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MARGINALLY MALE: RE-CENTERING EFFEMINATE MALE CHARACTERS IN E. M. FORSTER'S *A ROOM WITH A VIEW* AND *HOWARDS END*

by

DAMION CLARK

Under the Direction of LeeAnne Richardson

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I argue that understanding Forster's effeminate male characters is central to understanding the novels that they appear in. Tibby in *Howards End* and Cecil in *A Room with a View* are often viewed as inconsequential figures that provide comic relief and inspire pity. But if, instead of keeping them at the margins, readers put Tibby and Cecil in direct contact and conflict with the dominant themes of gender identity, gendered power structures, and gender equality in these novels, these characters develop a deeper significance that details the *fin de siècle*'s ever-changing attitudes regarding prescribed gender roles for both men and women. Indeed, by examining Forster's feminized male characters, one can chart the development of these roles in both the larger world and Forster's prescription for gender evolution in his novels.

INDEX WORDS: E. M. Forster, Effeminate Male, Gender, A Room with a View, Howards End, Homosocial, Edwardian, Masculinity, British, England.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster writes about the process of creating characters and thus provides the reader with a valuable guide to understanding how character operates in his fiction: "They do not come … coldly to his [the author's] mind, they may be created in delirious excitement; still, their nature is conditioned by what he guesses about other people, and about himself, and is further modified by the other aspects of his work" (44). His characters are influenced by people that he came into contact with, by his own ideas of human nature and behavior, and, most important, by other elements of his novels. This thesis focuses closely on this last aspect, how Forster's characters relate to the themes, plots, and identities at work in his fiction. Moreover, these relational patterns cannot be separated from each other. Forster's patterns are so intricately crafted that the reader must not examine parts as parts, but rather parts in relation to the whole. This is a crucial distinction, for in this thesis I argue that understanding Forster's effeminate male characters is central to understanding the novels that they appear in.

Yet Forster does not examine male effeminacy in a vacuum. Indeed, his exploration of the effeminate male occurs in concert with detailed critiques of other gender identities, thus revealing the reinforcing interplay that gender identities have on each other. As a member of the Bloomsbury group, Forster was closely associated with other authors who dealt specifically with questions of gender identity. One can see this questioning at work in the short fiction of Katherine Mansfield, the critical writings and novels of Virginia Woolf, and the essays of Lytton

Strachey. In "He, She, and It," Strachey humorously comments on the current state of gender fluidity in a dialogue between He and She:

> He: …Couldn't you – it would make discussion so much easier – think of me for a minute or two as a woman?
>
> She: It would be delightful. But if I do, wouldn't it be the right thing for *you* to imagine *me* to be a man? (94)

Granted, Strachey's approach to the subject is comical, but this does not negate the timeliness of the issue for the Edwardians, for while identity issues were chief concerns for the writers of the Edwardian period, questions about the construction and deconstruction of established gender identities were paramount. Strachey reflects just one aspect of the gender question; one which takes a "delightful" approach. Further, he portrays this approach to gender fluidity as a simple task that requires none of the stress and anxiety that his peers seem to believe necessary and normal. Indeed, for Strachey, this playful approach to gender inversion makes communication between the genders easier, for if a man approaches a conversation with a woman from the perspective of a woman, and if a woman enters into conversation with a man from the perspective of a man, it is not only the "right thing to do," but, this shift in perspective allows for more understanding between the genders. Forster, however, takes a much more serious approach to questions of gender identity. The role of the individual in society and society's impact on the individual form the dominant themes of Forster's writings; these themes include detailed examinations of the individual's relationship to cultural gender norms.

The scholarship on Forster's novels most often views gender issues in light of how Forster's female characters either conform to or deviate from established gender norms. Unfortunately, these critics have paid little attention to Forster's male characters, and almost

none to Forster's effeminate male characters. This critical omission stems largely from the still prevailing cultural taboo regarding male effeminacy. If scholars discuss the topic at all, it is usually either to dismiss its importance or to use it as a path to another topic, like homosexuality. Rarely does a critic seek to examine effeminacy as relating to a serious discussion of gender, with the notable exception of Alan Sinfield. In his book *The Wilde Century*, Sinfield argues that "Effeminacy is founded in misogyny. Certain manners and behaviors are stigmatized by associating them with 'the feminine' – which is perceived as weak, ineffectual and unsuited for the world of affairs" (26). He further claims that effeminacy "is a way of stigmatizing deviation from proper manly and womanly stereotypes. The effeminate male is (1) 'wrong' and (2) inferior (female). The 'masculine' woman, conversely, is (1) 'wrong' and (2) impertinent (aspiring to manliness). The function of effeminacy, as a concept, is to police sexual categories, keeping them pure" (26). And, on one level, this is how effeminacy works in Forster's novels: By interpreting the effeminate male as "wrong" and "inferior," the "normal" characters in Forster's novels reveal the cultural attitudes towards those "men" who deviate from their established gender role. Yet Forster does not begin and end with this approach to effeminacy, for his narrators reveal depths and complexities that "deviancy" alone cannot address, and the effeminate male character himself reveals his sensitivity to the social world he inhabits and his unique position to affect change in that world. Moreover, Forster combines these two perspectives to examine the possibility of discovering a path that leads to the evolution of acceptable gender identities that will not only work for the individual, but will also work for the greater good. For Forster, the potential blending of two genders into one represents an ideal to strive for, one that will lead to equality, understanding, and, ultimately, to acceptance of the "natural" self.

Caught between the end of the Victorian era and the start of World War I, the Edwardian period is defined by its state of flux. It is an era searching for an identity in a culture that has broken ties with the past yet is uncertain about the future[1]. Issues of class, gender, sexuality, economy, and psychology became paramount as they reflected the insecurity and instability that comes with the combined ending and beginning of a centurial shift. Elaine Showalter notes this in her period-defining work, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. As her primary focus in this work is the transformation of sexual and gender identities at the turn of the twentieth century in England, she evaluates these mutations across gendered lines. "The nineteenth century," writes Showalter "had cherished a belief in the separate spheres of femininity and masculinity that amounted almost to religious faith" (8). However, these "separate spheres" soon began to break down, and, as Showalter notes, this "process of upheaval" threw men and women into a state of crisis: "Gender crisis affected men as well as women, and the fantasies of a pitched battle for sexual supremacy typical of the period often concealed deeper uncertainties and contradictions on both sides" (8). This redrawing of traditional gender boundaries revealed that gender did not exist in fixed positions, rather it existed on a fluid continuum. Thus, men and women began to question where they fit on this line. "Where, men asked themselves, were they placed on the scale of masculinity? Were they dangerously close to the borderline?" (Showalter 9). I argue in this thesis that the careful reader can find a proposed

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[1] In her "Introduction" to *Sexual Anarchy*, Elaine Showalter writes, "The crises of the *fin de siècle* then, are more intensely experienced, more emotionally fraught, more weighted with symbolic and historical meaning, because we invest them with the metaphors of death and rebirth that we project onto the final decades and years of a century" (2). Here, Showalter refers to the overall project of her book as it ties the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. What she leaves out of this discussion is the equally uncertain beginning decades and years of the new century. I argue here that the anxiety of the "rebirth" of the new century is just as emotionally fraught, and, just as heavily weighted as the anxiety of the "death" of the old century.

solution for these questions of gender anxiety by examining the effeminate male characters in two novels by Forster, *A Room with a View* and *Howards End*.

In order fully to examine these issues, I find it important to look at how male gender identities work in relation to the patriarchal male homosocial continuum as analyzed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her influential work, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. In this text, Sedgwick argues "that the emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetro- and homosexuality was in an intimate and shifting relation to class; and that no element of that pattern can be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole" (1). This is an especially appropriate reminder when discussing the role of the effeminate male in English literature, for the effeminate male, in one sense, operates on both sides of the gender system. In Forster's imagining, he strives to equalize the gendered power structure through incorporating the positive aspects of both normative genders. Yet he is also deeply imbedded in the homosocial continuum because "real men" tend to view him as weak and inferior – and therefore a woman and a traitor to his sex. They also use him to further assert their own sense of maleness and dominance over the feminine characters in the novels.

Nancy McCampbell Grace sagely points out that

> The feminized male in twentieth-century American and British literature has not been fully acknowledged and treated as a distinctly significant literary phenomenon. However, his presence is critical to the overall development and understanding of the novels in which he appears as well as to an on-going analysis of men and women in literature. (4)

If the feminized male is integral to understanding the novels that he appears in, then Cecil Vyse in *A Room with a View* and Tibby Schlegel in *Howards End* cannot be the minor, inconsequential characters that many scholars make them out to be. In fact, for Forster, these two unmanly men, in relation to each other, represent an evolution of the ideal "new male" as he might function in educated upper-middle-class society (the realm that exerts the most influence in Forster's novels). Forster's commentary on masculinity and effeminacy develops and evolves through the cultural changes between the 1890s and the beginning of the First World War, and he journeys from the decline of the aesthetic decadent (Cecil) to the blending ideal (Tibby).

Tibby in *Howards End* and Cecil in *A Room with a View* are often viewed as inconsequential figures that provide comic relief and inspire pity. But if, instead of keeping them at the margins, readers put Tibby and Cecil in direct contact and conflict with the dominant themes of gender identity, gendered power structures, and gender equality in these novels, these characters develop a deeper significance that details the *fin de siècle*'s ever-changing attitudes regarding prescribed gender roles for both men and women. Indeed, by examining Forster's feminized male characters, one can chart the development of these roles in both the larger world and Forster's prescription for gender evolution in his novels.

Few scholars have paid attention to the character of the feminized male in British and American literature. A prime example of the reductive nature of the criticism that does exist can be seen in Joseph Bristow's *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885*. In this work, Bristow reduces effeminacy in Forster's novels to a tool to express homosexual desire. To be sure, homosexual desire can find expression through effeminacy in Forster's fiction; but limiting a discussion of gender to one aspect of the homosocial continuum ignores both the complexity of Forster's gendered arguments as well as his multi-faceted cultural narratives. Forster does not,

after all, write only about gender and homosexuality[2], and to suggest that his inclusion of male effeminacy has one sole purpose ignores the imbedded commentary the effeminate male characters make on class, education, travel, imperialism, and the urban/ rural divide.

