominates in the novel over human elements. In order to avoid this danger a novelist must steer the middle way between plot-maker and character-monger. But usually he plans his book beforehand, stands above it, is interested in cause and effect and so has an air of predetermination. The result is a screw and hammer framework which depresses Forster. He exclaims :

> After all, why has a novel to be planned? Cannot it grow? Why need it close, as a play closes? Cannot it open out? Instead of standing above his work and controlling it, cannot the novelist throw himself into it and be carried along to some goal that he does not foresee? The plot is exciting and may be beautiful, yet is not a fetish, borrowed from the drama, from the spatial limitations of the stage? Cannot fiction devise a framework that is not so logical yet more suitable to its genius?[77]

Forster's frustration at the cool facetiousness of a plot-dominated novel evident in this outburst reflects modern theory's disgust with the mimetic trap in criticism which piously values our own mimetic assumptions and produces meaning by recounting the story of a real reader's engagement with the text. Forster's tendency to break free from the novel's mimetic underpinnings makes him visualise this new possibility for the novel, of growing and opening out instead of the traditional closing. He is all admiration for Andre Gide's _Les Faux-_

---

74. Ibid p. 92 - 93
75. Ibid p. 93
76. Ibid p. 94

Monnayeurs which successfully attempts to put something else in the place of plot. It attempts to combine the two truths, namely, the truth in life and truth in art. It also proposes that

> ... writers should mix themselves up in their material and be rolled over and over by it; they should not try to subdue any longer, they should hope to be subdued, to be carried away.[78]

Forster is warmed by this prospect of being carried away and arrives at the premise "that to create life with sufficient intensity is itself to create aesthetic form."[79] And his enthusiasm for this new experiment with the art of fiction leads him to declare :

> As for a plot – to pot with the plot! Break it up, boil it down. Let there be those 'formidable erosions of cantour' of which Nietzche speaks. All that is prearranged is false.[80]

This is the voice of a romantic-humanist iconoclast out to free the novel from the tyranny of the plot. H.A.Smith feels that Forster's link with the Romantics is very firm and significant. As a writer of comedy, "Forster deals with illusion and reality, but his characters are not measured, primarily, against a commonly accepted social norm; they are judged, rather, by the ideal standards of the

---

77. Ibid p.95
78. Ibid pp. 98-99
79. R.Advani, p. 136
80. *Aspects* p. 99

'Beloved Republic'."[81] The "Holiness of the Heart's Affection", Forster's ideal in 'What I Believe', cannot be realised without imaginative perception which combines the truth in life with the truth in art, which sees life steadily and sees it whole. This often transcends the hard and freedom-denying confines of the plot. Rukun Advani is of the view that Forster's special brand of humanism recognizes the complexity and variety of human life and values it more than strict doctrines.[82] Strict adherence to the plot structure prevents the novelist from giving full expression to this complexity and variety. Man's uniquely human self must not be destroyed in the process of creating a just social order. Similarly in the novel the vitality of character should not be stifled by the predominance of plot. Aesthetic activity derives from sources of integrity deep in human nature which cannot be satisfactorily portrayed by the mere structure of a plot, and hence Forster's emphasis on character. This is a 'humane' rather than an aesthetic view of the novel and its functions. This view indirectly reflects the French critical movement, deconstruction which is a radical critique of conventional epistemologies, such as mimetic assumptions in reading and reductive logocentrism which is the basis of plot construction. It questions the mimetic concept of 'art imitates life". This phrase marks the reality/representation dichotomy, in which reality (life) is both prior and privileged in relation to representation (art), which is both derivative and parasitic. This theory deconstructs this concept to reveal representation as always already coexistent

---

81. "Forster's Humanism and the Ninteenth Century", Twentieth Century Views ed. Malcolm Bradbury,(New Delhi, Prentice-Hall of India, 1979) p. 114.

with reality. Moreover representations (texts) that contain our culture also over-determine our existence. Therefore, art imitates life and life imitates art. Neither is privileged or prior, both are parasitic and derivative. Thus by overturning the conventional understanding of mimesis, deconstruction questions the referential foundation of the novel and most novel criticism.[83] This possibility is indicated by Andre Gide's experiment, in which he sort of breaks down the plot and uses "various bundles of words". This will be enjoyed by all "who cannot tell what they think till they see what they say" – this borders on unauthorized forays into mysticism and the subconscious. From this brave experiment of Andre Gide which he so much admires Forster moves to the "vague and vast residue into which the subconscious enters. Poetry, religion, passion ...",[84] the aspect called Fantasy.

Forster begins his description of Fantasy by reiterating his characteristic mistrust of criticism in which, while theorizing, the subject usually slides away from beneath it "like a shadow from an ascending bird." A similar situation can exist in the novel, that is, of conflicting truths, which cannot be tackled by the old apparatus consisting of the three aspects of story, character and plot. It will be sufficient only when the bird is on the ground and the shadow touches the bird. But when the bird and the shadow are far apart something more is required which includes, illumines and cuts across these three aspects like "a bar of light"

---

82. *E.M.Forster as Critic*, p. 42
83. Bernard Duyfhuizen, op.cit, p. 219
84. *Aspects*, p 100

which can recall the bird to its shadow. Forster calls this bar of light by two names, fantasy and prophecy. Sterne and Melville belong to this new aspect of fiction: the fantastic-prophetical axis. George Meredith and Charlotte Bronte came near this axis but they were not essentially fantastic or prophetic. But Sterne, Melville, Peacock, Max Beerbohm, Virginia Woolf, Walter de le Mare, William Beckford, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and Swift essentially belong to the fantastic-prophetical axis.[85] This aspect of fantasy demands from the reader "something extra", "an additional adjustment". Forster calls it "a side-show in an exhibition" for which we pay extra as well as the original entrance fee. In fantasy we invoke "all that is medieval this side of the grave", whereas in prophecy the appeal is to whatever transcends our abilities, "to all that is medieval beyond the grave".[86] Fantasy "implies the supernatural, but need not express it." The fantasists use devices "such as introduction of a god, ghost, angel, monkey, monster, midget, witch into ordinary life or the introduction of ordinary men into no-man's land, the future, the past, the interior of the earth, the fourth dimension; or divings into and dividings of personality; or finally the device of parody or adaptation." Occurring naturally to writers of certain temperament these devices help to manipulate the "bar of light."[87] The logic of ordinary life, appeal to intelligence and realistic representation are abandoned and a fictional universe which is non existent in reality and which is a purely imaginative construction is presented. Fantasy "re-orders the real world into a new imaginative synthesis,

---

85. Ibid pp. 101 - 3
86. Ibid pp. 104 - 5

and is thus a movement away from the logic and divisions of social existence."[88] Forster cites Norman Matson's book, Flecker's Magic as a typical example of a fantasy in which a wishing-ring given by a witch to Flecker brings either misery or nothing at all. He becomes mad with confusion and cannot wish anything at all. The kingdoms of magic and common sense are merged in the novel and the mixture comes springing many surprises. This is a true fantasist at work, and Forster is optimistic of more such prospects as he says : "... and to the end of time good literature will be made round this notion of a wish."[89] Forster cites Max Beerbohm's Zuleika Dobson as a more complicated fantasy. Treated with a mixture of realism, wittiness, charm and mythology, and involving a number of supernatural machines, both original and borrowed, the book achieves "a beauty unattainable by serious literature". "It is funny yet charming, iridescent yet profound."[90] Fielding attempted a "false start" at fantasy in Joseph Andrews by using Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* as a comic mythology. He invented a brother to Pamela in order "to laugh at Richardson, and incidentally express his own views of life." But Fielding's view of life easily finds expression in solid round characters, Parson Adams and Mrs Slisplop whose growth makes fantasy vanish and we are once again in the serious world of Henry Fielding.[91] The Magic Flute, the fantasy of Lowes Dickinson draws its mythology from the world of Mozart. Tamino, Sarastro, and the Queen of the Night become magically alive when the

---

87. Ibid pp. 106 - 7
88. R. Advani, p. 139
89. Ibid p. 109
90. Ibid pp. 110 - 11
91. Ibid p. 112

author's thoughts are poured into them. James Joyce's fantasy, Ulysses draws from the world of *Odyssey* and is an "epic of grubbiness and disillusion". It does not come off because "Indignation in literature never quite comes off". The book is full of experiments "the aim of which is to degrade all things, and more particularly civilization and art, by turning them inside out and upside down."[92] These are Forster's example of fantastic novels and in them the power of fantasy penetrates into every corner of the universe. They appeal to the spirit rather than to the intellect. These fantasies have an impoverished air, which is the secret of their force and charm. "Their appeal is specially personal - .... and they ask us to accept either the supernatural or its absence." We cannot make any sure statement as to their subject matter and they must be saved from "the claws of critical apparatus."[93] In his essay on Ronald Firbank he further clarifies this point:

> ... if critics had not their living to get they would seldom handle any literary fantasy. It makes them look foolish. Their state of mind is the exact antithesis of that of the author whom they propose to interpret. With quiet eyes and cool fingers they pass from point to point, they define fantasy as 'the unserious treatment of the unusual' – an impeccable definition, the only objection to it being that it defines. A gulf between the critical and the creative states exists in all cases, but in the case of a fantastical creation it is so wide as to be grotesque."[94]

---

92. Ibid pp. 112 - 14
93. Ibid p. 105
94. "Ronald Firbank", *Abinger Harvest*, p. 130

A fantasy is unanalysable because it is unanswerable like an insect plaint that says: "Impossible to anatomise and find what breeds about my heart."[95] The sacred waters from a hundred rills running down from the mountains of Poetry and History make the novel, "the moister area of literature". And the aspect of fantasy further moisturizes the novel.

Fantasy thus contributes significantly to the warp and woof of the rainbow and Forster goes on further to Prophecy, to the realm of song and shock. Prophecy is "a tone of voice". As it implies any of the religious faiths in history or enlarging the power of love and hate to gigantic proportion, the prophetic aspect will "filter into the turns of the novelist's phrase". It demands "humility, and the suspension of the sense of humour" from the reader. The prophet's voice cannot be heard and his glory cannot be seen without humility and we must also realize that laughter has no critical value and it impedes the listening to the song. George Eliot and Dostoyevsky with their common background of Christianity and influenced by the Christian spirit, believing that sin is always punished and punishment is purgation create in their novels the atmosphere of pity and love out of which springs "a heavenly bonus".[96] Forster quotes a passage each from their novels, <u>Adam Bede</u> and <u>Brothers Karamazov</u> respectively and highlights their difference. George Eliot is a preacher and Dostoyevsky is a prophet. Pity and love are firmly and unalterably focussed in George Eliot's novel and they are

95. Ibid p. 129
96. *Aspects*, pp. 116 - 17

only needed in Hetty's prison cell. The rest of the universe does not seem to need them. But in Dostoyevsky "the characters and situation always stand for more than themselves; infinity attends them, though they remain individuals they expand to embrace it and summon it to embrace them." They are apt illustrations of the saying: "God is in the soul and the soul is in God as the sea is in the fish and the fish is in the sea."[97] This "extension" of meaning or feeling is typical of Dostoyevsky which gives him the greatness of a prophet. He does not correspond to our ordinary standards. Hetty and Mitya are gulfs apart though they share similar moral and mythological worlds. Hetty is quite adequate after her confession. She is in a better frame of mind. Mitya, taken by himself, is not adequate. His mind is not in a frame at all. He is distorted and intermittent. But he extends, when focussed, to a region where he could be joined by the rest of humanity. We go all out to him in spiritual sympathy when he declares : "I've had a good dream, gentlemen". "Mitya is all of us. ... He is the prophetic vision, and the novelist's creation also." This extension or melting or the unity through pity and love takes place in a region which can only be implied. The characters of Dostoyevsky belong to the ordinary world of fiction, but this world "reaches back." Mitya is not tinged with mysticism or symbolism. His experience is ordinary till "the tremendous current suddenly flows", and we are asked "to share something deeper than their experiences." Forster elaborates the effect of prophecy:

---

97. Ibid p. 122

> ... a sensation that is partly physical – the sensation of sinking into a translucent globe and seeing our experience floating far above us on its surface, tiny, remote, yet ours. We have not ceased to be people, we have given nothing up, but 'the sea is in the fish and the fish is in the sea'.[98]

What matters in this aspect is not the message, but the prophet's message, "the accent of his voice, his song." Intermittent realism pervades a prophetic novel. The prophet busies himself with little things in the foreground at moments. What he feels during these intermittencies, which we cannot know, characterizes his novel and gives it "roughness of surface." But the roughness though provocative at first is eventually forgotten and smoothness is established. Prophetic fiction while demanding humility and the absence of the sense of humour, while reaching back though not always to pity and love

> ... is spasmodically realistic. And it gives us the sensation of a song or of sound. It is unlike fantasy because its face is towards unity, whereas fantasy glances about.. Its confusion is incidental, whereas fantasy's is fundamental - ....[99]

The prophet seems to be gone "off" - "he is in a remoter emotional state while he composes. Not many novelists have this aspect.... A prophet does not reflect. And he does not hammer away."[100] James Joyce is excluded from this group because of his workmanlike manner, use of too many tools, absence of real

98. Ibid p. 123
99. Ibid pp. 123 - 25
100. Ibid p. 125

looseness and vagueness. His is all talk, "never song." After Dostoyevsky Forster lists Melville, D.H.Lawrence and Emily Bronte in this group. Melville's Moby Dick is easily placed as an account of whaling adventures but as soon as we hear the song it "grows difficult and immensely important." Its spiritual theme is battle against evil. It is also a contest. But the idea of battle and of contest takes us no further than accepting it as a yarn. We must look elsewhere:

> The essential in *Moby Dick*, its prophetic song, flows athwart the action and the surface morality like an undercurrent. It lies outside words.... *Moby Dick* is full of meanings; its meaning is a different problem.....Nothing can be stated about *Moby Dick* except that it is a contest. The rest is song.[101]

Melville's work owes much of its value to his conception of evil and Forster suggests *Billy Budd* if we want to see a real villain. He is Claggart – he is evil – he is natural depravity which is serious, but free from acerbity. Billy Budd, though a remote unearthly episode, is a song not without words.... Evil is labelled and personified instead of slipping over the ocean and round the word". Melville by sharing his apprehensions with us makes us feel bigger, not smaller. Unburdened by a conscience, and after the initial roughness of realism, he reaches straight back into the universal." He offers "that undefinable something ... and he gave us harmony and temporary salvation."[102] D.H.Lawrence scores very high on this aspect of prophecy. He is "the only prophetic novelist writing

101. Ibid pp. 126 - 128
102. Ibid pp. 128 - 30

today ... the only living novelist in whom the song predominates, who has the rapt bardic quality, and whom it is idle to criticize." We can only try to criticize the foreground of his novels where he assumes the role of a preacher and nags us with his sermons. But "his greatness lies far, far back and rests ... upon something aesthetic." The prophet in him irradiates "nature from within, so that every colour has a glow and every form a distinctness". This he does with "a power of re-creation and evocation we shall never possess." Humility is the only way to approach D.H.Lawrence. His indefinable value lies in the fact that he makes the usual stock-in-trade of the novelist evolve "by a different process that they belong to a new world."[103] Emily Bronte with her _Wuthering Heights_ completes this list of prophets. Though it contains no view of the universe, her novel "is filled with sound – storm and rushing wind – a sound more important than words and thoughts." The "emotions of Catherine and Heathcliff surround them like thunderclouds, and generate the explosions that fill the novel..... Even when they are alive their love and hate transcended them." With a literal and careful mind, Emily Bronte constructed her novel on a time-chart. But she introduced muddle, chaos and tempest

