

## THE ASPECT OF »PROPHECY« IN E. M. FORSTER'S

### *The Longest Journey and Howards End*

IVO MARDEŠIĆ

Although Forster's first novel was published in 1905, his works did not attract much critical consideration until the late twenties. The reason why his novels did not gain a serious consideration for a long time is that he was considered very much a writer in the traditional line of the English novel of the nineteenth century, rather old fashioned and uncomplicated as compared to the other writers of the twentieth century, such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence. It was only in 1927 that the first critical article of major importance appeared. »A Passage to Forster: Reflections on a Novelist« was an article written by I. A. Richards with the purpose to introduce Forster's works in America. By that time Forster had a considerable reputation in England, but was very little known abroad. I. A. Richards comments on the »oddness« in Forster's works which, »if we can track it down, may help us to seize those other peculiarities which make him on the whole the most puzzling figure in contemporary English letters.«<sup>1</sup> Richards points to Forster's concern with the separation within society of the men of vision from the men of action, the attitude that is later taken by many critics of Forster. But what I. A. Richards called »the most puzzling figure in contemporary English letters« started to attract the attention of critics again, and most recently a new approach has recognized his debt to Bloomsbury. Forster's association with the Bloomsbury group lead him to accept at least some of its credos, especially that of the importance of personal relationships, which is one of Forster's main concerns and with which this essay will be mainly concerned. There is a transition from an overt treatment of this theme in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *A Room with a View* to a more subtle one in *The Longest Journey*, the novel in which Forster's attitudes are set in a more symbolic way and where his social commitments are given with less emphasis than in his later novels, i. e. in *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*. At the same time *The Longest Journey*

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<sup>1</sup> M. Bradbury, *Forster, A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1966, p. 15.

sets best, I think, Forster's ideas about the dilemma of the intellectual of his time and comes closest to the realization of his concept of »prophecy«. It is the novel which Lionel Trilling describes as »perhaps the most brilliant, the most dramatic, and the most passionate of his works«. <sup>2</sup> In particular what has attracted very close attention in recent years is Forster's aesthetics as is presented in his most important work of literary criticism, *Aspects of the Novel* published, like Richards' essay, in 1927. Many of the features Forster put in this work were not considered of much importance for a fairly long time, but with the new trends in modern criticism they have become important and very much in demand. This is especially true for the New Criticism with its stress on poetic or symbolic values. Some of the features have been applied to the study of the novel in general, as well as of the novels of individual novelists. »Rhythm« and »symbol« seem to be of particular relevance in this respect, and a great number of studies has been produced, using Forster's aesthetics, not only concerning Forster's own works but the works of many other authors as well. Malcolm Bradbury points out that »the application of the aesthetic principles it [*Aspects of the Novel*] states or assumes to Forster's own fiction has shown how much more modern than we have cared to assume Forster's methods and literary intuitions actually are«. <sup>3</sup> In this essay another of the aspects will be applied to Forster's works, the one Forster calls »prophecy«, and we shall try to see how far it can be pursued in his novels and with what results.

## I

E. M. Forster begins his chapter »Prophecy« with the following words: »With prophecy in the narrow sense of foretelling the future we have no concern, and we have not much concern with it as an appeal to righteousness. What will interest us today — what we must respond to, for interest now becomes as inappropriate word — is an accent in the novelist's voice, an accent for which the flutes and saxophones of fantasy may have prepared us. His theme is the universe, or something universal, but he is not necessarily going to 'say' anything about the universe; he proposes to sing, and the strangeness of song arising in the halls of fiction is bound to give us a shock.« <sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Lionel Trilling, *E. M. Forster*, The Hogarth Press, London 1944, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> M. Bradbury, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, Edward Arnold & Co., London 1947, p. 161.

What strikes us at the first glance on this quotation is a feeling of a calculated vagueness. If prophecy has nothing to do with foretelling the future, why is it called »prophecy« and not a different name instead? I think that we can explain this in terms of Forster's attitudes and conceptions towards some other features in fiction, at the same time trying to give explanations to his interpretations of prophetic elements in a number of works of art which he mentions and considers as of particular relevance in *Aspects of the Novel*.

We may start with the »theme« of the novelist, which is »the universe, or something universal, but he is not necessarily going to 'say' anything about the universe; he proposes to sing.« If a novelist is going to sing, he has to sing about something, and we have to listen to his »voice, an accent for which the flutes and saxophones of fantasy may have prepared us«. This poses immediately another question: how are we going to listen to his voice so that we can discern its accent, and what is the »accent« in this case? Fortunately Forster gives some explanation how to discern the novelist's »voice« and his »accent«. »We shall have to attend to the novelist's state of mind and to the actual words he uses; we shall neglect as far as we can the problems of common sense.«<sup>6</sup> While it may not be quite clear how we are going to »attend to the novelist's state of mind«, the second part of the sentence is revealing. In any case, we cannot attend to the novelist's state of mind unless we take into account »the actual words he uses«, but Forster seems to imply something else here. That the novelist is not »necessarily going to 'say' anything about the universe« implies the novelist's unwillingness, indeed his conscious (or unconscious?) avoidance of setting down any open statements, of »saying« anything about the universe. On the other hand, we cannot exclude the possibility of the novelist's »saying« something about the universe; only we must try and look at »what he does focus« as Forster puts it, and must not see only »what he does not focus«. Now another problem arises, that of how can we find, discern and interpret the things that the novelist does not focus but that are so important, or even of the greatest importance to explain what is »prophetic« in a novel? Forster seems to associate »prophecy« with »song« and it is »song« we must follow in order to understand what the »prophecy« is about. It is difficult to define what Forster means by »song«, especially knowing that it is the novel Forster is talking about. He himself is aware of the difficulty of incorporating »song« in a novel. He asks: »How will song combine with

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

the furniture of common sense? we ask ourselves, and shall have to answer 'not too well': the singer does not always have room for his gestures, the tables and chairs get broken, and the novel through which bardic influence has passed often has a wrecked air, ...<sup>6</sup>