An examination of the prevailing criticism of *Howards End* offers a glimpse into how the effeminate male's absence from most criticism actually undermines the critic's claims. Several critics have noted that E. M. Forster's fourth novel, *Howards End*, examines the role of the individual in a society that is insecure in its state of flux. Parminder Kaur Bakshi writes, "In *Howards End*, Forster broadened the scope of his novels from domestic comedy to social and political issues" (180). Claude J. Summers observes that "it concretely embodies the tensions and conflicts of that superficially placid age [….] *Howards End* is especially distinguished by its mature exploration of the role of the individual in society" (105). Indeed, most critics seem to work from these assumptions, and this thesis does not seek to overturn them. Rather, what intrigues me about the bulk of the scholarship on this novel is a certain glaring omission. How is it that so many scholars agree that *Howards End* is a novel that explores "the role of the individual in society" and deals with "social and political issues," and still manage virtually to ignore a character that uniquely personifies a crisis in individual and social identity? The Schlegel sisters' brother Tibby is just such a character in that Forster's narrator, along with Margaret and Helen, describes Tibby in conflicting gendered terms. Yet he receives only a scant mention here and there in the rather large body of scholarship on this novel. Furthermore, these few brief mentions of Tibby never treat him as representative of any substantial critique of Edwardian culture; he is merely the sickly, decadent, or effeminate brother. This is an

[2] In fact, Forster's overtly homosexual texts were, by necessity, covert. *Maurice*, for example, was not published in his lifetime.

unfortunate neglect of a character that can offer a great deal of insight into the fluctuating nature of gender identity.

What does Tibby, as the feminized male character, represent during this period, and why is he dismissed from the evaluations of gender identity construction? Tibby, as the more minor character of the two examined in this thesis, is more often neglected by critics, and to some degree, understandably so: he is barely present in the novel, and, when he is present, he tends to be an object of ridicule and burden, he is sickly, weak, ineffectual, deft at making tea, and educated; the story does not revolve around him. Yet when one looks at Tibby through the lens of Forster's mantra "only connect," Tibby takes on a more central role in the novel. While the feminine Schlegels and the masculine Wilcoxes battle for gendered cultural dominance in *Howards End*, Tibby is the one character in the novel that most fully connects the feminine and the masculine in one body. In many ways, Tibby becomes the ideal.

The criticism of *A Room with a View* offers similarly neglectful interpretations of the effeminate male. If one were to believe the critics, *A Room with a View* is a light comedy that serves double duty as a travel narrative and a young girl's coming of age tale. I will argue that by re-centering Cecil Vyse in *A Room with a View*, the comedy becomes a tragic tale of loss and loneliness that nevertheless embodies hope for a gendered evolution. Cecil is *almost* everything that a man in the late Victorian period should be. He is rich, he is educated, and he is "artistic" in his style of dress and life. He is also a bit behind the times, and, therefore, he finds himself excluded from everyone's fun. The women do not want him around because he is too stuffy and cold, and this persona is in direct conflict with the novel's ideal of a real man who is brazen, spontaneous, playful, and emotional. The men in the novel do not want Cecil around because he is too shockable, like the women, thus, he is not invited by the real men to go bathing with them.

And, ultimately, Lucy rejects him because he is not the sort of man that one marries. In a novel that is “supposed” to be a comedy (everyone is happy and/ or married at the end) Cecil is alone. What does this treatment of the decadent/ aesthetic male say about what the culture of the early twentieth century desires a man to be? Where is Forster in his gendered evolution? By examining the effeminate characters of Cecil Vyse and Tibby Schlegel in concert with each other, I will show that Forster intends his readers to view these marginal men as central to the project of gender equality, for with them Forster reveals a possible evolutionary pattern for a “new man.” This “new man” is sensitive enough to see the humanity of women, secure enough to trust women to make the right decisions for their own lives, and, because he is an educated member of the upper middle class, in a position to ensure that this cultural shift towards gender equality becomes reality.

CHAPTER 2

CECIL VYSE: THE DOWNFALL OF THE DECADENT IN *A ROOM WITH A VIEW*

On its surface, *A Room with a View* is, as most Forster scholars agree, a romantic comedy in the tradition of Jane Austen, in which a young girl comes of age and marries the "right" man. Yet this description oversimplifies the novel, as all of Forster's work embodies complex evaluations of society and its impact on the individual. And since the "individual" is the dominant subject of Forster's work, it is inappropriate to suggest that the protagonist is the sole focus of any Forster novel. This focus on individualism in Forster's fiction forces the reader to withhold generalizing statements like, "*A Room with a View* is about Lucy's self-discovery and journey toward marriage," for the novel may simultaneously be about Miss Bartlett's manipulation of those around her for the purpose of surviving middle-class spinsterhood, Freddy Honeychurch's search for place as the lone male in a house governed by women, George Emerson's rejection of societal norms in his attempt to view everyone as an equal, or Cecil Vyse's dated and narrow notions of acceptable gender roles and their interplay. Yet it is also a mistake to dismiss the central plot of the novel, no matter how sentimental it may seem, for it may hold the key to understanding how the journeys of the individual characters come into contact/conflict with the society at large. Thus, a reading of *A Room with a View* should focus on the love triangle between Lucy, George, and Cecil, but it must allow for movement in the triangle. For the purposes of this chapter, I will argue for a repositioning of the triangle that places Cecil at the focal point. By doing so, I hope to reveal Forster's critique of the late-Victorian aesthetic male as a failed and dated attempt at masculine gender evolution, a holdover

that is incompatible with the evolution of femininity in early twentieth-century Britain. In *A Room with a View*, Forster suggests that the key to the evolution of both genders is to focus on the natural rather than the artificial.

Described as "aesthetic and rather priggish" by Glen Cavaliero (94) and prudish by Forster's narrator (107), Cecil Vyse is the picture of the socially acceptable late nineteenth-century effeminate male. What makes him acceptable in the eyes of the late Victorians are his prudishness, his connections, his money, and his education. Unfortunately for Mr Vyse, however, he does not live in the late nineteenth century; rather he exists in the early twentieth century where his aesthetic aloofness, fastidiousness, and indeed every aspect of his persona is on its way out of fashion. In its place arises a new interpretation of the desirable male, a man who is natural, spontaneous, passionate, and sees woman as his equal. The decadent aesthetic male, as represented by Cecil, is a poseur who basks in leisure, artifice, and reserve; he does not see women as equals, or even as human; to him women are works of art. Furthermore, it seems as if this shift in acceptable "maleness" stems not only from the desires of the "new woman" to be treated as an equal human companion, but also from the middle-class male's desire to reassert his place as the true interpretation of the masculine gender role. In her book, *The Perfect Gentleman: Masculine Control in Victorian Men's Fiction, 1870-1901*, Karen Volland Waters correctly argues that "the Decadents were punished by middle-class heterogeneous male society for their insurrection, and the ideology of the gentleman was used as a means of marginalizing Decadents and defusing their disruptive potential" (119). Yet, while Waters acknowledges the gendered cultural shift brought about by the "middle-class heterogeneous male society" and its aim to marginalize the "Decadent" male, she seems to imply that this transition is the work of

other men solely. She does not take into consideration the impact of the "new woman's" movement on the shift in acceptable male gender roles.

Forster, however, strikes a more balanced approach to this shift in male gender norms, and he does so in *A Room with a View* by presenting a variety of male types, examining their interaction with each other, and evaluating their acceptability and desirability through the novel's female characters, paying special attention to the differences that generation and class play in these women's notions of masculine desirability. The argument that *A Room with a View* is a female-driven novel is not new. As Cavaliero writes in his text *A Reading of E. M. Forster*, "One notable feature of the book is the strongly feminine atmosphere: Lucy and her mother, Charlotte Bartlett (perhaps Forster's greatest comic creation), the Miss Alans, Miss Lavish, Minnie Beebe – they pervade the book" (94). He goes further in his argument to say that "even Cecil and Mr Beebe, the (at first) friendly clergyman, seem to belong to this world rather than to the one normally associated with men" (94). But with this last comment, Cavaliero misses the complexity of Forster's gendered structure. While it is true that Cecil and Mr Beebe are more at home in the world of women than they are in the world of men, Forster draws a very distinct line between these two worlds, and the effeminate male characters of Cecil and Mr Beebe do not fit in either of these gendered spheres. Indeed, they occupy a social third world that does not know quite what to do with them. As a result, the end of the novel portrays them as somewhat bitter, dissatisfied, and alone.

Joseph Bristow, one of the few critics to attempt an examination of the different masculinities in Forster's work, writes that "It does not take long for the novel to compare and contrast its two differing types of men" (72). Yet Bristow races to over-generalize the role of the effeminate male in Forster's fiction by reducing him to an easily interpreted stock character for

whom Forster has no pity. Bristow continues by stating: "it is clear that the aesthete shall act in a condescending manner at no uncertain peril…. In other words, he belongs to that despicable and regressive species of mocking intellectuals who would like to be proper men but who hardly find courtship easy" (72). While Bristow correctly notes that Cecil is regressive, Forster does not seem to think that Cecil's "peril" is certain at all. After Lucy breaks off her engagement with Cecil, he displays growth and change, not "peril": "I was bound up in the old vicious notions, and all the time you were splendid and new…. I must actually thank you for what you have done – for showing me what I really am. Solemnly, I thank you for showing me a true woman" (173). "Peril" implies demise; here we see Cecil grow. Furthermore, while Cecil indeed does not find courtship easy, Bristow neglects fully to examine the reasons behind this difficulty – Cecil's difficulty stems from his rigid adherence to a fashionable artificiality. Instead, Bristow prefers to conclude rapidly that characters like Cecil reflect not only Forster's dislike of effeminate men, but also display Forster's expression of the difficulties of same-sex desire. Indeed, Sinfield points out, effeminacy does not always equal same-sex desire: "this is crucial, although there was a tendency to perceive same-sex passion as effeminate, effeminacy still did not necessarily signal same-sex passion" (45). Cecil is effeminate, but there is no evidence in the novel that he harbors any "same-sex passions."[3]

There is, however, a bounty of evidence that suggests Cecil's effeminacy is unnatural, undesirable, and outdated. The key to understanding how Cecil functions in the narrative lies in the thematic structure of the novel itself. On its surface, the novel is a simple romantic comedy that ends in marriage for its heroine, a reading which accounts for the lack of scholarship on this work compared to the enormous body of scholarship on Forster's "more serious" novels,

[3] Indeed, Cecil comes across in the novel as rather asexual.