> Because in our sense of the word she was a prophetess; because what is implied is more important to her than what is said; and only in confusion could the figures of Heathcliff and Catherine externalise their passion till it streamed through the house and over the moors.[104]

---

103. Ibid pp 130 - 31
104. Ibid pp 131 - 32

Wuthering Heights is cut off from the universals. It is thoroughly local and has no mythology save what the two characters provide. Inspired by another prophet-poet, Blake, Forster recommends the suspension of "single vision" and says in conclusion:

> The human mind is not a dignified organ, and I do not see how we can exercise it sincerely except through ***eclecticism.***(emphasis mine)

But he advises fellow eclectics not to be proud of the inconsistency that is the consequence of eclecticism and bemoans the condition of being so poorly equipped. Critical formulations cannot be based on consistently valid principles because the mind cannot be exercised univocally at all times. The variety and the complexity of human nature and of human life prevent this. So one cannot impress with consistency of standpoint and be truthful at the same time. Thus Forster is wary of what is usually called critical equipment. The prophetic effect in a novel is entirely due to the expansive imagination of the novelist which makes him sensitive to the invisible essence which fills all living organisms. And so he is naturally and aesthetically capable of reaching out to the unseen or the unpredictable. Forster's fictional aesthetics based on the fantastic-prophetic axis which transcends the bounds of the traditional establishment of mimesis seems to anticipate the significances of deconstruction theory. The mimetic poetics of fiction relied on the author's authority and intentions and, on the readers willingness (longing) to believe that illusion of reality could be connected to his

world of experience. Deconstruction questions the authority of the author or narrator as originator of the text and also as the sole authority over meaning. Deconstruction argues that the words of the text have neither their origin nor their reference exclusively with the writer's intention. Every text is always already written, is a reiteration of what has already been said. The author by working in words also always creates other selves that represent the authorial voice (narration) or the thematic focus (characters) and minimal construal for the text becomes more of a problem when the narration becomes more complex. Signifiers float free, open to an endless play of signification.[105] The reader for his role has to abandon his reliance on mimesis and his seeking a correspondence between the text and the real world. This is the 'article of hermeneutic faith'. Clayton Koelb says that 'fiction, no matter how outlandish, conceals some hidden kernel of truth'. Koelb deconstructs this article of faith by showing how some texts ask the readers to maintain disbelief rather than suspend it. This mode of 'lethetic' reading reveals a 'logomimesis' in texts that claim no correspondence with the real world. 'Lethetic' reading renounces any claim to discover the 'true' reference of the text it disbelieves whereas 'alethetic' reading seeks meaning through reference everywhere in the text.[106] The reader's pleasure comes precisely from his or her disbelief. Forster's view that fantasy demanding of the reader "to pay something extra", compelling him "to an additional adjustment"

---

105. Bernard Duyfhuizen, op.cit., p. 219 – 20.
106. Clayton Koelb, *The Incredulous Reader: Literature and the function of disbelief* (Ithaca: Corneil University Press, 1984), 41, 125

(*AoN*, p.103) strongly anticipates these modern theoretical formulations of deconstruction and 'lethetic' reading. Forster's view of prophetic fiction that asks us to abandon 'single vision' anticipates Duyfhuizen's theory of transmission and textuality in which the concept of 'contact', the physical and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee enabling them to enter and stay in communication, is seen as a process rather than a product. Transmission is a process that brings a text into momentary being but never into final semantic determinacy. This is because the theory of textuality recognises the plurality of transmission processes and the text therefore is never an autonomous artifact. The text by its intertextuality includes all previous and later texts within its universe of possible significance and potential meaning. And the transmission process by its reading of the text tells of a thing that is a product of language and thus in a condition of becoming rather than stasis and constructs a text that is often markedly different from the one intended by the author, denoted or connoted by the language, or read by any number of other readers. This constructed text can never be a totalization of the narrative. The constant shifting of perception between the narrating and the narrated is a unique experience that does not ask to be reduced to a fixed meaning in order to be understood.[107] Forster's idea of the aspect of prophecy enabling us to "reach back" and his description of it in *Aspects*: "the sea is in the fish and the fish is in the sea" (125) strongly anticipates this theoretical manifestation of intertextuality and

---

107. Bernard Duyfhuizen, op.cit., pp. 221- 222.

transmission. Forster's view of the human mind and his recommendation of eclecticism strongly reflects his liberal humanist position. It also points to the conglomeration and proliferation of theories of a poetics of fiction in contemporary times. The moderns are learning to read texts differently and any poetics of fiction must contribute to and remain dynamic and flexible within its learning process. So the poetics of fiction can neither be singular in its focus nor depend on a fixed centre always already present in readers. Each of us develops a poetics of fiction, but it develops over time and is altered with each reading experience. This poetics of fiction, if we can really conceive of one, would have to be capable of accommodating ever expanding textual universes and numerous personal poetics.[108] Forster's conviction that "there is no such thing as the art of fiction", and that "There is only the particular art that each novelist employs in the execution of his particular book",(183) seems to be prophetic when we consider these contemporary developments concerning the poetics of fiction.

After discussing fantasy and prophecy Forster turns to something which concerns the form of the novel and which springs mainly out of the plot. Characters and other elements should contribute to this new aspect. He calls this aspect, 'pattern'. Pattern appeals to our aesthetic sense and helps us to see the book as a whole as we look at a painting or picture. Forster describes it as an

108 Ibid. p. 222

"hour-glass" and cites the book of Anatole France, *Thais* as an example. The story, the characters of Thais and Paphnuce and the plot exert their full force in *Thais* because of this hour-glass. They live and breathe as they do in the book because of the pattern by which the novelist orders it. 'Pattern' of *Thais* "which seems so rigid, is connected with atmosphere, which seems so fluid." *Roman Picture* by Percy Lubbock is cited as using pattern like "the grand chain". The story of the narrator and his friend Deering is held together by this chain and this pattern is suited to the mood of the author, and we feel that they have done the exact thing which the book requires them to do from the beginning. Scattered incidents are bound together by a thread made out of their own characters and these contribute to the total atmosphere which is externalised.[109] Pattern in a novel draws most of its substance from the plot. Plot, the house constructed by Logic, adds to itself the quality of beauty by neat carpentry and structure over which one can notice the figure of the Muse. Logic having completed the structure called plot is inspired by the Muse and lays the foundation for a new house, Pattern. Pattern thus "springs mainly from the plot, accompanies it like a light in the clouds, and remains visible after it has departed."[110] This is why we see beauty in the shape of the book, in the book as a whole, in the unity and so on. Forster cites Henry James' novel, *The Ambassadors* as an example of the triumph of pattern. In that novel

---

109. Ibid pp. 134 - 36
110. Ibid p. 136

> The plot is elaborate and subtle, and proceeds by action or conversation or mediation through every paragraph. Everything is planned, everything fits.... The final effect is pre-arranged, dawns gradually on the reader, and is completely successful when it comes. Details of the intrigue may be forgotten, but the symmetry created is enduring.... and when we have finished the book, and allow its incidents to blur that we may see the pattern plainer, it is Paris that gleams at the centre of the hour-glass shape – Paris – nothing so crude as good or evil...[111]

James is rewarded for his fine artistry and hard work, for pursuing "the narrow path of aesthetic duty". *The Ambassadors* is a great success because the pattern has woven itself, with exquisite modulations and reservations. "But at what sacrifice!" – Forster exclaims sadly, and adds: "most of human life has to disappear before he can do us a novel."[112] James has a very short list of characters constructed on very stingy lines. "They are incapable of fun, of rapid motion, of carnality and of nine-tenths of heroism." They are devoid of the stuff that humans are made of in other books. They are maimed, but specialized creatures sapped of natural exuberance and vitality because of their creator's devotion to pattern, for the mere sake of an aesthetic effect. Henry James was thoroughly convinced that a pattern must emerge in his book and anything that emerged from the pattern must be scrapped as a wanton irrelevance. Humans, so wanton as they are, become the major casualties in his novels. Pattern implies unity and Forster wonders whether it could be combined with the rich

111. Ibid pp. 137 - 39
112. Ibid p. 142

diversity of life. James thought it was not possible. His novels are unique but they provide only some valuable and exquisite sensations.This attitude to Henry James remains unchanged throughout his life. In a 1948 letter to Robert Trevelyan he narrates his feelings after reading James's Princess Casamassima

> It is much the most exciting James I have read....and throughout there is an interest – unusual for him – in the social structure, and in different types of human beings and of dialects[:] Balzac no doubt; and I kept wishing he had developed into an English Balzac instead of a specialist in sensitiveness and a composer of patterns, who always tends to make his characters alike, and all of whose characters must be – at certain moments – "wonderful".[113]

In a 1956 review of James's The Painter's Eye, Forster pulls up James for ignoring Winslow Homer's "excellent and exciting water-colours" that plummet the viewer "down rapids in the Adirondacks where his top hat rolls off." And his subsequent remarks evoke the central spirit of his critique of fiction:

> The wilderness and the countrified place were slightly suspect to the neatly attired James. He appreciated scenery, but had no mind to get mixed up in it, whereas Winslow Homer liked to get mixed up."[114]

Interestingly this temperamental antipathy to Henry James began as an undergraduate prejudice in Forster's Cambridge days. In 1899 he wrote to George Barger: "I have just read James' "A Portrait of a Lady". It is very

---

113. Lago and Furbank, ed., *Selected Letters of E.M.Forster*,(London, 1985) Vol.2, p. 229
114. "Henry James in the Galleries", quoted by Donald Watt, "The Artist as Horseman: The Unity

wonderful but there's something wrong with him or me; he is not as George Meredith."[115] Forster's predominantly humanist temperament makes him vote out dry formality and barren pattern from his scheme of the novel. "The artist should favour the sprawling richness of the unpredictable secret life ahead of the life-stifling constraints of an exclusively aesthetic accomplishment."[116] Pattern "shuts the door on life and leaves the novelist doing exercises, generally in the drawing room." The beauty that it brings in is a "tyrannous guise" and it generates regrets. Forster concludes his discussion of pattern by suggesting that the achievements of pattern because of the costly sacrifices it makes in the process are 'beautifully done, but not worth doing.'[117] This is because he feels that "the novel is not capable of as much artistic development as the drama: its humanity or the grossness of its material hinder it."[118] The anarchy and illogic of life need not be superimposed by an aesthetic form but must be expressed with sufficient intensity. Novels "organized by a poetic intensity of vision" are immensely superior to "those shaped by a theory of form."[119] The novelist as artist should "try to satisfy his own aesthetic instincts and the aesthetic expectations of his readers, although he should never sacrifice vitality to pattern."[120] So in Forster's scheme of the novel beauty cannot hold her lustrous plea in the rigid arms of

---

of Forster's Criticism, Modern Philology (August 1981) p. 54

115. *Selected Letters*, Vol. 1. p. 31.
116. Donald Watt, Op.Cit. p. 54
117. *Aspects*, p. 145
118. Ibid
119. R.Advani, pp. 136 - 137
120. Frederick P.W. McDowell, "E.M. Forster's Theory of Literature", Criticism, a quarterly for Literature, Vol. VIII, No.1 Winter, 66, p. 35

pattern. We must look elsewhere – and "edge rather nervously towards the idea of 'rhythm'."[121]

Forster begins with an assumption that the starting rhythm in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, 'diddidy dum', which we can all hear and tap to can be found in certain novels and may give them beauty. The deeper rhythm, that is, the rhythm of the symphony as a whole may also be present in a novel. Forster cites Marcel Proust as producing the rhythm of the first kind. Remembrance of Things Past is "a progressive rather than an aesthetic confession." Though it is chaotic, ill-constructed and with no external shape (pattern), "yet it hangs together because it is stitched internally, because it contains rhythms."[122] Forster pinpoints the "little phrase" in the music of Vinteuil as the most important rhythm in the book from the binding point of view and it does more than anything else "to make us feel that we are in a homogeneous world."[123] It is always a living being, but takes various forms attending on love and misery alike but never losing its divine character. The little phrase is like a chorus, an echo, a memory – it belongs to the unknown. Forster admires Proust for his use of rhythm in literature – his use of "a musical phrase". The little phrase establishes beauty that is not tyrannous, ravishes the reader's memory and at times, "means everything to the reader", and at other times, it means nothing and is forgotten. Forster emphasizes this as the function of rhythm in fiction, that is, "not to be there all the time like a pattern,

---

121. *Aspects*, p. 146
122. Ibid
123. Ibid p. 147

but by lovely waxing and waning to fill us with surprise and freshness and hope." Shabbily done, rhythm can be extremely boring – Galsworthy and Meredith are cited as instances. It cannot be achieved by deliberate planning but has to depend on "a local impulse when the right interval is reached", and it lessens our need of an external form.[124] After Proust Forster leads us to a more central problem in his fictional aesthetics.

> Is there any effect in novels comparable to the effect of the Fifth Symphony as a whole, where, when the orchestra stops, we hear something that never actually been played? The opening movement, the andante, and the trio-scherzo-trio-finale-trio-finale that composes the third block, all enter the mind at once, and extend one another into a common entity.[125]

This musical effect, according to Forster, is likely to find its nearest parallel in fiction. Not in drama because it is not so deeply committed to the claims of human beings. Human beings enter the novel and dare the novelist to recreate them, order them in the interest of beauty and Forster strongly feels that music can "offer in its final expression a type of beauty which fiction might achieve in its own way." This may be done through the method of

> Expansion ....Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out.[126]

---

124. Ibid p. 148
125. Ibid p. 149
126. Ibid

In *War and Peace*, Forster suggests, one can hear the great chords sounding behind one, and when we have read through the novel, every item in it seems to expand, all enter the mind at once, extend one another into a common entity and lead a larger existence. We do in fact listen to the tune that never actually been played. That is why "most people agree that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is the greatest novel that western civilization has produced."[127]

Forster concludes his remarkable survey by speculating on the future of the novel. He suggests the same sound method of visualizing the novelists of the next two hundred years as also writing in the same circular room. Though "the change in their subject-matter will be enormous: they will not change." The developments in history will not affect the art of the novel.

> The novelist of the future will have to pass all the new facts through the old if variable mechanism of the creative mind.[128]

Forster's question: "can human nature change?", and his hope that "if the novelist sees himself differently he will see his characters differently" leads to a new system of lighting. He neglects both "the great tedious onrush known as history", and a "shy crab like sideways movement".[129] The latter is misunderstood as his approach to literature by some critics.[130] Forster ventures to take a wider

---

127. "Our Second Greatest Novel?" *TCD*, p. 226
128. Ibid p. 151
129. Ibid p. 1520
130. Frederick P.W. McDowell, E.M. Forster's Theory of Literature, says :"He has generally approached books with the 'shy crablike sideways movement' of the mind, as he terms it in

view that "the development of the novel" necessarily implies "the development of humanity."[131]

The art of fiction in Forster's hands passes through the evolutionary stages of story, people, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern and rhythm and assumes ahistorical, atemporal status by reaching it high point in music. Fiction is made to arrive and "give intimations of the unseen like music" through "an intense absorption in life" by the novelists' sensitiveness "to the spiritual rhythms that constitute the underlayers of man's inner life."[132] Firmly stressing the importance of human values in fiction Forster argues for the creation of a fiction which can transcend, not exclude, the outer life of action and approximate towards an intense illuminated inner life of values. This parallels the individual man's emergence from being socially bound to a state of spiritual freedom and autonomy. This is the epitome of the human civilization vis-à-vis the development of the novel from the liberal humanist perspective.