I think that the emphasis on, or rather the contrast between, »the song«, and »the furniture of the common sense« might be helpful here. We may use terms »image« instead of »song« and »discourse« instead of »the furniture of the common sense«. But these two elements are in no way in opposition, we cannot talk of them as »image versus discourse«, but »image and discourse« or sometimes »discourse through image«. Speaking about *Moby Dick* Forster says: »The essential in 'Moby Dick', its prophetic song, flows athwart the action and the surface morality like an undercurrent.«<sup>7</sup> Perhaps we could define Forster's conception of »prophesy« as a main idea which appears and develops through a novel, although Forster would not be very happy to hear the word »idea« applied to his work. »Message« would be even more inadequate, since Forster states openly that »we are not concerned with the prophet's message, or rather (if matter and manner cannot be separated) we are concerned with it as little as possible.«<sup>8</sup> Still, to make the point more clear, I would like to repeat what Forster says about Dostoevsky and Melville as perfect examples of »prophetic« fiction writers. The idea of contest is what pervades *Moby Dick*, contest the man is capable of even if it leads him to his own destruction. We can grasp the idea reading the novel as a whole, but there are some passages that the novelist »focuses« which help us to realize the full meaning, the complete idea. Such is the passage at the beginning of the novel, containing the sermon about Jonah. The idea of »reaching back to the universal love and pity« is the main one in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, love and pity that can be gained through experience of one's own or other people's sufferings. The crucial scene is of course Mitya's dream, after which he is capable of signing what was required of him, and is full of emotion and »his whole soul was quivering with tears.« Forster is convinced that this, sometimes, »double life« can perfectly coalesce and give a perfect aesthetic unit. We shall try to analyze what is »prophetic« in Forster's works, what is the »song« about, and, if possible, to see how the »song« fits in »the furniture of the common sense«.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

## II

*The Longest Journey* was first published in 1907 as Forster's second novel. It opens with a group of undergraduates discussing some philosophical problems in Rickie's room in Cambridge. The undergraduates are discussing the nature of reality, the central theme of the novel.<sup>9</sup> Rickie finds it difficult to follow the discussion, and he cannot agree with the idea that a thing exists only when it is seen. It is present always, if it is present even only in one's imagination, and one's imagination is very important to the problem of reality. But one of the most prominent features in Rickie's character is obvious already at the beginning of the book. It is a conflict between the »visionary moment«, the experience of reality, in itself a subjective revelation, and the object that produces, brings it forth. We shall see that this characteristic, the unbalanced state of Rickie's mind plays a great role in the later developments of his character and the novel. Forster seems to associate Rickie's mental condition with his physical deformity. Agnes, inspecting his room,

...saw her host's shoes: he had left them lying on the sofa. Rickie was slightly deformed, and so the shoes were not the same size, and one of them had a thick heel to help him towards an even walk.<sup>10</sup>

Rickie's is a world of imagination, which is often remote from daily life. In conversation with Agnes and Mr. Pembroke Rickie's vision is brought to light, if only by implication.

'The person who has no ideals', she exclaimed, 'is to be pitied'. 'I think so too', said Mr. Pembroke, sipping his coffee. 'Life without an ideal would be like the sky without the sun'. Rickie looked towards the night, wherein now twinkled innumerable stars — gods and heroes, virgins and brides, to whom the Greeks have given their names'. (21)

There is a sort of parody implied here. If Rickie has no ideals, that is because he cannot define them, or because he is not aware of them, while Mr. Pembroke's ideals will prove to be sham and false.

What Rickie lacks is experience, and it is to be gained only gradually and through various phases of his life. Experience will lead him to his maturity and recognition of its importance. Forster observes:

<sup>9</sup> J. B. Beer, *The Achievement of E. M. Forster*, London 1962, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> E. M. Forster, *The Longest Journey*, Penguin Books, London 1964, p. 13. All the quotations will be taken from this edition, with page numbers in brackets.

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He has no knowledge of the world; for example, he thinks that if you do not want money you can give it to friends who do. He believes in humanity because he knows a dozen decent people. He believes in women because he has loved his mother. And his friends are as young and as ignorant as himself. They are full of the wine of life. But they have not tasted the cup — let us call it the teacup — of experience, which has made men of Mr. Pembroke's type what they are. Oh, that teacup! To be taken at prayers, at friendship, at love, till we are quite sane, quite efficient, quite experienced, and quite useless to God or man. We must drink it, or we shall die. But we need not drink it always. Here is our problem and our salvation. There comes a moment, — God knows when — at which we can say 'I will experience no longer. I will create. I will be an experience! But to do this we must be both acute and heroic. (66—87)

Rickie's first great experience takes place while he is staying with the Pembrokes and Agnes's lover, Gerald. Having witnessed a love scene between Agnes and Gerald he is overcome with a new feeling, new sensation, and turns away »crimson and afraid. A thought, 'Do such things actually happen?' and he seemed to be looking down coloured valleys.« (45) Love becomes for him something that surpasses all his expectations and transfigures everything, inside and outside him, into the highest spheres of experience, and Rickie's spiritual life has very much changed. »He stared, and struck the gong. To its music they approached, priest and high priestess.« (46) The scene reminds us of Philip's seeing Caroline and Gino with the baby, »the Virgin and Child, with Donor«,<sup>11</sup> in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* which marks the beginning of his spiritual conversion. Although there is no symbolic episode in *The Longest Journey* such as for example the Santa Deodata episode in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* which foreshadows the impossibility of fulfilment of Philip's desires and intentions, yet Forster predicts Rickie's future disappointment in love and marriage. »It was the merest accident that Rickie had not been disgusted. But this he could not know«. (46)

Soon afterwards Gerald dies suddenly, and Rickie returns to Cambridge. But a correspondence between him and Agnes ensues, and they become engaged. It is during their engagement that they visit Mrs. Failing, Rickie's aunt, where a most unexpected revelation is made to Rickie. Mrs. Failing tells Rickie that Stephen Wonham, the young man living with her, is his half-brother. The moment is of vital importance for Rickie, and he recognizes the fact. Earlier in the story Forster comments upon Rickie's gaining experience: »For it is not easy, after accepting six cups of tea, to throw the seventh in the face of the hostess. And to Rickie this

<sup>11</sup> E. M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Penguin Modern Classics, Bungay, Suffolk, 1965, p. 122.

moment has not, as yet, been offered.« (67) It has been offered now, but he lets himself be persuaded by Agnes not to tell his brother anything about it. From this moment Rickie gradually declines. He has no success as a short-story writer, his work as a school-teacher offers him neither joy nor satisfaction, and his marriage proves to be a failure. But he is not desperate, he does not want to give up life. There is another revelation made to him — that Stephen Wonham is not his half-brother by his father's side, but by his mother's. As he formerly disliked Stephen because of his dislike for his father, he now likes him because he liked his mother. But he is incapable of seeing his brother as a man. At the same time, Rickie has a strong will to do good, which is very strong till the end of his life. »To do good! For what other reason are we here? Let us give up our refined sensations, and our comforts, and our art, if thereby we can make other people happier and better.« (156)