Howards End and *A Passage to India*. John Colmer writes that *A Room with a View* is a "Jane Austen like comedy" (116). But this reading does not take into consideration the complexity of Forster's social commentary. The ending of the novel, while joyous in the successful marriage of George and Lucy, has a melancholy tone due to the social unacceptability of the union. Cecil is not happy, Mr Beebe is not happy, and Mrs Honeychurch is not happy about this elopement. Audrey P. Lavin explains the origin of this reductive interpretation, as well as its inaccuracy, in her convincing book, *Aspects of the Novelist: E. M. Forster's Pattern and Rhythm*: "*A Room with a View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread* are often classed together as Forster's 'Italian novels,' an affectionate, but a somewhat derogatory, rubric in that it has come to imply works almost too light and too romantic" (13). And it is true that Forster allows for this simplistic reading of the novel with frequent interjections of generalizing text like Mr Emerson's declaration that "Women like looking at a view; men don't" (4).

But the reader should always question Forster's use of simplicity, for it is never as simple as it may appear. For example, if men don't like looking at views, then what of George, who, before his first passionate kiss with Lucy, is looking out over the Italian countryside, enraptured with its beauty and inspired by the blue flowers that envelop Lucy? "George had turned at the sound of her arrival. For a moment he contemplated her, as one who had fallen out of heaven. He saw radiant joy in her face, he saw the flowers beat against her dress in blue waves. The bushes above them closed. He stepped quickly forward and kissed her" (68). The careful reader of Forster's work can see through such blanket statements as "Women like looking at a view; men don't" by paying attention to the patterns and codes that Forster employs in his fiction. Toward the end of the novel, Forster's narrator comments that Lucy "loved Cecil; George made her nervous; will the reader explain to her that the phrases should have been reversed?" (142).

With this direct address to the reader – significantly, the only one in the novel – Forster alerts us to the fact that we should be closely analyzing not only the differences between Cecil and George, but also the feelings and thoughts that people in the world of the text have about these two characters. A multiplicity of "view" points is necessary to fully understand Forster's novel.

Sexuality, class, society, suburbia, empire, the city, gender: these themes run consistently throughout Forster's work, and they never operate independently from one another. In their Introduction to *Queer Forster*, Robert K. Martin and George Piggford write that "Even an ostensibly 'heterosexual' text such as *A Room with a View* sees sexuality as a potentially destabilizing force that undermines class and convention" (13). The operative term could as easily be "class" or "gender," for these things subvert the status quo and are subverted by other thematic elements in Forster's works. However, discovering the constant interplay between these dominant social forces in *A Room with a View* requires more than just a cursory glance. Lavin cautions the reader not to give up on the novel after the first read:

> As we read *A Room with a View* the first time for pleasure, there is not a pattern constantly before us as in an oriental rug. As we reread it, however, we wonder how we could have missed its obvious design. The answer is that Forster has seamlessly woven his story and pattern together…. Once it has been seen, we can follow Forster's lead in conceptualizing the patterns of the novels by drawing a simple schema of this one. (15)

It is, therefore, crucial to establish the pattern that Forster develops in this particular novel. The frame of the novel is a love triangle that pits George Emerson against Cecil Vyse for the love of Lucy Honeychurch. Yet this "love triangle" can and should be mutable. With Lucy at the center, she has a choice to make about which man will fulfill her needs socially and sexually as

well as her need for independence. George, of course, is her choice because he fills her with physical passion and treats her as his equal. With George at the center, he must choose either to remain passive and accept Lucy's socially motivated choice of Cecil, or to fight brazenly for the woman he loves. With Cecil at the center, the choice becomes more complicated. Does he choose to remain in his affected persona as the educated and cultured man of leisure, a role that won him the hand of Lucy, or does he try to become more desirable, like George, by altering his affectation and emphasis on artifice and embracing Lucy as a human being instead of a painting? Unfortunately, Cecil is too wrapped up in his *façade* to see the choice laid out before him until it is too late. What ends as a comedy for George and Lucy ends as a tragedy for Cecil.

Yet many critics seem to view this dichotomy between George and Cecil as a Forsterian pattern of pitting the aesthete against the athlete. In his work, *Regenerating the Novel: Gender and Genre in Woolf, Forster, Sinclair, and Lawrence*, James J. Miracky writes of this conflict: "The love triangle on the level of the surface plot is lopsided, however, because Cecil could not be more different from the manly and modern-minded George, setting up another Forsterian aesthete-athlete conflict. Uninterested in sports and games, Cecil is represented as a fop who is awkward at love" (39). Cecil is not awkward at love because of his effeminacy by itself; rather, he is awkward because his feminine traits are not natural, they are a part of an aesthetic pose. If the traits of passion, hysteria, impulsiveness, and feeling are considered feminine (and by early twentieth-century standards, they are) then Cecil does not fit the bill. George does. George embodies the gender equality ideal espoused by John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century. He longs for his wife to be his friend and companion, an equal with her own mind. Cecil, displaying traditionally male gender traits, wants his wife to be an object to display. But Cecil is also weak-willed, passive, and gossipy, driven by the need to fit in with the female society represented by

his mother and her friends, whereas George is brash, aggressive, determined, silent, and brooding. Each displays typical masculine traits, no one in the novel fits easily and neatly into one gender category. And Forster takes great pains to coach the reader into looking for these gendered inconsistencies.

Early in the Italian section of the novel, Mr Beebe comments on Eleanor Lavish's smoking habit when he notices her cigarette case, "'That belongs to Lavish,' said the clergyman. 'A good fellow, Lavish, but I wish she'd start a pipe'" (34). Forster creates in Lavish a hybrid gender that Mr Beebe finds unattractive. His disdain for her reveals itself through mocking. Still others view her radical gender performance as quite attractive. Miss Bartlett loves Miss Lavish's independence and boldness, something that she cannot embody due to class-driven dependence. Lucy notes that "Miss Lavish is so original" (32). Lucy longs to be as free from social boundaries as Miss Lavish is. During a political conversation with her, Lucy declares, "We are Radicals, too" (16), thus aligning herself and her family with other politically minded "new women." But "original" is also a Forsterian code, like the label "clever," that conveys an almost freakish difference from the norm. The first mention that readers get of Cecil identifies him as clever: "'They're very nice people, the Vyses. So clever – my idea of what's really clever" (57). Lucy, like London society, is still so enraptured with cleverness as a novelty that Cecil's cleverness is initially quite attractive. But other people, like Lucy's brother Freddy, are beginning to mistrust men who are "clever." After he meets his new friend George Emerson, he questions his sister as to what type of man George is, asking

"'Lucy, what's Emerson like?' 'I saw him in Florence,' said Lucy, hoping that this would pass for a reply. 'Is he the clever sort, or is he a decent chap?' 'Ask Cecil; it is Cecil who brought him here.' 'He is the clever sort, like myself,' said Cecil. Freddy looked at him doubtfully"

(138). Is Cecil "clever" or "decent"? Freddy's question reflects a change in the younger males. No longer do they find the "clever" to be unique and interesting; rather, young men like Freddy have grown weary of the artificial nature of the aesthetic and long to be more natural in their identities. This is a direct result of the downfall of Oscar Wilde. From 1895 on, Wildean traits of posed effeminacy, wit, and attention to the artificial fall out of favor. And Cecil, who has not moved on with this cultural shift, finds himself being left behind.

For there is a new type of man becoming romanticized by British society; he is strong rather than effete, hard-working rather than leisure-driven, and he is sincere rather than affected. Forster displays this change gradually, as it happened in the culture, by initially portraying Cecil as charming and Mr Emerson as "One of the ill-bred people" (3). But Forster's romanticizing of the "new male" reveals itself early on as well. The narrator observes the working-class men of Florence in a manner that verges on rapture: "Over the river men were at work with spades and sieves on the sand foreshore, and on the river was a boat, also diligently employed for some mysterious end" (14). The passage then goes on to note voyeuristically the masculine soldiers passing by and the sensitive young boy who stumbles in the church and does not hide his pain. Through this description, Forster assigns the role of the new male to the working class. It is with them that the change begins, not with the upper-class educated men like Cecil. Readers would have to wait for Tibby Schlegel to see the development of the new male in the educated classes.

Forster is also quick to point out how beneficial this change will be for women. When Mr. Emerson meets Lucy at the church, her tells her, "By understanding George you may learn to understand yourself. It will be good for both of you" (26). But Lucy is somewhat slow to recognize this. She still desires a dated version of masculinity that includes an equally dated notion of chivalry. After Lucy witnesses the fight in the square that leaves one young Italian

man bleeding, she faints and gets blood on her newly purchased souvenir photographs. George comes to her rescue, notices the blood on the photographs and tries to protect her from the horrible sight by throwing them into the river. The narrator comments that this action causes Lucy, who is still looking for her ideal of chivalry, to dismiss George: "He had thrown her photographs into it, and then he had told her the reason. It struck her that it was hopeless to look for chivalry in such a man" (44). Lucy's idea of the chivalrous man would be one who either saved her pictures, or did not her the gruesome reason of why he discarded them. Indeed, this cultural tendency to ignore the "new man" as a "real man" continues after George "insults" Lucy with a kiss. Miss Bartlett, reeling from her failure properly to chaperone young Lucy, declares, "'O for a real man! We are only two women, you and I. Mr Beebe is hopeless. There is Mr Eagar, but you do not trust him. O for your brother! He is young, but I know that his sister's insult would rouse in him a very lion. Thank God, chivalry is not yet dead. There are still left some men who can reverence woman'" (75). This outburst by Miss Bartlett begins to reveal the change in social expectations for men. But it is gradual, for while Miss Bartlett does not yet value the emotional nature of George Emerson, she does see the need for a return to directness of action that she observes in the younger males of her time. Freddy is such a male; Mr Beebe is not.