Aspects presents no formal theory of the novel, no everlasting mould by which the novelists could express themselves. It is no chartered guideline for the aspiring novelists of the future. To an aspiring novelist Forster wrote about his book: "Books like mine or Mr Richards or Mr Lubbock's are all very well for students and examinees, but, seriously, I think they may do more harm than

---

the last pages of *Aspects of the Novel.*" P. 19
131. *Aspects*, p. 153
132. R. Advani, p. 145

good to those who are actually engaged in creative work."[133] Forster had no pretensions to guide futurity but he was just being "sensitive to what is going on"[134] which was for him the main business of a literary critic. He himself did not set store by what he had said in *Aspects*. He wrote to T.E.Lawrence in 1927 and said that the copy of the lectures "reads like a saucerful of last week's grape nuts."[135] It was not at all meant for "the critic hungry for firm guidance" who, disappointed in his expectations, describes him "as a will-o'-the-wisp light-heartedly hovering over the marshland to which he himself compares the field of his enquiry."[136] Nor are his views and ideas only hinted at and swiftly abandoned but are imaginatively and consistently reflected and developed, as we shall point out, in his critical writings both prior to and after *Aspects*. Forster is no literary mystifier out for a little fun, no pedlar of Erewhonian myths about fiction. In *Aspects* as well as in his other critical writings he emerges as a tough-minded advocate of the supreme role of imagination – for the poetic and the personal – in the art of fiction. Though he appears to be "a strong and skilled champion of certain modes and masters", he does not univocally colour his critical views with just his "personal taste" in order to build us "a palace of shining criticism" and illuminate it "with many of the glimmering mystification", as the overanxious and frustrated reviewer has pointed out.[137] The mode that he champions is ***Imagination***, and the masters are those who devotedly celebrate its various

---

133. *Selected Letters* 2, p. 94
134. "English Prose between 1918 And 1939", *TCD*, p. 288
135. *Selected Letters* 2, p. 80
136. E.F.Benson, "A literary mystification'. *Spectator*, CXXXIX 1927 in *E.M.Forster: The Critical Heritage*, ed, Philip Gardner, p. 329

manifestations in their works. He does not pretend to cover the entire range of the novel, that 'formidable mass ... so amorphous'. His plan excludes some, as all plans tend to be exclusive. Like what he said about Forrest Reid, he "kept to what he liked"[138] and praised it to be good and desirable. This might give him an air of whimsicality and arbitrariness. But he redeemed himself by the inner gravity of his spirit and his natural good taste. He has established, by his visionary approach to the novel, that Imagination can 'connect' what history had lain asunder. Thus he liberated the art of the novel from the manacles of epochs and placed its practitioners and their works in fruitful simultaneity. "This was a great relief", as one admiring reviewer has said. "The fashion of imprisoning a work of art in the pigeon hole of its period takes the zest from criticism."[139] Bursting the long-established bubbles of preconceived loyalties and animosities Forster bravely reaffirms the static quality of art : "History develops, Art stands still."[140] The permanence of Art is thus established and stated as opposed to the impermanence of life. Distancing himself carefully from any absolute judgement, he moves on to commend and criticize the novels and their authors with a view to finding categories for fiction. Shunning the historical method, he establishes a sort of equality in the fictional arena where the novelists meet on equal terms and are juxtaposed; we are made to look at them all at once. This method can be called a liberal method and Forster uses it to establish his aristocracy in the

---

137. Ibid, p. 331
138. "Forrest Reid", *TCD*, p. 276
139. L.P. Hartley, review, Saturday Review, cxliv, 17 December 1927, *EMF: The Critical Heritage*, p. 337
140. *Aspects*, p. 36

field of fiction. Forster's approach also reflects the influence of Einstein's theory of relativity in literary criticism. There is no absolute standard for judging literary merit and literary taste is relative, not absolute. Though Forster believed in the absoluteness of literary values and human values he does not subscribe to any absolute literary standard by which a work of art can be assessed. *Aspects* presents an interesting combination of entertainment and discernment which is seldom found in a critical work. Forster is "frankly provisional" but without "the disabling diffidence which frustrates discussion" and also without "the intimidating arrogance which seems to defy it."[141] He brings life to the critical comment by his totally relaxed but passionately lively disposition as a critic. His critical approach was a welcome variation from the hackneyed academic assumptions about the novel. It points to new directions which fiction can take and new possibilities which can be realized by the novel genre.

Forster the critic is primarily a sympathiser and as Virginia Woolf points out in her review of the *Aspects*, "his sympathies are with the untidy and harassed people who are scribbling away at their books.... And he makes out ... that certain shapes and ideas tend to recur in their minds whatever their period."[142] A detailed look at Woolf's reactions to *Aspects* and Forster's responses to those reactions will be useful in evolving a new aesthetic of fiction. It is Woolf's criticism of the *Aspects* that brought the usually aloof Forster to clarify his views further in

---

141. Wilfred Stone, The Cave and the Mountain : A Study of E.M. Forster, p. 91
142. *EMF: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 332-333

his letters. Woolf admires Forster's informality and familiarity with the art of fiction, the lady in trouble. With her "he enjoys the privileges which are allowed the lover." She also admires his art of saying things that sinks them in the mind. But she is exasperated at his refusal to lay down rules for the novel for rules "confer dignity and order upon their subject; they admit her (fiction) to a place in civilized society; they prove that she is worthy of consideration." But this duty of helping the lady in trouble Forster disowns. "He is not going to theorize about fiction except incidentally; he doubts even whether she is to be approached by a critic, and if so, with what critical equipment." His comments on the novelists – Meredith, Hardy and Henry James – do not lead to a creed but can lead us "to commit him to a point of view." This is something he calls 'life' and these novelists fail when they are brought to this test of 'life'. "It is the humane as opposed to the aesthetic view of fiction."[143] But Forster does not clearly define 'life' and lays down no laws for it. "Why is it absent in a pattern and present in a tea party?" Forster does not respond. We are left to follow our instincts and the result is chaos, and "a card-house of theory" made up of a pile of opinions. Fiction is humbly attached to the service of human beings. His book does not say a word about the medium in which the novelist works, about words and other aesthetic qualities. Pattern is mentioned and severely censured for "her tendency to obscure the human features. Beauty is suspect and is allowed a furtive appearance in rhythm. "But for the rest, fiction is treated as a parasite which draws its sustenance from life, and must, in gratitude, resemble life or perish. But

143. Ibid, p 334

she is not surprised by this "unaesthetic attitude" in the critic of fiction because critics do not consider the novel a work of art and judge it so. She proposes that the English novelists should be bolder and should break loose from "the eternal tea table and the plausible and preposterous formulae". Then the novel might become a work of art. Woolf feels that the book merely encourages us to dream.[144] Forster wrote a reply:

> Your article inspires me to the happiest repartee. This vague truth about life. Exactly. But what of the talk of about art? Each sentence leads to an exquisitely fashioned casket of which the key has unfortunately been mislaid & until you can find your bunch I shall cease to hunt very anxiously for my own.[145]

Woolf replied saying that ""both bunches are lost". This gave rise to a sort of controversy between two aspects of novel-writing cherished by these two novelist-critics – character and aesthetic vision, life and art. In another article, "Novels of E.M.Forster", Woolf lists the things which his own novels reflect that come near to the elusive thing he calls 'life': "It is the soul; it is reality; it is truth; it is poetry; it is love; it decks itself in many shapes, dresses itself in many disguises. But get at it he must; keep from it he cannot."[146] She comes closest to Forster's own vision of the novel when she states Forster's central problem as a novelist: "He believes that a novel must take sides in a human conflict.... he ...

---

144. Ibid, pp. 335- 336
145 Furbank 2, p. 146

146. Woolf, *Collected Essays* 1, 343

has the impulses of a poet."[147] Woolf believes that "the power of combination – the single vision", is very essential to the novelist. He must have "immense persuasiveness of a mind which has completely mastered its perspective."[148] According to Woolf Forster's problem as a novelist was the graceful combination of realism and mysticism, to make the reader believe at once the complete reality of the soul and the complete reality of the suburb because in all his writings this belief "that it is the private life that matters, that it is the soul that is eternal".[149] So in his novels instead of seeing "one single whole we see two separate parts." Forster's works "lack fusion", and his variety of gifts "tend to trip each other up."

> If he were less scrupulous, less just, less sensitively aware of the different aspects of every case, he could, we feel, come down with greater force on one precise point.[150]

In *Howards End* we have to interrupt the pleasures of imagination to be tapped into the symbolic meaning and the larger intention of the conversation of characters. We have to step from "the enchanted world of imagination where our faculties work freely, to the twilight world of theory, where only our intellect functions dutifully." In his comedies where he abandons responsibility for his characters' behaviour, and forgets that he should solve the problem of the universe, he is the most diverting of novelists. In *A Passage to India* "the double vision which troubled us in the earlier books was in process of becoming

147. Ibid, p. 344
148. Ibid, p. 345
149. Ibid

single."[151] Woolf decries his lack of consistency that is due to his acute sensitivity to details. She calls him a light sleeper who is always being woken by something in the room.

> The poet is twitched away by the satirist; the comedian is tapped on the shoulder by the moralist; he never loses himself or forgets himself for long in sheer delight in the beauty or the interest of things as they are.[152]

But Forster considers this intermittence as a great strength of the novelist. According to him the writer should mix himself in the subject matter of his books and be prepared to be rolled over by them. Woolf decries this mixing up and stands for expressing the thing in itself.

This sums up Woolf's reaction to Forster's views on the novel in *Aspects* and also his problem as an artist of the novel genre. This reveals the polarity between "the two teacups on the Bloomsbury table – the two aspects of novel-writing, character and artistic vision".[153] After reading the proof of Woolf's article Forster responded with a letter to her and said:

> ***I don't believe my method's wrong!*** The trouble is I can't work it: through the simple lack of the coordinating power that Ibsen had. My novels will be either almost-successes or failures:- probably in its future

---

150. Ibid, pp. 348 - 49
151. Ibid, pp. 349 - 51
152. Ibid, p. 349
153. Ann Henley, op.cit, p. 75

> almost-successes, because experience enables one to substitute cleverness for force with increasing verisimilitude.[154]

He does concede to the elusiveness and lack of force in his work but is sadly ruffled by Woolf's assessment of him. Nevertheless he did not want Virginia Woolf to "spoil the article by softening down or omitting anything" as he wrote to Leonard Woolf and said: "there is no individual phrase that I 'mind in the least."[155] But Virginia Woolf was sure that Forster was acting aloof and was "taking every word to heart." "Part of the trouble, though he didn't tell her so, was that he neither wanted to show her *Maurice* nor to have his work summed up without it."[156] In a letter to T.E.Lawrence he mentions his Clark lectures, and *Maurice* as the items which represent him as a man and man of letters and says: "These are items which you must have in your mind if you want to sum me up. Virginia Woolf, deprived of the items, has just made the attempt."[157] Forster was resigned to the fact that the elusive 'truth' about him is the truth that "I am a most disappointing writer, also no one seems to know anything about me, I am feebly satirical.... Virginia Woolf tried to through feelings of friendliness but the truth was again the truth."[158] Woolf's failure to assess Forster correctly is clearly stated by T.E.Lawrence who after reading 'Dr.Woolacott', Forster's short story wrote to him:

---

154. *Selected Letters* 2, p. 79
155. Ibid.
156. Furbank 2, p. 145
157 *Selected letters* 2, p.80

158. Letter to William Plomer (1946), *Selected Letters* 2, p. 219

> It's the most powerful thing I ever read. Nearly made me ill....Virginia [Woolf] obviously hadn't seen it: or she wouldn't have put so much piffle in her note on you... but she has only met the public side of you, apparently. Or else she doesn't know the difference between skin and bone.[159]

Forster believed that the 'force' of formal unity in a novel cannot be "combined with the immense richness of material which life provides."[160] Woolf's "singleness of purpose" led her to the pitfall – "the Palace of Art, it is the bottomless chasm of dullness which pretends to be a palace... a dreadful hole into which the unwary aesthete may tumble".

> She has all the aesthete's characteristics: selects and manipulates her impressions; is not a great creator of character; enforces pattern on her books; has no great cause at heart.[161]

Her characters fail to live because she had no human concern. She felt no responsibility for improving the world. She was not sympathetic but cared for abstractions – Order, Justice, Truth. Remote from realities and detached from the working classes she was aloof and angular, untroubled by the bubbling humanity. But Forster the humanist is not hesitant to mix ethics with aesthetics. "We may hate humanity, but if it is exorcised or purified the novel wilts; little is left but a bunch of words."[162] According to Forster the best and most valuable fiction is produced by the novelist whose vision is catholic, eclectic and who can focus

---

159. *Selected Letters* 2, p. 82 – Note.1 – quotes the excerpts from T.E.Lawrence's letter.
160. *Aspects*, p. 145
161. *TCD*, pp. 251 - 52
162. *Aspects*, p. 39

simultaneously upon the work and upon the human concerns that surround it. Woolf focussed with single-minded force on her "work itself" oblivious of human elements in fiction. But Forster flits and taps himself into an eclectic and asks to be delivered from "single vision and Newton's sleep."[163] Woolf's single vision would have led her to effete aestheticism but she escaped the pitfall because of her "sense of humour" and because "she liked writing for fun."