Stephen visits his brother again, and Rickie decides that he should stay with him. In his room, before going to bed, he contemplates his own position and feelings, free of remorse and guilt of the past. »Something had changed. He had journeyed — as on rare occasions a man must — till he stood behind right and wrong. On the banks of the grey torrent of life, love is the only flower. A little way up the stream and a little way down had Rickie glanced, and he knew that she whom he loved had risen from the dead, and might rise again.« (250) Rickie is thinking of his mother to whom he was bound by strong ties of love and sympathy — and now he loves his brother to the same extent. He remembers his dream when he knew about the existence of his brother, but did not want to tell him and so to recognize him. »He heard his mother crying. She was crying quite distinctly in the darkened room. He whispered, 'Never mind, my darling, never mind', and a voice echoed, 'Never mind — come away — let them die out — let them die out'! He lit a candle, and the room was empty. Then, hurrying to the window, he saw above mean houses the frosty glories of Orion.« (196) Rickie is taking this dream as a vision, and »tonight also he hurried to the window — to remember, with a smile, that Orion is not among the stars of June. 'Let me die out. She will continue', he murmured, and in making plans for Stephen's happiness, fell asleep.« (250)

Forster never explains the significance of Orion, but its presence has a special meaning. In the first instance it represents Rickie's emptiness and despair and his incapability of a further vision, of mind as well as of life. But in the second instance its absence opens new vistas for Rickie and mirrors his feeling and

high hopes. Rickie's next encounter with his brother proves to be a difficult one, because Stephen is insulted in being treated by Rickie first as a brother, and then as a man. Rickie admits his error of having taken the world »second-hand. I have bothered less and less to look it in the face — until not only you, but every one else has turned unreal.« (254)

Stephen stands for something else here. He is an embodiment of natural man, closely connected with nature and with everything it stands for. He is a part of Wiltshire and its surroundings, and if turned out of it he would be lost forever. Forster seems to imply this in Stephen's statement of his actually being thrown out of Mrs. Failing's house. »But down in the village there were both cricket teams, already a little tight, and the mad plumber shouting 'Rights of Man!' They knew I was turned out.« (219) Forster holds Melville in high esteem, and his favourite works by Melville are *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*. The ship, from which Billy Budd was taken was called »Rights of Man«, and the fact that he had to change it, was forced to do so, lead to his destruction and death. Stephen also reminds us of Gino in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, and of Gerald from the beginning of the book, a man without any intellectual inhibitions and of natural and spontaneous behaviour. There is not Italy here, but there is Wiltshire with the Rings at its very heart symbolizing a remote, unspoilt nature, with Stephen as a part of it. These surroundings and their atmosphere helped Rickie to begin to understand his brother, and he wants to be back again.

He longed to be back riding over those windy fields, to be back in those mystic circles, beneath pure sky. Then they could have watched and helped and taught each other, until the world was a reality, . . . (255).

After a short hesitation, Rickie really decides to leave his home, his job and his wife and to go with his brother. It is not easy for Rickie to make such a decision, although it is in him already, if only latent, and it is only the matter of time and opportunity for it to come to be made. He cannot resist the appeal of the brotherly love, still less can he resist the appeal Stephen makes to him as a man. Forster wants to point out the latter appeal, the human one, which drives Rickie to leave everything that has been a part, if not a whole, of his life so far. »'Come with me as a man', said Stephen, already out in the mist, not as a brother; who cares what people did years back? We're alive together, and the rest is cant'«. (257) Rickie goes after Stephen and »soon lost his colour and his form. But a voice persisted, saying, 'Come, I do mean it. Come; I will take care of you, I can manage you'«. (257) It seems that

once again Forster points out to what he often calls »universal pity and love«, in this case on both sides. And what is equally important, Rickie is willing to obey »the voice«, he has no prejudices against it.

In the voice he had found a surer guarantee. Habits and sex may change with the new generation, features may alter with the play of a private passion, but a voice is apart from these. It lies nearer to the racial essence and perhaps to the divine; it can, at all events, overleap one grave. (257)

Rickie follows this voice, he goes with Stephen, and after a short separation the brothers go to Wiltshire, Rickie to visit his aunt, his brother accompanying him. Rickie makes Stephen promise to behave, not to drink or gamble. On their way from the railway station to the town a small incident happens with a little boy, the owner of the trap they want to hire. Rickie cannot understand why the boy has to think over whether to let them have his trap or not, although it is perfectly understandable to Stephen. Rickie tries to explain the boy's behaviour as a consequence of the modern civilization, the civilization that he has known. »Organize', 'Systematize', 'Fill up every moment', 'Include esprit de corps'. He reviewed the watchwords of the last two years, and found that they ignored personal contest, personal truces, personal love. By following them Sawston School had lost its quiet usefulness and become a frothy sea, wherein plunged Dunwood House, that unnecessary ship.« (269) He is completely determined to stay as far away from his previous way of life as possible. On the same way another incident occurs, a game played by Stephen and assisted by Rickie. He lights a ball of paper with a match and hands it to Stephen, who puts it on the stream.

The paper caught fire from the match, and spread into a rose of flame... and then the flower sailed into deep water, and up leapt the two arches of a bridge. 'It'll strike!' they cried; 'no, it won't; it's chosen the left, and one arch became a fairy tunnel, dropping diamonds. Then it vanished for Rickie, but Stephen, who knelt in the water, declared that it was still afloat, far through the arch, burning as if it would burn for ever. (272)

The passage is considered as the central »visionary moment« of the novel.<sup>12</sup> »The rose of flame« should symbolize new attitudes and feelings in Stephen, and it is to be understood from the context that they will last, that nothing will be able to destroy them. Rickie is aware of the change in his brother, but only partially. As the flame soon vanishes for Rickie, he himself will vanish,

<sup>12</sup> J. B. Beer, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

but not his impact upon Stephen. His values, his influence and feelings have transformed Stephen, who has learned them and is going to keep them. Rickie's fragile nature and Stephen's strong and virile one, and the destruction of the former are symbolized in another incident taking place in Mrs. Failing's house. The conversation between the aunt and the nephew proves a failure once again, because she cannot succeed in persuading him to go back to his wife and to »beware of the earth«. (274) Left alone, Rickie takes a lump of chalk to play with it, which slips on the coffee-cup breaking it. The crude texture has destroyed the fragile one, finely elaborated and expensive. That is precisely what is going to happen. Stephen breaks his promise, gets drunk, and leaves Rickie deeply disappointed. Finding his brother lying drunk over the rails, he »did a man's duty«. Saving his brother's life he loses his own. Still, his life has not been lost in vain. Lionel Trilling says in his book on E. M. Forster: »To Rickie Stephen owes not only his physical but his spiritual life, his salvation in happiness and responsiveness, in his farm, wife and child.«<sup>13</sup>

