

HOWARDS END AS A HEARTBREAK HOUSE: E. M. FORSTER,  
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, THE GREAT WAR,  
AND THE CONDITION OF THE EMPIRE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) and George Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House* (1919/20), the authors' relationship to contemporary liberal British imperialism, and the Great War. Both of the texts are considered by critics to belong to the "condition of England" theme, but the relation of this theme to the international concerns of the British Empire have gone relatively unnoticed. The texts are loaded with violent imagery and representations of violence. This violence is intrinsically connected to the issues of maintaining an Empire. Both Shaw and Forster use post-realist forms in order to render their critiques more digestible to their audiences. In *Howards End*, Forster presents his liberal-humanist fantasy, representing not reality as it is but reality as it could/should be. He fills his text, though, with instances of violence in tandem with the problems of imperial rule to undermine the sense of security that the fantasy otherwise provides. Forster offers questions rather than answers. In refusing to conclude his novel with any clear-cut vision for who will "inherit England" (and the Empire) and what that will actually mean, Forster is expressing an anxiety of uncertainty and pessimism for the future. In *Heartbreak House*, Shaw has invented his own world wherein he might stage a commentary on violence and class that responds to the conditions of the war and imperialist policies. He stages his own anxieties and concerns for the future of not just England but Western culture at large and specifically the violence it seems to have embraced as just another aspect of life. Both of the houses, *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House* themselves, are violent, hostile places made so because of the conditions of imperialism.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to Danielle, who listened to me drone on about Shaw and Forster for months and who came to Alabama with me for this grand adventure called “Graduate School.”

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are only used for the parenthetical citations that are frequently employed.

<i>AWI</i>	<i>A War Imagined</i> by Samuel Hynes
<i>TEToM</i>	<i>The Edwardian Turn of Mind</i> by Samuel Hynes
<i>EO</i>	<i>Edwardian Occasions</i> by Samuel Hynes
<i>HE</i>	<i>Howards End</i> by E. M. Forster
<i>AN</i>	<i>Aspects of the Novel</i> by E. M. Forster
<i>SLF</i>	<i>The Selected Letters of E. M. Forster</i>
<i>FJD</i>	<i>E. M. Forster's Journals and Diaries</i>
<i>TCAC</i>	<i>The Creator as Critic</i> by E. M. Forster
<i>TCfD</i>	<i>Two Cheers for Democracy</i> by E. M. Forster
<i>BBC</i>	<i>The BBC Talks of E. M. Forster</i>
<i>HH</i>	<i>Heartbreak House</i> by George Bernard Shaw
<i>CLS</i>	<i>The Collected Letters of George Bernard Shaw</i>
<i>TMWI</i>	<i>The Matter with Ireland</i> by George Bernard Shaw
<i>CSAtW</i>	<i>Common Sense About the War</i> by George Bernard Shaw
<i>MCS</i>	<i>More Common Sense About the War</i> by George Bernard Shaw
<i>JRF</i>	<i>Joy Riding at the Front</i> by George Bernard Shaw

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## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO	
“A TIME OF TRANSITION”: 1899-1914.....	13
CHAPTER THREE	
“HOPE WITHOUT FAITH”: E. M. FORSTER AND <i>HOWARDS END</i> .....	31
CHAPTER FOUR	
THEATRE OF WAR: GEORGE BERNARD SHAW AND <i>HEARTBREAK HOUSE</i> ...	68
CHAPTER FIVE	
HOWARDS END AS A HEARTBREAK HOUSE.....	91
POSTSCRIPT.....	105
REFERENCES.....	107

“What will the future make of the present? That is a question which opens a wide field for speculation, but secures no certain reply.” – C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (5)

“*Only connect...*” – Epigraph to *Howards End* (3)

*‘Let a European War break out – the war, perhaps between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, which so many journalists and politicians in England and Germany contemplate with criminal levity. If the combatants prove to be equally balanced, it may after the first battles, smoulder on for thirty years. What will be the population of London, or Manchester, or Chemnitz, or Bremen, or Milan, at the end of it?’* (The Great Society, by Graham Wallas, June 1914) – Epigraph to *Common Sense about the War* (16)

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

One may as well begin with E. M. Forster’s journal entry from his 1905 summer in Germany:

Nassenheide [Germany]  
April 8 Here since the 4<sup>th</sup>. On my way had three hours in Berlin – a terrible city, dirty, ugly, mean, fully of unhappy soldiers. Unter den Linden, of which I had a glimpse, looked merely large: and the museums, though costly, were vulgar...I don’t make out the G[ermans]s. They terrify me. *I swear anything they’re the coming nation... The country is unthinkable large and contented and patriotic – I mean [that] is its spirit as you go in the train. It’s got no charm, like Italy, where you think all time [sic] of the glorious limb sliding southward between warming seas; but an awful formlessness which – don’t know what. (FJD I 134, my emphasis)*

Then, one may as well note the curious comment George Bernard Shaw made in 1916:

After saying good-bye to Shaw before leaving for the Middle East, [actor and playwright Hesketh] Pearson was halfway down the stairs when Shaw leaned over

the balustrade and called out, 'The war will last another thirty years.' Then he waved a cheery farewell. (Weintraub 159)

This study is, in some ways, an attempt to connect these two incidents and the historical chasm known as The Great War that seemingly separates them but rather illuminates the ideological and aesthetic similarities of these two major writers as well as what they had to say about the time in which they lived – and what they thought about the world in which they were about to enter. Specifically, this study examines works that stand at the opposite ends of the catastrophe of 1914: Forster's *Howards End* (1910) and Shaw's *Heartbreak House* (written 1916-19, published 1919, and performed 1920). In Forster's novel and in Shaw's play, each author uses non-realistic elements to cast the texts in forms of fantasy. The form of the two works each allow the authors to move beyond the standard Victorian literary realism and thereby symbolically comment on the condition of England and, more significantly, an Empire on the verge of and during war. Furthermore, this enables them to forecast what the future holds for an Empire that, to them, seemed to be tottering on the edge of oblivion. Despite common thinking that the First World War was to be "the war to end war," these texts, and others by these authors, are profoundly skeptical – even frightened – about the future. This anxiety, I argue, stems from a very basic concern over whether the Great War would, in fact, end war – regardless whether that means nationalistic war, class war, or war between the sexes.