Of course, Lucy's impression of George changes, reflecting the appeal of Forster's evolved "new male," even though the "new male" can still only exist in the working class. Lucy's ideals of manliness evolve to include room for traits that are not planned and confident and stereotypically masculine. When thinking about George, the narrator reads in Lucy's mind that "Perhaps anything that he did would have pleased Lucy, but his awkwardness went straight to her heart: men were not gods after all, but as human and clumsy as girls; even men might

suffer from unexplained desires, and need help" (153). Of course, even though the "new man" could be as "clumsy as girls," he had to be sexually confident as well. When George kisses Lucy a second time, the narrator notes that he "simply enfolded her in his manly arms" (160). This action is the deciding factor for Lucy. She decides that while she can accept a certain amount of "femininity" in her man, it, like he, needs to be natural. Cecil's femininity is a pose.

It is, in fact, George who convinces Lucy of this during his emotional plea for her love. When Lucy tries to throw George out of the house he replies, "'You cannot live with Vyse. He is only for acquaintance. He is for society and cultivated talk. He should know no one intimately, least of all a woman'"(165). The connotation here is that Cecil is a fraud as a male in the sense that he is shallow, but he is also the same type of male that has held back progress in England for centuries. George continues his impassioned rant about Cecil: "He daren't let a woman decide. He's the type who's kept Europe back for a thousand years" (166). But lest he reveal his hypocrisy, George reveals to Lucy and to the reader that this tendency to govern women, rather than walk with them, is deeply rooted. He is guilty of it himself. The chief difference, however, is that he recognizes it in himself and is trying to overcome his domineering ways: "'I'm the same kind of brute at bottom. This desire to govern woman – it lies very deep, and men and women must fight it together…. I want you to have your own thoughts even when I hold you in my arms'" (166-7). Still, even as he accepts the responsibility for his chauvinism, he and Forster emphasize that women must participate in this change. Women must alter what they view as valuable in a man, just as men must change what they value in women.

George is unique among the men in this novel. The other two major male characters, Mr Beebe and Cecil, are both determined to hold on to their dehumanizing objectification of women as art. And although these two men differ from each other in their embodiments of masculine

and feminine traits, they are also more alike than many critics would have the reader believe. In his essay "'Thinking about Homosex' in Forster and James," Eric Haralson notes this difference, but oddly reads Mr Beebe as the "ideal" form of the bachelor and Cecil as the "repugnant" form: "Forster takes pains to discriminate between Mr Beebe and Cecil Vyse as, respectively, the hearty and most sympathetic 'ideal bachelor'… and the repugnant variety… who combined, for Forster a precious Paterian-Jamesian aestheticism with a Wildean lassitude and antiathleticism" (68). This reading is incorrect, as Forster clearly does not identify either of these men as "ideal." Furthermore, if Forster has any sympathy for either of these characters, his sympathies lie with Cecil, not Mr Beebe. Indeed, when we come to the close of the novel, Cecil arrives at an epiphany, albeit rather late, while Mr Beebe reveals his bitterness and nastiness.

In the Italian section of the novel, the omniscient narrator comments on Mr Beebe's ideas about women and, in doing so, reveals a great deal about Beebe's "manhood": "All his life he had loved to study maiden ladies; they were his specialty…. Girls like Lucy were charming to look at, but Mr Beebe was, from rather profound reasons, somewhat chilly in his attitude towards the other sex, and preferred to be interested rather than enthralled" (32). "Rather profound reasons" is also Forsterian code in this passage. Embedded within this combination of words, there lies the key to understanding not only Mr Beebe's attitudes towards women, but also his embodiment of "masculinity," and his connection with and difference from Cecil. Like Cecil, Mr Beebe tends to view women as otherworldly *objects d'art*; he does not seek close relationships with them, rather he prefers to analyze them from some distance, just as he would a painting or a text. Also like Cecil, Mr Beebe embodies some very traditional "masculine" traits in how he views the relational interplay between the sexes; he, as the dominant male, holds the power and the authority to relegate woman to the position of object rather than human, or equal.

Yet, unlike Cecil, Mr Beebe has some "rather profound reasons" for his feelings about women; Mr Beebe is homosexual, whereas Cecil is heterosexual.

Several critics have commented on Mr Beebe's sexuality in this novel; some have even gone so far as to use it as justification for his rejection of Cecil at the end of the novel, as well as his displeasure with the elopement of Lucy and George. Cavaliero argues that this interpretation of Mr Beebe is central to the novel as it reveals Forster's dissatisfaction with his own situation. He writes that Mr Beebe

> is one of Forster's most penetrative studies, and essential to the particular atmosphere the book engenders. In him the cautious, self-punishing homosexual consciousness that acquiesces in the verdict of religion and society finds an embodiment familiar in other terms, that of the bachelor with an old mother who disguises his real desires under the cloak of celibacy. (99)

While I agree with critics like Cavaliero that Mr Beebe is homosexual, I disagree on the level of importance placed on this interpretation. Indeed, I argue that Mr Beebe's displeasure with Lucy and George's elopement stems from loss. He loses his favorite object to interpret; for him, Lucy becomes fully human through her relationship with George. His dislike of Cecil, however, stems from a more deeply rooted issue. In Cecil, Mr Beebe sees a reflection of himself. Freddy is the first to comment on this explicit connection, as seen by Mr Beebe. When Freddy talks with his mother about Cecil and Lucy's engagement, he invokes the words of Mr Beebe, "'You know Mr Beebe's funny way, when you never quite know what he means. He said: 'Oh, he's like me – better detached'" (85). Mr Beebe's comment on Cecil as an ideal bachelor shows that he recognizes himself in Cecil. Furthermore, it reveals in Mr Beebe a tendency towards self-analysis and cultural analysis, something that, for the most part, Cecil tends to avoid.

Cecil views himself as a man; he does not question his own masculinity, his role as a man in British society, or his relationships with women until the end of the novel. Mr Beebe, on the other hand, seems constantly to reflect on the difference between the sexes, and how they interact. When he and Freddy go to Cissie Villa to welcome the Emersons, Freddy asks George if he would like to come and have a bathe. This bold statement causes Mr Beebe to comment on the nature of men: "'How d'ye do? How d'ye do? Come and have a bathe,' he chuckled. 'That's the best conversational opening I've ever heard. But I'm afraid it will only act between men'" (126). And since real boys will be boys in Forster's novel, George agrees to the bathe, and the three men journey off to the pond. The atmosphere of the pond reveals, in an almost magical way, the true nature of those who enter. Indeed, this scene, unlike any other in the novel, seems to take place in an alternate universe. As Freddy and George strip out of their clothing and, in turn, their established roles as "men," they enter the transfiguring waters and become boys. Moreover, as boys, their true selves unburdened with the demands of society, they freely play together and beg Mr Beebe to join them. Yet the water does not seem to have the same power over Mr Beebe. He does join them, but with hesitation; he is uncomfortable in his own skin because he cannot break free from his self-analysis. During the whole scene, he is cautious and nervous. Maybe this stems from his attraction to naked young men in his presence, but more likely, even though he has also removed his clothes, he is still a "man." And it is in his role as the "man" here that Mr Beebe alerts the playing "boys" to the approach of the "ladies": "Hi! Hi! *Ladies*!" (131).

This group of intruding "ladies" includes Mrs Honeychurch and Lucy with Cecil as their leader. What is perhaps most fascinating about this revelation is that while Mr Beebe groups Cecil as one of the women, Cecil believes that he is acting as a man. The narrator comments on

Cecil's interpretation of manhood: "Cecil, who always felt that he must lead women, though he knew not whither, and always protect them, though he knew not against what" (132). So Cecil knows what his role as a man should be, but he cannot fully understand what this role means, or where it leads. He just has not given it much thought. This is because of his tendency to reside on the surface of things rather than, like Mr Beebe, delving into the inner workings of them. Haralson argues that

> Perhaps most telling, from the standpoint of Forster's adjudication of masculinities, is his casting of Cecil as unwittingly arrayed with the feminine forces of normalization – a notion embedded in Beebe's sentinel cry of alarm… which seems to collapse Vyse with his female companions. By now well-established as a condescending poseur… Vyse here shows even more sharply as a walking parody of the English patriarch. (70-1)

Therefore, Cecil's performance of the "real man" in this scene is as much of a pose as his aesthetic dandy. But as with his performance of the dandy role, Cecil boldly acts the man as he attempts to take charge and lead the other women to safety. While this is happening, Freddy and George continue to play like the little boys they are, and Mr Beebe slinks back into the pond to hide like the self-aware man that he is. If the reader concurs with Forster's transforming pond idea, and believe that the pond reveals the true nature of its inhabitants, then what does the reader make of Cecil here? On one hand, he is one of the "ladies," but he is also ostensibly one of the men. I argue that we must agree with Mr Beebe's impression of Cecil as a lady; he is just as prudish, just as offended, just as much of an outsider to the play of the boys as the women are. Mr Beebe, an outsider himself who has already noted his likeness to Cecil, would naturally be the one to notice Cecil's social femininity. Furthermore, as Mr Beebe tends to study "ladies" as a

hobby, and since he is the one person in the pond who has not altered his nature, his interpretation must be trusted here.