Coming back to the question of prophecy I cannot help mentioning Herman Melville again and Forster's conception of prophecy in his works, especially *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*. In his *Aspects of the Novel* Forster never makes explicit what he considers »prophetic« in these works. »Nothing can be stated about *Moby Dick* except that it is a contest. The rest is song.«<sup>14</sup> But still, Forster quotes a passage from the very beginning of the book as the essential one. It is a sermon on human struggle and endurance, on preserving man's own faith, on being true to himself. »Delight is to him whose strong arms yet support him when the ship of this base treacherous world has gone down beneath him. Delight is to him who gives no quarter in truth, and kills, burns and destroys all sin though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges. Delight — top-gallant delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven.« The sermon is rather extensive and goes on, glorifying man's sacrifices to God and eternity. Forster seems to imply that the »prophecy« of *Moby Dick* is precisely what is expressed in the passage just quoted. It is human struggle, »contest«, against forces which oppress him in one way or another, which are against his conceptions of truth and life. The result of the struggle, Forster seems to imply, is not essential. It is contest that is accentuated, because during the contest man develops and becomes his true self. Now I cannot help drawing a comparison

<sup>13</sup> Lionel Trilling, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 181.

between *Moby Dick* and *The Longest Journey*. If *Moby Dick* is a contest against the evil as represented in some natural forces, *The Longest Journey* is a struggle against convention and authority, a striving to be true to one's own attitudes and ideas, however these attitudes and ideas, as well as personality as a whole, may be developing during one's life. To be able to go through life and to struggle, to save the character so that its development may be unhampered one must not be afraid of, indeed one must try to go through, reality, »experience« as Forster puts it. He is talking of experience as of »the teacup« which we must drink.

But we need not drink it always. Here is our problem and our salvation. There comes a moment — God knows when — at which we can say, 'I will experience no longer. I will create. I will be an experience'. But to do this we must be both acute and heroic. (6/7)

Looking at *The Longest Journey* in this light it is not of vital importance that Rickie failed. He took his »teacup of experience«, he struggled and did not want to remain entangled in the webs of convention and authority. It can be even questioned if Rickie failed. The new life of his brother, his spiritual and even moral transformation comes as a result of Rickie's acts, and at least a part of his life will be continued. »One thing remained that a man of his sort might do. He [Stephen] bent down reverently and saluted the child; to whom he had given the name of their mother.« (288) Through Rickie's suffering and death Stephen is saved, as much as Ishmael in *Moby Dick* is saved by the coffin made for Queequeg when he was ill but which he never occupied.

If we accept Forster's concept of prophecy, namely that »in the narrow sense of foretelling the future we have no concern«, then a certain aspect of prophecy can be found in this work, too. Contest in itself is not enough to give any »prophetic« feature, but it is certainly one of the main elements, or even a framework, within which the elements of prophecy work. Concerned with the problem of personal relationships, as he is in other works as well, Forster tries to find a solution once again. The question is whether Rickie will remain alienated from his friends and his halfbrother or whether he will find a way of spiritual communion and eventual closer relationship with them. Three elements are of importance here which Forster points out. The first one is the idea of »contest«, of conscious encounter, to drink »the teacup of experience«. Sometime or other, the moment will come when one can say »I will experience no longer. I will create. I will be an experience.« The quantity of new accumulated experience will suddenly change into a new quality of mutual understanding among people.

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But to achieve this experience only is not enough, Forster seems to imply. Rickie was helped by two factors. »The two complementary aspects of reality« as K. W. Gransden calls them are the intellectual and the physical. There is Ansell, Rickie's friend from Cambridge days, and Stephen Wonham, Rickie's half-brother. There is no Italy here as a supporting force, but there is nature, as yet unspoiled, to give strength to both Rickie and Stephen, the latter being a part of it. All three elements, taken together, contribute to a final revelation, to the state of Rickie's mind when he can acknowledge and love his brother. Rickie dies, but it is not the end of what he achieved in his life time. His half-brother remains, the inheritor of the farm, and Stephen's daughter born after Rickie's death symbolizes a rebirth of love and understanding that Rickie achieved before he died. Stephen is saved. »The spirit is fled in agony and loneliness, never to know that it bequeathed him salvation.« (288)

The crisis in personal relationships that Forster sees in the existing society, the gap that divides individuals, will be solved in the future. Conscious effort, the help of intellectual and physical nature will conspire all together towards that goal, and although the person contesting may not see any immediate result, his efforts will be rewarded and sooner or later he or his ideas, his spiritual inheritance will triumph. This is, I think, what Forster calls »prophetic« in fiction. It is not »in the narrow sense of foretelling the future«, but is certainly concerned with the future, at least with some of its aspects.

## III

*Howards End* was first published in 1910 as Forster's third novel. Already at the beginning two families are introduced to us through Helen's letters to her sister Margaret. Helen is staying with the Wilcoxes at Howards End and we anticipate that the story will be about the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels, or at least that theirs will be the most prominent role in the novel. From Helen's letters we also learn the details about Howards End and the garden surrounding it - the big wych elm being one of the most remarkable trees in the garden. Mrs. Wilcox is introduced too. We shall see that although she is not a very outstanding member of the Wilcox family, her presence is felt everywhere. Even after her death her shadow will be appearing, and its constant presence adds to the whole symbolic pattern of the novel. Helen's letter describes Mrs. Wilcox when »she came back with her hands full of the hay

that was cut yesterday«<sup>15</sup> while she is watching her through the window, and we shall see that once again Mrs. Wilcox appears with hay in her hands, also during Helen's stay at Howards End. »She approached just as Helen's letter had described her, trailing noiselessly over the lawn, and there was actually a wisp of hay in her hands.« (22) So besides being introduced to the two families, the three main symbols are introduced — hay, house and wych-elm, which will be of particular relevance and are subtly interwoven in the whole story.

The difference between the two families is made obvious very soon. Margaret and Helen as intellectuals, responsive to art, new ideas, and beauty, interested in the »inner life« of the individual, are juxtaposed with the Wilcoxes (excluding Mrs. Wilcox who stands, as it were, apart from her family), with their sound sense of business, their interest in world affairs and the »outer life« of the individual. Helen is fascinated with the atmosphere at Howards End, even with the members of the family. She becomes responsive to their ideas and even avows to herself that she will practice some of their ways of life and attitudes in future. She falls in love with Paul, the younger son of the Wilcox family, and the first (and last) love scene takes place »under the column of the vast wych-elm.« But »the truth was that she had fallen in love, not with an individual, but with a family.« (23). It was nothing more than the flash of a momentary passion, without knowing the person loved and without any spiritual kinship, which can develop through long acquaintance and mutual experience. Forster implies the inadequacy of this desire for »connection« without the proper »spiritual« basis. This is the point Forster is continuously stressing in his novels, but surely most clearly put in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *Howards End*. In any case, Helen's attachment proves a failure, and the confusion afterwards owes much to the arrival of Mrs. Munt, Helen's aunt, at Howards End. In the argument between two brothers of the Wilcox family we learn about their practical mind which cannot transcend anything of what it literally expresses. On the other hand, Mrs. Wilcox is aware that life is not so simple, she always looks at something beyond the plain facts. Asking his brother if there is any truth in Mrs. Munt's statement about their engagement, Charles says:

»Yes or no, man; plain question, plain answer. Did or didn't Miss Schlegel...« »Charles dear«, said a voice from the garden. »Charles, dear Charles, one doesn't ask plain questions. There aren't such things.« They were all silent. It was Mrs. Wilcox. (22)

<sup>15</sup> E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, Penguin Modern Classics, 1965, p. 6.