> Literature was her merry-go-round as well as her study. This makes her amusing to read, and it also saves her from the Palace ofArt .... But in her writing, even in her light writing, central control entered. She was master of her complicated equipment, and though most of us like to write sometimes seriously and sometimes in fun, few of us can so manage the two impulses that they speed each other up, as hers did.[164]

Forster admired Woolf's achievements in technique in the art of fiction but he strongly objected to her predilection, nay, obsession with the formal as against the human elements of the novel. But he remains reserved about her novels because of the intrusion in them of method into matter. In 1957 Forster made a telling remark in an interview with Angus Wilson : "Aren't we both working in the same tradition?" This was said in the context of the relative merit of conventional and experimental forms of the novel. He approved of the "interior monologue" but not the revealing of "conscience", - "it's bit of a cheat."[165] Forster seems to believe that the continuous narrative style of Tolstoy and the Victorians brings

163. Ibid, p. 132 – Forster quotes Blake's lines.
164. *TCD*, pp. 252-53
165. Watt, Forster's Criticism, p. 58 – quotes from "A Conversation with E.M. Forster", *Encounter*

the reader closer to the secret life than the experimental styles of his modernist contemporaries. But Woolf wanted the novel to rid itself of all externality and convey single-mindedly the wholeness of life, the moment of being. She wrote in her diary a few months after her responses to *Aspects*:

> ... what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole.... Why admit anything to literature that is not poetry – by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novelists? that they select nothing?[166]

She wanted the novel to render the moment whole, that is, to reproduce the luminous halo of consciousness no matter what is sacrificed in the process. Though she exemplifies a break from traditional conventions, she substitutes them with something more severe and difficult. An exceptionally gifted artist like herself can only use her method of sensibility in the novel. According to her form is not a visual pattern as Percy Lubbock saw it. But form is an emotional pattern. It is the result of, and it results in, emotion. According to her

> ... the book itself is not the form which you see, but the emotion which you feel, and the more intense the writer's feeling the more exact without slip or chink its expression in words.[167]

---

9 (1957)
166. Ann Henley, op.cit, 80
167 "On Re-reading Novel" *Collected Essays* 11, p. 125

Woolf argues for the supremacy of emotion in writing and reading and hence for the supremacy of the form. When she saturates every atom with intensity of emotion in her work a central emotional pattern emerges and everything else is burnt down. The novel transcends life and reaches the level of the psychological novel. Forster believes that the best novels should reveal life with veracity and should also reveal formal competence. According to him form is only "the surface crust" of the harmony holding the work together from within, thereby suggesting the presence a deeper harmonising force in the novel which he vaguely calls 'life', poetry, religion, passion. He found himself pat in the midst of the cultural confusion of the age which demanded literary communication of something similar to old truths and values. He just could not ignore human affairs and world affairs and shut himself up in an ivory tower. He involved himself in the problems of life by expressing them in his novels. Woolf, on the other hand, being a woman and feminist, distanced herself from the man-made mess and concentrated her full force of vision in rendering luminous moments of human consciousness, moments of being, in her novels. She advanced the claims of art as against the claims of 'life.' This debate between Forster and Woolf highlights one central problem of modern fictional aesthetics, that is, the proper relationship of art to life. Woolf was a more serious critic and an impassioned pleader for an almost unattainable formal excellence in fiction. Her feminist vision of 'androgyny', the perfect ideal state of inner harmony achieved through a union of the male and the female principles in the mind, was central to her art as a novelist. As a critic she struggled to evolve an ideal form to convey in fiction the

complexity of the mind in its struggle towards perfection in androgyny. A novel is a search within, an inward voyage according to this Woolfian scheme, and this new novel can be called the novel of sensibility[168] or poetic novel.[169] Forster, because of his homosexuality, was not in favour of the idea of heterosexual union either in marriage or in art. As a novelist he was weary of marriage as a satisfactory closing for a novel. As a critic he is conscious that one can have only imperfect vision and so he eschews any absolutism in his struggle to discover the elusive strangeness and mystery that lies at the depth of our being. But he does not take to aestheticism for this purpose and he does not deny the outside world in order to capture the inner reality. He proposes a balance, as a humanist should, and concludes that only 'proportion' would help us in search for truth both in life and in art. He was too involved in human affairs, too much engaged in the affairs of his time to ignore the solid fabric of the outside world. His concern for life, for soul took him right into the midst of human affairs, into society in its intricacy and triviality. He plunged into and rolled himself into the mud that is life, and keeping proportion, tried to come to terms with life and to express it in his works. His revolutionary and refreshing insights into the nature of fiction need to be taken more seriously for they point to many important dimensions of the problematics of the protean novel. *Aspects* artfully argues for a personal theory of fiction and at the same time suggests interpretative elements for describing a

---

168. William Troy, "Virgina Woolf; The Novel of Sensibility", *Virginia Woolf, A Collection of Critical Essays* (1979), pp. 26-39
169. Leon Edel, "The Novel as Poem", *Virginia Woolf*, pp. 63-69

novel in the form of its different aspects. It also presents a refreshing version of the art of fiction in the vision of the Novel as a Rainbow, with seven aspects for its seven colours. It is a theory almost playfully, evolved, not consciously formulated. It is revolutionary because it takes bold steps away from the prevailing premises of fiction and draws the aesthetics of fiction towards a provisional Musical theory of fiction.

CHAPTER SIX : 'CRITIC-AS-FRIEND' –

FORSTER ON NOVELS & NOVELISTS.

Forster provisionally revealed his attitude to the avant-garde in fiction in ***Aspects of the Novel***. It was and would remain to some extent "an outsider's attitude."[1] This is because he was predominantly an artist with absolutely no definite attitude towards criticism. It was a simplification of aesthetics in the interest of humanist tenets. He generally argues for increased human relevance for the novel. The different aspects by which he describes the novel reflect his attitude to life which evolves from a sort of reaction to realism, through liberal humanism, to a sort of poetic-musical semi-mysticism. It will be interesting to see how these aspects of Forster can be applied to his views on novels and novelists in his essays and journals. Though not as Arnoldian touchstones these aspects can be seen as influencing Forster's loosely held critique of fiction both prior to and after ***Aspects of the Novel***. Forster speaks about the other practitioners of fiction who flit "like a swarm of summer insects, feeling perfectly free and disclaiming any vested interests".[2] This suggests an atmosphere of free trade, a sort of laissez-faire in the practice and the criticism of fiction. An apt remark by Forster while speaking about Forrest Reid can be used to describe the central attitude in all that he says about novels and novelists:

---

1. Furbank 2, p. 143
2. "Ronald Firbank", AH, pp. 131 - 32.

There was his heart, thus it happened to respond.[3]

Forster's criticism is mainly a heart-dominated response. He kept to what he liked and spoke volumes for it. His range is not exhaustive by any standards. He wandered where his temperament led him and his heart led his temperament. It surely is a delicate, balancing act to handle fiction as a critic, and Forster describes it thus:

> To break a butterfly, or even a beetle, upon a wheel is a delicate task. Lovers of nature disapprove, moreover the victim is apt to reappear each time the wheel revolves, still alive, and with a reproachful expression upon its squashed face ...[4]

To Forster criticism of fiction is an unanswerable "insect plaint", and it is "impossible to decide where one insect stops and another starts; they are metamorphosed ... on the very wheel of criticism".[5] Forster's criticism of fiction has its origin in his undergraduate days in Cambridge. He was acquiring a minor reputation through his whimsical articles in the college magazine, ***Basileona***. In 1899 he was awarded a prize for his essay on "The Novelists of the 18th Century and their influence on those of the 19th."[6] In that essay he singles out Fielding "as the greatest novelist of the eighteenth century". He feels that "he is observant rather than imaginative", but "a most sensible man in a sensible age". Fielding "wrote great books – but not the greatest books", did not wander into the

---

3. "Forrest Reid", TCD, p. 276
4. Ibid. p. 129.
5. Ibid. pp. 130 - 31.
6. Letter to Alice Clara Forster(1899), Selected Letters, Vol.1 p. 17

unknown country. 'Finished and finite clod, untroubled by a spark'- it seems a harsh judgement on the writer of our most perfect novel, but no one can deny that it is true." Fielding represented the most disturbing aspect of the eighteenth century as a whole – it "hated mystery". This attitude fluctuated over the years. In 1929 he reacted angrily to Ford's criticism of ***Tom Jones*** as containing "nauseous special pleading" in the headings of Chapters. But in 1938 he declares that Fielding "cannot reflect, because he has a non-reflective mind. His place is in a West-Country pub, amongst tankards of the ale and an occasional bloody nose: not in a tower, where he just becomes a bore."[7] This seemingly rash hyperbolic undergraduate critical attitude matures into a strong imaginative plea for Poetry, Passion, Religion, in ***Aspects*** as we have already seen.

If Fielding bores him, Jane Austen is exhilarating. "I am a Jane Austenite.... She is my favourite author!", he declares in his 1925 article on Jane Austen.[8] He calls her "most kind hostess" whom he reads with "measureless content" while "criticism slumbers." This attitude, expressed a year before ***Aspects***, defines, if anything can, Forster's central focus as a fiction critic. Primarily an artist of the novel, he is the born-native in his wood vigorously responding with the "holiness of the heart's affection" to the immense pleasure which the "truth of imagination" provides. The internal life which her novels so wonderfully live is evenly balanced, "freshened and enriched by contact with the life of facts." Besides humour, cynicism and moral earnestness Jane Austen holds out

---

7. Forster Papers – quoted by Donald Watt, op.cit, pp. 49 - 50
8. *Abinger Harvest*, p. 162

> something which is easily called Life, but does not thus become more approachable. It is the books rather than the author that seem to reject us – natural enough, since the books are literature and the author an aunt.

This "life", "something as impalpable as stardust" is very elusive and Jane Austen herself, "though she evoked it, cannot retain it any more than we can." Forster expands this elusiveness of life further

> When ***Pride and Prejudice*** is finished she goes up to London and searches in vain through the picture galleries for a portrait of Elizabeth Bennett. 'I dare say she will be in yellow,' she writes to Cassandra. But not in that nor in any colour could she find her.[9]

This is Forster's real artist who is also an ancestor of the central comic-ironic tradition of the English novel to which he temperamentally belongs. In 1949 essay, "In my Library", Forster places Jane Austen among the "three writers whom I would like to have in every room, so that I can stretch out my hand for them at any moment. They are Shakespeare, Gibbon, and Jane Austen."[10] Speaking about ***Sanditon*** which was written after ***Persuasion***, Forster says though it is of small literary merit it may throw light on the last phase of the great novelist. She was ill in 1817 but he finds her in total control "so far as character-drawing is concerned." She was trying to write "when feeling out of sort" and "we realize with pain we are listening to a slightly tiresome spinster, who has talked too much in the past to be silent unaided." Forster comments:

---

9. Ibid p. 166
10. Two Cheers for Democracy, p. 308

> Nevertheless, there is a queer taste in these eleven chapters which is not easily defined: a double-flavoured taste – half topography, half romance.... Character-drawing, incident, and wit are on the decline, but topography comes to the front, and is screwed much deeper than usual into the story.... Isn't this new? Was there anything like it in the preceding novels which were purely social? And – now for the romantic flavour – is there not a new cadence in this prose? .... Why read and discuss Burns, Wordsworth, and Scott? The new literature rises over old landmarks like a tide, and not only does the sea dance in freshness, but another configuration has been given to the earth, making it at once more poetic and more definite. ***Sandition*** gives out an atmosphere, and also exists as a geographic and economic force.[11]

Here the imbecility of a self-confessed Jane Austenite takes the place of cool dispassionate criticism. The letters of Jane Austen, because they are characterized by triviality and sententiousness, are weak and scrappy. Forster says she did not have enough subject matter to deal with in her letters. Removed from public affairs on account of her sex and character, and being too sincere and spontaneous to affect any interest in politics or religion or war, having nothing significant to comment on literature, Jane Austen cuts a sorry figure as a letter-writer. Though the letters suggest her novels constantly only the minor characters flip up at times. But the critical tips on novel-writing offered to a niece in one of the letters, "most of them are connected with "getting things right' – always a preoccupation with English novelists, from Defoe to Arnold Bennett", excites Forster

---

11. Abinger Harvest, pp. 168 - 70

> ... the English school of fiction speaks, and puts its case amiably and privately, as it should. Manifestoes belong to abroad.[12]

Auntish predilections mixed with sound generalizations delighted Anna, the niece cum prospective novelist and she must have been enthused to find her novel much better than she thought. Here Forster finds a fusion between the novelist and the letter-writer brought about by the auntish affectionate concern for a niece who wants to write a novel. Jane Austen is in her elements again, this time the "perfect novelist" as affectionate critic but passing "the creative finger down every sentence and into every word."[13]

> Family feeling has done the trick; .... supreme thing in life to her was the family. She knew no other allegiance; ....Intimacy out of the unknown never overwhelmed her.... The family was the unit within which her heart had liberty of choice.... The accidents of birth and relationship were more sacred to her than anything else in the world, and she introduced this faith as the groundwork of her six great novels.[14]

This is Forster's brand of criticism putting its case "amiably and privately as it should", and imagination and human feeling have done the trick.

After Jane Austen, the top favourite, Samuel Butler should be placed in perspective because he wrote the book that influenced Forster, viz, ***Erewhon***. It has influenced him because he thinks he could have "turned out this little skit of

---

12. Ibid p. 178
13. *Aspects*, p. 77
14. *Abinger Harvest*, p. 179

Erewhon if the idea of it had occurred" to him.[15] That was the food he was eagerly waiting for and Butler, the "master of the oblique" caught him unawares. He is influenced rather than extended. ***Erewhon***, 'a serious book not written too seriously', is "partly a yarn, partly an account of Utopia, partly a satire on Victorian civilization."[16] It takes us to the fantastic world where "it's wrong to have a watch, wrong to catch a cold, but embezzlement is only a subject for sympathy."[17] It is a bizarre world with its Musical Banks, College of Unreason and the worship of Ydgrun. In the High Ydgrunites who were conventional in the right way, who did not have many ideals and were willing to abandon couple of ideals to oblige a friend, Forster sees what is dear to Samuel Butler.

> Although a rebel, he was not a reformer. He believed in the conventions, provided they are observed humanely. Grace and graciousness, good temper, good looks, good health and good sense; tolerance, intelligence, and willingness to abandon any moral standard at a pinch. That is what he admired.[18]

That is why Forster admires Butler and is influenced by him. The qualities which Butler admires are the qualities that enrich both life and art. Besides this his strong predilection for the fantastic, the idea "of muddling up the actual and the impossible" excites Forster. As a contrast to this Erewhonian influence Forster cites his negative influences as St.Augustine's ***Confessions*** with its ascetic goodness close to cruelty, Macchiavelli's ***Prince*** with its cold inhuman

15. *Two Cheers*, p. 226
16. Ibid p. 223
17. Ibid p . 224
18. Ibid, p. 225

cleverness, Swift's ***Gulliver*** with its savage indignation, and Carlyle's ***Heroes and Hero Worship*** which presents the strength of dictatorship foreshadowing Hitler.[19] What Butler offers in ***Erewhon*** makes him abandon the affectation of academic criticism and substitute it by something so provisional as 'influence'. Here again the heart rules and his love of fantasy makes him grade Butler very high as a novelist. "Imbecile" about Jane Austen by self-confession, Forster is an admirer of Butler. While "criticism slumbers" in the case of Jane Austen, Forster feeds himself greedily here in Butler's Erewhonian feast.

The same magnetism of affection and impulse for the fantastical-rhythmic axis are at work when Forster praises Proust[20] whose fundamental despair was only an assumption so that in his great epic, *A le recherché de temps perdu* (Remembrance of things past) "the wreckage of his creation evolves as naturally as the music of the spheres."[21] Though Proust was "too great an artist to indulge in the facile jiggle of a Dance of Death", his "insistence on illness" makes the realities of decay and death very vivid without making their cumulative effect macabre. His characters are living beings, "not masked skeletons or physiological transparencies" and are "doomed more obviously than ourselves to decay." Through them Proust achieved "a new view of the impermanence of the

19. Ibid, p. 226
20. **Proust, Marcel** (1871-1922), French writer, creator of the 16-volume *À la recherché du temps perdu* (1913-27), the lengthy cyclic novel known in English as *Remembrance of Things Past* (1922-32) and regarded as one of the greatest achievements in world literature. Proust was born July 10, 1871, in Paris, of a well-to-do family and educated at the Lycée Condorcet. As a young man he studied law, but gave it up after a brief time to mingle with Parisian fashionable society and to write. - Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.

human race". Thus Proust through his work "expresses the spirit of our age" in the same way Virgil expressed the spirit of the Early Roman Empire and Dante, that of the Middle Ages.[22] Forster calls Remembrance a "contemporary document", and says that a reading of Proust will enable the twentieth century historian to discover "you and me". Proust also taught him what he came to know about the unconscious and its influence.[23] In an interview he confessed that he "learned ways of looking at character" from Proust: "The modern subconscious way, He gave me as much of the modern way as I could take. I couldn't read Freud or Jung myself; it had to be filtered to me."[24] Remembrance which Forster votes as Our Second Greatest Novel[25] can be cited as an example of Art for art's sake because "it is an adventure in the modern mode where the nerves and brain as well as the blood take part, and the whole man moves forward to encounter he does not know what; *certainly not to any goal.*"(italics mine)[26] The importance of Proust's novel is not so much in his descriptions of changing French society as in the psychological development of characters and in his philosophical preoccupation with time. As Proust traced the path of his hero from happy childhood through romantic attachment to self-awareness as a writer, he was also concerned with seeking eternal truths in the changing world. He treated time both as a destroyer and as a positive element that can be grasped only by intuitive memory. The sequence of time is perceived in the light of the theories of

---

21. "Proust", *A.H.*, p. 111.
22. Ibid. p. 110.
23. Frederick McDowell, "E.M. Forster's Theory of Literature, p. 36
24. Watt, Forster's Crticism, p. 55 – quotes from The "Paris Review" Interview
25. "Our Second Greatest Novel?", *Two Cheers*, p. 226
26. A.H. p. 111.

the French philosopher Henri Bergson,[27] whom Proust admired. Bergson was a master prose stylist and a brilliant lecturer, his mystical yet vital style contrasting with the formalistic materialism of his peers. Although often associated with the intuitionist school of philosophy, Bergsonism is too original and eclectic a philosophy to be thus categorized. Bergson did, however, emphasize the importance of intuition over intellect, as he promoted the idea of two opposing currents: inert matter in conflict with organic life as the vital urge strives toward free creative action. Time is in constant flux, moments of the past and the present having equal reality. Proust also boldly explored the depths of the human psyche, subconscious motivations, and the irrationality of human behaviour, particularly in relation to love. The work, translated into many languages, established Proust's reputation throughout the world, and his method of writing, which entailed analyzing his characters' development in minute detail, had an important influence on 20th-century literature. Making use of memory he wove his sensations and experiences of life into a work of art. "What mattered to him was not life, which he had found unsatisfactory, but art, which alone makes any meaning out of life." His legacy to the fellow artist is that it is

---

27. **Bergson, Henri** (1859-1941), French philosopher and Nobel laureate, who advanced a theory of evolution, based on the spiritual dimension of human life, that had widespread influence in a variety of disciplines. Born in Paris, October 18, 1859, Bergson was educated at the École Normale Supérieure and the University of Paris. - Encarta.