But Mr Beebe is not the only character in the novel who tends to see people as the culture sees them; Mrs Honeychurch also has rigidly defined opinions about the roles that people ought to play in society. After Cecil asks her permission to marry Lucy, Mrs Honeychurch tells Freddy, "I was rather amused at Cecil asking my permission at all. He has always gone in for unconventionality, and parents nowhere, and so forth. When it comes to the point, he can't get on without me" (83). Cecil puzzles her here. First, she questions Cecil's performance of the traditional "male"; he asks for her permission when he affects the unconventional role of the dandy. Second, he acts like a traditional woman in that he is tentative and needy. Yet she also believes that Cecil is the right sort of man for Lucy to marry. When Freddy answers no to Cecil's question of "Wasn't it a splendid thing for Lucy and for Windy Corner generally if he married her?" (84), Mrs Honeychurch calls him a "Ridiculous child!" (84) and continues by saying, "Do you suppose that a man like Cecil would take the slightest notice of anything you say? I hope he boxed your ears" (84). Cecil, in the eyes of Mrs Honeychurch, is still a proper man. But Forster is quick to counter this sentiment with Freddy's reply to his mother, "Oh, do keep quiet, though, and let a man do some work" (84). Displaying traits that are far from being those of the evolved "new man," Freddy's reassertion of his manhood not only puts his mother back into the traditionally subservient place that a mother should occupy but also comments on her perception of Cecil as a real man. To Freddy, Cecil is not a real man, and by displaying his manhood to his mother in such a dominant way, Freddy shows her what a "real man" is.

In her study of homoerotic codes in Forster's novels, *Distant Desire*, Parminder Kaur Bakshi writes that "Lucy's engagement to Cecil is generally approved of because it fits neatly

into social conventions, whereas George's unschooled passion is considered to be dangerous and creates fear and anxiety" (141). However, while it may be approved of by some, the engagement is not approved of by all. Bakshi fails to fully develop this aspect of approval because he does not analyze the implications of who approves and who does not. Mrs Honeychurch approves because she is a woman of a certain generation and of a certain class. Mrs Honeychurch is a part of the social sphere that still accepts and values the masculine role of the educated, well-off aesthetic male. She tells Freddy, "Well, *I* like him, [….] I know his mother; he's good, he's clever, he's rich, he's well connected…. And he has beautiful manners" (85). These are the qualities that she values in a mate for her daughter. But note here that she calls Cecil "clever," and that should alert the reader to the dominant interpretation of the term as it appears in the novel as a whole. To be "clever" in this novel is not a positive trait, and Freddy is quick to counter his mother on her impression of Cecil. When he defends his dislike of Cecil, Freddy muses, "Cecil praised one too much for being athletic. Was that it? Cecil made one talk his way, instead of letting one talk in one's own way…. And Cecil was the kind of fellow who would never wear another fellow's cap" (85). Thus, according to Freddy, Cecil's "cleverness" is almost unnerving and definitely uncomfortable. Cecil in this passage is too aesthetic, domineering, prissy, and germophobic; he does not accept others as they are; he views them as curiosities, and he certainly is not one of the fellows. Forster, in order to firmly establish Cecil as a Decadent aesthetic male, first introduces him as flustered poseur ill at ease in his environment: "Cecil's first movement was one of irritation. He couldn't bear the Honeychurch habit of sitting in the dark to save the furniture. Instinctively he gave the curtains a twitch, and sent them swinging down their poles. Light entered" (86). Not only does this passage demonstrate Cecil's emphasis on the importance of aesthetic qualities, it also presents him as a

character on a stage, complete with curtains and light and flair. Forster's narrator continues to develop this characterization with a detailed description of Cecil's appearance:

> He was medieval. Like a Gothic statue. Tall and refined, with shoulders that seemed braced square by an effort of will, and a head that was tilted a little higher than the usual level of vision, he resembled those fastidious saints who guarded the portals of a French cathedral. Well educated, well endowed, and not deficient physically, he remained in the grip of a certain devil whom the modern world knows as self-consciousness, and whom the medieval, with dimmer vision, worshiped as asceticism. A Gothic statue implies celibacy, just as a Greek statue implies fruition, and perhaps this is what Mr Beebe meant. And Freddy, who ignored history and art, perhaps meant the same when he failed to imagine Cecil wearing another fellow's cap. (86-7)

With his head tilted on high, Cecil begins his performance in the novel. But he is cold like a Gothic statue; he is also dated like a Gothic statue. He is a relic in the modern world because of his "self-consciousness," which the reader should not confuse with Mr Beebe's self-awareness. "Self-consciousness" here is a derogatory term that implies artifice. Cecil continues his affectation with his first words in the novel, "'I promessi sposi,' said he. They stared at him anxiously" (87). Instead of announcing to Mrs Honeychurch and Freddy that Lucy has accepted his proposal, he declares it with a flourish of Italian, which marks him as not only an actor and a dandy, but also as a foreigner in this world. His affectation makes him an alien in Windy Corner. This emphasis on the image continues as Cecil muses on Lucy as he would a piece of art, "She was like a woman of Leonardo da Vinci's, whom we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us" (88). It is the mystery of woman that appeals to Cecil, not the

revealing of who she is. And it is not just women that Cecil wants to view as art; anything seems to be ripe for his objectification and alteration. As Cecil waits alone in the Honeychurch home, he mentally re-decorates it: "Then he lit another cigarette, which did not seem quite as divine as the first, and considered what might be done to make the Windy Corner drawing-room more distinctive" (89).

I would caution the reader, here, against reading Cecil as a flat character that remains stuck in a fixed role. Forster does not want to create in Cecil a static character at all; instead, Forster alerts the reader early on to look for Cecil's desire to evolve. After the engagement, Mr Beebe arrives at Windy Corner and encounters Cecil alone in the drawing room. As the scene unfolds, Forster journeys from a comic meeting of two "ladies" gossiping and talking about tea, to a revealing comment by the narrator about Cecil's desire to change:

> Cecil greeted him [Mr Beebe] rather critically. "I've come for tea Mr Vyse. Do you suppose that I shall get it?" "I should say so. Food is the thing one does get here – don't sit in that chair; young Honeychurch has left a bone in it." "Pfui!" "I know," said Cecil, "I know. I can't think why Mrs Honeychurch allows it." For Cecil considered the bone and the Maple's furniture separately; he didn't realize that, taken together, they kindled the room into the life that he desired. (90)

This passage foreshadows Cecil's desire for change in himself. He recognizes that the times have moved past him. He longs to be a hybrid of art and nature but does not know how to change. This recalls Wilde very specifically. Indeed, at times, *A Room with a View* reads like Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" when it comes to Cecil. Cecil repeatedly holds art in a much higher esteem than he does nature. Indeed, he attempts to transform that which is natural, Lucy, through art. Forster leans heavily on the cultural perceptions of Wilde in his creation of Cecil,

especially early on in the novel. Examples of this include Cecil's commentary on his relationship to locations which slyly invokes the character of Algernon in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "I only go into the country to see my friends and to enjoy the scenery. It is very remiss of me. Italy and London are the only places where I don't feel to exist on sufferance" (91). This continues through Cecil's attitudes about work:

> 'I have no profession,' said Cecil. 'It is another example of my decadence. My attitude – quite an indefensible one – is that so long as I am no trouble to anyone I have a right to do as I like. I know I ought to be getting money out of people, or devoting myself to things I don't care a straw about, but somehow I've not been able to begin.' 'You are very fortunate,' said Mr Beebe. 'It is a wonderful opportunity, the possession of leisure.'… 'I am glad that you approve. I daren't face the healthy person – for example, Freddy Honeychurch.' 'Oh, Freddy's a good sort isn't he?' 'Admirable. The sort who has made England what she is.' (91)

Cecil is quite proud of his decadent lifestyle, but he also recognizes, even if he doesn't process this recognition fully, that "real men" like Freddy have made England "what she is." Instead, Cecil, in a fascinating twist, aligns himself with men like Freddy and Mr Beebe; all of them are interested in creating women in an artificial way. Men like Freddy view England as a woman/ object, while Mr Beebe and Cecil are both obsessed with their own constructions of Lucy. In this, Cecil continues to invoke his perverted interpretation of Wilde's "art for art's sake." Whenever Lucy breaks out of her mold as a piece of art, Cecil desires her quick return to being the beautiful object that holds no meaning other than art. The narrator observes that Cecil "longed to hint to her that not here lay her vocation; that a woman's power and charm reside in

mystery, not in muscular rant. But possibly rant is a sign of vitality: it mars the beautiful creature, but shows that she is alive" (99). And indeed, Cecil, in many ways, tries to be this unmarred creature himself.

But in his attempt at remaining unmarred by the ugliness of vitality, Cecil can be quite abusive. Later on in the novel, Mrs Honeychurch complains to Lucy that Cecil has been uncivil towards her. Lucy defends Cecil by telling her mother that "he doesn't mean to be uncivil – he once explained – it is the *things* that upset him – he is easily upset by ugly things – he is not uncivil to *people*" (136). But Cecil, at this point in the novel, does not seem to separate the two. People are things to Cecil, as are relationships. And Cecil never stops in his attempt to make them all "perfect." When he tragically bungles his first kiss with Lucy – the "seduction" of his fiancée is unromantic, clumsy, timid, and inept – Cecil reimagines the event:

> Why could he not do as any labourer or navvy – nay, as any young man behind a counter would have done? He recast the scene. Lucy was standing flower-like by the water; he rushed up and took her in his arms; she rebuked him, permitted him, and revered him ever after for his manliness. For he believed that women revere men for their manliness. (108)

Indeed, they do in this novel, and Lucy confirms this when she later notes that "Cecil, this afternoon, seemed such a twittering sparrow" (158). In his mind, Cecil longs to be the sort of man that George is. He longs to kiss Lucy in the same way. He longs to be a "real man." What holds him back, for Forster, is his education and his class. These qualities, so desirable to London society, fail to win the day in Windy Corner.

