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E. M. Forster and Women

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Biography

Edward Morgan Forster was born in England on January 1, 1879. For most of his childhood years, he lived at Rooksnest. He states that Rooksnest had a huge impact on his life, and he often wondered what kind of man he would have been if he had lived at Rooksnest his whole life. Rooksnest would later become the basis for *Howard's End*, one of Forster's most famous novels. His name was registered as Henry Morgan Forster, but at his baptism, he was accidentally named Edward Morgan Forster. In order to distinguish him from his father, he was called Morgan. Even after his father died of tuberculosis in 1880, Forster was still called Morgan. He went to Tonbridge School in Kent as a day boy. Just as with wondering what would have happened in his life if he had lived at Rooksnest longer, he daydreamed about what his life would have been like if he hadn't attended Tonbridge as a day boy, and instead stayed on, like many of the boys. Tonbridge is a place that makes an appearance in his early novels, like *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Beauman).

After Tonbridge, Forster attended King's College in Cambridge (his view of Cambridge also made an appearance in his later novel, *The Longest Journey*). He became a member of the Apostles, a discussion society that would meet in secret and interpret novels. When he had received his education from Cambridge, he and his mother traveled continental Europe together, the most important place they visited being Italy. His time in Italy would later be put into use in the novel *A Room with a View*. Once Forster and his mother had returned to England, he began writing and didn't stop until his first four novels had been published (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *The Longest Journey*, *A Room with a View*, and *Howards End*) and a fifth one completed (*Maurice*), as well as finishing numerous short stories. The next part of his life wouldn't begin

until he was already a successful author. In 1912, he and two of his friends took a trip to India for a year, which would inspire him to begin writing *A Passage to India* (at the early stages, it was simply referred to as the India novel) (Beauman). Once the trip to India was over, he stayed in England with his mother until the war. During the first World War, he worked in Alexandria identifying soldiers in hospitals and trying to find out what happened to their comrades that had gone missing. It was also in Alexandria that he had his first homosexual encounter. Forster had known he was homosexual from his early days, but he had never acted on it—in Alexandria, he attributed his weakened resolve to the heat (Beauman). When he returned from Alexandria to England, he did not stay very long, and took off to India. This second trip to India would inspire him to finish *A Passage to India*, a novel that he often regarded as his best work. When he returned to England for the last time, he began an affair with Bob Buckingham that would last the rest of his life.

Forster and Women

Forster was perplexed by—and in the beginning of his life, afraid of—women. It wasn't until later in his life that he would become comfortable around them. But, around the time he wrote *A Room with a View* in 1908, he was preaching feminism as a result of reading Edward Carpenter. This would be one of the reasons that he would no longer be confused by women in his later life, in addition to the fact that he was surrounded by women and constantly being influenced by them. Because he was so influenced by women, he acted femininely. He was able to put many of his own characteristics in his female characters. He did this effectively mostly because he felt stifled by his mother—he felt hemmed in, the way that many women of that time

felt, because they weren't able to choose their own husbands or have their independence. Because he was homosexual, he also felt that he could not choose his own husband, and that, in his early life, he could not marry a woman. He was terrified of the female gender and didn't understand it, at that point in his life. Once he read Carpenter, his eyes were opened to the fact that the plight of women was his own (as a homosexual man) and he was able to support feminism through the characters in his novels. When Forster "looked around Suburbia, he became convinced that it was the women who determined its social tone through nervous self-consciousness about their niche in that narrow society. At the same time, they were afraid to question it too much or too often" (Lago 24-25). Forster saw himself in these women, as well. Just as he saw himself in the women who wouldn't be able to choose their own husbands, he saw himself in the women's "nervous self-consciousness." Forster's niche in society was even smaller than theirs, too—there was not a thriving subculture of gay men that he could rely on. As much as Forster saw himself in these women, they also helped to influence the way that he would write his female characters. Acting femininely often gave Forster an androgynous tone in his conversations with people.

It was this androgyny that "helped his circle of friends to grow: people found him easy to confide in, he listened, and he made perceptive and not obtuse remarks in response" (Beauman 225). The influence of women in his life was more than simply influencing his female characters. The feminine influences in his life led to him being more androgynous than masculine, in addition to his identification with his female characters. Once he was no longer afraid of the female gender, his female characters benefitted from an author who saw himself in them. It was easy to be friends with women when he was in Alexandria, and "his friendship with [his landlady's] opera-singer employer, the bohemian Aïda Borchgrevink, his correspondence with

Florence [the wife of one of his friends], were all making him feel better about women than he ever had before” (Beauman 301). This, partnered with his Carpenter-esque view of feminism, allowed Forster to find himself writing more interesting female characters on purpose, because he was no longer afraid of the other sex. Before this, he had written interesting women by accident—he had feminine airs, being an old bachelor who was close to his mother, and often would write himself into his female characters without meaning to. His correspondence with Florence would play a larger part in his life than simply allowing him to no longer be afraid of women. Florence would become his confidante.

When Forster was in Alexandria, he needed someone to tell his experiences to, someone that wouldn't judge him for being homosexual and who would not tell other people. Beauman writes that, “Something else that Morgan needed before finding sexual fulfillment, what Morgan needed as well was a confidante. How odd, I thought, on first reading the letters, that he told Florence all these details. Then I realised that the details would not have existed but for someone to tell them to” (Beauman 303). Beauman discusses the importance of Forster's letter-writing to women in another passage about his letters to Maimie, his mother's friend. Without either of these women, who is to say that these letters would exist at all? Who is to say that the records of Forster's whereabouts and emotions at these times would exist today without these women? Forster wrote letters to his male friends, but rarely about anything noteworthy. Florence was his confidante while in Alexandria, which speaks to her influence on his life, that he would choose her to confide in, rather than any of his male friends. Forster was afraid that his male companions would judge him for the way he behaved and therein lies the reason that he couldn't confide in them the same way he could in Florence (which may attest to his male companions' influence on him, as well). Another confidante that Forster would have in his life was Josie Darling. She was

the one he discussed his life with while he was in India. Forster first confided in her when he “felt in his element” (Beauman 272). Josie was his confidante while he was in India, as Florence had been his confidante when he was in Alexandria. Maimie was another person to whom Forster wrote; there were certain periods in his life when he did not keep a diary, and the only records of his doings are the letters that he wrote. Without Maimie and the other women that Forster wrote to, we would have no idea what his thoughts were at these points in his life.

Beauman writes on page 259 that when he was in India for the first time, he

Managed all the same to evoke the day memorably for Maimie: throughout his trip he was a devoted correspondent, with the usual letter-writer’s dilemma. ‘It sounds conceited,’ he told Aunt Laura, ‘but I should be so glad to see my own letters again when I come back! my diary gets behind, and what I write to you and mother will be the freshest chronicle of my doings.’

Maimie was just one of the women in his family (Maimie was not related by blood, but Forster and his mother often thought of her as family) that he had a close relationship with. The Whichelo women, his mother’s family, played a large part in Forster’s life.

Forster had a close relationship with all his Whichelo relations. But there was one of his aunts that he was closer to than any of the other women. Beauman wrote about Rosie, that “‘She was Morgan’s favourite aunt’, partly because of her tremendous spirit and intelligence (as can be seen in her photograph), partly because she was only thirteen years older than Morgan and in some ways like a sister. It was with her much more than with any of the other Whichelos that Morgan’s heart lay” (Beauman 243). The female Whichelo cousins all had an influence on Forster, but it was Rosie who had the most. Because she was closest to him in age, and because he did not have any siblings of his own, she became like his sister. Forster’s male relations were

not as influential in his life. Beauman writes simply that “the male Whichelos did not appeal” (Beauman 243). Forster did not want anything to do with the male side, which shows that there were more women in his life to influence him, and that he didn’t value his male family’s influence. His grandmother was a large influence in his life. Beauman writes that “Louisa, it seems, had a gregarious, life-giving nature of which Lily tended to be censorious and Morgan envious [. . .] Louisa (who, we may suspect from Morgan’s hint, enjoyed a merry widowhood) was never too serious-minded” (Beauman 241). Forster’s grandmother was one of the women that he truly admired in his life. From her, he gained the knowledge that one must not take things too seriously, and although he would rarely implement that knowledge in his own life, he used it to shape some of his female characters. There was also another relation, one who had been dead since before he was born, that Forster was influenced by. Forster “was to be intrigued by [his] great-great-grandmother and in the 1950s would transcribe some of her diary into his commonplace book” (Beauman 20). He named Lucy in *A Room with a View* after this great-great-grandmother. His paternal family would also be a huge influence in his life—namely his great-aunt.