The two works have much in common even beyond their use of fantasy; however, few critics have taken the two works together. Anne Wright's *The Literature of Crisis, 1910-1922: Howards End, Heartbreak House, Women in Love and The Waste Land* (1984), though, brings the two together in an extended dialogue. To her, the texts are highly attuned to the broader cultural awareness of impending doom. She reads the texts separately, though – shortchanging the critical potential that exists between the two works. I want to emphasize these similarities.

For example, each belongs to the tradition of “condition of England” fiction but also play with and change that tradition, expanding it to include not just England but the British Empire at large. Both the novel and the play feature representations of violence both in the deaths of characters as well as in discussions and displays of less severe violence. Both critique capitalism. Both feature a pair of sisters at the center of the plot. Both, I argue, use all of these aspects and more to explore the perilous uncertainties facing England in the face of and during the Great War and ultimately suggest that more violence is inevitable.

E. M. Forster and George Bernard Shaw experienced the First World War, its approach, and its wake in vastly different ways, though. Forster left England to work at a hospital in Alexandria, Egypt while Shaw remained in Britain and became one of the war’s and the Empire’s most outspoken and infamous critics. Prior to the war, Forster was primarily known for his Italian-setting comedies while Shaw was the, again, outspoken Fabian socialist critic and playwright who scandalized the literary world with his equally outspoken essays and plays – several of which were banned from public performance in London by the Lord Chamberlain. After the war, Forster returned to Britain with a sense that he no longer belonged, finding himself a relic of a way of life that had faded into the past. Shaw, on the other hand, went on being a social and political commentator in essays and plays that only became more and more radical (as evidenced by his first post-war play *Back to Methuselah* [published in 1921] which depicts a Utopian future where man has evolved into superman). Still, Forster was not quite so faded as to remain silent. Before, during, and after the war, Forster wrote essays – mostly published after the war – on politics and, occasionally, on the war itself. He also became more and more popular as a speaker on various BBC radio programs.

Even in these writers' letters and journals, the basic differences in their personalities are clear. Shaw's letters often read more like miniature treatises on everything from the Irish Question to Women's Rights to vegetarianism. Forster's, on the other hand, are not only (generally speaking) shorter in length but are (again, generally) more personal and less polemical.<sup>1</sup> What's more, Forster is generally recognized by critics as a liberal-humanist (as will be recounted below) while Shaw's Fabian socialism was well rehearsed by himself and has equally been well-recounted by critics. When the war broke out, Forster was 35 and Shaw was over twenty years his senior at 58. Despite these differences (and other, more consequential, differences as will be shown), Shaw and Forster shared a deep and complex concern for the condition of England that was ultimately bound in a concern for the condition of the British Empire before, during, and after the war. These concerns are surprisingly similar in both their articulation and execution and are manifest in both non-fiction and imaginative texts.

The Great War is generally understood by scholars to be the event that ushered in the modern era. To Samuel Hynes, the war was "the agent of change" and not just "a narrative of military actions" (*AWI* xiii). Hynes would likely agree with Barbara Rosecrance's notion that "Time and history define the fault: the Great War appears to most critics an unbridgeable chasm between Georgian meliorism and modern alienation" (109). "Chasm" is the term Hynes, in his book *A War Imagined* (1990), uses to express the historical vacuum the war created, writing,

It brought to an end the life and values of Victorian and Edwardian England; but it did something more fundamental than that: it added a new scale of violence and

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<sup>1</sup> I am, of course, being reductive, here. To say that Shaw's letters aren't personal at all underestimates the warmth, kindness, and charitable nature he clearly felt for his friends and the ferocity with which he attacked others. Alternatively, Forster's letters aren't devoid of political and social commentary. Still, my point is simply that the sheer quantity of political-social commentary in Shaw's letters stands in stark quantity to how infrequently such discussions appear in Forster's letters and how much more relationship-driven Forster's letters seem to be in comparison to Shaw's.

destruction to what was possible – it changed reality. That change was so vast and so abrupt as to make the years after the war seem discontinuous from the years before, and that discontinuity became a part of English imaginations. (xi)

Despite this, he argues that

The story does not begin in 1914, nor end in 1918, but extends back into the Edwardian world before the war, and forward into the modern, post-war world, ending in the early 1930s, with the Myth of the War fixed, Modernism dominant in the arts, and a new world war beginning to enter the consciousness as a possibility, to make them once more different. (xiv-v)

If the story begins before 1914, before the beginning of the war, and does not end in 1918, then how did the artists of the time perceive the changes taking place around them? To what extent did writers encounter the notion of a future, catastrophic war? To what extent did writers during the war feel that an abrupt change had taken place that would continue after peace was made? For Shaw and Forster, these questions are answered in their imaginative writing. Forster *did* sense the threat of a specifically German threat long before the war. Shaw *did* have a sense that the violence of the war had made life itself more violent and that that wasn't going to go away anytime soon.

Another major contributing factor, especially as far as this study is concerned, is the gradual downfall of Victorian liberalism that began with the Second Anglo-Boer War and the end of the Great War. Indeed, so tremendous was the party's decline that George Dangerfield titled his study of the phenomenon *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935). Vincent Sherry acutely articulated the literary impact of this "death" in linguistic terms at the sentence level in modernist writing in his brilliant work on *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (2003). Sherry concludes, "Liberalism... went on dying. The agon and pathos of that death may be heard in the contortions of the rationalist's language, which will prove to be of such tremendously consequential account for English literary modernism" (21). Sherry's

articulation of how the political conditions and language of politics affected modernist writing may similarly be extended to include the pre-war years – which is equally bound in the paradox of a liberal militarism in what Sherry identifies as the party’s “chief type of unreason” (26). In his recent and revealing historical research on *Militarism and the British Left: 1902-1914* (2013), Matthew Johnson writes, “[i]t is one of the ironies of the twentieth-century British political history that a Liberal government, elected in 1906 on a platform of ‘Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform’, should embark upon a naval arms race of unprecedented financial expense” (88). Johnson’s work seems to connect nicely to Paul Fussell’s classic study of literary modernism and the war in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975): “There seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War” (38). Irony is key to Fussell’s understanding of modernism and the war itself is also a key aspect of Johnson’s notion of pre-war liberal politics.