> ... the duty of a novelist to do his work as it ought to be done, basing it on laws of goodness, scrupulousness and sacrifice which seem to be derived from some other world.[28]

And thus he raised 'art' to a status of sublime importance which cannot be neglected. According to Forster, Proust's pessimistic view of human relationship is more right than the optimistic view of Dante in the modern context. Dante lived in the age of faith but Proust appeals to unbelieving temperaments like Forster's. Proust is the best exponent of Einstein's idea of relativity in literature. There is no absolute good or evil in his novel. Even the most odious character, Madame Verdurin "can behave nobly."[29] Forster further admires him for making "enough allowance for a certain good sense that persists in the human organism even when it is heated by passion".[30] Speaking of the artistic curiosity of Proust, Forster involuntarily makes a statement of self-revelation :

> Never looking upward, and seldom down, it advances like some rare insect across the floors of France, waving its antennae and exploring both the realm of social conduct and the realm of art. He is not sure which realm is the more tolerable, he varies, as every sensitive creature must. But on the whole he votes for art. ... on the whole art is best, ...[31]

Proust represents us, and his "curiosity belongs to our age ... just as his despair is akin to ours, although we sometimes hope." His book is the product of a double curiosity, social and artistic, and his "memory-snatching habits" have

28. *Two Cheers*, p. 227
29. "English Prose Between 1919 And 1939", *TCD*, p. 281
30. *AH.* p. 114.
31. Ibid.

helped Proust "simultaneously recollect and create" a masterpiece.[32] Forster likes the book for a number of reasons. Firstly the narrator or hero is more or less like Proust himself. Secondly the central problem of the book is its concern not with events but with memories of events and people. Thirdly it presents a brilliant and satirical picture of the French aristocracy of the time. Fourthly the masterly drawing of character achieved by Proust – his people live and develop in front of our very eyes. Fifthly Proust's theory of love that "the more deeply people fall in love, the more they distort one another, so that passion is a certain prelude to misunderstanding." Proust demands constant mental and sensory alertness from the readers. Forster's admiration grows because he "was an individualist, he was an invalid ... and he had no interest in social reform."[33] Topicality and contemporaneity inform Proust's Remembrance of Things Past which is full of natural, human vitality, and effectively 'connects' the actual with the aesthetic, and it exemplifies Forster's tentative description of the novel as "being bounded by ... the opposing ranges of Poetry and History". Music too plays its part in Proust's far from happy universe. His "little tune, the petite phrase of the Vinteuil sonata" influences the varying sensitiveness of his characters.[34] This little phrase is almost an actor crossing the book again and again with significant effects on the hero

> ... giving complete orientation, so that he is back in the country of his childhood with the knowledge that it belongs to the unknown. It gives

32. Ibid. p. 115.
33. *TCD*, pp. 229 - 230
34. "Word-making and Sound-taking", *AH*, P. 115

> memory a shock, and these shocks and their emotional consequences are Proust's main concern.[35]

In ***Remembrance of Things Past*** Proust, Forster's example of a great artist, "found in memory the means of interpreting and humanizing this chaotic world."[36] It proves the permanence and also the triumph of art which, according to Forster, springs from some mysterious sources in human nature deeper than moral integrity.

From the sentimentality of a little tune we pass on to worship of music and Romain Rolland, another French writer, the author of *John Christopher* with the theme, "the hero as musician."[37] Romain Rolland also cherished the cult of the great man and by 'greatness' he meant power of "creation" and "exploration". The ten volumes of the novel are "intensely human" possessing the culture of the past that they proclaimed to be "a living spirit to be carried on", not time-bound or class-bound. Being a great lover of music he knew and understood a great deal of it, and demanded vitality and robustness in music which alone can feed the spirit.

> He felt music as a breath from the vanished centuries, to be transformed by our lungs into the song of the moment and the prophecy of the future; music is the god which each generation must make into flesh. It was the deepest thing for him....,[38]

---

35. *TCD*, p. 229
36. Ibid. p. 230
37. "Romain Rolland and the Hero", *TCD*, p. 237
38. Ibid, pp. 236- 38

Forster mentions a scene from the opening volume of ***John Christopher*** in which the hero, still a baby, touches the piano for the first time, and "experiments in the marriage of sounds." Forster is spell bound:

> I have never come across a scene like it in literature, for it not merely poetic, not merely good child psychology: it seems to take us inside a special chamber of the human spirit, and make us co-creators.[39]

This is the prophetic-rhythmic effect of fiction, Forster's ideal for what a novel can achieve, and the last scene where John Christopher with a child sitting on his shoulder is saved from drowning is a miracle of sorts. And Forster adds:

> He is not just the artist. He is Christopher the saint. He has carried on his shoulders, through the troubles of our century, the divine spirit of man, so that it may live and grow.[40]

Though Forster thinks that ***John Christopher*** will not live like Proust's ***Remembrance***, he rates Romain Rolland far above Proust from the socio-moral point of view:

> ...he cared about other people and tried to help them, and he fought for a better world constantly and passionately, and he moved across frontiers towards internationalism as surely as the Rhine moves through Germany to the universal sea.[41]

---

39. Ibid, p. 238
40. Ibid, p. 240
41. Ibid.

Andre Gide, also French, who was praised in ***Aspects*** for his plot-breaking experiment should come next in line as Forster's novelist of merit. Gide is "the humanist of our age",[42] His work is a "reaction to the present chaos". This reaction is similar to Forster's reaction against the advance of totalitarianism and it continued to express truth in the midst of World War. Upholding the torch of freedom in the crisis of darkness "he has advanced the republic of letters."[43] He had the four leading characteristics of a humanist: "curiousity, a free mind, belief in good taste, and a belief in the human race."[44] He believed that the individual will not develop his individuality "until he forms part of a world society." He believed in "the greatness of man" and Forster calls him "the humanist unafraid."[45] His writings transmitted what he had got out of life, not life's greatness, but its "complexity, and the delight". "He has taught thousands of people to mistrust facades, to call the bluff, to be brave without bounce and inconsistent without frivolity."[46]

Similar is the passionate courage that typifies Forrest Reid, the Belfast author who "existed in his own right, and by the right of being unlike anyone else."[47] He did not fit into any clique and his independence of character was remarkable. His works are remarkable for the presence in them of "squalor" and "beauty" that are haunted by an "indwelling power seen, sometimes clearly, sometimes

---

42. "Gide's Death", *TCD*, p. 235
43. "Gide And George", *TCD*, p. 231
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid. p. 234
46. Ibid. p. 235
47 "Forrest Reid", *TCD*, p. 274

remotely."[48] He was a man of vision like Wordsworth – vision of the supernatural which he approached through both squalor and beauty. The resultant uncertainty or mystery "gives the books their grave charm."[49]

> He who dreamed and was partly a dream. A dream compounded not only of visions, Mediterranean and Celtic, but of the 'moral fragrance' which he prized and pursued and diffused.[50]

When regarded as transcripts of human activities which arise from the author's belief that "a man's great decisions and experiences occur in boyhood, and that his subsequent career is little more than recollections", the novels are a failure. Their range is very small and all the characters are thinking of youth. But Forster likes to look at them differently.

> They must be classed not as transcripts but visions before they can be appreciated, and their vision is that of the hierophant who sees what lies behind objects rather than what lies between them, and who is not interested in the pageant of society or history.[51]

His realism is coupled with a strong ethical tendency and the author evinces in his work "a kind of moral fragrance" complementary to which there is also "the odour of sin". The moral fragrance and the odour of sin connect the foreground and the background and "lead the characters towards the supernatural". He does not use magic to invoke the world of spirits but instead it is invoked by conduct

---

48. "Forrest Reid" *AH*, p. 91
49. Ibid p. 92
50. *TCD*, p. 274
51. *AH*, p. 93

and habits as Henry James did in ***The Turn of the Screw***. Reid's two best novels, ***The Bracknels*** and ***Following Darkness*** approximate to "some spiritual experience into which the 'supernatural', as we crudely call it, entered." Not caring for fresh people or problems, always harking back to "some lonely garden or sombre grove", Forrest Reid's genius can be recognized as that of a novelist who has preferred "to see life steadily than to see it whole."[52] Forster also admires him for the toughness of his opinions, constancy in loyalties, his "natural good taste" and "the inner gravity of his spirit."[53]

Forster is grateful to William de Morgan for the excessive weakness for music which other critics consider as one of his many lapses. This lapse was so 'congenial' to Forster because he felt that the pot of art, when it gets cracked here and there, sheds a few drops into life as it does in William de Morgan's novels. The "little tune" by Beethoven, when verbally introduced in ***Joseph Vance*** or in ***Alice for Short***, floats out of upper windows. It cheers the depressed hearts of de Morgan's characters, and "they leap towards the happy ending their kindly creator has destined for them."[54] We revel thus in the happy universe of de Morgan which has a "humanitarian character."[55]

---

52. Ibid, pp. 93 - 95
53. *TCD*, p. 276
54. "Word-Making and Sound-Taking", *AH*. p. 116
55. Ibid, p. 117

Some sort of insect-like plaintive fraternity makes Forster admire the genius of Ronald Firbank,[56] "his taste, his choice of words, the rhythm both of his narrative and of his conversation, his wit, and - in his later work - an opulence as of gathered fruit and enamelled skies." Though there is nothing up to date in him, he "is fin de siecle", an interesting example of "literary conservatism" to the historian and "a radiance and a joy" to his fellow insects.[57] Completely absorbed in "his own nonsense", Firbank is "incapable of totting up life."[58] Being "fundamentally unserious", not introducing "the soul nor its attendant scenery of Right and Wrong", this butterfly makes play its business and, inhabits and invites us to share, "the realm of the lower air".[59] Celebrating a long list of grotesque situations "or a hundred other sentences or people (the two classes are not separable) which have been evoked by his gaiety and exoticism" Ronald Firbank is discovered as "a glow-worm".[60] He was an Impressionist, who broke away from the naturalism which infected the English novel of his time. He freed the novel from the clutches of realistic lumber by focusing and presenting a series of absurdities in his novels. He can be admitted into the fantastic category of fiction.

---

56. **Firbank, (Arthur Annesley) Ronald** (1886-1926), English writer and aesthete, born in London, who devoted his life to travel and novel writing. Firbank achieved some recognition as an innovator in satiric dialogue and narrative techniques. His books reflect his legendary and eccentric life, with their bizarre characters and sophisticated wit. His most famous novel is considered *Prancing Nigger* (1924; originally published in England as *Sorrow in Sunlight*). - Encarta 97 Encyclopedia.
57. Ibid. p. 132.
58. Ibid. p. 133.
59. Ibid. pp. 134 - 35.
60. Ibid, p. 133

Similar geniality informs Forster's views on Howard Overing Sturgis who "was a domestic author, of the type of Cowper" and "wrote to please his friends".[61] Forster also admires the strong literary bent in Sturgis and praises him for bringing about a significant change in his age : the change from fashionableness to bookishness. His love for his friends and his awe of the past and the departed combined to make interesting riddles of his books, and Forster says:

> ... - he was most intelligent and probably quiet unshockable. One gets at moments an impression from his books that he is waiting for people to catch him up, and that they have not done so yet.[62]

Though Forster calls Sturgis's novel, ***Tim*** "an Etonian meditation rather than a novel", he approves of it because it "is a wistful, 'pretty' book" which "can be read with pleasure if read indulgently, and it was written to please."[63] This passion to please cannot be fully realized because the "heart is never appeased" and Sturgis drolls into self-pity and demonstrates how badly the game of life goes. Forster further advances to a generalized comment:

> However, happiness is a very difficult thing to do in art, and what novelists have put it across convincingly? It only arrives through music.[64]

Forster admires Sturgis because he is largely a neglected novelist who believed that the "world is like a huge theatrical company in which half the actors

---

61. "Howard Overing Sturgis", *AH*, P. 136 -37
62. Ibid. p. 137
63. Ibid. pp. 138 - 39
64. Ibid. p. 140

and actresses have been cast for the wrong parts." Sturgis enjoyed imagining misfortunes and this helped him to create his novels. Disasters grow out of one another and the reader is fascinated by the rare monstrous growth. There is no attempt to compromise for the sake of good life. This endears Sturgis's novels to Forster as he is full of admiration for the man:

> He did not care for the applause of outsiders. He lived and he wrote for his personal friends.[65]

Sturgis did not achieve worldly success and his novels did not sell well. But his loyalty to his personal friends makes him important in Forster's scheme of things.

Sinclair Lewis is acclaimed in bemused tolerance for he "brought down some snapshots to show us and posterity", has helped "to lodge a piece of a continent in our imagination", and thus "stopped our havering." That Forster is too eager to spot and focus the usefulness of an author is evident from his observations about Sinclar Lewis who through his photographic method of presenting the Middle West "has made thousands of people all over the globe alive to its existence, and anxious for further news."[66] Forster even values geographic information when transmitted through a novel and admires Lewis for his instinctiveness, his direct approach, his detachment and the absence of superiority and swank.

> Mr Lewis claims no special advantages; ... he is never contemptuous, though he can be ironic and even denunciatory, he has nothing of the

65. Ibid. p. 143

> aspic awfulness of the seer. Neither for good nor evil he is lifted above his theme; he is neither a poet nor a preacher, but a fellow with a camera a few yards away.[67]

Not laying too much stress on Lewis's attitude to life Forster admires him because "he is against dullness, heartiness, and intolerance." He believes in scientific research, prefers truth to comfort, passion to stability, prevention to cure, and can be termed as 'advanced' writer. The quickness of his eye is more important than his attitude.