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As mentioned before, Mrs. Wilcox appears with a wisp of hay in her hands. »A wisp of hay« with which Ruth Wilcox is associated begins already here to have its symbolic meaning. It stands for individual and spiritual life, but the spiritual life that draws its strength from the past, from the ancestors and, above all, from the house and nature that surrounds it. The symbol of hay will be reiterating throughout the novel. There will be hay-fever attacking some characters in the book. All the male members of the Wilcox family suffer from hay-fever, and Tibby Schlegel as well. Henry Wilcox and his sons have been already mentioned as having no »spiritual« life, no »inner« life as Margaret so often says. Tibby is also quite different from his sisters. He is possessed of a complete lack of interest in other people, even in his sisters' affairs, and lets people and events slip by him, unable or unwilling to notice them. He does not even possess the practical mind or any sense of business of a Wilcox, and Helen is right when she says that »Tibby is too tiresome«. (5)

After the Wilcox episode Helen returns home and in conversation with Margaret there is a new and basic hint given of the character of the latter. We shall see that this is the clue to Margaret's behaviour, and one of the most important clues of the whole novel.

»The truth is that there is a great outer life that you and I have never touched — a life in which telegrams and anger count. Personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there. There love means marriage settlements, death, death duties. So far I'm clear. But here is my difficulty. This outer life, though obviously horrid, often seems the real one — there's grit in it. It does breed character. Do personal relations lead to sloppiness in the end?«

»Oh, Meg, that's what I felt, only not so clearly, when the Wilcoxes were so competent, and seemed to have their hands on all ropes.«

»Don't you feel it now?«

»I remember Paul at breakfast«, said Helen quietly. »I shall never forget him. He had nothing to fall back upon. I know that personal relations are the real life, for ever and ever.« (27)

This dialogue between Margaret and Helen is very important, because it gives us the first hints as to the characters of both sisters and their future development. It can also be learned that Margaret is not strictly confined within the limits of her intellectual circles, that she does not care only for the »inner« life, but is interested in people and happenings outside it, in the world in general. Another characteristic of Margaret that is obvious already in her early years and that Helen does not possess is to accept the world, at least sometimes, as it is, without bitterness

and exasperation. She is never easily disappointed, either in people or in their behaviour, although they often are and act in opposition to her concepts of the world and people. She »went straight ahead, and accepted an occasional failure as part of the game.« (30)

Near the beginning of the novel Forster gives a description of a concert. It is Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and the experience of Helen while listening to the music is revealed with great vividness. The concert takes place after Helen's disappointment in love with Paul Wilcox, when »she felt the same, and had seen the reliable walls of youth collapse«. (33)

... the music started with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end. Others followed him. They were not aggressive creatures; it was that that made them so terrible to Helen. They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world. After the interlude of elephants dancing, they returned and made the observation for the second time. Helen could not contradict them, for, once at all events, she had felt the same, and had seen the reliable walls of youth collapse. Panic and emptiness! Panic and emptiness! The goblins were right.« (32—33)

»Panic and emptiness« are words which re-echo throughout the novel, and they are characteristic for some characters — first of all, Helen and Leonard Bast, and they dominate Helen's reactions to the Wilcoxes.<sup>16</sup> But even if such is the case, there is no need for despair, and Helen is never desperate or pessimistic. Her attitude towards life and people is different from that of Margaret, inasmuch as she does not want, or does not try, to understand other people who have different notions about the world. Such are the Wilcoxes who may doubt Beethoven's goblins and their meaning. »And the goblins — they had not really been there at all? They were only the phantoms of cowardice and unbelief? One healthy human impulse would dispel them? Men like the Wilcoxes, or President Roosevelt, would say yes. Beethoven knew better.« (33) Beethoven knew better, and so did Forster, but in spite of Helen's better knowledge she will not give up going through the world. Once again Forster points out contest and persistence, no matter what impediments one may meet with. Describing Helen's vision at the concert Forster, as it were, sings the hymn on the importance and inevitability of contest.

For, as if things were going too far, Beethoven took hold of the goblins and made them do what he wanted. He appeared in person. He gave them a little push, and they began to walk in major key instead of in a minor, and then — he blew with his mouth and they were scattered.

<sup>16</sup> J. B. Beer, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

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Gusts of splendour, or gods and demi-gods contending with vast swords, colour and fragrance broadcast on the field of battle, magnificent victory, magnificent death! Oh, it all burst before the girl, and she even stretched out her gloved hands as if it was tangible. Any fate was titanic; any contest desirable; conqueror and conquered would alike be applauded by the angels of the utmost stars.« (33)

Helen's experience while listening to the Fifth Symphony — her vision of the world — may be compared with Forster's vision in the novel. *Howards End* is full of unexpected happenings, sudden revelations, battles and strivings — till almost the very end, where Forster gives the peculiar reconciliatory statement with which the book ends. The end of the Fifth Symphony suggests a similar end.

Beethoven chose to make all right in the end... He brought back the gusts of splendour, the heroism, the youth, the magnificence of life and death, and, amid vast roarings of a superhuman joy, he led his Fifth Symphony to its conclusion. But the goblins were there, they could return. He had said so bravely, and that is why one can trust Beethoven when he says other things. (33).

Forster gives his comment on the artist, on the »personal artist« as George H. Thompson suggests,<sup>17</sup> and he wants to stress that the vision in the Fifth Symphony is Beethoven's vision in the same way as Forster's vision in *Howards End* is his own, but we are invited into the spheres of the vision to give our judgment and participate in it. This is probably the way we can listen to the novelist's song and discern what it is about. The reason I have dwelt so long on the description of the concert is that it initiates, or rather, by it Forster initiates us into the main stream of his thought — that of contest and persistence through life, given through the vision of Helen, but supported earlier in the novel by a »discourse« on Margaret's willingness to step out of her limited »inner life« and try to understand the world and people outside it, in other words, to get to know »outer life« and, if possible, to accept it as part of the whole. Margaret will be much more conscious of her striving than Helen, who is more a representative of an ideal life, but even she will go through everything that life offers to her, as will be shown later.