All of these ideas are irrevocably connected. The dominant liberal politics of the Edwardian period, the supposed champions of peace and progressivism, were ironically caught in a time of increasing domestic and international tension. This irony continued as imperialist nations were caught up in an arms race to paradoxically maintain peace, following the unreason that a surplus of arms would keep the *status quo* steady and thereby deny any single nation the obvious advantage in an extended struggle. What happened, instead, was a continuous stockpiling of arms that only fueled the desire to use them in war. Liberalism was thereby rendered, in part, much more closely aligned to radical conservatism – eventually leading to the party’s demise by the conclusion of the war they had sought to avoid, ironically, by building more weapons. All of this, I argue, contributes to Forster’s and Shaw’s art.

Both *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House* are considered part of the “condition of England” tradition, which stretches back at least to Thomas Carlyle’s essays *Chartism* (1839) and *Past and Present* (1843). In those works “the condition of England” problem primarily concerned the questions wrought by the Industrial Revolution and its impact on Britain. Charles Frederick Gurney Masterman took up the mantle again in his 1909-essay *The Condition of England*. The essay’s subject is the current way of life as he sees it and speculation about the future. As a more thorough reading of the text will later illustrate, Masterman is, like Forster and Shaw, deeply concerned about the present and anxious about the future. “The condition of England” is also a nineteenth and twentieth-century literary theme. As far as it concerns this study, that theme was most frequently (or famously) expressed through metaphoric and metonymic country houses in novels ranging from Jane Austen to Charles Dickens right up to Forster and Shaw. “These tiny Englands” as Masterman called them (23), contained symbolic and sometimes even allegorical figures that stood for various socio-political notions and groups. For example, a character may stand in for the middle class while another is representative of the extremely poor. Houses provide a space wherein writers can, through characters and stories, negotiate their take on the current condition of England and suggest a potential future within the broader emblematic environment of rural England that, in Masterman’s words, was “everywhere hastening to decay” (148). Forster and Shaw both take this tried-and-true trope and change it to express particular modern issues. In doing so, I argue, they evolve a literary tradition, performing a kind of modernist act – transforming the condition of England problem into the condition of the Empire problem through the threat of perceived violence in the near future and the critique of the political-economic conditions that enabled the lives of its most prosperous inhabitants.

Literary criticism has done little in the way of formally addressing anticipatory literature – probably, in part because of the fine line between “anticipatory” and “prophetic” – although there are exceptions. In Sebastian D. G. Knowles’ study *A Purgatorial Flame: Seven British Writers and the Second World War* (1990), he coined the term “Literature of Anticipation.” He writes, “[t]he years of Chamberlain’s Ministry (May 1937–May 1940) were, in literary as in geopolitical terms, years of anticipation, looking ahead to a war future” (1). Knowles claims, “The Literature of Anticipation is a phenomenon peculiar to the Second World War... No war before or since has produced so considerable a body of prophetic texts” (2). I argue that Knowles’ term may be applied equally to the literature leading up to the First World War. Hynes provides evidence to suggest that there was, in fact, a great deal written about the Great War before a single shot was fired. In *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (1968), he reports:

Over the years from 1900 to the war, the publication of invasion literature increased markedly; there were as many books and pamphlets published during these fourteen years as during the preceding thirty. But numbers alone do not tell the whole story; one must add three points. First, the circulation of this Edwardian invasion literature was vastly increased, partly through publication in mass-circulation newspapers like the *Daily Mail*; second, the flow of books was not steady through the period – it hit a peak in the years 1906-1909; and third, it concentrated on one enemy – Germany. (34-5)

That the texts were circulated via newspapers suggests a popular literature of anticipation in the form of these invasion stories. That the “flow of books... hit a peak in the years 1906-1909” suggests a particular kind of anxiety that probably stemmed from the Anglo-German armaments race and especially the German construction of dreadnaughts to compete with the British navy that parallels the peak of invasion literature. Perhaps most surprisingly, though, is the focus on a specifically German adversary – suggesting an acute awareness of pre-war, high-stakes political tensions between these two particular Empires amidst the quagmire of continental threats from older enemies (such as France and Russia). Hynes further names several specific examples of

invasion literature including Robert Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), William Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906) and *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894), H. G. Wells' *The War in the Air* (1908), and a 1914 reprint of the popular *The Battle of Dorking* (1874) as particularly popular invasion novels during the Edwardian period (*TEToM* 35-45). Invasion literature, though, is only one kind of literature of anticipation characteristic of the pre-World War One years. Of course, there were sensational political pamphlets in mass and private circulation as well as "Patriot" plays like *An Englishman's Home* (1909) by Major Guy du Maurier, and others.<sup>2</sup> This play was something of a propaganda piece so ardently English that, when it played in Dublin, according to Hynes, it "had to be done largely in dumb show because dialogue was not audible above the shouts of 'Sinn Fein' and the singing of 'God Save Ireland' (*TEToM* 48). Hynes calls H. G. Wells's novel *Boon* (1914) "the first war book that matters," while also acknowledging that Wells began writing it in 1911 (*AWI* 24 and 21, respectively). Another Wells work, *Tono-Bungay* (1909), ends with the protagonist building and selling war machines. Additionally, speculative essays questioned how the inevitable war would impact the various aspects of life. Further evidence of a broader cultural "anticipation" will be illustrated through political and historical examples in chapter two. Such texts and awareness point directly to how the Great War did have a pre-war culture of anticipation.