Forster’s paternal great-aunt was Marianne Thornton, who played a large part in Forster’s life for the short time she was in it, and would also affect his life after she died. When Forster’s father died in 1880, “Marianne’s attention fixed firmly on the widow and her child. She had aggressively definite ideas of how she wanted Morgan to turn out, so that the move to Rooksnest in 1883 became Mrs. Forster’s cautious declaration of independence” (Lago 10). Lily wanted to distance herself from Marianne’s influence without cutting ties with the Thornton side completely. It was the money that Marianne would leave him that would help enable the Forsters to live comfortably, help Forster take the time to become an author, and allow him to go to

Cambridge. He even wrote that it was Marianne, and no one else, that had made his career as a writer possible. Beauman clarifies that, “in fact his father’s money by itself could have sent him to Cambridge and allowed him to become a writer—many times over. It was not Marianne’s money that allowed these things to happen; it was qualities inherited from her, far less definable but far more important qualities, that only became apparent when his life as a writer took hold” (Beauman 35). Marianne, for the short time that she was in Forster’s life, had a lasting impact on him. He would not have been a writer without the qualities he gained from her influence, and he would not have had his connection to Rooksnest, leading to the novel that would finance the rest of his life. Beauman explains on page 23 that

In 1852 Marianne was turned out [of Battersea Rise]. It was the greatest tragedy and the greatest drama of her life, and there is no doubt that it was from her that the infant Morgan first learnt to associate leaving houses with unhappiness; so much so that when he was twice forced to leave his own home without having chosen to do so he elevated these quite normal terminations of the lease into similar disasters.

Marianne’s influence on Forster is why *Howards End* exists. If he hadn’t felt so connected to his childhood home, the novel would not have existed. There would have been a novel like it, one that addresses the class system of England, but not quite reaching the fame that *Howards End* reached, during and after Forster’s life. Marianne had a large influence on the character of Mrs. Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel. They both had a penchant for houses and places, not wanting to uproot their lives or see places pass out of their lives.

There were other women that influenced Forster, as well. Josie Darling, Virginia Woolf, and May Wyld all influenced Forster in some way—be it to write, to read, or to inspire a character in one of his novels, he would not have been the man he was without these women. In

the middle of Forster's life, he considered marriage because of Josie. Beauman writes on page 262 that

It might have been staying with Malcolm and Josie that made him receptive to the idea that marriage can bring enormous joy even to someone of Malcolm's type; it might have been the unusual and sweet nature of Josie, whom Merz too had greatly admired; indeed the yearning for bisexuality, for so it seems briefly to have been, might have in part resulted from talking to Josie about Merz and feeling that a compromise marriage—were such a thing achievable—would be far, far better than Merz's fate. Whatever the reason, Morgan's thoughts at this time turned often to women.

Josie made him want to be bisexual, made him consider marrying to avoid the fate that their friend Merz suffered. Merz committed suicide because he felt he could never truly be a part of society as a gay man, and he felt he didn't have any marriage prospects. Virginia Woolf had an influence on Forster, as well. Beauman writes that, "it was Virginia Woolf who had made Morgan resolve to read the great French writer" (Beauman 320). The great French writer is Proust, whose novels Forster would read voraciously.

Virginia Woolf obviously had a strong impact on Forster's life, as she was able to influence what novels he read and how he thought about artists. He never considered himself a pure artist, but he thought of Woolf as one. When she killed herself, "Morgan had written in a letter, 'I think suicide is the best course at the present moment for a pure artist, such as Virginia was. They will have no chance to exercise their art and they cannot be expected to play at hoping for a better state of things to come some day'" (Beauman 370). For Forster to say that Woolf was a pure artist and that he was not was a way of him saying how much he admired Woolf and her work. While she was alive, it had seemed like she valued his friendship more than he valued

hers, but after she died, it was a different story, as this passage illustrates. There was another woman that influenced Forster—so much so, that he modeled a character after her. Her name was May Wyld, and “Morgan returned to Bombay in order to get the train to Hyderabad and visit Maimie’s friend May Wyld who was headmistress of a school; her direct, approachable manner perhaps contributed something to the character of Mrs. Moore” (Beauman 279). Wyld was a real woman who played a part in contributing to his novels, if only by being there to let him be influenced by her life—to sculpt a character out of her.

There was yet another woman that played a large part in Forster’s life, and who had more influence on him than anyone else did. That woman was his mother, Lily Forster. Forster grew up with only his mother, as his father died when he was two years old. He often complained about her being overbearing, but she was not always that way. When Forster thought back on their time at Rooksnest, “more than innocence, more than growth, what he realised the decade at Rooksnest embodied for him for ever was ordinary happiness; the house remained throughout his life an ideal, a paradise” (Beauman 37). In this part of his life, Lily was not the overbearing mother that she was to become in later years. They lived simply in the house, and they simply lived. There was nothing to worry about when Forster lived at Rooksnest (or, at least, there were no worries that he was aware of as a child). As Forster grew, Lily’s grip on his life tightened. She was afraid of losing him. Beauman suggests that Forster was afraid of losing Lily, as well. On page 240, she writes

The psychiatrist Anthony Storr has made a special study, in several of his books, of the creative personality and has made various observations that apply to Morgan. The loss of a father would have left a void in Morgan’s life which he tried to fill by over-attachment

to Lily; he was then over-dependent on her approval for his own self-esteem; and would adopt a placatory attitude in order to avoid incurring disapproval.

Did Forster do this to himself? Did he attach himself to Lily more than he should have because he didn't have a father? Forster still would have been homosexual, still would have felt separate from his peers because of it, probably still would not have told his parents, either. Lily's fear of losing her son was heightened by his fame, and "of those whom he loved, his mother was most affected by his fame, for she felt left out of his life as it became busier and busier. Her own mother's health was failing, and Forster dreaded his grandmother's death, not only because he loved her dearly but because his mother's life would seem even emptier" (Lago 51). While Lily may have felt more left out of Forster's life as his fame increased, he did not feel her grip on him letting up.

It wasn't until he went to India in 1912 that he took a trip to another country without his mother. Even then, he felt that he couldn't escape her. His "depression with which he had continually to battle, the lack of self-worth that had been his all his life, even in India he could not get rid of them" (Beauman 266) Lily was tied to his feelings of worthlessness—he constantly felt that he had to behave in a manner that would please her. He was afraid of writing novels that were too personal because of what she would say, and even in India, he felt that he had to behave. But, wouldn't her aura have kept him from misbehaving, from forgetting that there could be consequences for his actions when he returned to England? In 1911, when Lily's mother died, it made sense that she would want to hang on to her child, to keep him close, especially when she had felt that he was tiring of her—constantly going to other places to work on his novels. Beauman writes that "He could, of course, have escaped. There was no financial tie holding him to Lily [. . .] Deep down, complain as he might, as he frequently did in his diary, Morgan did not

want to break away” (Beauman 281). Forster made enough on *Howards End* alone to cover the cost of living away from his mother. But he couldn’t bring himself to do it. Part of him enjoyed being close to her—she was the only parent that he ever knew. Even when he came back from India the second time, and decided to get his own place (to meet with Bob Buckingham), it was still close to hers, and he lived with her for a good amount of his time in England. As a grown man, he did not want to be far from his mother, as “the most important thing in his life was Lily. When, two months before the official end of the war, on 11 March 1945, she finally died aged ninety, he felt only grief: the person who had been by his side for the whole of his sixty-six years was no longer there. He told Isherwood: ‘I partly died when my mother did’” (Beauman 364). As much as Lily was the one to want Forster close, he also wanted to be near to his mother. Throughout his life he desired to please her. As much as they had a strange relationship—with she being so overbearing and he taking it lying down—he loved her. After all, she was his mother, and Forster would not have been the man—the author—that he grew to be without her.

Even though Forster was confused by women, they still influenced his life greatly. Without having women to write to, we would not know how Forster felt about certain things, like his homosexuality. Without Lily, we would not have the novels that we do today. Forster’s life was in large part influenced by women, and we see that in his female characters.

The Young Women

Adela Quested travels to India in *A Passage to India* to see how her future fiancé handles working in there, as well as to quench her curiosity about the country. Forster was absolutely brutal with her and her characterization. She wants to search out what she thinks of as

the “real India” and, naïvely, believes that Aziz is the one that will show it to her. When they and Mrs. Moore go on an outing to the Marabar Caves, Adela suffers a traumatic event from someone she believes to be Aziz and subsequently accuses him of assaulting her. Readers are not supposed to feel empathy for her, or want her to succeed after her incident in the caves.

Finkelstein suggests that “Adela’s central problem is that she is totally prosaic and, unlike Margaret Schlegel, cannot unite the prose and passion” (Finkelstein 131). Adela cannot connect her idea of India with what she really experienced, and she is haunted by the echo of what she experienced because of that. When the incident in the caves goes to trial, she takes back her statement against him, hoping that everything will go back to normal. But it cannot, and she goes back to England to try and help Mrs. Moore’s children, as that is the only thing she thinks she can do to right her wrong. This last act is when Adela goes from youthful to experienced, finally putting others’ needs before her own.