Gradually we get acquainted with other characteristics, or rather the development, of Margaret's character, and with her attitudes. The Wilcox family come to stay in London, and they take a flat just opposite Wickham Place where the Schlegels live. Mrs. Munt, their aunt, causes a confusion exaggerating the »danger« for Helen, thinking that there will be more troubles for her

<sup>17</sup> George H. Thompson, »Theme and Symbol in 'Howards End'«, *MFS*, VII/1961—62, p. 230.

and her nieces. The whole situation is rather humorous, as every situation is where Mrs. Munt appears. She is thinking of the »plan of the campaign« for her nieces in order to avoid any eventual distress. In fact, Helen is upset a little, not because of her attachment to Paul Wilcox, indeed »the Wilcox nerve is dead in her really« as Margaret says, but as a consequence of Paul's and her momentary passion (her later reaction of hate is inverted passion),<sup>18</sup> which will later turn into the devotion to Leonard Bast. Margaret is against any plans, any preparations to keep apart from the Wilcoxes. In her conversation with Mrs. Munt Margaret has a vague notion that one must not have fixed ideas about people and situations — indeed such ideas can impede one's experience and even joy of life.

Her thought drew being from the obscure borderland. She could not explain 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. (57—58)

During the same dialogue Margaret reveals that she is conscious of the importance of money to maintain one's social position — money that is not thought much about by the people who possess it. But the very fact that she recognizes the difference between the rich and the poor, and that she is willing to talk about it adds a new dimension to her character — and once again a new hint of the difference between the two sisters is given. Helen never talks of money, except when, rather late, she tries to give an amount of money to Leonard Bast hoping she can help in that way, but without success. »You and I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence«. (58) Margaret tells her aunt telling us at the same time that she does not forget its existence. That is what will help her later to understand Henry Wilcox, who is an epitome of the money-making class that enables her to keep the position in society she has and to maintain various interests in it. She will declare later, after her long acquaintanceship with Henry: »More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it.« (164)

Margaret's connection with Ruth Wilcox adds another dimension to her character, as well as to the novel. Mrs. Wilcox is often referred to as a romantic figure whose significance in the novel

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

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cannot be fully explained. Her existence and her life are short, and her death, rather sudden and mysterious, is also a part of her fuller meaning in the whole complex of the book. Mrs. Wilcox's »informal« will is that her house, Howards End, should go to Margaret Schlegel, and that is what her family can neither understand nor accept. Her whole being is represented as deeply rooted in the past, in her ancestors, in the house and the English countryside. She is quite aware of the lack of the »spiritual« insight on the side of her family, but at the same time able to recognize in Margaret her »spiritual« heir. Only in Margaret, not in Helen, whose eventual match with her son she was very much against. Yet, the Wilcoxes cannot allow Howards End to go to the hands of an outsider, and they muddle the whole thing trying to justify their attitude to themselves. But in this attitude we can discern a difference between Henry Wilcox and the rest of the family. While his children put all the blame on Margaret, thinking she is depriving them of their rights, Henry defends her and tells them not to be hard on her.

You are all a bit hard on Miss Schlegel... She has been officious and tiresome during this terrible week, and we have all suffered under her, but upon my soul she's honest... Take all in all, she has not come out of it badly. (95—96)

Although Howards End will not go to Margaret, at least not until the very end of the novel, some of Mrs. Wilcox's virtues, as Forster thinks of them, will pass to Margaret, and they will be obvious especially during Margaret's visit to Howards End. At the same time, Henry Wilcox will find them, gradually, in Margaret, and in this sense she represents a sort of continuity of Mrs. Wilcox and everything that she stood for in her lifetime, though with new and wider aspects in Margaret's character. The similarities between the two characters and their mutual appeal and understanding as well as the continuity of their course in life are pointed out in Margaret's — (Forster's) reflections on the life of the late Mrs. Wilcox.

Her withdrawal had hinted at other things besides disease and pain. Some leave our life with tears, others with insane frigidity; Mrs. Wilcox had taken the middle course, which only rare natures can pursue. She had kept proportion. She had told a little of her grim secret to her friends, but not too much; she had shut up her heart — almost, but not entirely. It is thus, if there is any rule, that we ought to die — neither as victim nor as fanatic, but as the seafarer who can greet with an equal eye the deep that he is entering, and the shore that he must leave. (97)

»She had kept proportion« is what especially appeals to Margaret, and this may be taken as the credo of her life. She will pursue this credo and try to keep the proportion, with more or less success, throughout her life, the main proportion being that between the »inner« and the »outer« life.

She saw a little more clearly than hitherto what a human being is, and to what he may aspire. True relationships gleamed. Perhaps the last word would be hope — hope even on this side of the grave. (98)

Once again, Forster points to the idea of the importance of personal relationship and conscious efforts to achieve it. Margaret's will be a constant desire and effort to come to this goal, and hope will never be lost — no great hope, but still one that will be a constant companion to her efforts to understand and accept. The same attitude will lead Margaret towards the desire to reconcile the two kinds of life. She tries to persuade her sister to do the same.

'Don't brood too much', she wrote to Helen, 'on the superiority of the unseen to the seen. It's true, but to brood on it is medieval. Our business is not to contrast the two, but to reconcile them'. (98)

And in order to be able to aim at reconciliation one has to be free of prejudices and various preoccupations. Experience must be allowed to develop, and it can be developed if one is responsive to what is happening around him. That is why »Margaret hoped that for the future she would be less cautious, not more cautious, than she had been in the past«. (102)

Margaret's character has been sufficiently defined so as not to surprise anybody when she accepts Henry Wilcox's marriage proposal. She is prepared to understand, indeed to accept his ideas and everything he stands for.

Some day — in the millennium — there may be no need for his type. At present, homage is due to it from those who think themselves superior, and who possibly are. (152)

Besides, Margaret has been attracted by the Wilcox masculinity as Helen was before her, but Margaret's attitude to Henry Wilcox has been much less romanite that that of Helen. The proposal takes place while Henry is showing his flat to Margaret who is to rent it, at the moment when Margaret is thinking of Mrs. Wilcox and her drawing room at Howards End. She does not love him yet, but »the idea that Mr. Wilcox loved, obsessed her before she came to love him in return« (156), and at that moment she starts loving him, as she says later to her sister.

In spite of her sister's warnings and opposition, Margaret defends Henry Wilcox and decides to marry him. She is well aware of all his faults, but she believes, at the same time, that she can help him

to the building of the rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion. Without it we are meaningless fragments, half monks, half beasts, unconnected arches that have never joined into a man. With it love is born, and alights on the highest curve, glowing against the grey, sober against the fire. (174)

This is the first time that we touch upon the point of »connection«. Forster surely means two kinds of connection; one is that within an individual, and the other between two individuals. The best example of an individual who needs to connect »the monk and the beast« within himself is Henry Wilcox, and Margaret hopes she will succeed in building the bridge between the two. Henry has a belief that bodily passion is bad, but still he cannot get over it, as we can see later on in his relation with the present Mrs. Bast. His belief was strengthened by religion.