Still, Forster does have hope for Cecil. When Lucy breaks off her engagement to Cecil, he "looked at her, instead of through her, for the first time since they were engaged" (171).

When he asks why she is breaking the engagement, she repeats George's words about Cecil, "Because… you're the sort who can't know anyone intimately" (171). This truly begins Cecil's evolutionary process – and Forster's, too. With Cecil's awakening, Forster begins to develop a path for the educated upper-class male to transition, like the working-class male, into his vision for the ideal "man." With Cecil, Forster begins the journey that will continue with Tibby in *Howards End*. However, the process is not an easy one, nor a quick one to develop, and Forster acknowledges this fact. Cecil wakes up to a reality of sorts, and he apologizes for treating Lucy as an object, but, the narrator notes, "For all his culture, Cecil was an ascetic at heart, and nothing in his love became him like the leaving of it" (173). Cecil remains in his persona as the decadent, but there are cracks forming in this Gothic statue.

Joseph Bristow argues that "the heteronormative imperatives shaping Forster's idealizations of erotic love between men appear to exert their influence so strongly in his work because he expressed a widespread loathing of the effeminate aesthete iconized by Wilde" (Bristow 12). I argue differently. I do not believe that Forster has a "loathing of the effeminate aesthete" at all: in fact, I think that Forster is sympathetic towards him. Cecil may be an effeminate aesthete, but he is still a human individual who is doing his best to get along in his environment. Furthermore, Cecil longs to be loved, and treated as human. He reveals this to Lucy in the following conversation:

> 'I connect you with a view – a certain type of view. Why shouldn't you connect me with a room?'… 'When I think of you it's always as in a room. How funny!' To her surprise, he seemed annoyed. 'A drawing-room pray? With no view?' 'Yes, with no view, I fancy. Why not?' 'I'd rather,' he said reproachfully, 'that you connected me with the open air.' (106)

This does not read as loathing to me. Quite the opposite. Furthermore, in a short article marking the fiftieth anniversary of the novel's publication, Forster revisits his characters and has obvious affection for Cecil. "Cecil Vyse must not be omitted from this prophetic retrospect. He moved out of the Emersons' circle but not altogether out of mine. With his integrity and intelligence he was destined for confidential work" (*A View without a Room* 6). Cecil has begun his evolution as a "new man." He recognizes that his aesthetic persona has ill-served him in his quest for a mate. But, he also recognizes, in himself, the need to be connected with nature as well as society. Forster notes his "integrity." This is not a trait that Cecil displays in the novel; rather, it is a trait that he has grown into. Cecil is not the completion of Forster's ideal "new man," merely a beginning, for, as we shall see, Mr Vyse returns in *Howards End* as the type of man that Tibby Schlegel would like to be.

CHAPTER 3

TIBBY: EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE (BR)OTHER SCHLEGEL IN *HOWARDS END*

Whereas Cecil in *A Room with a View* represents the demise of the decadent "male" as an acceptable gender role for educated British men, Tibby in *Howards End* embodies Forster's attempt to reposition the educated "man" and his gender identity onto a romantic, yet pragmatic, middle ground. In fact, Tibby is Forster's imagined evolution of Cecil Vyse. In many ways, Forster presents Tibby's blending of the feminine and the masculine as an ideal that educated, upper-middle-class men should aspire to and one that women should encourage. For obvious reasons, the literary critics of the early 1900s almost unanimously overlooked Forster's radical proposition for gender blending; instead they tended to focus on issues of the economic and moral disparities that dominate the novel. Indeed, all the contemporary literary critics ignore the character of Tibby, except for Virginia Woolf. In her essay, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," Woolf is the first critic to pay special attention to the Other Schlegel. Woolf astutely argues against a dismissive reading of Tibby:

> The admirable Tibby and the exquisite Mrs. Munt in *Howards End*, though thrown in largely to amuse us, bring a breath of fresh air in with them. They inspire us with the intoxicating belief that they are free to wander as far from their creator as they choose. Margaret, Helen, Leonard Bast, are closely tethered and vigilantly overlooked lest they may take matters into their own hands and upset

> the theory. But Tibby and Mrs. Munt go where they like, say what they like, do what they like. (326-7)

But while Woolf acknowledges the “freedom” of characters like Tibby and Mrs. Munt, she fails thoroughly to examine and explain exactly what makes these characters so free. In the case of Tibby, his freedom comes from his ability to move in both feminine and masculine spheres. Still, Tibby does not move in and out of these realms with absolute ease, nor is he “untethered,” as Woolf states, from Forster’s tightly-constructed theories of “connection” and blending. Indeed, Tibby is Forster’s model of evolved manhood in the novel; this would suggest that, as the proposed ideal, Forster watches over Tibby very closely. Furthermore, through the impressions of his sisters Margaret and Helen and Charles Wilcox (the “anti-Tibby”) Forster voices his culture’s skepticism about Tibby’s gender “freedom.” This combination of admired deviation and skeptical criticism structures Forster’s presentation of Tibby.

Forster's narrator, and Margaret and Helen, describe Tibby in terms that reflect Edwardian society’s discomfort with those who present conflicting gender identities. Moreover, the few brief mentions of Tibby in contemporary criticism display a similar discomfort, using the same language of the culture that Forster criticizes. This is an unfortunate underestimation of a character that can reveal a great deal of insight into the fluctuating nature of gender identity, and a reductive evaluation of Forster’s multi-layered agenda in *Howards End*.

"Only connect…" (183). This is Forster's mantra throughout the novel. And Tibby is the one character in the novel that most completely "connects" the masculine and the feminine into one being. Critic Alan Sinfield deftly explores the gendered nature of *Howards End* by examining the “masculine” house of the Wilcoxes and the “feminine” traits of the Schlegels, noting that

> … Forster distinguishes the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels. The former represent imperial and business enterprise: they produce the wealth of the country, but are sadly vulgar, clumsy, and dishonest. The Schlegels represent a finer sensibility: they are artistic, not altogether English, gifted with human understanding, sincerity, and even sexual spontaneity. And they are feminine. Margaret says that theirs is a 'female house' … whereas the house of the Wilcoxes, the empire-builders, is 'irrevocably masculine'…. Effeminacy could be endorsed…. Of course, it was patriarchal pressure that made effeminacy an excellent way of bucking the system. (88)

Nonetheless, in his revealing evaluation of effeminacy in *Howards End*, Sinfield does not recognize a connection in Tibby. Surely Forster's emphasis on the "feminine" house of the Schlegels and the "masculine" house of the Wilcoxes is not incidental, as he spends much of the novel trying to connect all sorts of divergent Wilcox and Schlegel traits.

In fact, a closer look into these gendered “houses” of the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels reveals the overarching frame of Forster’s argument for an educated “new man.” By creating the über-feminine house of the Schlegels, Forster details many of the qualities that his culture associates with upper-middle-class women. Margaret, while initially presented as a forward-thinking modern woman (and, in many ways, she certainly is modern), embodies more traits associated with traditionally-accepted notions of femininity. She is nurturing, patient, forgiving, and old-fashioned in her ideas about relationships between men and women. She shocks easily, especially when confronted by Helen’s frequent rejection of female normativity, and, with one lone exception (when she confronts Henry about his infidelity and his hypocrisy concerning Helen’s impropriety), Margaret is quite submissive to Henry. Margaret is by no means a “new

woman"; her sister Helen, however, is. Or, more specifically, Helen is Forster's idea of the "new woman." Forster presents Helen as the extreme embodiment of liberated womanhood; she is just as loyal to the ideals of the "new woman" as Margaret is to the tenets of the "traditional woman." Helen is sexually free, financially secure, and socially rebellious. Margaret and Helen are both almost stereotypical depictions of the two prevailing women's gender roles of the early twentieth-century. Interestingly, although they embody opposing roles, they both expect "men" to behave in a certain way.

In the Wilcox house, on the other hand, Forster reveals many of the qualities that his culture associates with upper-middle-class men. Henry, the patriarch of the Wilcox clan, deeply embodies the masculine traits that Edwardian England expects of men in his powerful position; he is imperialistic with no concern for the consequences of empire, capitalistic with no consideration for how his business practices affect human beings, and mechanistic in his familial relationships, allowing no room for individual expression among its members. Henry toes the party line when it comes to all aspects of gendered roles: men should be "men"; women should be "women." Charles Wilcox, too, exhibits stereotypical "male" upper-middle-class behavior. He is petulant in his sense of entitlement, dutiful in his submission to his father's will, impulsive with no regard for consequences, violent in his expressions of repression and perceived dominance, and self-deluded in his expectations of instant power. Paul Wilcox, although appearing only briefly in the novel, exhibits traits associated with the adventurer, the explorer, the Casanova, and the cad. All of these men seek to repress women through dominance, tradition, and seduction, and they expect their women to submit to their will.

Gender identity is a dominant trope in this complex novel that is full of strongly delineated tropes. Elizabeth Langland is a prominent critic of gender in Forster's work, yet she,

like Sinfield, tends to overlook crucial “connections” in her important study of gender in *Howards End*. She writes, "Forster accomplished something difficult and important in his novel…. In his personal embattlement with gender and his embattlement with patriarchal culture, Forster exposes the constructed nature of gender and his own ambivalent relationship to traits coded 'masculine' and 'feminine' in his culture" (252). While Langland makes a vital observation here, she also fails to mention Tibby in her argument. This forms a notable gap in her discussion, as Tibby is not only represented as “feminine” and “masculine,” but he is also represented as a combined “other.” It is through the character of Tibby that Forster connects the masculine and the feminine and challenges the rigid patriarchal system of a fixed and compulsory gender identity. Furthermore, Forster accomplishes this task in a tightly woven pattern that begins with Tibby’s complete feminization, gradually adds in examples of Tibby’s ideal concept of the sort of man that he would like to be, and completes the connection with two important scenes, one with Helen and one with Charles, in which Tibby asserts his hybridized “new masculinity” with resounding success.