This pre-war culture of anticipation is part of what cultivated the proto-modernism of Edwardian art. Artists found ways of expressing these conditions and did so in post-realist forms. In this way, writers like Shaw and Forster paved the way for the post-war artists more readily identified as modernists (or "high modernists"), who pushed and rented the limits of literary form. Here, the focus is primarily on what Forster called "fantasy" and the violence staged

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<sup>2</sup> See *TEToM* 15-54 for a more comprehensive account of pre-war war literature.

within the “fantasy” of *Howards End* and, to recall *Heartbreak House*’s subtitle “A Fantasia in the Russian Manner,” the “fantasia” of *Heartbreak House*. Both Shaw and Forster use a heightened sense of reality as part of their anticipatory art. If, as already noted, Hynes and others see the Great War as “changing reality” Shaw and Forster both illustrate that this change was already taking effect before and during the war through their use of form. Using non-naturalistic or post-realist forms of expression, Shaw and Forster are not only able to pointedly begin a social commentary on both the present and the future but do so through an expression of the current conditions of anxious anticipation in aesthetic terms.

The next chapter outlines the historical circumstances of the pre-war years in broad terms. The main aim of chapter two is three-fold: firstly, to illustrate the complexity of the times in which Forster and Shaw lived; secondly, to underpin the subsequent discussion of Shaw’s and Forster’s texts in a historical, social, and political framework that takes into account both the international tensions as well as domestic issues of the day (focusing mostly on the period of roughly twenty years from the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 through the outbreak of the war in 1914); thirdly, to demonstrate how the pre-war conditions enabled Shaw and Forster to create non-naturalistic worlds in a proto-modernist mode.

Chapter three focuses on a close reading of *Howards End* and specifically on the issues of narration, violence and performances of violence, and the ambiguous ending within the context of fantasy and their connection to the problems of liberal imperialism. After opening with a discussion of Forster’s own experiences during the Edwardian period, this reading highlights some of the ways in which Forster engages with fantasy that takes the seemingly realist novel into the realm of post-realist form. Fantasy loads events and material objects with symbolism – the concert they attend, Margaret leaping from the car, the death of Leonard Bast

after being struck by a German blade, etc. These events and items are all employed by a not-quiet-unbiased or dependable narrator, distancing “reality” of the story from the reader. The narrator’s telling of the story renders it in fantastic terms. The plot’s conclusion figures into the notion of an alternative expression of reality prior to the War, generally seen as the break that facilitated artists to be able to express a (proto-)modernist English reality. Forster’s fantasy-world in *Howards End* anticipates the likes of Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre that sought for an intellectual rather than an emotional audience response – the “fantastic” qualities of the text (like its “contrived” plot, heavy use of symbolism, and biased narrator) force the reader to question the text and the world it purports to represent. Through the fantastic and proto-didactic elements of the novel, Forster is able to critique the condition of the British Empire, resolving to not answer the questions he poses or resolve the anxieties he expresses. Rather, the reader is left to ruminate on these themes and concerns. In refusing to conclude his novel with any clear-cut vision for who will “inherit England” (and the Empire) and what that will actually mean, Forster is, himself, expressing an anxiety of uncertainty and pessimism for the future.

Chapter four continues the discussion with a close reading of *Heartbreak House*. As in the previous chapter, the author’s experiences and non-fiction prose is examined – especially Shaw’s war writing and his thoughts on Ireland and other class struggles as these inform the notions of Empire and politics at the play’s core. The historical setting of Shaw’s play is free from the Great War – it does not necessarily take place during the First World War or any war that has actually happened. Shaw has invented his own world wherein he might stage a commentary on violence and class that responds to the conditions of the war. As with *Howards End* the ambiguous ending of *Heartbreak House* is of particular concern in this study. Shaw’s play is less didactic than Forster’s novel, however, it still ends in uncertainty. It also ends in

explosive violence and death. Shaw also calls on a multitude of literary and theatrical voices and traditions ranging from his contemporaries Ibsen and Strindberg to Shakespeare to Goethe and even to classical texts and myths from antiquity. All of this, I argue, affords Shaw a kind of Forster-esque space of fantasy in which he stages his own anxieties and concerns for the future of not just England but Western culture at large and specifically the violence it seems to have embraced as just another aspect of life.

The final chapter considers *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House* side-by-side and shifts the focus to the houses themselves, exploring what might be revealed if *Howards End* is a *Heartbreak House* as Shaw defines it in his Preface to the play. Since both of these texts are in the vein of the “condition of England” novel/play, in exploring the houses themselves I am ultimately exploring how two radically different authors embodied England and English character before, during, and immediately after the war in strikingly similar ways by illustrating an evolution in the tradition of the English country house. By changing the houses, both Shaw and Forster express the ongoing cultural change. In particular, I argue that they ultimately change the house to being not just a symbol for England, but for the British Empire. Broadly speaking, this reading contributes to historical cultural studies of early twentieth century Britain by providing a new way of suggesting that the mere approach of the Great War in and of itself as well as the domestic problems such as Women’s Suffrage and the Irish Question were enough to trigger a shift in how artists understood and expressed the rapidly evolving world around them. In a more presentist sense, though, reading the texts through this historicist lens allows for some degree of solace in our own anxious anticipatory and uncertain times. Shaw and Forster’s texts ultimately point to a critique of politics and economics that implicate the Empire as a failing, falling entity on the verge of destruction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “A TIME OF TRANSITION”: 1899-1914