> His commentary on society is constant, coherent, sincere; yet the reader's eye follows the author's eye rather than his voice, ... His method of book-building is unaffected and appropriate. In a sense (a very faint sense) his novels are tales of unrest.[68]

Forster does not criticise Lewis for being superficial because his method is photographic. Lewis has merely lost his spontaneity and so is "merely not artistic." Forster explains:

> ... photography is a pursuit for the young. So long as writer has the freshness of youth on him, he can work the snapshot method, but when it passes he has nothing to fall back upon. It is here that he differs from the artist. The artist has the power of retaining and digesting experiences, which, years later, he may bring forth in a different form; to the end of life he is accompanied by a secret store.[69]

---

66. "Sinclair Lewis" AH pp. 144 - 145
67. Ibid. pp. 146-47
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid p. 149

Lewis did not possess this 'secret store.' Being indifferent to poetry and not strongly curious about the universe, he could not galvanize his later works into life by photographic skill alone. But Forster ranks his early books as "done, safe, mankind's for ever".[70] In contrast Forster presents the case of H.G.Wells, another photographer, hitting off a person or place in a few quick words who shares the same indifference to poetry with Lewis. But Wells seems to be successful because when the freshness of photography failed he could galvanize his later novels into life by bringing into play his "restless curiousity".[71] Wells in the Forsterian circular room is paired with Dickens, and is catalogued as humorist, visualizer, irritable cataloguer of details, generous-minded, social reformer, not having much taste and entirely blind to the world of beauty. As a contrast to Dickens, Wells is better educated and science has strengthened his mind and subdued his hysteria. He symbolises an improvement in society, but not any improvement in the art of the novel.[72] His characters being "flat as a photograph" never pulsate by their own strength. They are moved by his powerful hands to "trick the reader into a sense of depth." He is an example of "good but imperfect" novelist.[73]

It is for the 'secret store' that Forster admires T.E.Lawrence and his book Seven Pillars of Wisdom. He attributes three heroic virtues to Lawrence: courage, generosity and compassion. Compassion informs T.E.Lawrence's book

---

70. Ibid. p. 150
71. Ibid
72. Aspects, pp. 33 - 34
73. Ibid. p. 76

and though it is largely hidden it "lifts us up into a region of tenderness and unselfish love which was probably his real world."[74] Compassion is like a lodestar which may "lead us through the psychology of the Seven Pillars as surely as Damascus led us northward through the geography." "Inner life" of the hero runs contrary to his exhilarating adventures and the book consists of "a latent unselfishness, a constant goodwill which are fundamental" to the triumph of compassion.[75] Lawrence created a great work of art out of his inner life and out of his military experiences but he himself never grasped its greatness nor admitted, "he had given something unique to our literature." The greatness of his "secret store" made him more likeable later in life though "he could reveal only a little of himself to each person and yet not arouse distrust."[76] These traits of T.E. Lawrence make him expand in our mind. "He belonged body and soul to our islands." T.E.Lawrence has the making of a fantasist and ***Seven Pillars*** has in it splashes of the fantastic stuff which Forster so much admires. The bath scene with the "grey-bearded, ragged man, with a hewn face of great power and weariness" is very revealing; and his words, "The love is from God; and of God; and towards God" border on the fantastic-prophetic axis of fiction. Away from the dangers of progress and industrialism T.E. Lawrence fled into the deserts of Arabia and "later on into the deserts of his own heart." Forster feels that it is the "writer's duty" to lead us into safe retreat.[77] This and Forster's affection for the writer combine to characterise his criticism of ***Seven Pillars***. In a 1926 letter to

---

74. T.E.Lawrence, AH, p.159
75. T.E.Lawrence, AH, p.160
76. Ibid. p. 162
77. "English Prose Between 1919 And 1939", *TCD*, pp. 278 - 279

Florence Barger Forster speaks of the ***Seven Pillars of Wisdom*** with admiration and of T.E.Lawrence with affection:

> It is a very great work. I am certain. One wants to settle down to it comfortably.... I used to think him incapable of affection, but have changed my opinion, and think he has some for me. To be with him, or read him, is a great experience, as he has the power of making one feel one could do all he has done. I don't know whether this is a sign of genius, certainly few people possess it.[78]

In total contrast to this "sign of genius" is Joseph Conrad who "neither explicitly nor implicitly does... demand friendship."[79] He dreads intimacy with the reader and does not take him into confidence though he professes to be personal. At times he draws back from his characters and generalizes about the conditions under which he thinks life is carried on. In spite of the expanse of his universe, his characters "do not reach back." He is excluded from the prophets because the voice, "the voice of Marlow, is too full of experiences to sing, it is dulled by many reminiscences of error and beauty, its owner has seen too much to see beyond cause and effect."[80] Similarly in ***Lord Jim*** "the interest is not in the man – a Henry Jacobean creature, interestingly enough – but the leagues of forest or swamp or sea in which he is a speck and his power of comprehending that he is a speck."[81] In ***Nostromo*** the whole story is in view at once and it should have been "a Romance about Capital, but to the careless reader it has no central idea

78. *Selected Letters*, Vol2, p. 75
79. "Joseph Conrad : A Note", *AH*, pp. 155-56
80. *Aspects*, p. 125
81. Letter to Clive Carey on June 15, 1907 – quoted by Watt, Forster's Criticism, p. 55

at all." Characters are conventional or perfunctory and the description of the scenery is not upto the mark. "But it remains better than other people's successes."[82] Joseph Conrad never gives himself away and as a consequence there is "a central obscurity, something noble, heroic, beautiful, inspiring half a dozen books".[83] His essays convey no creed but only opinions mistaken for a creed, and they suggest that "he is misty in the middle as well as at the edges, that the secret casket of his genius contains a vapour rather than a jewel."[84] He is most solid though not splendid when he deals with his experiences as a simple sailor and is not difficult to understand.

> Work filled the life of the men whom he admired and imitated and whom, more articulate than they, they would express.[85]

Not respecting all humanity but not despising men he holds on to the ideal, "a universal, the love of Truth." "But Truth is a flower in whose neighbourhood others must wither", and Conrad is equally sensitive to this "others" and hence there is a constant discrepancy between his nearer and his further vision contributing to his "central obscurity." Had he not meddled with what lies beyond his real experiences, he would have been easier to read.

> He is too much of a seer to restrain his spirit; he is too much Joseph Conrad, too jealous of personal honour, to give any but the fullest value to deeds and dangers he has known....One realizes, more definitely, what a

82. Watt, Forster's Criticism,p.55 – quotes from Forster Papers.
83. *AH.*, p. 152
84. Ibid
85. Ibid p. 153

> noble artist is here, what an austere character, by whose side most of our contemporary writers appear obsequious. One would like to offer him not only praise but friendship, which cannot, however, be done;"[86]

Conrad desires no good wishes from his readers and "the anonymous intimacy, so dear to most, is only an annoyance and a hindrance to him."[87] Conrad is great, novelist as seer, and Forster can only praise him. He is too huge for Forster's affection.

The desire to find affection is evident in Forster's attention to William Arnold whose Oakfield or Fellowship in the East , though not a masterpiece, is read "with intense interest for the reason that its author was Mathew Arnold's brother". Mathew Arnold is Forster's most favourite Victorian, "a great poet, a civilized citizen and a prophet",[88] and curiousity makes him take up the book by his brother and he is not disappointed. Another reason for Forster's enthusiasm is that it is a book about India. Though the story makes depressing reading the book discovers the difference between Eastern and Western mentality which makes co-operation impossible. It also states that to preach Christianity to India is to begin at the wrong end. Indian situation needs "physical improvement first, then intellectual, then spiritual". The novel is "honourable, intelligent, and critical – a typical Arnold combination".[89] Though "India is passed with a puzzled sigh, with a sense of ignorance and importance", and though the writing remains flat,

---

86. Ibid. pp. 154 - 55
87. Ibid. p. 156
88. "William Arnold", *TCD*, p. 201
89. Ibid p. 202

for William Arnold was not an artist", the book "is so sincere, and it states so fearlessly truths which are unwelcome to the governors and the governed."

> ... it has the Arnold integrity. It is the work of a man whose brother was a genius, and who was akin to that brother morally.[90]

Forster's praise of William Arnold boils down eventually to a hymn in praise of Mathew Arnold's poetry. Mathew Arnold glorifies his brother in two of his poems, "Stanzas from Carnac" and "A Southern Night" in which "his punkah-swept life" is given a touch of "the eternal freshness of poetry" and William Arnold becomes a part of the "beauty in the world".[91]

Forster knew and liked D.H.Lawrence though he kept only a remote contact with him. It was an uneasy relationship. Forster regarded their friendship as one of his 'failures'.[92] Forster was quite taken up by the "sandy haired passionate Nibelung" at their first meeting at Lady Ottoline Morrell's house and felt that his life was enlarged. He found Lawrence and his views wonderfully attractive. "He was ... so human, so personal; he lived his views".[93] But Lawrence's efforts to recruit him to his Utopia, Rananim did not succeed. Forster did not approve of his revolutionary mission, and Lawrence attributed this to his "class-snobbery."[94] Lawrence seemed to have ignored the homosexual side of Forster and this may

---

90. Ibid pp. 203 - 204
91. Ibid pp. 204 - 205
92. Furbank,2, p. 163
93. Furbank 2, p. 5
94. Ibid, p. 11

have made Forster think of him as too "un-self-aware" and "deliberately self-blinding." This must have made for absurdity in their own relations.[95] But his admiration grew steadily and he was eager to declare it.

> I am a great admirer of D.H.Lawrence, especially of his early work, before he became so didactic and theoretical.... Most alarming and explosive but I like him .... ***The White Peacock*** ... brings the glory of summer nearer to me than could pages of elaborate poetry.[96]

In *Aspects* Forster describes him as idle to criticize. But Lawrence's preaching invites criticism. He is "an excessively clever preacher who knows how to play on the nerves of his congregation."[97] Forster did not appreciate the typical proselytising mood into which Lawrence often relapsed. In a letter to the Lawrences he declares:

> I don't like the deaf impercipient fanatic who has nosed his own little sexual round until he believes that there is no other path for others to take, he sometimes interests & sometimes frightens & angers me.[98]

But he was firmly convinced that D.H.Lawrence is "the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation"[99] This brought protests from T.S.Eliot and Clive Bell but he stoutly and fiercely maintained this position. This though is not blind unilateral admiration in which criticism slumbers. Lawrence is read not because

---

95. Ibid, p. 12
96. To Wilson Plant (1917), *Selected Letters* 1, pp. 249 - 50
97. *Aspects*, p. 130.
98. Letter to D.H. and Frieda Lawrence (1915), *Selected Letters* 1, p. 219
99. *Selected Letters* 2, note-2, p. 92 - quoted from *The Nation and The Athenaeum*, 46, (1930), p. 888,

he expresses some special "struggle" or announces some special "doctrine", but because the struggle and the doctrine caused him to write "magically."[100] This Lawrencian magic demands humility on our part but that also creates difficulties with him "for the humbler we get the crosser he gets." "What is valuable about him cannot be put into words: it is colour, gesture and outline in people and things" which his magic transfigures and they look as though they belong to a new world.[101] This is the prophet's power. Forster unabashedly declares on two occasions in his letters that Lawrence is "the strong novelist",[102] and he was sure of the influence of the strong Lawrence on him which made him express his feeling more openly. He wrote to Sir Henry Newbolt when *The Rainbow* was confiscated by the authorities and spoke of D.H.Lawrence as "a man of genius and a serious writer ...."[103] It (***White Peacock***) "is the queerest product of subconsciousness that I have yet struck – he has not a glimmering from first to last of what he's up to."[104] Lawrence is Forster's example of the novelist who communicates at a deeper level than plot structure or aesthetic form. He finds at the centre of Lawrence's works a "poetry that broods and flashes", sometimes striking into " pages and chapters of splendour." The reader experiences "a satisfied feeling at the close" of his books. "The sense of life has swooped in, poetry has taken the place of construction." Though Lawrence's characters are not alive, "yet they are filled with the living stuff."[105] In 1960 Forster appeared as

---

100. "The Cult of D.H.Lawrence" – quoted by Frederick McDowell, op.cit, p. 36
101. *Aspects*, p. 131
102. Letter to Hilton Young (1915), *Selected Letters* 1, p. 220, & To Virginia Woolf, Ibid,. p. 230.
103. Ibid, 231
104. To Edward Joseph Dent (1915), Ibid, p. 222
105. Watt, Forster's Criticism, p. 59

a witness in the Lady Chatterly trial, and when asked by the defense counsel where he would place Lawrence in literature, he replied: "I should place him enormously high ... the novels he wrote dominate terrifically."[106] Lawrence was passionate about the world. So Forster stood by him till the last and his obituary of Lawrence proves him to be a real 'critic-as-friend.'

> All that we can do ... is to say straight out that he was the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation. The rest must be left where he should have wished it to be left – in the hands of the young.[107]

To Eliot's niggling rebuke of this note Forster's reply was:

> Mr.Eliot duly entangles me in his web. He asks what exactly I mean by 'greatest', 'imaginative' and 'novelist' and I cannot say. Worst still, I cannot even say what 'exactly' means – only that there are occasions when I would rather feel like a fly than a spider, and that the death of D.H.Lawrence is one of these.[108]

As a critic Forster avoids the academic-intellectual spider web wherever and whenever he can and flits and taps gloriously like a fly with his hums and plaints. Lawrence is great because he is 'imaginative', and to Forster's critical sensibility this means a writer's ability to convey the poetic sense of the secret inner life. Affection and imaginative sympathy for Lawrence as a fellow writer takes the place of dispassionate and almost needling criticism of Eliot's kind, and Forster is only too proud to admit it.

---

106. Furbank 2, p. 311
107. Ibid, p. 163

Contrasted with his attitude to Lawrence are his views on another modernist contemporary, James Joyce. He appreciates his ***A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*** and calls it "a very remarkable product".[109] But his more famous novel, a parodied fantasy, ***Ulysses*** is "anything but exquisite", though "the most interesting literary experiment of our day". Forster appreciates ***Ulysses*** for being a fantasy but does not have sympathies with Joyce's "dogged attempt to cover the universe with mud", his "inverted Victorianism", his "attempt to make crossness and dirt succeed where sweetness and light failed", and his "simplification of the human character in the interest of hell."[110] Satire did not at all appeal to the predominantly comic-ironic temperament of Forster, and the fantastic in ***Ulysses*** does not come off because "Indignation in literature never quite comes off either in Juvenal or Swift or Joyce", and what we are left with is only "a super-fetation of fantasies, a monstrous coupling of reminiscences." Disgusted by its perverse pessimism and implied anti-humanism Forster says the aim of the book is "to downgrade all things, and more particularly civilization and art, by turning them inside out and upside down".[111] Joyce grossly misrepresented the secret life and gave a degraded picture of it. Ulysses portrays all his subconscious wishes and unrealised dreams, all the mud of his mind. Forster does not approve of Joyce's condemnation of the human race and finds him to be vindictive, soured, obscure and uncompromising. He curtails his characters, not only in the interest of aestheticism but also in the interests of an

108. Ibid, p. 164
109. Letter to Florence Barger (1917), Selected Letters 1, p. 272
110. Aspects, p.. 113
111. Ibid, p. 114

unrelieved and unjustifiable pessimism. In an article entitled "The book of the Age?: James Joyce's Ulysses", Forster says:

> Of our failures and false teeth (your and mine), he has given an excellent account, but he is too irritable and peevish to notice that we sometimes have teeth of our own. That indeed is the central mystery of human nature in the year of doubt, 1926: it is well equipped and successful, and a book that would fully express our age must take into account occasional beauty, strength and nobility. Ulysses shirks this problem.[112]

Joyce failed to unleash the "central mystery of human nature", the underside of the creative mind, and provides little nourishment for the reader's humanity. In 1944 Forster says in a BBC note: "I can swallow him but I don't cotton to him." Joyce's central impulse is to play with words, he is interested in words for their own sake. "He deals with words, and knows an enormous number, but he has no affection for them." Forster also does not approve of Joyce's presentation of the inner life and his way of presenting Leopold Bloom, the central character. According to him Joyce does not present an authentic undistorted portrait of the inner life.[113] And so the raging of Joyce seems essentially, not exquisitely, fantastic and does not approximate to the prophetic-rhythmical axis of fiction.