For most of the novel, Forster describes Tibby in stereotypically "feminine" terms. Early in the novel, the narrator notes that Margaret and Helen brother “warmed the teapot -- almost too deftly -- rejected the Orange Pekoe that the parlour-maid had provided, poured in five spoonfuls of a superior blend, filled up with really boiling water, and now called the ladies to be quick or they would lose the aroma" (40). Helen replies to him by saying, "All right Auntie Tibby" (40). Margaret joins in with, "In a way, I wish we had a real boy in the house …" (40). In this passage the reader glimpses Tibby's "feminine" nature as it relates to nurturing and comforting, the reader can also see examples of cultural judgment through Helen and Margaret’s commentary regarding Tibby’s “feminine” traits. Notice how the narrator comments on Tibby’s tea making skills; he

prepares the teapot “almost too deftly,” he rejects the parlour-maid’s choice of Orange Pekoe, Helen mocks him with “Auntie Tibby,” and Margaret longs for a “real boy in the house.” Additionally, Margaret and the narrator frequently describe Tibby as weak, sickly and a burden: "Tibby, who was not feeling well, lay stretched on a sofa by the fire" (63), "I was asked too, but Tibby's illness prevented me" (5). Furthermore, Tibby's "femininity" is a challenge for his sisters, who have bought into patriarchal gender roles for men to a larger degree than they have accepted the patriarchy's assigned gender roles for women. Helen and Margaret discuss their desire to have a "man" in the house and complain that Tibby's deficiency in this area is detrimental to their social home environment: ""Tibby only cares for cultured females singing Brahms' [….] 'We get the right sort of man, but the wrong side of him, and I say that's Tibby's fault. There ought to be a something about the house - an - I don't know what.' 'A touch of the W.s perhaps?'" (40-1). The W.s in this passage are the Wilcoxes, who are described in specifically "masculine" gendered terms throughout the novel. Tibby, in his sisters' eyes, does not have these Wilcoxian traits. Or does he? For although Tibby is frequently portrayed as "feminine," Forster does occasionally display Tibby's masculine qualities as well.

While he may not be fully "male," Tibby is able to fulfill a "male" role in crucial moments. When his sisters are arguing over Helen's close proximity to Paul Wilcox and Margaret's desire for Helen to go abroad in order to avoid a possible meeting between the two former lovers, Tibby's "male" presence is enough to stop the bickering: "A male - even such a male as Tibby - was enough to stop the foolery" (63). “Even such a male as Tibby” -- indeed, begs the reader to specifically question Tibby’s maleness, if the reader has not already begun to do so. Forster expects that the reader will not question the masculinity of Henry and Charles Wilcox because he has created them as embodiments of accepted maleness. The narrator gives

the reader the first full description of Henry while he is musing on the quality he loves most in his wife, "steadiness": "Ah yes – she had been a good woman – she had been steady. He chose the word deliberately. To him steadiness included all praise" (88-9). Henry chooses his words deliberately, like a "man"; he does not use words impulsively or emotionally. The narrator continues with a physical description of Henry:

> He himself, gazing at the wintry garden, is in appearance a steady man. His face was not as square as his son's, and indeed the chin, though firm enough in outline, retreated a little, and the lips, ambiguous, were curtained by a mustache. But there was no external hint of weakness. The eyes were capable of kindness and good-fellowship, if ruddy for the moment with tears, were the eyes of one who could not be driven. The forehead, too, was like Charles's. High and straight, brown and polished, merging abruptly into temples and skull, it had the effect of a bastion that protected his head from the world. At times it had the effect of a blank wall. He had dwelt behind it, intact and happy, for fifty years. (89)

This description of Henry Wilcox is important to a discussion of gender in Forster's novel because it simultaneously shows what a "real man" should be and the *façade* that this "should be" requires. Moreover, it is important because it demonstrates the stark difference between "real men" and "men" like Tibby. A "real man," according to Forster's description above, "should" be a steady, strong, firm, straight, bastion of a blank wall. Henry is all of these things, but only because he has created a façade to hide his truer self. He has a weak chin and ambiguous lips, but the moustache hides this ambiguity and diverts attention away from the weakness of Henry's chin. His eyes show the possibility of kindness, but they are steely with determination. Finally, his forehead, a bastion, a blank wall, is an impenetratable barrier that

allows Henry to live happily and "intact." Forster does quite a bit of foreshadowing in this passage as well, for, in it, he informs the reader that while Henry's persona is still intact at this point in the novel, Margaret will begin to tear it down to reveal more of the "true man" behind the "real man" by the end. Tibby's initial description, on the other hand, is not of a well-crafted persona; rather it is a natural, caring, and purposeful portrayal of Tibby preparing tea. His "male" identity may be questionable to the narrator and to his sisters, but it is not falsely crafted.

This question of Tibby's "male" identity becomes a central topic of conversation between Tibby and Margaret. Upon Tibby's return home from Oxford for his Easter vacation, Margaret asks Tibby what he wants to do with his life; he remarks that "he should prefer to be quite free of any profession" (108). Thus Forster introduces the aesthetic/ decadent model of masculinity – the model represented by Cecil Vyse – into his fictionalized England. Vyse is quite proud of not having a profession in *A Room with a View*; in fact, this is a defining aspect of his decadent effeminacy in the novel. Therefore, by explicitly evoking Vyse and his effeminacy in relation to Tibby's future as a "man," Forster connects the two characters in order to develop his ideal for the educated "new male." The "new man's" evolution does not end with Cecil's awakening toward the end of *A Room with a View*; rather, it continues in Tibby in *Howards End*. Margaret replies to Tibby's stated interest in being "free of any profession" with "I was thinking of Mr Vyse. He never strikes me as particularly happy" (108). Clearly, Margaret wishes to steer her brother away from this sort of "maleness." But Tibby responds, and the narrator muses on Tibby's thought process:

> "Ye-es," said Tibby, and then held his mouth open in a curious quiver, as if he, too, had thought of Mr Vyse, had seen round, through, over and beyond Mr Vyse,

> had weighed Mr Vyse, grouped him, and finally dismissed him as having no possible bearing on the subject under discussion. (108)

Here the narrator is mistaken in his interpretation of Tibby's "Ye-es." Tibby has thoroughly thought about Vyse, but has not dismissed him. Margaret knows this and, therefore, continues with her attempt to dissuade her brother from a "decadent" life:

> But Mr Vyse is rather a wretched, weedy man, don't you think? Then there's Guy… everyone is the better for some regular work…. I am not saying it to educate you; it is what I really think. I believe that in the last century men have developed the desire for work, and they must not starve it. It is a new desire. It goes with a great deal that's bad, but in itself it's good, and I hope that for women, too, 'not to work' will soon become as shocking as 'not to be married' was a hundred years ago. (108)

In this passage, Margaret continues to reinforce the cultural notions of "real" maleness for the benefit of Tibby, but there is a great deal more happening in the above speech than that. Forster wishes to make clear, here, that cultural perceptions of maleness are still quite fixed, even among those who seek to help society change and evolve. Notice the section where Margaret espouses "new woman" ideology. She hopes to see an England where women are encouraged to work and are not limited to marriage as their sole duty and purpose. With this, Forster specifically draws the reader's attention to Margaret's hypocrisy. In "theory," Margaret believes in equality, but not really; men should still be "men." In "theory," Margaret believes in the "new woman," but not fully; with the exception of her defense of Helen and her confrontation with Henry, Margaret, in life, is the very ideal of a "traditional" woman. She marries Henry and, usually, submits to his will. She does not go out and get "a job." She tries to force her siblings into

traditional roles as much as she can. Thus, with Margaret and with Helen, Forster implicates women in the cultural reinforcement of stagnation in male gender identity.

Margaret's monologue about men and work continues as she asks Tibby to think about the "lives of the men" that he likes the most, to which Tibby replies, "I like Guy and Mr Vyse most" (108). But I caution the reader, here, not to limit Tibby's reply to the subject of men and "profession." Tibby does not refer to profession only. Indeed, Tibby likes much more about Mr Vyse than his propensity towards leisure. Tibby, like Cecil at the end of *A Room with a View*, believes in the equality of the genders, only more so. This comes to light later in the novel when Helen comes to visit Tibby at Oxford in order that he may perform the role of "male" household-finance officer and man of sense. In this scene, which includes only Tibby and Helen, Tibby's hybrid gender identity begins to come into sharp focus. Here, Tibby does perform the role of the "male" head of household, and he rises to the occasion with the air of a worldly, "suitably masculine" man. However, Tibby does not limit this role to the authoritarian persona that one might expect. Instead he tempers his dominant "male" role with compassion, understanding, and equality. Helen seeks Tibby's advice about whether to disrupt Margaret's wedding, with the revelation of a previous affair between Mr. Wilcox and Jacky Bast. Tibby replies that "It is certainly a very bad business," and this reply "seemed to calm his sister" (250). She decides that he is in the correct position to judge the situation and leaves the question in Tibby's hands. Further, when she informs Tibby that she wishes him to send a check to Leonard Bast for five thousand pounds, he responds to the situation from a rational and conservative point of view, specifically Wilcoxian traits, and he tries to talk her out of it by relying on a "logical" argument (251). Nonetheless, Tibby decides to honor the wishes of his sister and does send the requested monies to Mr. Bast; it is her money, after all. Tibby thus exhibits stereotypically "masculine"

traits, while tempering them with notions of equality between the sexes. He does not assert his male dominance over his sister, rather she places him in the dominant position. He can be rational, logical, trustworthy, responsible, and action-oriented. But what separates Tibby from the either/ or realm of a fixed gender identity is his ability to blend these traditional and sometimes stereotypical masculine and feminine gender traits.