#### Part I: “The Illusion of Security”

In order to understand these works and these authors, it is absolutely essential to understand the times in which they lived. Shaw and Forster both wrote explicitly on politics outside of their imaginative works. These ideas, though, permeate their imaginative works – sometimes explicitly and sometimes more subtly through the use of symbolic content and forms. This chapter simply lays out some of that historical content. The range of dates selected to explicate are somewhat arbitrary. We must travel back far enough so as to understand how Forster and Shaw came into the Edwardian period and its politics, its individual historical incidents, and its culture, but not so far back as to necessitate the recounting of the entire Victorian era. Indeed, Victorianism has a great deal to do with this study as its culture and traditions began to fall into decay at the beginning of the twentieth century. I have chosen as a starting place the very end of Victoria’s reign and specifically the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. This war, I propose, exacerbates many of the key problems and concerns for the Empire that Forster and Shaw later critique, particularly the problem of how to reconcile the Empire, British liberalism, and militarism. It is also pertinent, I think, for a study on how writers perceived that times were changing to see exactly *from what they were* changing. Forster and Shaw, I argue, are acutely aware of these issues. Forster’s world in *Howards End* is fraught with the issues of colonial rule while at the same time, the Wilcoxes owe their comfortable lifestyles

in part to Britain's Empire. Indeed, even the Schlegels, as Louise Harrington notes, "dismiss the Empire, [although] it is the very existence of that same Empire which enables them to move from house to house, to attend debating societies, and take up worthy causes such as the Basts" (284-5). Shaw's Utterword couple also earns their living from Africa while Captain Shotover, who spends his energies devising death devices and hoards dynamite, supposedly sold his soul to the Devil in Zanzibar. In *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House*, Forster and Shaw comment upon Edwardian imperialism and its problems with militarization and its connection to imperial capital made in foreign lands and conflicts.

The Edwardian period is very generally seen as "a social Eden before the Fall, a time of order and harmony, the golden evening of Empire and the Pax Britannica" (Duckworth 3). Hynes recalls Sir Edward Grey's infamous line at the start of the war: "The lamps are going out all across Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our time" (qtd. in *AWI* 3). Hynes argues that the single most prominent symbol for the beginning of the war was Grey's dampened light which represented the end of civilization as it was understood – that the world was to be plunged into darkness (*AWI* 3-4). Alistair M. Duckworth, though, convincingly argues that the notion that the Edwardian period had been a shining beacon of prosperous, civilized life, merely romanticizes and shortchanges the condition of England and its Empire at the onset of the war in 1914 made especially available in retrospect (3). Such a reading of the Edwardian period, as Hynes and Duckworth point out, ignores the increasingly militarized and threatening labor unions and suffragettes, the continuously evolving and escalating problems in Ireland, the armaments race with Germany, a divided liberal party, the incredible gap in wealth distribution between the rich and the poor, and the poverty-stricken blocks in all of Britain and Ireland's major cities where

diseases festered, to name but a few. As Duckworth puts it, “Far from a paradise, the Edwardian period (1901-1910) was a time of social and political strife” (3).

All of these problems, I argue, ultimately stem from the problem of the Empire and the residue of Victorian liberalism. While Britain’s imperialism and its manifest problems in the early twentieth century could be sketched from the Regency era (1811-1820) (or even earlier [especially in regard to Ireland]), most of the problems can be exemplified by examples from much later. The first of such examples, and the beginning of the historical placement of these two texts for the purposes of this literary study, is the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. As Matthew Johnson notes, “war was no stranger to the Edwardian imagination” (20). Indeed, “during the sixty-four years of Queen Victoria’s long reign there was not a single year that did not see British soldiers fighting in some corner of the world” (20). With the exception of the Crimean War, though, virtually all of the British wars during the Victorian period were wars fought to maintain or advance imperial control over African, Asian, Pacific, or Atlantic lands and peoples. These were wars of Imperial administration driven by economics.

The Second Anglo-Boer War, though, is the perfect event to exemplify the British military state as it relates to the Empire, liberalism, and the domestic problems already listed. As Johnson points out, “The [Second Boer] war unleashed a wave of popular ‘jingoism’, defined by J. A. Hobson as a pathological form of hyper-patriotism, involving ‘the glorification of brute force and an ignorant contempt for foreigners’” (11). This particular war, set some 8,000 miles from Downing Street fought against Dutch, Dutch-descendent, and native African farmers from whom Britain had won South Africa in 1814, could hardly be more removed from the daily existence of English civilians. The Boers fought for political and economic control of their own states while the British fought to maintain political and especially economic control over their

states. To the British Empire, control of South Africa meant the control of the South African Cape and the lucrative tariffs levied on traders passing around the continent as well as taxes on the people of the region.

The problem with the Boer War was that it kept going, sulking on for nearly four years. As George Dangerfield recounts, the prestige of liberal England “had suffered as the Boer War dragged on and England discovered how much blood it cost to run an Empire, particularly when that blood was spent in the prolonged and frequently ludicrous pursuit of a number of undaunted Dutch farmers” (21). Yet, as the war continued to drag on,

the [liberal] ‘Pro-Boer’ position of condemning the war while praising the British army become more difficult politically after September 1900, when the Boers turned to guerrilla tactics and the British responded with the burning of farms and internment of Boer families. In June 1901, in his most famous political speech of the war, the Liberal leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman denounced British practices as amounting to ‘methods of barbarism’... [maintaining] that it was the policy of the government, and not the conduct of the soldier, which he sought to critique. (Johnson 37)

In the face of ongoing guerrilla warfare and the establishment of concentration camps where tens of thousands of Boer civilians were killed, the conservative position dominant in the House of Commons since the outbreak of the war began to slip. Still, as often happens in times of patriotic war, while the war became increasingly unpopular, it was still relatively taboo to criticize the military itself.<sup>3</sup> That is not to say that the war and the military didn’t have shared critics. Indeed, Masterman, Noel Buxton, and G. P. Gooch all “complained bitterly at the ‘exaltation of military achievements and the relative disparagement of the more humdrum pursuits of civil life’ which they identified as a particularly disturbing component of the jingoism that had swept Britain” since the war (Johnson 28).

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<sup>3</sup> See Johnson (20-44) for an in-depth discussion of this phenomenon especially as it concerns the Boer War.