All Adela wants is to see the “real” India, and to understand. Adela’s name “implies a search or quest, and she comes to India looking for ‘the *real* India’ (*P*, p. 24) and for marriage; she finds instead real Indians, sexuality, and self-knowledge” (Finkelstein 128). Also, Adela doesn’t think of herself as “England,” but doesn’t extend that privilege to Aziz, and instead thinks of him as “India.” When one of the male characters tells Adela not to worry about something to do with the Indians, she says, “‘Exactly what Mr. Heaslop tells me,’ she retorted, reddening a little. ‘If one doesn’t worry, how’s one to understand?’” (*Passage* 69). She wants to know why things are the way they are between the British and the Indians. She thinks that if she can see the “real” India, she will understand why the British treat the Indians the way they do. Adela thinks that she has found the real India in Aziz. Forster writes that, “As for Miss Quested, she accepted everything Aziz said as true verbally. In her ignorance, she regarded him as ‘India,’

and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India” (*Passage 72*). Part of her thinks that he will be the one to help her understand why the people treat each other the way they do—after all, he had already made his thoughts about the British known to Mrs. Moore.

Adela doesn’t think before she speaks—just like when she asked Aziz how many wives he had, offending him—when someone asks her if she’s going to settle in India, she responds, “‘I’m afraid I can’t do that,’ said Adela. She made the remark without thinking what it meant. To her, as to the three men, it seemed in key with the rest of the conversation, and not for several minutes—indeed, not for half an hour—did she realize that it was an important remark, and ought to have been made in the first place to Ronny” (*Passage 73*). Not only does she not think before she speaks, she also doesn’t think before asking her fiancé. This is one of the moments that betrays her youth and inexperience.

Adela rarely doubts herself, another sign of her youth and inexperience, but one of the times she does doubt herself, she consults Mrs. Moore by asking, “ ‘Mrs. Moore, if one isn’t absolutely honest, what is the use of existing?’ [. . .] The words were obscure, but she understood the uneasiness that produced them. She had experienced it twice herself, during her own engagements—this vague contrition and doubt. All had come right enough afterwards and doubtless would this time—marriage makes most things right enough” (*Passage 98*). Adela is able to brush off any self-doubt that she has, until after her encounter in the caves. When she goes to testify at Aziz’s trial, she doubts herself, allowing Aziz to walk free. Stone writes that Adela’s self-doubt and the realization that she does not love Ronny “is the unconscious breaking into the conscious mind, and for one not accustomed to such visitations it can seem—as it did for

Adela—like a rape of the personality” (“Caves” 21-22). This is why she claims that Aziz assaulted her, and her self-doubt is why Aziz is able to go free.

Once Adela has her encounter in the caves, she experiences self-doubt for the first time about a major issue. She doesn't know if it was truly Aziz that followed her into the cave, and she goes the rest of her life without knowing. She says, “I have no longer any secrets. My echo has gone—I call the buzzing sound in my ears an echo. You see, I have been unwell ever since that expedition to the caves, and possibly before it” (*Passage* 239). In this passage, she recognizes that she had doubted herself before but never given in to it. It was with this recognition that she begins to behave as an adult, losing her youthful inexperience. Before that, she wanted to understand how the world works so much because she was so inexperienced.

Finkelstein writes on page 132 that

Adela's main neurotic symptom is her echo, which temporarily disappears when she tells Mrs. Moore that Aziz is innocent. All the women in the book are linked to an echo: Mrs. Moore hears one after *her* experience in the caves; at the Bridge Party there is no communication between Adela and the purdah women because of ‘the echoing walls of their civility’ (*P*, p. 43); and an echo links Adela and Aziz's wife.

Once she has experiences to look back on, she no longer needs to know why the world is the way it is and her echo disappears.

Right before Adela enters the cave where she has her encounter, she comes to the realization that she doesn't love Ronny. She believed “the discovery had come so suddenly that she felt like a mountaineer whose rope had broken. Not to love the man one's going to marry! Not to find it out till this moment! not even to have asked oneself the question until now! [. . .] Ought she to break her engagement off? [. . .] If love is everything, few marriages would survive

the honeymoon” (*Passage* 152). This is another example of Adela doubting herself and then brushing it off, based on others’ experiences.

At the end of the novel, Adela finally becomes a real person, instead of just a book of questions. When she is a young woman, people aren’t able to appreciate her, because she is abrasive and doesn’t always know what she’s talking about. Once she becomes older, and dedicates her life to helping Mrs. Moore’s other children, she becomes someone that people can accept. Forster writes that, “Although her hard school-mistressy manner remained, she was no longer examining life, but being examined by it; she had become a real person” (*Passage* 244-245). When she passes from young and inexperienced to older and wiser, she is able to become a “real person.” She is able to be accepted in Forsterian society because she is helping younger people and imparting her wisdom on them.

A Room with a View begins with **Lucy Honeychurch** on vacation with her cousin Charlotte in Italy. Italy becomes the awakening for Lucy, as she’s gone her entire life constantly being told what to do. After seeing a man’s death in the square, she begins to question the way she’s lived her life. Later, on a trip to the Italian countryside, she is kissed by a man that she doesn’t realize she loves yet, and after that, starts to re-evaluate everything she’s experienced thus far. She acts immaturely at points, but by the end of the novel, she realizes what she must do. The whole of the novel is about Lucy going from the darkness into the light. The darkness represents many things for Lucy, one of them being immaturity. When she has passed into the light, she becomes a grown woman, ready to make her own decisions about her life. The light also allows her to become self-realized, and once she does that, she is able to retire safely into Forsterian old-womanhood.

Lucy goes through her life never questioning anything—much the opposite of Adela. It is after Lucy’s encounter in Italy (like Adela’s encounter in the caves) that begins her character development. After playing Beethoven, Lucy begins to think about her life and what she wants. Forster writes, “Lucy never knew her desires so clearly as after music. [. . .] she wanted something big, and she believed that it would have come to her on the windswept platform of an electric tram—this she might not attempt. It was unladylike. Why? Why were most big things unladylike? [. . .] It was not that ladies were inferior to men; it was that they were different” (*Room* 37). Lucy is told how to think her entire life—even that last part of the passage is not her own thought, but what Charlotte told her when she asked the previous question. This is the darkness of ignorance, of inexperience. Going to Italy is her first real experience in her life, which is why it starts her journey from darkness to light, which is why Forster doesn’t start the novel before that—if he did, there wouldn’t be anything of note to say about Lucy. Finkelstein writes that “Music is what makes Lucy special; it is her one ‘illogical element’ (*R*, p. 35), and without it she is rather ordinary [. . .] Lucy’s music does not lead directly to salvation but rather prepares her for it. Her music ultimately allows her to ‘connect’” (Finkelstein 76). Without music in her background, Lucy would be like anyone else, and without her experience in Italy, she would have never began her journey into the light.

When Lucy’s in Italy, she experiences “the hour of unreality—the hour, that is, when unfamiliar things are real. An older person at such an hour and in such a place might think that [something] sufficient was happening to him, and rest content. Lucy desired more” (*Room* 38). This passage betrays Lucy’s youth. If she were older, she would be perfectly content in the hour of unreality, but, because she is a young woman, and she has begun to think about her life, she now wants more. She wants more experiences, more chances to make her own choices about her

life. This only lasts for a short while, though. When it is no longer the hour of unreality, she realizes that making her own decisions is difficult.

In the course of going from the darkness to the light, Lucy learns how to make decisions for herself. The first time this happens, though, she doesn't know what to do and is caught up in making the right decision, not just the decision that would make her happy. Forster writes that, "For good or evil, Lucy was left to face her problem alone. [. . .] This solitude oppressed her; she was accustomed to have her thoughts confirmed by others or, at all events, contradicted; it was too dreadful not to know whether she was thinking right or wrong" (*Room 43*). Lucy is used to having people around to tell her how to feel about things and people. When she is on her own, she is forced to determine her own opinions of things and people. This leads to more self-reflection than she would like. While she's making the decision, "she had a feeling that Charlotte and her shopping were preferable to George Emerson and the summit of the Torre del Gallo" (*Room 44*). Lucy chooses safety over adventure. By doing this, she is able to reaffirm the beliefs that had already been put in her head by Charlotte, rather than look at new ways of thinking from George. She puts off going to the light, in order to stay in the supposed safety of the darkness.

At one point, Mr. Beebe says to Cecil: "I'm only thinking of my pet theory about Miss Honeychurch. Does it seem reasonable that she should play so wonderfully, and live so quietly? I suspect that one day she will be wonderful in both. The watertight compartments in her will break down, and music and life will mingle. Then we shall have her heroically good, heroically bad—too heroic, perhaps, to be good or bad" (*Room 86*). Mr. Beebe is the only one to realize that Lucy doesn't live to her true potential—at this point in the novel, even Lucy hasn't realized it yet. Mr. Beebe is the stand-in for Forster in the novel—the closet homosexual. He has an intuition when it comes to other people, especially to Lucy. He encourages her to go from the

darkness into the light, because he believes that he can't, as that would mean that he has to out himself. In the end, Lucy ends up being the heroic figure because she took a chance to go to the light, and Mr. Beebe is the coward, because he stays in safety.