Forster's views on Virginia Woolf would be the appropriate culmination of this section of our survey. They were contemporaries, primarily novelists and even in

---

112. New Leader (March 12, 1926), pp. 13-14, quoted by Watt in "Artist as Horseman ....", Modern Philology, vol. 79, No.1, p. 57
113. Ibid, pp. 56-57

their critical writings their main concern was for the genre which they practised. *They show a sort of thematic unity and there is a common factor in their creative* and critical writing: a search for the conditions of poetry in the art of fiction. They both believed that the best approach to literature was the personal and they tried to assert the essential poetry of the novel and of life. Both of them belonged to the Bloomsbury circle and often engaged in formative dialogues about the art of the novel over tea. Theirs was a "long-standing but problematic friendship."[114] In 1925 Forster in his essay "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf" exclaims: "So near, and yet so far ! Which is what one feels about her art." And which was what she was to him in life.

> It is far more difficult to catch her than it is for her to catch what she calls life – 'life; London; this moment in June.'[115]

She was full of interests, curious about life, was sensitive and tough, and she liked writing. She was a mistress of sensations – sights, sounds, tastes – and all "her writings oozed with these sensations".[116] Commenting on the first novel of Woolf, ***The Voyage Out***, Forster says, "It is a noble book ... like all Virginia Woolf's work, it is not romantic, not mystic, not explanatory of the universe." "Amazingly interesting, and very funny", is his comment elsewhere about the book.[117] Both her passion for truth in the form of atheism and her passion for

---

114. Ann Henley, "But We Argued About Novel-Writing": Virginia Woolf, E.M.Forster and the Art of Fiction", ARIEL,Vol.20 No.3 July, 1989.
115. *Abinger Harvest*, p. 120
116. "Virginia Woolf" *TCD*, pp. 249 - 50
117. Letter to Florence Barger(1915), Selected Letters 1, p.223

wisdom in the form of music both are in strong evidence in this first novel.[118] Though he considers it inferior to his own works, it is "fine in other ways – its feeling for adventure, its knowledge that adventure can only be undertaken alone. From the tropical forest to the end struck me as unique in English Literature."[119] ***Night and Day***, a deliberate exercise in classicism "contains all that has characterized English fiction for good or evil during the last hundred and fifty years – faith in personal relations, recourse to humorous side-shows, insistence on petty social differences." Though modern in its machinery its form is as traditional as that of *Emma*. Woolf is using tools that did not belong to her. But he found it "interesting"[120] and liked it far less than ***The Voyage Out***. Woolf found it hard to take the criticism philosophically because all through her career as a novelist her desire for Forster's approbation was ardent. But she took it not as "a criticism to discourage ....Morgan has the artist's mind; he says the simple things that clever people don't say; I find him the best of critics for that reason."[121] This is an honest assessment of Forster as a critic. But he objected to the drowsy and desultory, yet artistic style she evolved in her short story, *Kew Gardens* calling it "an inspired breathlessness, a beautiful droning or gasping which trusts to luck, and can never express human relationships or the structure of society." ***Jacob's Room*** (1922) is a tremendous surprise and "A new type of fiction has swum into view".[122] Forster wrote to Virginia Woolf:

---

118. *TCD*, p. 253
119. Letter to Malcolm Darling(1915), Selected Letters 1, p. 227
120. Letter to Florence Barger (1919), Selected letters 1, p. 313
121. Ann Henley, op.cit, p. 74
122. *AH*, p. 123

> I like ***Jacob's Room*** and am sure it is good.... You keep this interest in Jacob. This I find a tremendous achievement – the greatest in the book and the making of the book. I don't yet understand how, with your method, you managed it ... and am confused by wondering what developments, both by style and form, might come out ofit .... One very important thing is that most of the book is seen through happiness; you have got clear from the sensitive sorrower whom novelists cadge up to as the easiest medium for observations.... My favourite pages are 63-4.[123]

This had the sensitiveness and style of ***Kew Gardens*** "but they were applied to human relationships, and to the structure of society", and "a method essentially poetic and apparently trifling has been applied to fiction." ***Jacob's Room*** marks Woolf's great departure from the traditional stock-in-trade of fiction and "leads on to her genius in its fullness", to her later novels.[124] *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) "is perhaps her masterpiece, but difficult". Its message is "Here is one room, there another." Having to choose between the surface and the depth, "she chooses the surface and then burrows in as far as she can."[125] Forster calls it "a civilized book... written from personal experience." Being sane and civilized on the subject of madness and having experienced the edges of that malady, she "robbed it of the evil magic it has acquired through timid and careless thinking." Her equipment, 'visual sensitiveness' becomes "a productive force" in her case with which she explores the treasures of the deeper mind.

---

123. *Selected Letters* 2, p. 32
124. Ibid, pp 253-54
125. *AH*, pp. 124-125

> It is easy for a novelist to describe what a character thinks of;.... But to convey the actual process of thinking is a creative feat, and I know of no one except Virginia Woolf who has accomplished it.[126]

Firmly convinced that "human beings are the permanent material of fiction" she mirrors Forster's own view of the novel's subject matter. But he doubts whether "her own characters live .... They do live, but not continuously". This was because of her problem which was "... to retain her own wonderful new method and form, and yet allow her readers to inhabit each character with Victorian thoroughness" This was a difficult task because

> If you work in a storm of atoms and seconds, if your highest joy is 'life; London; this moment in June' and your deepest mystery 'her is one room; there another,' then how can you construct your human beings so that each shall be not a movable monument but an abiding home, how can you build between them any permanent roads of love and hate?[127]

Thus Virginia Woolf has tried to advance the novelist's art whereas other innovators merely experimented with new subject matters for the novel. If she succeeds, a new type of English fiction will emerge which will destroy its old "picture gallery" image and replace it with "Something more rhythmical. ***Jacob's Room*** suggests a spiral whirling down to a point, ***Mrs Dalloway*** a cathedral."[128] ***To the Lighthouse*** (1927) is a greater achievement with the characters in total accord with "the poetic scheme".

---

126. Ibid. pp. 125-26
127. Ibid. p. 127
128. Ibid, pp. 128-129

> ***To the Lighthouse*** is in three movements. It has been called a novel in sonata form... the slow central section conveying the passing of time, does demand a musical analogy. We have ... the rare pleasure of inhabiting two worlds at once, a pleasure only art can give: the world where a little boy wants to go to a lighthouse but never manages it until, with changed emotions, he goes there as a young man; and the world where there is pattern... emphasized ... through the mind of ... a painter.[129]

In a letter to Woolf in 1927 Forster said that this book "is awfully sad, very beautiful both in (non-radiant) colour and shape, it stirs me much more to questions of whether and why than anything else you have written. The uneasiness of life seems to well up between all the worlds, the excitement of life on the other hand to be observed, stated. This I believe to be right: excitement would dry up those little winds. ... am inclined to think it your best work."[130] The Pattern is supreme in the next novel, *The Waves* which is" an extraordinary achievement, an immense extension of the possibilities of ***Kew Gardens*** and ***Jacob's Room***." Forster places it as "her greatest book, though *To the Lighthouse* is my favourite"[131] He wrote to her to explain his feelings about *The Waves*

> It's difficult to express oneself about a work which one feels to be so very important, but I've the sort of excitement over it which comes from believing that one's encountered a classic.[132]

---

129. TCD, p. 254
130. Selected Letters 2, pp. 77-78
131. TCD, p. 255
132. Selected Letters 2, p. 110

The Years which again is in the realistic tradition and in which she deserts poetry is a failure. *Between the Acts*, her posthumous novel, the theme of which is a village pageant, in a way reaches Forster's idea of "expansion". At its close by the concluding phrase, 'The curtain rose' the audience is itself drawn, to continue" the pageant. Its conception is poetic, and the text of the pageant is mostly written in verse. Through her "poetic vagueness" she gives us a glimpse of "something more solid than patriotic history, and something better worth dying for."[133]

Forster says that like most novelists worth reading she strays from the fictional norm. Her problem was whether she could create characters who are alive and according to Forster there are two sorts of life in fiction, "life on the page, and life eternal". "Life on the page she could give.... Life eternal she could seldom give; she could seldom so portray a character that it was remembered afterwards on its own account".[134] Forster elaborates on Virginia Woolf's great difficulty as a novelist

> Holding on with one hand to poetry, she stretches and stretches to grasp things which are best gained by letting go of poetry. She would not let go, and I think she was quite right, though critics who like a novel to be a novel will disagree. She was quite right to cling to her specific gift, even if this entailed sacrificing something else vital to her art. And she did not always have to sacrifice.... Belonging to the world of poetry, but fascinated by another world, she is always stretching out from her enchanted tree and snatching bits from the flux of daily life as they float

---

133. TCD, p. 255

> past, and out of these bits she builds novels. She would not plunge. And she should not have plunged. She might have stayed folded up in her tree singing little songs like *Blue-Green* in the *Monday or Tuesday* volume, but fortunately for English literature she did not do this either.... She is a poet, who wants to write something as near to a novel as possible.[135]

She had extraordinary keenness of the senses and that made her books seem real. Through symbols she tried to give expression to Order, Justice, Truth as an artist should and found the symbols inadequate. But she was not as patterned or forced or bleak as Joyce. She preserved in her work the sense of freedom and the sense of spontaneity and so she was quite successful in the artistic rendering of the secret life.[136] Forster experienced a sense of artistic spiritual kinship with Virginia Woolf. In 1915 he wrote in *The Daily News* that *The Voyage Out* reflected his own wishes for his own fiction, for something more visionary, less restricted by satire and 'suburban' comedy.

> Human relations are no substitute for adventure because when real they are uncomfortable, and when comfortable they must be unreal. It is for a voyage into solitude that man was created.[137]

Forster greatly valued Woolf's views on fiction and had reportedly consulted her before he delivered the Clark Lectures.[138] He wrote to her on 17th May, 1926 for help:

---

134. Ibid p, 257
135. Ibid pp. 257-58
136. Watt, Forster's Criticism, p. 58
137. Furbank 2, p. 18
138. Ann Henley, op.cit, p. 75

> I am going to give some lectures in Cambridge. I suppose on the novel but am a good deal hung up, & should be very grateful indeed if I might consult you about them ... Please tell me the names of the best novels – I have only just read Tristram Shandy and Moll Flanders, so you see.[139]

He admired the breadth of her knowledge and the depth of her literary sympathy. As a critic, he thought, "she could enter into anything – anything lodged in the past".[140] He had a strong feeling that they both worked in the same tradition of English fiction. She too became very dependent on his opinion. Waiting eagerly for Forster's reaction to Roger Fry biography she wrote: "And I fear Morgan will say – just enough to show he doesn't like, but he is kind".[141] His response was more than just kind : "Biographies are too often described as 'labours of love', but the *Roger Fry* is really in this class; one artist is writing with affection of another, so that he may be remembered and may be justified."[142] Their mutual respect and reciprocal critical honesty were remarkable. "She liked him a good deal – rather more than, in his heart, he liked her." He always "felt the need to be on guard with her."[143] Forster is Woolf's "critic-as-friend"[144] when he declares:

> Like all her friends, I miss her greatly.... Virginia Woolf got through an immense amount of work, she gave acute pleasure in new ways, she

139. Furbank 2, p. 143
140. *TCD*, p. 255
141. Ann Henley, p. 74
142. *TCD*, p. 256
143. Furbank 2, p. 18
144. *Selected Letters* 2, p. 255

> pushed the light of the English language a little further against darkness.[145]

Forster seems to have a personal stake in whatever he says as a critic. As a critic of novels and novelists Forster by and large adopts a humane and humanistic stance. He thinks that fiction ought to be untidy, and the best writers intentionally flout the sacrosanct formats of novel writing. Human beings and human values are the supreme concern of Forster the critic and his canon of fiction clearly is evolved out of this concern. He runs down whatever he finds hostile to humanity even if it presents exquisite beauty, order and form. His studied aloofness from any firmly formulated aesthetic theory and his consistent refusal to articulate his own theory of the novel as a critic, are unique characteristics of his criticism of the novel. For Forster, the inveterate listener[146], a novelist is a man speaking to man.

---

145. *TCD*, p. 264

146. Frieda Lawrence wrote to Forster : "... I thought you were 'good' to people – you listen so carefully... so many things are said thoughtlessly - and you still listen with the whole of you ...", Furbank 2, p. 7

CONCLUSION

Forster is our contemporary both as an artist and as a critic. He stands somewhere in the imaginative space between artistic fin de siecle and critical avant-garde. Caught up in the breezes of modernism his novelistic art solidly maintained the Victorian tradition of the English novel, the tradition of suburban villas and omnibuses. He has tried to express the complex vision of the modern condition using the usual stock-in-trade of fiction and has succeeded to a very great extent. Life is to be lived steadily and to be seen as a whole – this is the dominant theme of his major novels which are largely experiments in connecting the prose with passion, poetry with ordinary life. So as a practitioner of the modern novel he can be aptly described as traditional modernist. He was not enthusiastic about establishing a new province of writing and did not try to be a legislator of the modern English novel. His preoccupation was not characteristically aesthetic but imaginatively artistic as far as his novels are concerned. If there be a conflict between life and art, Forster could be safely be enlisted on the side of life and he would have willingly declared himself to be a spokesman for life against art. While he valued art for its order-creating quality one gets a feeling that he valued life more in spite of all its chaos and anarchy. Incorrigibly humanistic and unabashedly liberal, he represents the need of the hour for crucial adjustment which imagination should make to make sense of life in the changed, complex modern context.

Forster's criticism resembles and, at times, anticipates traces of literary modernism and postmodernism without, of course, creating the storm of trend-setting and system-building. Though theory cannot totally claim him as its own, his critical formulations have given rise to many postulates shared by modern and postmodern theories. His critical postulate is characteristically and meticulously avant-garde. He always excluded himself from the elite and though he was of an inclusive temperament he did seriously seek to be included anywhere. To enlist and to be enlisted was not for the likes of him. D.H. Lawrence was nearly furious with him for not joining his sect. He did not take 'Bloomsbury' seriously. He was wary of elitism and 'set' culture while he was in Cambridge, and was inclined to see the richness of real life in ordinary, low class settings.