Popular opinion on the war also became increasingly convoluted as the war became more and more unjustifiable. “Wars of national defence were typically acknowledged as justifiable, as were those waged in the furtherance of a great moral cause” even in the British left (Johnson 21). Popular jingoism receded, at least for liberals, and as it went the traditional liberal anti-war sentiment returned; for “the widespread Edwardian acceptance of military conflict as an inescapable – and arguably even a legitimate – part of life did not, however, stretch to a popular belief in war as an absolute good in and of itself” (Johnson 22). Between this and the economic motives behind the war, the liberal party split into two groups, anti-war “Little Englanders” and “imperialist” supporters (Duckworth 4). Even the liberal party, traditionally against militarization and war, was divided over the Boer War – a war driven by economic motivations.

Shaw and Forster both wrote about the Boer War in essays and letters. Shaw, being a Fabian Socialist, was ardently against the war altogether “as wasteful, demoralizing, unnecessary, and ludicrously and sordidly inglorious in its reality. I *dont* [*sic*]<sup>4</sup> mean war... with any other qualification whatever: I mean war” (*SCL I* 169). In more than one letter, Shaw outlines his position on the war and its potential consequences for the factions involved. While Shaw was sympathetic to the Boer cause to shake off the shackles of imperial rule, he also anticipated that South Africa would continue down a capitalistic path until it would lead to civil war like it had in America (*SCL I* 119 and 122). As a result, he felt that the British Empire could enact socialism and socialistic legislature sooner than a free South African state could. Yet, he also was not exactly in favor of British victory, since he “recognize[d] no right of the good man to kill the bad man or to govern the bad man. The Boers have gone to war in defence of these rights. We have gone to war from pugnacity, greed and overfeeding” (*SCL I* 169). For Shaw,

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<sup>4</sup> Shaw didn’t use apostrophes for contractions. Since it was a part of his style, I am noting this idiosyncrasy here rather than interrupt every instance of this with “[*sic*]”.

there was no correct side in the Second Anglo-Boer War. The English were in the wrong. The Boers were in the wrong. In such events, Shaw tended to choose the side that, by his perception, would benefit the world the most. Since Fabian Socialism guided his sense of morality, Shaw favored British free trade and liberalism to American-style capitalism. Still – the war, it should be noted, was essentially an economic issue to Shaw.

Forster was quieter than Shaw on the matter, and only wrote about the Boer War in any extended monologue in retrospect. In a 1937 lecture, Forster discussed the past “Three Generations” of cultured England. Of the Boer War, and, by extension, the British imperialist project, he wrote, “It was no good talking about the tribes without the law when the tribes said they had laws. It was no good taking up the white man’s burden when it didn’t want to be taken up. Many of us soon saw that this crude imperialism had an economic side and we were put off” (*TCAC* 99). Of course, Forster is here referring to the Victorian project of spreading “civilized” government to the world in the form of democracy. Without this component, says Forster, the mask of morally driven Empire falls away to reveal the ugly face of Greed.

For both Forster and Shaw, the Second Anglo-Boer War raised questions about the nature of the British Empire – an Empire willing to spill the blood of tens of thousands between its own military, the opposing military, and the enemy civilian population in an effort to maintain the economic *status quo*. What’s more the British left were strangely divided over what, in theory, should have been a cut-and-dry issue. This division is precisely why the Boer War serves such a strong example – for the liberal party was to be confronted, over the next twelve years or so, with the problem of prioritizing its principles and deciding which it was willing to compromise for the sake of others. The Boer War demonstrates that progressivism may just take a back seat to free trade, and free trade capitalism may need to be fought for through military means that impede

upon the freedoms of citizens of the British Empire. Still, others utterly opposed the Boer War, seeing the violence as reckless and utterly not worth the prize.

The Empire facilitated the possibility of a particular culture in Britain – the leisurely and cultured classes as well as the aristocracy was at least partly dependent upon the Empire for the maintenance of their lifestyles. Yet, the Empire was fragily held in place by a weakening conservative party and a divided liberal party. It was under these conditions that Masterman considered “that the future, whether in orderly progress or with sudden or gradual retrogression, will be astonished at the ‘illusion of security’ in which today society reposes; forgetting that but a thin crust separates it from the central elemental fires, that the heart of the earth is a flame” (233). Masterman also understood that “with the destructive fury of the war comes the collapse in the whole edifice of credit which maintains the economic efficiency of the industrial system” (225). In other words, with war comes expenses and a wrench is thrown into the economic works of the nations involved. The condition of England was already in a dire state and was about to get worse *because* of the problems of its Empire. Indeed, Johnson notes, “[l]ate-Victorian critics of imperialism came to regard militarism as one of the most worrying social and political ills fostered by a policy of overseas expansion” (11).

From the end of the South African War until the outbreak of the Great War, the British Empire became more and more militarized – especially, strangely enough, after the liberal landslide victory in General Election of 1906, when liberals retook control of the House of Commons. Despite the win, liberal Britain would never reconcile its problems and the catastrophe of 1914 would ruin it and finally penetrate the crust, and the fire-heart of the earth would light ablaze and illuminate the falsehood of the illusion of security. Both Forster and Shaw saw all of this happening and it manifests itself in various ways in their texts – particularly in

their ambiguous endings that portend unease and pessimism and their use of militaristic, Empire-related violence.

## **Part II: “A time of transition”**

By the end of the Boer War, Queen Victoria had died and King Edward VII had been crowned. The Edwardian period had begun. Hynes remarks that the period as a whole “was a time of transition” (*TEToM* 5). The crown had passed after 67 years to the heir of Victoria and everything was changing. “Virtually everything that is thought of as characteristically modern already existed in England by 1914: aircraft, radiotelegraphy, psychoanalysis, Post-Impressionism, motion picture palaces, the Labour party were all Edwardian additions to the English scene” (*TEToM* 5). Political change was also on the horizon. Tensions increased in Ireland. Labour Unions united. The arms race intensified. The country became more and more militant. The nation was certainly transitioning – England was going from a nation that conducted foreign wars from a safe distance to a domestically militant nation at odds with itself and its continental neighbors.