The words that were read aloud on Sunday to him and to other respectable men were the words that had once kindled the souls of St. Catherine and St. Francis into a white-hot hatred of the carnal. He would not be as the saints and love the Infimite with a seraphic ardour, but he could be a little ashamed of loving a wife. (174)

Margaret is convinced that she will succeed in her endeavours to change her future husband's beliefs and attitudes, as she herself believes that every human being possesses a seed which needs favourable circumstances to be fully developed. And that is how Margaret comes to »sing her hymn« on »connection« between the two qualities in the individual and between two individuals.

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. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die. (174—175)

Margaret will be helped by nature to bridge the gap between her and Henry Wilcox in the way as nature had a special benevolent influence on Rickie in *The Longest Journey*, helping him in establishing normal human relations with his half-brother. But this is not enough to explain Margaret's strong belief in the importance and possibility of »connection«. The nature of this »connection« is difficult to pin down and explain. We may say that »to love« has a correlation with »to connect« and that the two things act together — that love can join »the beast and the monk«, and connect two individuals. J. McConkey points out that »nature and imagination, then, constitute a base which offers Forster in

this novel [*Howards End*] as Wordsworth before him, a sense of the connection between men and a belief in a spiritual reality.<sup>19</sup> Never does Forster explain what this spiritual reality is and how it is to be achieved. He mentions this subject in »Salute to the Orient« while writing about *The House of Islam*. Forster quotes a passage from that book: »The goal of life is surely not communion with a fellow-creature. That search must end in disappointment always. The soul of every living man and woman is solitary from the cradle to the grave unless it finds, by service, that communion with Allah for which, in truth, it was created. When that is found it is at one with all the other servants of Allah, but not before.«<sup>20</sup>

The essay was written in 1923, long after *Howards End* had been published, but it shows Forster's continual preoccupation with this theme. He points out the improbability of his countrymen's being able to have the same attitude toward God. »We cannot translate Shems-ud-din into an Anglican man who retires to his country parish; the latter, though equally a saint, would develop differently, because to him God would be fundamentally Love.«<sup>21</sup> So only through love can one achieve communion, »connection« with one's fellow-creatures, or through Love as Forster puts it. Still, how love is to be achieved he never explicitly says. The whole behaviour of Margaret shows what kind of love Forster implies — it is love that transcends the love between man and woman, love that can be achieved with efforts, goodwill, understanding and help. Another comparison with the previously quoted passage might be of relevance. Forster never speaks of God and of man's communion with him, but there are passages where Forster stresses the near omnipotence of nature and its beauty, and implicitly man's communion with it — and sometimes nature assumes such proportions as to be easily compared with God's — at the same time having some metaphysical qualities, often inexplicable. Still, love for, and communion with, nature seems to be pointed out as an essential for gaining communion with other people. This is exactly Margaret's feeling after visiting *Howards End*.

She recaptures the sense of space, which is the basis of all earthly beauty, and, starting from *Howards End*, she attempted to realize England. She failed — visions do not come when we try, though they may come through trying. But an unexpected love of the island awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joy of the flesh, on that with the inconceivable. (191)

<sup>19</sup> James McConkey, *The Novels of E. M. Forster*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1958, p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> E. M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest*, Penguin Books, 1967, p. 291.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

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There is even a broader vision for Margaret on beholding the landscape around Howards End and the house itself, which

transcends the similes of sex... they kept within limits of the human. Their message was not of eternity, but of hope on this side of the grave. As she stood in the one, gazing at the other, truer relationship had gleamed. (192—3)

Once again, the true and deep communion with nature is stressed as a means of transcending all the barriers among sexes and people in general. Margaret's feelings are even intensified after visiting Oniton, another place in the country, where she tries to communicate with the past and the people of the past. »Saxon or Kelt« she exclaims, wandering around and imagining figures and sounds in the garden. This theme has been reiterated to almost the very end of the novel, but each time with a new force and new significance. Forster is interested in musical patterns, and there is no doubt that he employs such a pattern here — because the descriptin changes from slow andante to evergrowing crescendo, in describing Margaret's feelings on her second visit to Howards End.

In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole, group in one vision its transitoriness and its eternal youth, connect — connect without bitterness until all men are brothers. (250)

Towards the end of novel the symbols we encountered at the beginning appear again — gradually and with ever growing significance, while the »discursive« elements become less and less frequent. We learn from the dialogue between Miss Avery and Margaret of the hay-fever the male Wilcoxes have been suffering from.

He [Charles] has it from his father, with other things. There's not one Wilcox that can stand against a field in June. (255)

says Miss Avery. The house appears again — Howards End and all its surroundings, and there Margaret meets her sister where they both decide to spend a night. It is furnished now with their furniture and they feel that the house belongs to them — and the importance of house as a family link and as a link with the past is stressed. This link helps in establishing again a normal relationship between the two sisters — the relationship of love and understanding. But at the same time Margaret must admit her failure in the efforts made towards her husband to make him capable of connecting. Henry cannot understand the new feelings between

the sisters and does not allow them to sleep at Howards End -- and at that moment Margaret recognizes her failure.

...you cannot connect. I've had enough of your unweeded kindness. I've spoilt you long enough. All your life you have been spoiled. (287)

The tree is introduced again — and significantly the sisters sleep under it. As a symbol of life, it will be continuously there — as it was there when Helen kissed Paul Wilcox, an event which has had a »medicinal« effect on her life, the same as »pigs' teeth« had on the tree. She has had her life's journey, and, she says

I shan't ever like your Henry, dearest Meg, or even speak kindly about him, but all that blinding hate is over. I shall never rave against Wilcoxes any more. (292)

In spite of her failure, and after the turmoil caused by Leonard's death at Howards End, Margaret remains her true self and never gives up, not even after the disappointment with her husband.

There was beauty and adventure behind, such as man at her feet had yearned for; there was hope this side of the grave; there were truer relationships beyond the limits that fetter us now. (307)

She accepts her husband again, life as it is, everything around her, and advises Helen to do the same.

'Don't fret yourself, Helen. Develop what you have; love your child... Don't you see that all this leads to comfort in the end? It is part of the battle against sameness'. (314)

Towards the end the hay appears again -- this time in Helen's hands »'Is it sweetening yet?' asked Margaret. 'No, only withered'. 'It will sweeten tomorrow'«. Once again the importance of experience is pointed, of spiritual development through experience, to come to the final realization of life and humanity. The same thing suggests that, through all experience and endeavours to understand »outer life« it is »inner life« that wins. The final exclamation of Helen testifies to this point. »'The field's cut!' Helen cried excitedly — 'the big meadow. We've seen to the very end and it'll be such a crop of hay as never!'« (319) Still, it might be wrong to assume that Forster wants to say that the future is to be entrusted to the people with developed imagination and contemplation only. In fact, the point stressed is that these qualities (inner life) should be connected with the outer life of action. So in this respect it is different from *The Longest Journey* where the future lies in hands of Stephen Wonham, a »man of nature« only, while in *Howards End* the importance and saving power of nature is stressed for

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persons of intellect, gifted with intuition and concern with society. Margaret may not be completely happy in her achievement, but we can agree with Helen that »her life has been heroic.« (315) *Howards End* remains hers, and it will pass to Helen's child who, we are left to believe, will have Margaret's characteristics and continue her line of life.