Forster's long silence as an artist and the subsequent critical engagements somehow tend to reflect a number of meanings: inability or refusal to create, subversion and repudiation of convention and artistic form, exploration of his homosexuality and a sort of turning of consciousness in upon itself. This can be seen as a sort of modernist 'will to unmaking' in the tradition of denial. Like Orpheus who was dismembered but who continued to sing 'on a lyre without strings', Forster even after he 'dried up' artistically after *A Passage to India*, continued to produce songs of a different texture. He breathed forth a new creative force from his unmaking as an artist and heroically recreated himself whole from silence. These paradoxes of negativity, the unmaking as an artist and 'positivity', the recreating himself as a critic interestingly resemble traces of

postmodernism. Ihab Hassan, one of the most influential contemporary theorists, in his book, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards a Postmodern Literature*, speaks of the case of Marcel Duchamp, the Dadaist artist whose assault on the conventions of art led him to twenty years of silence and renunciation of art, but he came back active and influenced artists in 1960s. Hassan takes him as an apt example of the link between modernism and postmodernism. Duchamp, he avers is:

> A supreme intelligence of anti-art, he dedicates his existence to the artistic avant-garde. A total skeptic, Cartesian without a method, he emanates a sacramental irony toward creation, and says always to his friends: "yes".[1]

This is true of Forster as well. He was particularly remarkable in the importance he gave to human relationship and its role in building up a happy world. His persistent humanism and insistence on human goodness hold sway even in the confusions of the postmodern maze of theory. His seemingly traditional 'anti-theory' attitude seems to offer more solace and confidence than the system building circus which postmodern theory offers. His appeal is both old and new representing a curious mixture of tradition and modernity. His flirtation with new ideas and his sympathies for those who try out new experiments puts him decidedly on the side of the artistic avant-garde. But his dislike of newness for newness' sake, theory for theory's sake makes him seem so convincingly

1. Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards a Postmodern Literature*, p.256 – quoted in Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford, 1989) p. 111

traditionalist. He is the charming, unassuming, dearly beloved 'friend' who has easy access to and has a secret understanding of 'Mrs. Brown', Virginia Woolf's personification of the art of fiction. This temperamental affinity with 'Mrs Brown', and a natural, spontaneous understanding of all literature and its theoretical and practical problems makes Forster a unique critic.

Forster's criticism presents a fresh and dynamic approach to life and literature. His views on life make brave idealistic statements which reveal a very sensitive mind. His literary criticism reveals the quality of his heart whose holy affection informs and transforms whatever it looks upon. His readings of the literary text are in themselves fit to be considered literature. There is that most desirable fusion of the creative and the critical qualities in Forster's non-fictional writing which makes it a unique genre by itself. Thus the whole body of his critical writings can be described as a narrative discourse in the postmodern parlance. They manifest the way the critical narrative functions within the literary and cultural sphere. Forster is a story-teller while he criticises other works of literary art and he, by his unique way of telling the story, legitimates himself in this task of story-telling like the story-tellers in primitive societies. He has revolutionized the practice of critical discourse not by using any general formulae but by employing creative imagination and thus he has ensured his authority and authenticity as a critic. This self-legitimation is done by telling the story of other books and authors in a certain way and thereby, like the story-tellers of the primitive societies, establishing his right as the critical-narrator to tell the story at all. So with Forster it can be said that literary criticism returns to the ancient form

of story or narrative which gives a special sort of authority and purpose to literary criticism. Jean-Francois Lyotard in his *La Condition postmoderne* speaks about the anthropological account of the origin of narrative knowledge in primitive societies and argues for the function of narrative within scientific discourse and knowledge. According to him scientific knowledge cannot exist without narrative knowledge which in itself is no knowledge at all.[2] Science can only make known its application through narrative though it does not fall into the trap by using narrative as its sole authority. Similarly Forster combines literary knowledge with narrative knowledge and makes use of dual aspects of narrative: the political and the philosophical. The political aspect of his literary narrative affirms his intense involvement with contemporary issues of the world while the philosophical aspect testifies to the high point of cultural modernism which has been reached by gradual evolution, through history, of self-conscious mind out of the ignorant unselfconsciousness of matter. Hence his proclamation of faith in being 'sensitive to what is going on' as a kind of manifesto for his criticism. To be sensitive to what is going on certainly requires a plural vision and eschewal of any kind of absolutism or totalization. This reflects the postmodern situation in which there is a great decline of the grand narratives or metanarratives which have been the absolute, universal, totalized points of power and the basis of all knowledge. "This form of narrative is the principal way in which a culture or collectivity legitimates itself", and these kinds of narratives are the points of power that define what has to be said and done in a culture, and "they are legitimated by the

---

2. Steven Connor, pp. 28-31.

simple fact that they do what they do."[3] Modern science since the eighteenth century has been struggling against this form of legitimation which is tyrannical and universalist. The crucial shift of emphasis from ends to means and a subsequent emphasis on plurality and heterogeneity are the symptoms of this decline of the legitimating power of grand narratives in the framework of science. This brought about a loss of confidence in the general regulatory power in the paradigms of science as science discovers the limits of its assumptions, throws up questions that are unanswerable.[4] Similarly Forster's criticism goes beyond the given formulae of traditional criticism and seems to encourage unorthodox leaps out of existing paradigms or governing structures of critical thought. His criticism encourages fresh thinking about literary authors and their works, passes them through the prism of his sensitiveness which is the outcome of a liberal-humanistic, pragmatic-idealistic, tolerantly agnostic, highly informed and cultured imagination. Forster caught the wind of the times, both contemporary and future times, and stands firm in the transitional phase between literary modernism and postmodernism. He stands out among the moderns and the postmoderns as a seer and prophet of the contemporary times. His vision of art and literature and his pronouncements on cultural matters are such that they will never be out of vogue. He is our contemporary active in the spirit of the times.

---

3. Ibid. p. 29.
4. Ibid. p. 32

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY

Books by E.M.Forster :

A Passage to India (1924), (London, Penguin Books, 1989.)

Aspects of the Novel (1927), ed. O. Stallybrass (London, Penguin Books, 1978.)

Abinger Harvest (1936), (London, Penguin Books, 1936).

A Room with a View (1908), (London, Penguin Books, 1990).

Collected Short Stories (London, Penguin Books, 1954)

Howards End (1910), (London, Penguin Books, 1989).

Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905), (London, Penguin Books, 1984).

Two Cheers for Democracy (1951), (London, Penguin Books, 1951).

Marianne Thornton: 1797 – 1887 (London, Edward Arnold, 1956)

Maurice (1971) : (rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975)

The Hill of Devi : Being Letters from Dewas State Senior (London, Edward Arnold, 1965)

The Longest Journey (1907) (London, Penguin Books, 1954)

SECONDARY

Advani, Rukun — E.M. Forster as Critic, New Delhi, Select Books Syndicate, 1985.

Albert D. Van Nostrand — ed., Literary Criticism in America, New York, The Liberal Arts Press, 1957

Allen Walter — The English Novel, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1954

Appignanesi, Richard and Chris Garrat — Postmodernism for Beginners, Cambridge, Icon Books Ltd, 1995

Arnold Mathew — Culture and Anarchy in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Fifth Edition, ed., M.H. Abrams, New York London, W.W. Norton & Company, 1986

Ashcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths And Helen Triffin — ed., The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, London and New York, Routledge, 1995

Banerjee, Surabhi — E.M. Forster: A Critical Linguistic Approach, New Delhi, Allied Publishers Limited, 1995

Beach J.W. — The Twentieth Century Novel, Ludhiana, Kalyani Publishers, 1994

Blunden Edmund and Earl Leslie Griggs — ed., Coleridge: Studies by Several Hands on the 100th Anniversary of his Death, New York, Russel & Russel, 1970

Boehmer Elleke — Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995

Booth Wayne C. — The Rhetoric of Fiction, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961

Bose Sujit — Attitudes to Imperialism: Kipling, Forster and Paul Scott, Delhi, Amar Prakashan, 1990

Bradbury, Malcolm — ed., Forster: A Collection of Critical Essays, New Delhi, Prentice-Hall of India, 1979

Bradbury Malcolm and J. MacFarlane — ed., Modernism, New York, Harmondsworth, 1976

Brooks Cleanth and Robert Penn Warren — The Scope of Fiction, New York, Appleton Century-Crofts Inc., ©, 1960

Brooker Peter — ed., Modernism/PostModernism, London and New York, Longman, 1992

Brown E.K. — Rhythm in the Novel, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1957

Christopher W. Gowans ed., Moral Dilemmas, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987

Connor, Steven Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to the theories of the Contemporary, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1989

Cowley Malcolm The Literary Situation, New York, Viking, 1947

Crews Frederick C. E.M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism, London, Oxford University Press, 1962

Culler Jonathan Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1997

Das and Mohanty ed., Literary Criticism A Reading, Calcutta, Oxford University Press, 1985

Davies Tony & Nigel Wooded., A Passage to India: Theory in Practice, Philedelphia, Open University Press, 1994

Deutsch Eliot ed., Culture and Modernity, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994

Enright D.J. and Ernst De Chickera ed., English Critical Texts, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002

Friedman Alan The Turn of the Novel, London, Oxford University Press, 1970

Furbank, P.N. E.M. Forster: A Life 2 vols. London, Oxford University Press, 1979

Gardner Philip ed. E.M. Forster The Critical Heritage London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973

Harvey W.J. Character and the Novel, London, Chatto and Windus, 1965

Holroyd Michael Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury Group, London, Penguin Books, 1971

Hudson William Henry An Introduction to the Study of Literature, New Delhi, Kalyani Publishers, 1994

Jaaware Aniket — Simplifications: An Introduction to Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2001

Jameson Fredric — The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic act, London, Routledge, 1989

Jones Edmund D. — ed., English Critical Essays (Nineteenth Century), Delhi, Surjeet Publications, 1992

Kettle Arnold — An Introduction to the English Novel, 2 Vols, New Delhi, *Universal Book Stall, 1967*

Lago Mary and Furbank P.N — ed., Selected Letters of E.M. Forster, 2 Vols, London, Collins, 1985

Leavis F.R. — The Great Tradition, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1972

Lodge David — ed., Modern Criticism and Theory : A Reader, London and New York, Longman, 1988

Macaulay Rose — The Writings of E.M. Forster, London, The Hogarth Press, 1938

Muir Edwin — The Structure of the Novel, First Indian Edition, India Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1966

Mukherjee Sujit — Forster and Further, Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 1993

Oliver H.J. — The Art of E.M. Forster, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1960

Panthanmackel George — A Form in Forms: The Form of Postmodernism, Bangalore, Asian Trading Corporation, 2002

Richards I.A. — Principles of Literary Criticism, New Delhi, Universal Book Stall, 1990

Said Edward — Orientalism, London, Penguin Books, 1995

Sethuraman V.S. — ed., Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, Madras, Macmillan India, 1989

Stone Wilfred — The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M.Forster London, Oxford University Press, 1969

Wilson Edmund — Axel's Castle, New York, Oxford University Press, 1969

Woolf Virginia — 1. Contemporary Writers, London, Hogarth Press, 1965

2. Collected Essays, 2 Vols, ed., Leonard Woolf, London, Chatto & Windus, 1966

JOURNALS AND ARTICLES

Armstrong, Paul B. — "Reading India: E.M.Forster and the Politics of Interpretation" Twentieth Century Literature Vol. 38, No.04, winter, 1992

Austin, Don — "The Problem of Continuity in Three Novels of E.M. Forster" Modern Fiction Studies Vol. VII, No.3, Autumn, 1961. EMF No

Bialostosky Don H. — "Booth's Rhetoric, Bakhtin's Dialogics and the Future of Novel Criticism", Novel, Spring, 1985

Brownstein Marilyn L. — "Postmodern Language and the Perpetuation of Desire", Twentieth Century Literature, Vol.30, Summer, 1972

Cohan Steven — "Figures Beyond the Text: A Theory of Readable Character in the Novel", Novel, Vol. 17, No.1, 1983 Fall

Dauner, Louis — "What happened in the Cave? Reflections on *A Passage to India*" Modern Fiction Studies Vol. VII, No.3, Autumn, 1961. EMF No

Delany, Paul — " 'Islands of Money': Rentier Culture in E.M.Forster's *Howard End*" Modern Fiction Studies Vol. VII, No.3, Autumn, 1961. EMF No

"Forster, Eliot, and the Literary Life" Twentieth Century Literature Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

Duyfhuizen Bernard — "Mimesis, Authority, and Belief in Narrative Poetics: Toward a Transmission Theory for a Poetics of Fiction", Novel, Spring 1985

Firchow P.E. — "Another Centenary : E.M.Forster" Modern Fiction Studies vol. 25, 79-80, No.2

Furbank P.N. — "Forster, Eliot, and the Literary Life", Twentieth Century Literature, Vol.31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3 1985

Gardner Philip — "'One Fraction of Summer Field": Forster and A.E.Housman' Twentieth Century Literature Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

Gordon, Jan B. — "The Third Cheer: 'Voice' in Forster" Twentieth Century Literature Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

Halls, Michael — "The Forster Collections at King's : A Survey" Twentieth Century Literature Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

Heath, Stephen — "Modern Literary Theory" Critical Quarterly Vol. 31, No. 2. Pp.35-49.

Herz, Judith Scherer — "The Remaking of the Past in Forster's Non-Fiction" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

"From Myth to Scripture: An Approach to Forster's Later Short Fiction", English Literature in Transition, Vol. 24, No-3, 1981-82

Henley Ann — "But We Argued About Novel-Writing": Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster and the Art of Fiction', Ariel, Vol 20, No.3 July 1989

Hoffman, Frederick J. "*Howards End* and the Bogey of Progress" Modern Fiction Studies Vol. VII, No.3, Autumn, 1961. EMF Number

Kirkpatrick, B.J. "E.M.Forster's Broadcast Talks" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

Lago, Mary "Introduction: Forster on E.M. Forster" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

May, Brian "Neoliberalism in Rorty and Forster" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 39, No. 1-3, 1985

McDowell P.W. Frederick "E.M. Forster's Theory of Literature" CRITICISM, a quarterly for Literature, Vol. VIII, No.1 Winter, 1966

"Forster's 'Nautral Supernaturalism': The Tales" Modern Fiction Studies Vol. VII, No.3, Autumn, 1961. EMF Number.

Melnick, Daniel "Fullness of Dissonance: Music and the Reader's Experience of Modern Fiction" Modern Fiction Studies vol. 25, 79-80, No.2

Moore, Geoffrey "The Significance of Bloomsbury", The Kenyon Review, Vol. XVII, Winter, 1955, No.1

Pearce Richard "The Present and Future States of Novel Criticism: *Our Two-Headed Profession*", Novel, *Spring* 1985

Quinn Martin and Safaa Hejazi "E.M.Forster and the Egyptian Mail: Wartime Journalism and a subtext for *A Passage to India*", English Literature in Transition, Vol. 25, No.2, 1982

Shaheen, Mohammad "Forster's Salute to Egypt" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 39, No. 1-3, 1985.

Shahne, Vasant A. "Mrs.Moore's Experience in The Marabar Caves: A Zen Buddhist Reading" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985, pp. 279-286.

Singh, Francis B. "*A Passage to India*, the National Movement, and Independence" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 31, Summer-Fall, No. 2-3, 1985

Spilka Mark "Still Towards a Poetics of Fiction?: No – And then Again Yes", Novel, Spring, 1985

Stone, Wilfred "Some Interviews with E.M.Forster, 1957-58, 1965" Twentieth Century Literature , Vol. 43, Spring, 97. No.1

Thomson, George H. "Theme and Symbol in *Howards End*" Modern Fiction Studies Vol. VII, No.3, Autumn, 1961. EMF Number.

Torgovnick Marianna "The Present and Future States of Novel Criticism: A Hopeful Overview", Novel, Vol. 18, No.5, Spring 1985

Watt Donald "The Artist as Horseman: The Unity of Forster's Criticism", Modern Philology (August 1981) Vol. 79, No.1

Wilde, Alan "The Aesthetic View of Life : Where Angels Fear to Tread" Modern Fiction Studies Vol. VII, No.3, Autumn, 1961. EMF No

WEBSITES AND SOFTWARE CONSULTED

Voice of the Shuttle, website on English Literature
"Only Connect", website on E.M. Forster
MS Encarta 97 Encyclopedia
Infopedia

NEHU LIBRARY 103775
6-9-07
Enter by
Transcribed by