The failure of the conservatives in 1906 was attributed to an ongoing debate pushed by Joseph Chamberlain, the conservative leader, in 1903. Chamberlain wanted to establish a tariff around England. Dangerfield described the motive for the tariff as “you could not ask favours of the colonies without having something to give in return, and the colonies, alas, were all protectionist” (22). This would help with relations within the Empire as well as help to curb the economic inflation spurred in part by the Boer War. However, “it carried with it one implication which nobody cared to face in 1903: it meant that England was no longer commercial dictator of the world; that the Empire of Free Trade must soon become one with Nineveh and Tyre”

(Dangerfield 22). The liberals rallied behind the proposed tariff's weaknesses and especially the threat to free trade and won the election in a landslide (Dangerfield 22).

The government itself became more and more militant through the creation of positions and offices related to the military, navy, and war issues throughout the Empire, even without the conservative party in power. Substantial militant additions were made to the government in 1904, 1906, and 1912. Johnson notes, “[i]n the wake of the South African War, military advisors from outside the cabinet were brought in, and the Defence Committee began to evolve into a more substantial and influential body including its own permanent secretariat” (55). The liberal government added to the list of military men in colonial power Field Marshal and Duke of Connaught, Prince Albert, who was made Governor-General of Canada, and Ronald Munro-Ferguson, an officer in the Grenadier Guards, and Liberal MP, who was made Governor-General of Australia (Johnson 50). They also kept military men in positions previously occupied by military men in the governorships of Malta, Gibraltar, and Bermuda (Johnson 49-50). This all is all the more peculiar considering that “many Liberals had long regarded their party as the particular champion of civilian authority in politics” (Johnson 49). The Parliament, itself, was hardly free from military men. “At least 120 Liberal and Labour MPs who sat in the House of Commons between 1902 and 1914 had either served in the armed forces or joined one of the militaristic pressure groups clamouring for ever greater resources to be devoted to the cause of national defense” (Johnson 157).

Similarly, a series of legislative pieces proposed and passed within the liberal government would have the general effect of developing a nation-at-arms. Campbell-Bannerman, now the leader of the liberal party in the House of Commons, wanted Britain to be “a nation under arms” (qtd. in Johnson 134). Lord Richard Haldane, in the War Office, developed a

program wherein boys finishing school at 14 or 15 “should already be proficient in the physical exercises which a recruit now learns, and in the most elementary movements of military drill” (qtd. in Johnson 144). This measure was supported in a trial-like measure supported by 75 MPs, 33 of which were liberals and 8 were labor party members. While the program was only carried out in a handful of state-sponsored schools, perhaps the most important idea behind this example is that Haldane and the lobbying groups that backed the measure all claimed they were acting in the name of peace – training boys at a young age to protect their country (Johnson 149).

The emphasis on young boys may have been noted in the above paragraph. Indeed, Hynes notes, “a nation at war *is* a male nation” (*AWI* 88). Johnson writes, “[f]or many Victorians and Edwardians ‘manliness’ meant essentially ‘Christian manliness’ or as it was sometimes termed, ‘muscular Christianity’. This tradition had clear martial overtones... Many authorities in Britain regarded sport... as the most effective means of fostering ‘manliness’ among the young” (23). Sports that fostered healthy competition and physical skills and prowess were particularly popular in the Edwardian period, such as football, cricket, rugby, polo, hunting, swimming, and boxing (Johnson 24).

All of this has been seen as a response to German or Prussian militarism. With the unification of Germany into an Empire and simultaneous defeat of France in 1871, Britain suddenly gained a new major competitor and threat.

From the later nineteenth century, militarism was regarded by most British (and many continental observers) as being synonymous with ‘Prussianism.’ Prussia, and from 1871 the German *Reich*, with its authoritarian government, politically powerful military caste, large standing army, and compulsory military service, appeared the paradigm of the militaristic state. (Johnson 10)

Johnson illustrates that what the English thought crude and barbaric in the Prussian militarist culture (“sauerkraut, militarism, and dueling”) manifested itself in different forms in England

and were equally regarded as crude and barbaric by the Germans (such as “boxing and football” (24). Developing a male youth culture around sports and military-like activities was Britain’s way of developing a military state without official conscription. What’s more, recalling Campbell-Bannerman’s accusation that the British actions in the Boer War were “mere methods of barbarism,” it can be reasonably conceived that Campbell-Bannerman was suggesting that the English were becoming too Prussian – too militant. It is another great, but terrible, irony that the events of the Second World War forever fixed notions of Germany together with concentration camps despite the British use of such camps against the Boers in South Africa. Shaw, in particular, would lampoon this attitude towards sports and the excitement that they fostered in *Heartbreak House* – but more on that later.

Beyond the standing army, Britain feared Germany because of her technological advances and machinery – in a word, her weapons. “The [British] War Office and the Admiralty, perceiving threats in the expansionist policies of post-Bismarckian Germany, committed Britain to a costly armaments race” (Duckworth 4). Even in the 1890s, “unease about the industrial and military challenge posed by the German Empire in particular led to a widespread belief, fostered by elements in the right-wing press such as Northcliffe’s *Daily Mail*, that a war between Britain and Germany might be inevitable” (Johnson 20-1). “Such concerns were raised even within Parliament; in 1909 the war secretary was asked to comment on the rumour ‘that there are, in a cellar within a quarter of a mile of Charing Cross, 50,000 stands of Mauser rifles and 7 ½ million Mauser cartridges’, to be used in a German invasion of the British Isles” (Johnson 21). The German threat was hardly a secret. Three separate attempts had been made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to come to a peace agreement – all three were failures. As Vincent Sherry notes, “[r]esistance to involvement in Continental wars had been a policy constant for the

Liberal party” (9). Yet, here was the British government not once but three times failing to establish a peaceful relationship with central Europe’s most powerful nation.