Lucy also has to make a choice about who she's going to spend the rest of her life with. Her choices are Cecil, George, or herself. She goes through phases, as she becomes closer and closer to the light. She first chooses Cecil—or, is forced into an engagement with Cecil because it pleases her mother. She does this because she thinks it's her duty. She realizes that "The contest lay not between love and duty. Perhaps there never is such a contest. It lay between the real and the pretended, and Lucy's first aim was to defeat herself" (*Room 150*). She wants to push her emotions down so that she will be able to marry Cecil without feeling guilty. Then, when she knows that George will bring her to the light, but doesn't want to be the type of woman to go from one man to the next, she chooses herself. Forster writes in *A Room with a View* on pages 162-163 that she realizes

She could never marry. In the tumult of her soul, that stood firm. [. . .] she must forget that George loved her, that George had been thinking through her and gained her this honourable release, that George had gone away into—what was it?—the darkness. [. . .] Lucy entered this army when she pretended to George that she did not love him, and pretended to Cecil that she loved no one. The night received her, as it had received Miss Bartlett thirty years before.

Ultimately, at the end of the novel, she chooses George, and can go safely into the light with a man that loves her and sets her emotions free.

There is a moment when the audience realizes that Cecil represents darkness, but Lucy doesn't. Lucy's staying with Cecil and his mother in London, when Mrs. Vyse hears, "a cry—the

cry of nightmare—rang from Lucy’s room. Lucy could ring for the maid if she liked, but Mrs. Vyse thought it kind to go herself. She found the girl sitting upright with her hand on her cheek. [. . .] Lucy returned the kiss, still covering one cheek with her hand. [. . .] Darkness enveloped the flat” (*Room* 114). Lucy is holding her cheek because that is where George had kissed her, and her guilt is getting the best of her, since she’s in the Vyse’s house. Cecil tends to intellectualize her, while George romanticizes her. Finkelstein suggests the same thing when she writes, “Life in London is a nightmare, as Lucy’s subconscious realizes when she cries out in her sleep in the Vyse’s London flat; she awakens ‘with her hand on her cheek’ (*R*, p. 141), reminding us of George’s kiss and contrasting her anticipated life with Cecil to a freer, more natural one with George” (Finkelstein, 81). What Lucy needs, after being an closed-off emotionally all her life, is for someone to teach her to let her emotions come to the surface, and she finds that in George, not Cecil. She doesn’t realize it at this moment.

If Lucy had only looked inwards earlier in the novel, she would have found the truth without becoming engaged to Cecil and causing a stir when they break off the engagement. Lucy “never gazed inwards. If at times strange images rose from the depths, she put them down to nerves” (*Room* 132). She doesn’t look inwards because she is afraid of self-realization. Self-realization leads to light, as do many things in the novel, such as George, and confidences. Lucy “disliked confidences, for they might lead to self-knowledge and to that king of terrors—Light” (*Room* 179). The whole novel is the story of Lucy coming into the light, coming to terms with herself. When she finally passes into the light, she finally knows herself, and can leave her youth behind her.

Helen Schlegel is a conundrum. Her experiences in *Howards End* lend her to being an older woman, and she grows older by the end of the novel, but she doesn't use her experiences in a way that Forster characterizes the older women. Helen's been shunned by the man that she thought she would marry, befriended a person of the lower class, and then, been impregnated by the same person. Once she has the child, she becomes motherly, but she is never outright the character of the old, wise woman that Forster uses in his stories. Helen holds on to her youth for the entirety of the novel. Why should she let it go? She has Margaret to be the old, wise one. Helen is, however, the one to propel the plot along. She is the one with the first lines and the last line. Stone writes on page 398 of "Red-Bloods" that

Helen is ardent, impulsive, idealistic, and easily disillusioned. If Helen is guilty of the radicalism of extremes, Margaret, Forster's chief ethical representative, is presented as an example of 'proportion.' Her truth, we learn, is a synthesis, an organic whole which is greater than the sum of its parts [. . .] But the connections Helen makes are worth study, partly because it is her energy that gives the book much of its momentum.

Helen also believes that personal connections are the most important parts of life.

Helen is of the Schlegel mindset—she believes in equality, and she is steadfast in this belief (as well as with the other beliefs that the Wilcoxes don't share). For once in her life, she can sit back and be the young woman in society that doesn't have to think for herself, because there are men in her life to tell her what to think. Forster writes that "She had liked giving in to Mr. Wilcox, or Evie, or Charles; she had liked being told that her notions of life were sheltered or academic; that Equality was nonsense, Votes for Women nonsense, Socialism nonsense, Art and Literature, except when conducive to strengthening the character, nonsense" (*Howards End*

19). This is one of the moments when her youth is made known. Another time is when she has to be the center of attention.

Helen loves being the center of attention when she has something to say. She “was fond of supplying her own surprise” (*Howards End* 83). Helen doesn’t wait for people to react the way that she wants them to, she reacts for them. Yet another example of her youth showing through her family’s intellectual life—for all the Schlegels intellectual talk, Helen loves succumbing to the dramatic. This betrays her youth, as does the fact that she uses the way that she looks to become the center of attention. Forster writes that “In character, [Helen] resembled her sister, but she was pretty, and so apt to have a more amusing time. People gathered round her more readily, especially when they were new acquaintances, and she did enjoy a little homage very much” (*Howards End* 24). This is another passage that betrays Helen’s youth. People don’t gather round her to hear what she has to say, to pick up the wisdom that she’s relaying (as Forster believes they would if she was an older woman), but because she’s pretty. People don’t gather round older women simply because of looks in Forster’s world.

In addition to being dramatic, Helen is also melodramatic. After listening to Beethoven, “She desired to be alone. The music had summed up to her all that had happened or could happen in her career. She read it as a tangible statement, which could never be superseded. The notes meant this and that to her, and they could have no other meaning, and life could have no other meaning” (*Howards End* 27). Helen’s youth can also be seen in her melodramatic character. She tends to exaggerate moments. When Paul kissed her, she immediately thought that was a call for marriage, and invited Margaret and her aunt down to celebrate. After sending that letter, she realized that Paul had no intention of marrying her, and her second letter was not quick enough to tell her sister and aunt that she had exaggerated the repercussions of that night. But,

the narrator refuses to tell us exaggerations. Once “having mentioned the ‘poetry’ of Helen’s rash kiss, the narrator can only shrug: ‘who can describe that?’ (20) Repeatedly, the novel tells us what we will not be told” (Levenson 359) though Helen tells more than ought to be told with her exaggerations.

Helen and the rest of the Schlegel’s main point throughout the novel is that the inner life, personal relations, are more important than anything else. She doesn’t know how the Wilcoxes live with themselves, all telegrams and anger—telegrams to take the personal out of personal relations, and anger because they think there’s always something to be angry about instead of accepting. She says that, “I knew it was impossible, because personal relations are the important thing for ever and ever, and not this outer life of telegrams and anger” (*Howards End* 126). Even though Helen is youthful, and shows it often, she has also experienced heartache, and has other experiences to fall back on—she’s been out and about in the world, enough to see that the way the Wilcoxes live their lives is not the most effective or worthwhile. Margaret makes this remark when she consider her sister and her fiancé’s relationship, thinking “How wide the gulf between Henry as he was and Henry as Helen thought he ought to be!” (*Howards End* 165). Helen believes that people should strive to be of the highest character and intellect that they can, but Henry has given up on this endeavor, as he believes that he has reached it. She also cannot understand why Henry would be content to live a life of telegrams and anger, when personal relations could save him.

Later in the novel, Helen’s dramatic side emerges. She gets so caught up in the fact that she thinks she can save Leonard that she doesn’t think of the consequences. Forster writes, “‘So never give in,’ continued the girl, and restated again and again the vague yet convincing plea that the Invisible lodges against the Visible. Her excitement grew as she tried to cut the rope that

fastened Leonard to the earth” (*Howards End* 172). Helen believes in bettering people, helping them to become their full selves—something that she thinks the Wilcoxes will never do because they don’t believe that there’s anything wrong with the way they live their lives, or that they can do anything more to better themselves. She fails to see that she cannot be the one to better Leonard, because once she sleeps with him, she wants nothing to do with him. This is her youthfulness rising to the surface.