Langland discusses this idea of blended gender in terms of Forster's own conflicted gender and sexual identity:

> in 1910, while composing *Howards End*, Forster was in a great deal of confusion, which we can understand more fully if we consider the Victorian notion of homosexuality: *anima mulieris in corpore virile inclusa* or 'a woman's soul trapped in a man's body.' Ironically, that confusion and dissatisfaction precipitated a misogynistic homosexuality, which I suggest we see in light of Forster's fear of the feminine in himself…. In *Howards End* we see this relationship played out through the narrator, the leading female characters, certain thematic oppositions, and the connections between all of these and the dramatic structure of the novel. (253)

We see this relationship keenly played out in Tibby. And while Tibby may embody a coded reference to Forster's own homosexuality with his incorporation of the masculine and the feminine into one male body, what interests me more in this essay is the idea that with this "connection" of two genders into one character, Forster radically challenges Victorian notions of fixed identity while simultaneously commenting on the state of fluctuation that the Edwardian era represents. Furthermore, if Forster indeed has a "fear of the feminine in himself," as Langland suggests, then the character of Tibby may be an attempt to overcome this fear through

the novel's philosophy of "Only connect." Langland, however, is not alone in her connection of male effeminacy with homosexuality in Forster's novel. Add to this Joseph Bristow's reduction of Tibby to a holdover from Cecil Vyse in *A Room with a View*, reflecting a dated and extinct form of effeminate manhood that harkens back to Wilde (74). I disagree strongly with both of these arguments. But it suits Bristow's argument to keep this issue of homosexuality at the forefront. In his brief discussion of Tibby, Bristow specifically conjures up images of Tibby languishing in his rooms at Oxford. Yet the novel shows Tibby contemplating Oxford as "Oxford; not a mere receptacle for youth, like Cambridge. Perhaps it wants its inmates to love it rather than to love one another" (103). Tibby is decidedly asexual (as is Cecil in *A Room with a View*) in the novel. His effeminacy in no way relates to homosexuality or homosexual desire. Nor do I buy into Bristow's assertion that Tibby is a holdover from the decadents. Tibby is a new form of man that allows for understanding, sympathy, feeling, and emotion (feminine traits) within the man who is responsible and dutiful (masculine traits). He is an evolution of the decadent rather than a holdover. One can clearly see this interplay between the "masculine" and the "feminine" and how this connection might manifest itself in a small scene toward the end of the novel.

In chapter thirty-nine, Charles seeks out and confronts Tibby in order that he may uncover the name of the man who has "disgraced" Helen. In their meeting, Forster offers perhaps his most convincing explanation of Tibby's gender fluidity. Tibby, in this chapter, tries to assert his "masculinity" when Charles confronts him on his "responsibility" to his sister. Charles begins this dialogue with, "'I suppose you realize that you are your sister's protector?' …. 'If a man played with my sister, I'd send a bullet through him, but perhaps you don't mind'" (307). Tibby responds with "I mind very much" (307). In this brief encounter, Tibby defends his sister

by viewing her as an equal, a woman capable of making her own decisions and her own life-choices, but, in remaining silent about Leonard Bast, he has also betrayed his sister. Charles interprets Tibby's silence on the direct question regarding the father of Helen's child as a confirmation of Leonard Bast's guilt. This leads to a tragic end for Bast. Helen wanted Tibby to insure that Leonard Bast was taken care of, and, while Tibby handles the financial side of this arrangement adeptly, he reveals Bast to Charles. Tibby is anxious about this "weakness" in himself: "Tibby was silent. Without meaning it, he had betrayed his sister's confidence …. He had a strong regard for honesty, and his word, once given, had always been kept up to now. He was deeply vexed, not only for the harm he had done Helen, but for the flaw he had discovered in his own equipment" (307-8). While Tibby is troubled by the recognition of his stereotypical "feminine" weakness, one should not overlook how he honors his sister as an individual, "He stood above the conventions; his sister had a right to do what she thought right" (306). Because Tibby does not adhere to a fixed convention of "maleness" and because he connects the "feminine" with the "masculine," he becomes liberated in his thinking and, in turn, honors his sister's liberation. He does not force his sister to adhere to rigid gender conventions any more than he does. This is the continuation of the "new male" ideal that Forster began with Cecil and George in *A Room with a View*. This is equality between the sexes and equality of the sexes within the individual. It is with this idea of individuality over conformity that Forster expresses a preference in the novel. But ultimately Forster is not confident in the success of Tibby's, or his own, venture. Forster portrays Charles's gender rigidity as brutish and Tibby's flexibility as honorable yet ultimately resulting in failure against the "brute masculinity" of Charles. This insecurity about the possibility of "connection" succeeding is carried throughout *Howards End*. Thus, Forster leaves the outcome purposefully ambiguous.

Like the triangle in *A Room with a View* involving Cecil, Lucy, and George, this novel includes several triangular relationships; most important to this discussion is the triangle formed by Tibby, Helen, and Charles. Tibby is the center of this triangle because he smoothly blends the affectionate and somewhat radical nature of Helen with the dutiful and protective nature of Charles. These are the positive aspects of each gender that Forster assigns to his characters. Further, it is important to note that Tibby does not personify the more negative aspects of these two extreme characters. Tibby is not impetuous, overly passionate, or as deeply rebellious as his sister, nor is he as brutish, selfish, or petulant as Charles. Forster, by including two scenes in the novel in which Tibby interacts solely with these two characters, begs the reader to compare Tibby with them. These are the only two scenes in the novel that include Tibby and only one other character in a dialogue therefore, they stand out to the close reader. By pitting Tibby's blended nature in scenes with two characters that embody extremes of gender identity, Forster "connects" the positive traits of the two in one being.

Yet the *success* of "connection" is less interesting to Forster than the *possibility* of "connection." Tibby's effeminacy as a male presents the potential for a radical break with a formerly fixed and brutal culture that is changing whether it likes it or not. After all, the empire is crumbling, women are demanding financial, political, and sexual equality, and the city and the suburbs are growing closer together. This almost universal upheaval of established boundaries leads Summers, one of the only critics to address the character of Tibby with even a modicum of substance, to note, "Tibby's effeminacy represents a tendency of liberal culture that parallels the far more dangerous tendency of the Wilcoxes toward brutality, as illustrated in the example of Charles" (122). For as these radical shifts in gendered power dynamics begin to chip away at the British patriarchy's control over the culture, the masculine power structure, represented by the

Wilcoxes, especially Charles, begins to reassert itself in an effort to retain dominance. And while Summers's statement seems to be a negative comment about Tibby's effeminacy, it is not entirely at odds with Forster. Forster is ambiguous about Tibby's and liberal culture's ability to succeed in challenging the established cultural norms, but he has hope. *Howards End* is a hopeful novel that raises the possibility of breaking down fixed boundaries by seeking the connections between them, especially regarding gender boundaries. With the character of Tibby, Forster seeks not only to make sense out of his own feminine/ masculine mixture of gender identity, but he also uses Tibby to examine the gender anxiety of his age.

This examination continues in Forster's next novel, *Maurice*. Yet, instead of seeking to blend the feminine with the masculine as he does in *Howards End* and *A Room with a View*, Forster seeks to alert the dominant culture to its negatively feminizing impact on the men of the early twentieth century. Because British cultural norms demand that its male citizens conform to the rigid standard of maleness that it has set forth, the men must become submissive to its demands and sacrifice their true natures (if they differ from the norm). Therefore, toeing the party line, in this case, equals passivity, submission, and conformity. Forster portrays these qualities as specifically feminine in *Maurice*. For him, a "real" man stays true to his nature. A "real" man does not passively submit to the demands of society.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Forster creates characters that embody hope for other people, hope for himself, and hope that his work will present the possibility of an evolved ideal well enough that cultural attitudes, beliefs, and norms might evolve as well. Although he is usually grouped in with the Edwardians and the early Modernists, in many ways Forster is as much of a Victorian as Charles Dickens. Although he does write from a perspective that reflects the anxieties of the modern age, although he does create fiction that seeks to reflect accurately the "new" realities of life in the post-industrial revolution period, and although his characters embody the sense of loss induced by the disintegration of fixed identities, Forster's work hinges on the hope that social consciousness can evolve, that people can be better and more caring and more naturally true to themselves.

In *A Room with a View*, Forster begins his exploration of the effeminate male by first examining the demise of the decadent as an orthodox male gender role. But he does not stop here. While he recognizes that the age of the decadent, as represented by Oscar Wilde, has come to an end with Wilde's conviction and imprisonment, Forster does not reject the potential for a "masculinity" that includes space for the positive aspects of "femininity." The decadent fails as a model because it relies on affectation to maintain acceptable relationships between the genders. The decadent male may be effeminate in his pose, but he is all man when it comes to seeing women as objects, creating them in his image, and remaining dominant in his relationship with his woman. With Cecil, Forster portrays the demise of the decadent, but he also provides hope that with the ending of decadence, a "new man" can arise. This "new man" is educated and

upper-middle-class, and he begins to see women as equal to men rather than objects or possessions.

This evolution of the "new man" continues in *Howards End*. In this novel, Forster ensures that his readers see Tibby as an evolution of Cecil Vyse by having Tibby say that he would like to be the sort of man that Mr Vyse is. And Tibby is that sort of man – but better. He views his sisters as competent independent women who are capable of making their own decisions and living their own lives as they see fit to live them. He is loving, nurturing, caring, and understanding. He does not dominate the women in his life through violence, capital, or any perceived masculine superiority. Tibby is the fruit of the evolution. Yet Forster recognizes that society is still not ready to accept this "new man." Tibby's sisters, Helen and Margaret, mock him for his effeminacy, mourn that they don't have a "real boy" in their house, and blame him for holding them back with his "sickliness." To them, to Charles Wilcox, and sometimes even to the narrator, Tibby is weak, ineffectual, and womanly. Nevertheless, Forster hopes that the society will begin to recognize the positive evolution of Tibby as a blended gendered ideal, as the "new man." By seeing a "connection" within Tibby, part of the evolution that began in Cecil, women like Helen, women like Margaret, and men like Charles will all be better off with "men" like Tibby in their lives.

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