Human relations are once again in this novel the main preoccupation of Forster. How to solve them, how to achieve the communion between two individuals, between »inner« and »outer« life is again his main concern. The Schlegels as representatives of the »inner life« and values that are embedded in such a life pursue their ideal throughout the novel. Margaret, however, differs from her sister in that she is prepared to modify her ideas as the circumstances sometimes require. But basically her ideals remain the same — although she endeavours to achieve a communion between her and Henry Wilcox, she herself has not much changed, except that she has realized the importance of action and conscious efforts. In fact, she has not changed her opinion about the importance of the »inner« life, and at the end it is precisely that life that triumphs and that will, in spite of the present failures, continue to play an important role in the future. Because the sisters, with their consistency in pursuing the ideals of the »inner« life, attain the »universal«, we are left to believe that the world will be left to them or more likely to Helen's daughter. The emphasis on the »inner« life is, I think, what constitutes the »prophetic song« of the novel. It can be said again that no future has been foretold, but then, Forster himself says that he has no concern with the prophecy »in the narrow sense of foretelling the future«, although the future cannot be excluded. But in pursuing, indeed being preoccupied with, the idea of the importance and victory of the »inner«, spiritual life, Forster is sometimes guilty of the same fault for which he criticizes Henry James when he says that »most of human life has to disappear before he can do us a novel.«<sup>22</sup> Forster is thinking of sacrifices James sometimes makes in his books, so that he can meet the requirements of pattern and rhythm. All the characters in *Howards End*, except the Schlegels, i. e. everybody who »cannot or will not sing to their tune« come »to death or moral destruction.«<sup>23</sup> If »moral destruction« is perhaps too strong an expression, the truth is that nobody who remains at the end of the book has any deeper significance — everybody retires into a remoteness and the world is left to the two sisters. But once again, Forster seems to be conscious that this can happen

<sup>22</sup> E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 205.

<sup>23</sup> Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain*, OUP, 1966, p. 275.

in a »prophetic« book. He says, »How will song combine with the furniture of common sense? we shall ask ourselves, and shall have to answer 'not too well': the singer does not always have room for his gestures, the table and chairs get broken, and the novel through which bardic influence has passed often has a wrecked air, . . .«<sup>24</sup> *Howards End* has not got a »wrecked air«, but the above example shows that the »song«, or the pursuit of the author's insistence on what he wants to convey can have a disadvantageous consequence on the book as a whole.

## IV

Still, if we think of »prophecy« in the usual, traditional sense of the word we may be disappointed to see how little of Forster's concept of the word is comprised within our notion of it. Although Forster himself says that »with prophecy in the narrow sense of foretelling the future we have no concern« it is difficult to think of prophecy without thinking of the future at the same time. But one important fact can be stressed, which is characteristic for the novels analyzed here. The problem of personal relationships can and will be solved in the future, and the famous hymn of Margaret Schlegel in *Howards End* »only connect« will come true. This is what all his novels have in common, with more or less emphasis and »undercurrent«. Human being will be helped either by aesthetic experience in special surroundings and supported by the influence of the purely physical nature (like in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*), or by intellectual and physical combined with the supporting power of nature (like in *The Longest Journey*), or by the power of nature combined with strong and conscious effort to understand, and establish spiritual communion with other individuals (as in *Howards End*). There is also another aspect — that of the individual hero. If we accept the statement about the difference between the tragic and the prophetic hero then we also may come to a certain point of prophecy in Forster's opus. »The tragic hero accepts the reality of the world of appearance and comes to terms with it. The prophetic hero, however, is essentially romantic: he wants to transcend the world of appearance and expects fulfillment not in his own epoch, but in a distant millenium.«<sup>25</sup> I am particularly thinking of the characters of Margaret and Rickie. While it cannot be said that Margaret does not expect fulfillment in her own epoch, there is still a wider suggestion in »only connect, until all men

<sup>24</sup> E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 161.

<sup>25</sup> Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain*, p. 191.

are brothers« — because it is impossible to attain all that in a short period of time. Rickie is another example of a »prophetic« hero, in that he only partly succeeds in evoking love from his brother during his life-time, but we are left to believe that his death has awakened sincere and deep love in his brother, and that he sacrificed his life so that the people of the future can love one another. Through Rickie's death Stephen becomes what he is and the future will be entrusted to him. »He was alive and had created life. By whose authority? Though he could not phrase it, he believed that he guided the future of our race, and that, century after century, his thoughts and his passions would triumph in England.«<sup>28</sup>

I. Mardešić: ASPEKT »PROROČANSTVA« U ROMANIMA  
NAJDUŽE PUTOVANJE I HOWARDS END E. M. FORSTERA

Sažetak

Iako je Forsterov prvi roman objavljen 1905, njegova djela nisu bila zapažena sve do kasnih dvadesetih godina, jer se smatralo da Forster ne predstavlja ništa novo u razvoju engleskog romana. Tek je članak I. A. Richardsa, objavljen 1927, »A Passage to Forster: Reflections on a Novelist« ukazao na nove tendencije u njegovim djelima, a u novije se doba sve češće ističe njegova povezanost s tzv. Bloomsbury grupom. Osobito se posljednjih godina ističe njegovo najvažnije djelo iz područja književne kritike, *Aspects of the Novel*, koji je izdan 1927. Novi smjenovi književne kritike ističu važnost nekih Forsterovih postulata u ovom djelu, što se osobito odnosi na tzv. novu kritiku s njezinim naglaskom na poetske ili simboličke vrijednosti. Jedan aspekt iz toga djela, »proročanstvo«, autor primjenjuje u analizi Forsterovih romana *Najduže putovanje* i *Howards End*. On dolazi do zaključka da je glavna Forsterova preokupacija u ovim djelima problem ljudskih odnosa i načina kako se oni mogu uskladiti. Forster, iz čijih romana zrači veliki humanizam, smatra da će otuđenost među ljudima biti pobijedena intelektualnom i fizičkom snagom uz pomoć prirode (*Najduže putovanje*), ili snagom prirode kombiniranom snažnim i svjesnim naporima da se uspostavi duhovna veza među pojedincima. Iako se dakle u Forsterovoj koncepciji »proročanstva« ne radi o predviđanju budućnosti u doslovnom smislu, ono ni u kojem slučaju nije isključeno.

<sup>28</sup> E. M. Forster, *The Longest Journey*, p. 288.