Helen never grows out of her dramatics, but she does grow out of her youthfulness. She realizes, “I’m ended. I used to be so dreamy about a man’s love as a girl, and think that for good or evil love must be the great thing. But it hasn’t been; it has been itself a dream” (*Howards End* 239). This comes only after Helen has more experiences to fall back on, to realize that things aren’t the way one thinks they are through the gaze of innocence. At this point, she’s become her own woman, and has grown into the person she’s going to be for the rest of her life. Her gaze of innocence is important to the novel, though, as “the offhand opening line of *Howards End* informs us of the importance of Helen Schlegel’s point of view: ‘One may as well begin with Helen’s letters to her sister’ (*HE*, p. 3); and the novel ends with Helen’s child and Helen’s view of the future” (Finkelstein 98). Even though Helen’s point of view is youthful, it is not inexperienced, and she provides a way to see characters that the audience wouldn’t have without her. After all, it is her child who will inherit *Howards End* and it is Helen who has the last line, “There’ll be such a crop of hay as never!” (*Howards End* 343).

Margaret Schlegel acts like a youthful woman for half of the novel. Indeed, it is almost at the halfway point that she marries Mr. Wilcox and becomes the next Mrs. Wilcox. But before that can happen, Margaret must grow into the woman that Forster wants her to be.. As the young

woman in Forster's novels, this is out of character, because the women are always picked up after, never the picker-uppers. But, this is not to say that Margaret starts off the novel as the character of the wise, older woman. She is still youthful, still inexperienced enough that her advice isn't the be-all, end-all. Because of her youth, she is taken under the wing of Mrs. Wilcox so that she can learn to become the woman that everyone listens to. Margaret doesn't have all the answers, nor does she pretend to, until the halfway point of the novel, when Mr. Wilcox asks her to be his wife. After that, the answers appear to just come to her, as Forster wants them to. Finkelstein suggests that "Margaret is Forster's quintessential androgynous hero and connects the themes of all his novels: the acceptance of sexuality, the role of women (and by extension homosexuals) in society, and the importance of fraternity" (Finkelstein 91). Margaret is the stand-in for Forster in *Howards End*. Once Margaret passes the boundary from youthful, inexperienced woman to old, wise woman, there's no going back in Forster's world.

At the beginning of the novel, Margaret has less experiences than Helen—Margaret was always the one to be the mother figure to Helen and Tibby, so she didn't have much time to do anything else, or experience anything else. When Margaret drops off her aunt at King's Cross so she can travel to see Helen at Howards End, "To Margaret [. . .] the station of King's Cross had always suggested Infinity" (*Howards End* 11). This reveals Margaret's youthful innocence—that she hasn't seen as much of England as other people have, so that King's Cross station suggests infinity—when one can't even get to mainland Europe from King's Cross (without utilizing another form of travel, as well). This is a key difference between Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox, in addition to the fact that Margaret didn't have a country upbringing. Finkelstein writes that "Margaret is much younger than Mrs. Wilcox and has ample room for growth; and she does remarkably well for someone without the benefits of a country upbringing" (Finkelstein 103).

Her first ride from King's Cross is one of the ways Margaret grows—she expands her horizons, just as Mrs. Wilcox does.

When her parents died, Margaret was only thirteen. She was forced to grow up quickly. She became “a hateful little girl, but at thirteen, [Margaret] had grasped a dilemma that most people travel through life without perceiving. Her brain darted up and down; it grew pliant and strong. Her conclusion was, that any human being lies nearer to the unseen than any organization, and from this she never varied” (*Howards End* 24). This passage shows both Margaret's youthful stubbornness and her older insight. The fact that, at thirteen, she had achieved more than many people achieve in her life attests to her insight—insight that existed for her as a young girl, when it doesn't appear until later in many people's lives, if at all. But, the fact that she never varied from this suggests, in her early years, that she employed the stubbornness that many children do, and that, in her later years, she didn't waver because she knew that she was correct in this conclusion. Levenson writes that “The initial and decisive characterization of Margaret Schlegel identifies her leading quality as ‘a profound vivacity, a continual and sincere response to all that she encountered in her path through life’ (10). Forster thus endows her not with a desire but with a *disposition*; he is concerned less with her will to act than with her ‘sincere response’ to what she encounters” (Levenson 354). Forster makes it clear that Margaret made the decisions once her parents died, and although she didn't have to become an adult immediately (having to worry about finances and such), she still began on that road once her parents died.

Margaret has her first experience where she is allowed to enjoy her surroundings without worrying like a mother about Helen and Tibby. When she meets the Wilcoxes, she realizes that

they are the opposite of the Schlegels. When one of the Wilcoxes infers that they must prepare themselves for a dinner-party, Margaret is appalled. In *Howards End* on page 45, Margaret's thought drew being from the obscure borderland. She could not explain it in so many words, but she felt that those who prepare for all the emergencies of life beforehand may equip themselves at the expense of joy. It is necessary to prepare for an examination, or a dinner-party, or a possible fall in the price of stock: those who attempt human relations must adopt another method, or fail. 'Because I'd sooner risk it,' was her lame conclusion. (*Howards End* 45)

This is where the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes differ, and where youth and age differ—Margaret is willing to risk something and go headlong into it, whereas the Wilcoxes feel they must prepare for every aspect.

Even though Margaret acted the mother to Helen and Tibby, she was still a child in the financial sense. She had never had a job, because her parents' money warranted that she didn't need one. Her "eyes were not opened until the lease of Wickham Place expired" (*Howards End* 80). She lived in Wickham Place with the closed eyes of youth—she didn't have to worry about the lease because her parents' money had paid for it for years after they died. Margaret didn't have to worry about things that many adults did because of her family's money. Because of this, she was able to do things that people like Leonard Bast never had the opportunity to.

Margaret shows the importance of fraternity that Finkelstein suggests when she considers every decision with Helen in mind, asking Helen what she thinks of things. When Margaret became engaged to Mr. Wilcox, her first thought was that "she must examine more closely her own nature and his; she must talk it over judicially with Helen" (*Howards End* 120). Even though this is when Margaret begins becoming the next Mrs. Wilcox, she is still youthful enough

to treasure her sister's opinion on matters. Even though she is the older one, Margaret still looks to Helen because she isn't sure she can make such an important decision on her own. This is the last example of Margaret simply existing as a pretty, young thing (although she will always be that way for Mr. Wilcox, simply because he is so much older than her), the last time that she doesn't try to tell Helen what to do, the last time that she and Helen exist on a field of equal youth.

The Old Women

Margaret Schlegel (Margaret Wilcox) begins the second part of *Howards End* married to Mr. Wilcox—whom the narrator laments that they now have to call Henry. Throughout the second part of the novel, she grows into the persona Mrs. Wilcox left behind when she died. By leaving Howards End to Margaret, Mrs. Wilcox insured that she would have a spiritual heir. Indeed, Margaret lives up to Mrs. Wilcox's expectations. She becomes the hero of women when she shelters her pregnant sister in Howards End. Margaret is truly Forster's androgynous hero, because "as the novel develops, Forster complicates [the] identification of Margaret with the 'female' or the 'feminine,' but initially undergirds the binary oppositions informing the novel" (Langland 441). By the end of the novel, Margaret has become the wise older woman, Forster's androgynous hero, able to give advice to all who ask for it.

Helen cautions Margaret about marrying Henry, warning her that he cannot feel any passion. Margaret replies, "The real point is that there is the widest gulf between my love-making and yours. Yours was romance, mine will be prose. I'm not running it down—a very good kind of prose, but well considered, well thought out" (*Howards End* 126). Margaret is

Forster's androgynous hero because she is able to connect—she connects the prose and the passion, and lives a full life. Langland writes that Margaret connecting the prose and the passion “is ultimately not representative of a view we might code as essentially female or feminine. Forster is sensitive both to essentialist conceptions of the female and to the social coding of the feminine” (Langland 443). Because Mr. Wilcox wasn't a very passionate man, Margaret had to find her passions elsewhere. But she managed to connect her life with Henry's. Margaret's whole being centers around being able to connect. At one point, she gives a long speech trying to get Henry to connect. At the end, Forster writes, “‘Only connect!’ That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height” (*Howards End* 134). Margaret, unlike Helen, is able to connect the prose and the passion.

When Henry did show a bit of passion by trying to kiss Margaret, “She was startled, and nearly screamed, but recovered herself at once, and kissed with genuine love the lips that were pressed against her own. It was their first kiss [. . .] On looking back, the incident displeased her. It was so isolated, no tenderness had ensued” (*Howards End* 133). This passage is Henry's first attempt at physical affection with Margaret, and it fails to meet her expectations. But again, as she has matured into the new Mrs. Wilcox, she is able to accept it and move on—connecting the prose to the passion she wished would come out of their relationship. Stone writes that, “As the novel proceeds, Margaret becomes more and more identified with Mrs. Wilcox, eventually assuming not only her married name but much of her nature. Ruth represents the achievement of ‘proportion,’ an ideal which has always ranked highest with Margaret” (“Red-Bloods” 403). Every time Margaret is identified as “Mrs. Wilcox,” she becomes flustered. She does not realize that she is becoming more and more like Mrs. Wilcox with each passing day. When Margaret

first meets Miss Avery, she “is shocked when Miss Avery confuses her with Mrs. Wilcox and stammers ‘I—Mrs. Wilcox—I?’” (*HE*, p. 202) as if she cannot quite believe it, but that will indeed be her name when she marries Henry” (Finkelstein 114).

Margaret visits Howards End for the first time with Henry, only knowing what Mrs. Wilcox has told her about the land. She asks Henry to go with her to look at the pigs’ teeth in the wych-elm that Mrs. Wilcox told her about, and on page 148,

They entered the garden for a minute, and to Mr. Wilcox’s surprise she was right. Teeth, pigs’ teeth, could be seen in the bark of the wych-elm tree—just the white tips of them showing. ‘Extraordinary!’ he cried. ‘Who told you?’

‘I heard of it one winter in London,’ was her answer, for she, too, avoided mentioning Mrs. Wilcox by name.

Mrs. Wilcox has transcended into the spiritual world at this point. She has become something that hangs over the heads of those at Howards End—after all, it was her home before she had ever met Henry. Margaret avoids saying Mrs. Wilcox’s name because she is now the new Mrs. Wilcox. Margaret realizes that she has to become the older, wise woman.

Margaret is intent on connecting the prose and the passion. She knows, as any older, wise woman would, that life is what you make it, and she’s going to try to enjoy every minute of it. Forster writes that “[Her Chelsea friends] attributed the change to her marriage, and perhaps some deep instinct did warn her not to travel further from her husband than was inevitable. Yet the main cause lay deeper still; she had outgrown stimulants, and was passing from words to things” (*Howards End* 187). Like Mrs. Wilcox before her, Margaret was transcending from the physical world to the spiritual. Even though at this moment, Mrs. Wilcox is completely spiritual,

and Margaret is still in some way physical, Margaret has started her transcendence into the spiritual world.

Helen comes to see Margaret at Howards End because she is pregnant, and needs the care and advice of her older, wiser sister. When Helen first arrives, many men try to get into Howards End to see Helen and tell her what to do, so Margaret has to turn them away, saying “‘Stop that at least,’ she said piteously; the doctor had turned back, and was questioning the driver of Helen’s cab. A new feeling came over her; she was fighting for women against men. She did not care about rights, but if men came into Howards End, it should be over her body” (*Howards End* 206). Forster was not an outright feminist—he was too afraid of women to advocate for their rights. But, Margaret, as his androgynous hero, is a feminist in this moment (she also doesn’t overtly advocate for women’s rights, as is stated in this passage and earlier in the novel). She wants to protect her sister from the men, she wants to protect Howards End from a man’s touch. Forster makes it obvious that he “relinquishes the hero-role entirely to women. The two Schlegel sisters, and especially Margaret, are his personal representatives, and they take on the male adversaries, the Wilcox Red-bloods, with feminine weapons” (“Red-Bloods” 397). Margaret fights for women against men. She feels that at all costs, her sister and Howards End need to be preserved.

Margaret transcends into the spiritual world quickly, leaving Henry behind in the completely physical world. Forster writes that, “She was transfigured. ‘Not any more of this!’ she cried. ‘You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress—I forgave you. My sister has a lover—you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection?’” (*Howards End* 219). Margaret desperately wants others to connect. She spends her entire engagement and marriage to Henry begging him to connect. For someone who is able to connect

the prose and the passion, she wants other people to be able to do it, as well—she sees life steadily and whole, and believes that is the best way to see life—so, in her eternal wisdom, she tries to help people see it that way.

At the beginning of her courtship with Henry, Margaret realizes that “Never before had her personality been touched. She was not young or very rich, and it amazed her that a man of any standing should take her seriously” (*Howards End* 120). At this point, Margaret is similar to Miss Bartlett—older and unmarried. This is when the audience knows that Margaret has passed from the world of the young women to the world of the older women. By the end of the novel, Margaret has become the self-confident older woman that Mrs. Wilcox was. When Helen and her son play in the field, Margaret realizes that “There was something uncanny in her triumph. She, who had never expected to conquer anyone, had charged straight through these Wilcoxes and broken up their lives” (*Howards End* 241-242). Margaret has changed the Wilcoxes’ lives in the way that Mrs. Wilcox started to do before she died. Margaret has finished Mrs. Wilcox’s business, the true testament to her wisdom.

Mrs. Wilcox is the late wife of Mr. Wilcox. She is the owner of Howards End, and she is the reason Margaret becomes like her. She leaves Howards End to Margaret because she wants a spiritual heir, someone that isn’t a part of her own family. Mrs. Wilcox is all-knowing—she knows how her husband’s life will end up, and she knows that Margaret will become the next Mrs. Wilcox. Stone writes that, “Ruth is the only character with greater spiritual authority than Margaret, and she is merciless on lapses of intuition” (“Red-Bloods” 402). Even after she dies, she is still present, guiding people down the paths to understanding.

At the beginning of the novel, Helen is writing letters home to her family. She mentions Mrs. Wilcox numerous times, saying on page 5 that

I looked out earlier, and Mrs. Wilcox was already in the garden. She evidently loves it.

No wonder she sometimes looks tired. She was watching the large red poppies come out.

Then she walked off the lawn to the meadow, whose corner to the right I can just see.

Trail, trail, went her long dress over the sopping grass, and she came back with her hands full of the hay that was cut yesterday.

Little does Helen know that Mrs. Wilcox is even more connected to the land than she seems.

Mrs. Wilcox is the human embodiment of Howards End. Even after she dies, the land reflects her presence, such as when Margaret and Mr. Wilcox find the tree with the pigs' teeth in it. At that moment, Margaret knows that Mrs. Wilcox is present, and avoids mentioning her name for fear of disturbing the dead.

Mrs. Wilcox has reached the point in her life when she has passed from people to things—things are what she thinks about the most, namely, Howards End. Forster writes that “Mrs. Wilcox’s voice, though sweet and compelling, had little range of expression. It suggested that pictures, concerts, and people are all of small and equal value. Only once had it quickened—when speaking of Howards End” (*Howards End* 53). Howards End is an extension of her self, so of course her voice would quicken when she talks of it—she’s baring a part of herself to her audience, she’s letting them in to a part of her life that few see. Even Margaret, Mrs. Wilcox’s spiritual heir, doesn’t see Howards End until much later in the novel. Mrs. Wilcox is the reason that the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes meet in the first place. By inviting Helen to Howards End, she is inviting the Schlegels into her life. Finkelstein writes on page 101 that

Ruth Wilcox represents the primary connection between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. An androgynous Demeter-figure, she is immediately identified with the image of hay [. . .] Mrs. Wilcox is repeatedly described as wearing long trailing dresses, usually trailing on the grass or in the hay, contrasting her with other women who lift their skirts to avoid contact with the earth. Her most impressive characteristic is her ‘instinctive wisdom’ of ‘the past’ (*HE*, p. 22). Although she always sounds uncertain, she intuitively knows of Paul and Helen’s love without being told, just as she knows when it is over.

Mrs. Wilcox has moments of telepathy, just like Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Wilcox is one with the earth, and invites all who come to Howards End to become one with the earth, as well.

Mrs. Wilcox enjoys taking her time. She no longer sees the need to rush around, as she knows that whatever happens will happen no matter how fast one goes. In Wickham Place, “The elder woman would not be hurried. She refused to fit in with the Wickham Place set, or to reopen discussion of Helen and Paul, whom Margaret would have utilized as a short-cut. She took her time, or perhaps let time take her, and when the crisis did come all was ready” (*Howards End* 59-60). At this point, Margaret is still acting the young woman, in a hurry, ready to get as much done as possible, whereas Mrs. Wilcox is past that. She will not rush as Margaret does, she will take her time.

Once Mrs. Wilcox dies, the Wilcoxes are thrown into turmoil—especially after they realize she has left Howards End to Margaret. When reflecting on Mrs. Wilcox, Henry thinks, “Ah yes—she had been a good woman—she had been steady. He chose the word deliberately. To him steadiness included all praise” (*Howards End* 67). But, in actuality, Mrs. Wilcox had seen life whole. Margaret is the one to connect Henry’s steadiness and Mrs. Wilcox’s wholeness—she too chooses to see life steadily and whole. When the Wilcoxes realize that Mrs.

Wilcox had left Howards End to Margaret, they are outraged, because “To them Howards End was a house: they could not know that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir” (*Howards End* 73). Howards End becomes her spirit once she dies. In an interview, Forster was asked the question “What was the significance of Mrs. Wilcox’s influence on the other characters after her death?” to which he responded, “I was interested in the imaginative effect of someone alive, but in a different way from other characters—living in other lives” (“E. M. Forster: Interview” 292). Mrs. Wilcox has died in the novel but lives on in others, and in Howards End.

When Margaret visits Howards End for the first time, she senses the previous Mrs. Wilcox throughout the house—this is important because, at this point in the novel, Margaret has become Mrs. Margaret Wilcox. As Margaret is walking around, “Mrs. Wilcox strayed in and out, ever a welcome ghost; surveying the scene, thought Margaret, without one hint of bitterness” (*Howards End* 120). Being Mrs. Wilcox’s spiritual heir means that her spirit is welcome wherever Margaret is. Howards End at this point has become the physical embodiment of Mrs. Wilcox. Howards End protects Mrs. Wilcox, even though “The heart of Mrs. Wilcox was alone hidden, and perhaps it is superstitious to speculate on the feelings of the dead” (*Howards End* 184). Mrs. Wilcox—even though she died much earlier in the novel—is still present throughout the novel. Because Howards End still exists, Mrs. Wilcox’s spirit does as well. Later in the novel, while walking around Howards End, Margaret senses Mrs. Wilcox again. “Margaret was silent. Something shook her life in its inmost recesses, and she shivered” (*Howards End* 242), as if a ghost had walked by. Mrs. Wilcox is always present. In these passages, Forster highlights the fact that Mrs. Wilcox has transcended fully from the physical to the spiritual. She no longer has a physical presence, but a spiritual one throughout Howards End that will never fade.

Mrs. Moore seems like another version of Mrs. Wilcox, but one that grows tired of being the old, wise woman constantly having to give advice. At the beginning of the novel, she acts selflessly, wanting to make sure all her children are happily married before she dies, so she knows they will be secure in their lives. But, while in India, she begins to become annoyed more and more easily. Mrs. Moore is a departure from the traditional way Forster writes older women. She mentions at one point that she is tired of people always asking her for advice, and then leaves India because she does not know how to help people anymore. When she dies, she is transformed into Esmi Esmoor

We first meet Mrs. Moore when Aziz steps into a mosque. He sees Mrs. Moore and assumes that she is like all other British women and doesn't know to remove her shoes in a mosque. When he gets her attention and says this, she responds,

'Yes, I was right, was I not? If I remove my shoes, I am allowed?'

'Of course, but so few ladies take the trouble, especially if thinking no one is there to see.'

'That makes no difference. God is here.' [. . .] Advancing, he found that she was old. A fabric bigger than the mosque fell to pieces and he did not know whether he was glad or sorry. She was older than Hamidullah Begum, with a red face and white hair. Her voice had deceived him" (*Passage* 20). And with that, Mrs. Moore steals Aziz's heart, for better or for worse, without even trying to. He is glad she's old because he objectifies young women and only views them at face value. With an older woman, he can actually put appearances aside and hear what she has to say. For Aziz, Mrs. Moore is always this woman who knows things other women like her don't know. For Aziz, Mrs. Moore is always his Mrs.

Wilcox. Finkelstein writes that “Mrs. Moore’s answer, ‘God is here’ impresses us, as it does Aziz, with its simplicity and sensitivity” (Finkelstein 124). Throughout the novel, Mrs. Moore is consistently honest with everyone she comes into contact with.

Adela wants to go on an adventure late at night and is told that she cannot. She is upset, but Mrs. Moore “did not take the disappointment as seriously as Miss Quested, for the reason that she was forty years older, and had learnt that Life never gives us what we want at the moment that we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually” (*Passage* 25). Just like Mrs. Wilcox, Mrs. Moore has learned that time cannot be hurried, so one should take the time to enjoy life. She doesn’t suffer from the impatience that Adela does, the impatience to experience life. Mrs. Moore knows that whatever happens will happen no matter how fast one goes.

The audience sees Mrs. Moore through Aziz’s eyes at points, which can give a biased view of her. Aziz sees her as “perfect as always, his dear Mrs. Moore. [. . .] There was nothing he would not do for her. He would die to make her happy” (*Passage* 131). Since she was the first Englishwoman he met that wasn’t repulsive to him or repulsed by him, he thinks she can do no wrong. He doesn’t see her when she grows tired of India, though. He never sees her bad side, so he thinks she doesn’t have one. But she’s human—at least, she is before she becomes Esmoor—and she makes mistakes, Aziz just chooses to remember her the way she was when he first met her. Woolf writes that we should “doubt both things—the real and the symbolical: Mrs. Moore, the nice old lady, and Mrs. Moore, the sibyl. The conjunction of these two different realities seems to cast doubt upon them both” (Woolf 393). Aziz is an unreliable narrator. While reading, we cannot believe everything he says about Mrs. Moore.

During the novel, Mrs. Moore reaches a point when she despises being asked for advice. When Adela is fretting about whether she did the right thing by saying Aziz encountered her in the caves, Mrs. Moore simply sits there. Forster writes on page 199 of *Passage to India*,

But Mrs. Moore showed no inclination to be helpful. A sort of resentment emanated from her. She seemed to say: 'Am I to be bothered for ever?' Her Christian tenderness had gone, or had developed into a hardness, a just irritation against the human race; she had taken no interest at the arrest, asked scarcely any questions, and had refused to leave her bed on the awful last night of Mohurram, when an attack was expected on the bungalow. Experiences don't always make people kind. Just because Mrs. Moore is wise, doesn't mean that she likes giving people advice. This is where Forster takes a turn from his norm of older women—they're normally a genteel kind of otherness, but after the caves, Mrs. Moore is no longer kind. Forster had been hinting at it throughout the novel—she would grow tired of people easily, she didn't want to listen to things that didn't interest her—but it finally took effect after the caves.

Just a little after the previous passage, she thinks back on her life. Adela and Ronny continue to ask her for help, and she replies on page 200,

'I have spent my life in saying or in listening to sayings; I have listened too much. It is time I was left in peace. Not to die,' she added sourly. 'No doubt you expect me to die, but when I have seen you and Ronny married, and seen the other two and whether they want to be married—I'll retire then into a cave of my own.' She smiled, to bring down her remark into ordinary life and thus add to its bitterness. 'Somewhere where no young people will come asking questions and expecting answers.'

She's tired of how much people expect of her—she believes that her old age should warrant peace, not giving advice because she has so many more experiences than others. By not willingly giving advice to people (not just the people who seek her out), she becomes a different type of Forsterian old-woman. But, she still wants to help others. She still wants to see her children married before she dies, she wants to see them happy. She just wants to help people on her own time.

Mrs. Moore wants to become one with the universe—which she ends up doing when she passes away and becomes Esmis Esmoor—and thinks that India can help her in that regard. When she landed in India, “it seemed to her good, and when she saw the water flowing through the mosque-tank, or the Ganges, or the moon, caught in the shawl of night with all the other stars, it seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one. To be one with the universe! So dignified and simple. But there was always some little duty to be performed first” (*Passage* 208). India does help her be one with the universe, but not in the way she imagines it will. India also makes her realize that she can't be the placid old woman who simply gives advice. She's her own person, and even though she's done having adventurous experiences, she's still a human being. That is, until she becomes Esmis Esmoor. Forster writes that during the trial, “The tumult increased, the invocation of Mrs. Moore continued, and people who did not know what the syllables meant repeated them like a charm. They became Indianized into Esmis Esmoor, they were taken up in the street outside. In vain the Magistrate threatened and expelled. Until the magic exhausted itself, he was powerless” (*Passage* 225). This is when Mrs. Moore passes from the physical to the spiritual. She becomes the embodiment of a goddess whose name happens to sound like her name—the people begin chanting her name because they think that her witness will set Aziz free. What the people of the court don't know is that she has died. But, her spiritual guidance allows

Adela to speak what truly happened to her in the cave, and that sets Aziz free. Parry writes that “The worth of human effort, ingenuity and creativity is restored in the view Mrs. Moore has on her last journey across India, where the symbolic landscape is pervaded by history and culture” (Parry 41). It is restored for Mrs. Moore in her last journey across India, and restored for India when her spiritual guidance allows Adela to help set Aziz free.

When Mrs. Moore dies at sea, she leaves “behind her a sore discomfort, for a death gives a ship a bad name. Who was this Mrs. Moore?” (*Passage* 256). Who was Mrs. Moore? Does the audience ever know? Readers know whom she left behind, but who was she in her life? The audience does not get any background information on her, except about her children and the fact that she had two husbands. They do not find out much else. A reoccurring theme throughout the novel is that Mrs. Moore has telepathy. At one point, Fielding and Adela are talking when Fielding says, “‘Mrs. Moore—she did know.’

‘How could she have known what we don’t?’

‘Telepathy, possibly’” (*Passage* 263). Mrs. Moore knows things simply because she has reached an age when she has experienced a wide variety of moments in her life, and can answer questions wisely. She can give good advice as to what to do next, because she knows what she did when she was their age. It’s not something so supernatural as telepathy, even though it wouldn’t be surprising, as Mrs. Moore is seen throughout the novel as a spiritual being.

By the end of the novel, Aziz realizes that Mrs. Moore didn’t go out of her way to help him, that she didn’t even go out of her way to show that she liked him. He thinks to himself, “‘What did this eternal goddess of Mrs. Moore amount to? To nothing, if brought to the test of thought. She had not borne witness in his favor, nor visited him in prison, yet she had stolen to the depths of his heart, and he always adored her” (*Passage* 312). Even though she did nothing

for him, that first encounter with her was powerful for him—it showed him that not all Englishwomen are the same, and he never forgets that. Mrs. Moore is a powerful woman for Forster, as well. She shows that, by the time his last novel is written, he has gained some depth in his knowledge of women to know that they aren't all one of two ways—that older women can act childishly and want their own way (in Mrs. Moore's case, their own cave), and that they don't have to simply be the wise, older figure.

Miss Bartlett, like Margaret, doesn't begin the novel as the wise older woman. Miss Bartlett has had a different experience in life from the rest of the older women, and it has left a huge impact on her life. She thinks she means well, like the other older women, but she is out of touch with what young people want from her. It isn't until the last part of the novel that she realizes how to help Lucy live her life happily—much the same way Mrs. Moore starts *A Passage to India*. Although Miss Bartlett is already an old woman, this is the realization that promotes her into her wise role. Finkelstein writes that, “Although the novel does very subtly lay the groundwork for Charlotte's change of heart, the effect remains one of surprise and of gratitude that she is not totally at the mercy of the frigid propriety she seems to represent” (Finkelstein 73). Once Miss Bartlett realizes what she can do, she does it and leaves Lucy and George happily married.

Miss Bartlett walks in on Lucy and George kissing in a field of lilies. Forster writes that before Lucy “could speak, almost before she could feel, a voice called ‘Lucy! Lucy! Lucy!’ The silence of life had been broken by Miss Bartlett, who stood brown against the view” (*Room* 63). In a field of lilies, Miss Bartlett is the one who smudges the background brown—she takes the color out of the romance of Lucy and George's kiss. She is the lurch back into reality for Lucy.

Miss Bartlett's "reaction to George's kissing Lucy reveals the dirty mind of the prude: she is concerned only with silencing him, because she is convinced that men of his 'type' 'seldom keep their exploits to themselves'" (Finkelstein 74). Miss Bartlett continues to be the reminder of reality for Lucy throughout the novel. Lucy resents it, but in the end, Miss Bartlett helps her more than she can repay.

Once Miss Bartlett let herself feel for Lucy physically, she accomplished much more with Lucy than she had ever done with lecturing her about her behavior. On the ride back from the countryside on page 65,

Under the rug, Lucy felt the kindly pressure of her cousin's hand. At times our need for a sympathetic gesture is so great that we care not what exactly it signifies or how much we may have to pay for it afterwards. Miss Bartlett, by this timely exercise of her muscles, gained more than she would have got in hours of preaching or cross-examination.

She renewed it when the two carriages stopped, half into Florence.

Miss Bartlett is not someone who lets herself be ruled by her emotions, because her experiences show her that doing that is a way to get hurt. That's what Lucy doesn't see, but that's why Miss Bartlett always advises her not to let her emotions decide what she does. Lucy thinks it's because Miss Bartlett doesn't know what life is like, but it's actually because Miss Bartlett has lived a very harsh life, and that's why she's still a "Miss" even though she's older.

Miss Bartlett watches out for Lucy in her own way—the way that she wishes someone had watched out for her when she was Lucy's age. When discussing George's kiss, Miss Bartlett tells Lucy, "But we fear him for you, dear. You are so young and inexperienced, you have lived among such nice people, that you cannot realize what men can be—how they can take a brutal pleasure in insulting a woman whom her sex does not protect and rally round. This afternoon, for

example, if I had not arrived, what would have happened?’” (*Room* 69). Miss Bartlett tells the audience more about herself in this passage than about Lucy’s lack of experience. Miss Bartlett is so harsh to Lucy because she’s lived such a harsh life. Throughout the novel, “Miss Bartlett, in deed, though not in word, had taught the girl that this our life contains nothing satisfactory. Lucy, though she disliked the teacher, regarded the teaching as profound” (*Room* 124-125). Miss Bartlett has taught what she knows—heartache. If Miss Bartlett hadn’t had such a disappointing life, she would have taught what Mrs. Wilcox or Mrs. Moore taught others—she would have taught them that life is precious and that time isn’t meant to be wasted rushing around.

At one point in the novel, Mrs. Honeychurch tries to convince Lucy to keep Miss Bartlett company for a while, even though she knows Lucy does not like her. Mrs. Honeychurch gives her reasoning, saying, ““You have each other and all these woods to walk in, so full of beautiful things; and poor Charlotte has only the water turned off and plumbers. You are young, dears, and however clever young people are, and however many books they read, they will never guess what it feels like to grow old”” (*Room* 130). This is where Lucy’s mother gives the audience more insight into Miss Bartlett’s life. She also imparts some wisdom of her own on Lucy—that she doesn’t know how it feels to grow old. Lucy hasn’t had the experiences that Miss Bartlett has, nor will she ever. Miss Bartlett makes sure of that. After Lucy lectures Miss Bartlett on life, Miss Bartlett replies, ““Very well, dear, you know best. Perhaps gentlemen are different to what they were when I was young. Ladies are certainly different”” (*Room* 135). Miss Bartlett only knows what she’s lived—she doesn’t see that Lucy is having a different life from hers. But, she feels she must caution Lucy so that Lucy doesn’t make the same mistakes she did. Miss Bartlett would no doubt feel guilty if she didn’t warn Lucy so that she didn’t have the same experience—no one warned Miss Bartlett, and she was forced to face the consequences.

Towards the end of the novel, Miss Bartlett realizes that George would be good for Lucy, and she begins to try to push them together. When George comes to tennis, someone has to tell him where to go, and no one volunteers. Exasperated, Lucy says, “‘Very well,’ [. . .] with an angry gesture. ‘No one will help me. I will speak to him myself.’ And immediately she realized that this was what her cousin had intended all along” (*Room* 153). Miss Bartlett herself starts to realize what Lucy doesn’t—that George is in love with her, and that she is in love with George. Even though Miss Bartlett never had this happen to her, she is not spinster enough to deny someone else happiness.

When Lucy gives up George in order to break off her relationship with Cecil, she goes into the darkness that George was trying to pull her from. Forster writes that “The night received her, as it had received Miss Bartlett thirty years before” (*Room* 163). This passage suggests that, not only was George’s presence pulling Lucy from darkness, but Miss Bartlett as well. When Miss Bartlett was Lucy’s age, she entered the darkness, and didn’t start to see the light until George came for Lucy. George’s love for Lucy showed Miss Bartlett that people can be trustworthy, and that one doesn’t have to live in the darkness to protect oneself. Lucy chose the darkness because it was easier—Miss Bartlett chose it because she felt it was necessary to protect herself from the evils of the world.

The moment that Miss Bartlett starts her plan to get Lucy to realize George loves her begins with a simple request. Before they depart, “Miss Bartlett at once came forward, and after a long preamble asked a great favour: might she go to church?” (*Room* 182). Even though no one knows it (not even the readers), she has noticed that Mr. Emerson is in the vicarage, and knows that Lucy won’t go to church with them, so she will probably go to the study and talk to Mr. Emerson. Once Lucy talks to Mr. Emerson, Miss Bartlett is guessing that Lucy will realize she

loves George and leave the darkness completely to be with him, preventing Lucy from suffering the same fate as Miss Bartlett. Finkelstein writes that “at the end [of the novel], there is that double turn to explain, and the only satisfactory explanation is that Charlotte has wanted Lucy and George to get together all along” (Finkelstein 75). If this is true, the reason for Miss Bartlett’s objections in the beginning are simply based off of her own experiences with men. Once she realizes that not all men are the same, she is more willing to allow Lucy and George to be together.

At the end of the novel, on pages 194 and 195, George and Lucy try to piece together why Miss Bartlett let Lucy encounter Mr. Emerson in the vicarage, saying

‘If Charlotte had only known, she would have stopped me going in, and I should have gone to silly Greece, and become different for ever.’

‘But she did know,’ said George; ‘she did see my father, surely. He said so. [. . .] He was dozing by the study fire, and he opened his eyes, and there was Miss Bartlett. A few minutes before you came in. She was turning to go as he woke up.’ [. . .] It was long before they returned to Miss Bartlett, but when they did her behavior seemed more interesting. George, who disliked any darkness, said: ‘It’s clear that she knew. Then, why did she risk the meeting? She knew he was there, and yet she went to church. [. . .]’

As they talked, an incredible solution came into Lucy’s mind. She rejected it, and said:

‘How like Charlotte to undo her work by a feeble muddle at the last moment.’ But something in the dying evening, in the roar of the river, in their very embrace, warned them that her words fell short of life, and George whispered: ‘Or did she mean it?’

Forever, Lucy will know that it is because of Miss Bartlett and her wisdom that she was able to marry George and move into the light.

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