More concerning than sport and exercises, though, was the naval race between Germany and Britain. Johnson suggests that Britain’s island condition necessitated a powerful navy since she relied on materials, goods, and trade from abroad in order to achieve sustenance (67, 69). “Most importantly,” he writes, “navalism could be associated with the most sacred tenet of the Edwardian Liberal creed, Free Trade. Britain’s need for the cheap imported raw material that fed her industry, and more importantly the cheap foodstuffs that fed her people, could be met only as long as the shipping lanes remained open and secure” (85). The arms race was more than a stockpiling of weapons. In the case of the navy, it really was an attempt to secure Britain’s safety against a major threat – and she was ready to spend to protect herself. “In terms of spending on armaments and military preparations, Britain was one of the most heavily militarized states in Europe” (Johnson 157). Masterman called the race an “insane competition of armaments which takes place amongst the terrified nations of the world” (20). “One year ten huge ironclads confront twenty,” he continues. “A decade after, fifteen huge ironclads of another type have replaced the first: to be confronted again by thirty of the new floating castles” (20-1). Whether the liberal party had wanted it or not, by 1914 they had developed a militarized Britain.

Still, if Germany was a threat, Ireland was a bomb about to explode. Home Rule had passed in 1912 but was delayed by the House of Lords until 1914 when it was further delayed by the outbreak of the war. Prior to its passage, however, the northern counties in Ulster formed a militia to resist Home Rule should it be passed. A nationalist force gathered momentum in the south to counter the Ulster militia. As tensions rose, civil war seemed imminent. In an effort to, once again, quell a threat of violence by adding more weapons and soldiers, British troops were

moved into Ulster to keep the peace. Rumors swirled that the British forces would be used to coerce Ulster into accepting Home Rule. Amidst the rumors, several officers of Irish protestant descent or with Irish protestant connections resolved to refuse such orders and resign. These officers were then given an ultimatum: Ulster-born officers could hide until tensions cooled, or they could resign. Some decided to resign. Westminster attempted to resolve the situation by issuing a memorandum that stated a misunderstanding had occurred while also impressing upon the soldiers their duty to obey. Before it was sent, though, J. E. B. Seely, the secretary of state for war and Sir John French, the chief of the imperial general staff, added two paragraphs that altered the entire meaning of the memorandum: ensuring that the government would not use coercion in Ulster (Johnson 47-8). The incident is important for a number of reasons. First of all, it illustrates how close Ireland was to the brink of civil war between the north and the south. Secondly, it demonstrates the people's ability to militarize themselves for nationalistic and social causes. Thirdly, at multiple turns, it illustrates the militant-like strategies and maneuvers of the officers, soldiers, general staff, and cabinet. The Curragh Incident remained unsettled, for when the Great War broke out Home Rule was postponed indefinitely. Still, it brought to a head issues of social class between officers, illustrated to both southern and northern militias that the British forces would be something of a lame duck to either side, bolstering unionist confidence that the British would not be able to enforce Home Rule while simultaneously stirring up further support in the south. Finally, it illustrated that the military and War Office could successfully intervene in matters both militant and parliamentary.

In this section, I have tried to demonstrate through historical examples a few of the ways in which the Edwardian period was less-than idyllic. Rather than a post-Victorian garden party, the Edwardian period was a time of transition into a military state that also problematized the

understood relationship between the British left and the military, the Empire, and other states like Germany and, for all intents and purposes, Ireland. “Rather than simple antagonism, then, the relationship between militarism and progressive politics by 1914 was one of ambiguity and unresolved tension” (Johnson 4). These ambiguities and tensions are part of what Shaw and Forster sought to express in their art – particularly as they relate to violence and the future of England. As Dangerfield put it, “The Liberal Party which came back to Westminster with an overwhelming majority [in 1906] was already doomed. It was like an army protected at all points except for one vital position on its flank” (21). But, as Hynes summarized the Edwardian period, “Still, for the moment how opulent, how stable, how peaceful it all *seems*” (*TEToM* 3, my emphasis).

### **Part III: The Modernist War**

Paul Fussell wrote of the post-war experience,

Another phenomenon implying a special sensitivity to ‘division’ is the post-war popularity, perhaps especially at the University of Cambridge, of the famous injunction on the title page of Forster’s *Howards End*, which was published four years before the war: ‘Only connect.’ To become enthusiastic about connecting it is first necessary to perceive things as regrettably disjoined if not actively opposed and polarized. ‘Only connect’: ‘It could be said,’ Goronwy Rees observes, ‘that those two words, so seductive in their simplicity, so misleading in their ambiguity, had more influence in shaping the emotional attitudes of the English governing class between the two world wars than any other single phrase in the English language.’ (115)

Given what I’ve already laid out regarding the false notion of complete and abrupt change between the Victorian and Edwardian periods and the Edwardian and War years, “Only connect...” should be easily applicable to the pre-war years and the war years themselves. As a “time of transition,” a time of the “illusion of security” there were obvious ruptures and hernias in the body of history. Times of change necessitate rupture and abrasion. Indeed, it may be seen as the principle of the times, with liberalism and militarism joining to apply enough pressure to

make the pimple burst while the post-war years tried in vain to clean the open pustule from infecting. But, as Johnson writes,

the outbreak of the First World War represented the moment at which it became impossible for British progressives to avoid confronting the problem of militarism directly. The Great War proved destructive to the British Liberal Party because it put unbearable pressure on the tensions and ambivalences which had long characterized the relationship between ‘militarism’ and progressive politics, but which had never satisfactorily been resolved. (184)

And yet the war was *not* very much of a surprise! As has already been illustrated, it had been looming for decades. Masterman, too, saw it coming. Hynes goes so far as to call him the “undecided prophet” of his time, noting, “but if he is important in the history of Edwardian England it is because there were so many men like him” (*TEToM* 70). There are moments in *The Condition of England* where Masterman does seem to be waxing prophetic. For example, in a discussion on H. G. Wells’ *The War in the Air*, he describes how German airships will bomb cities around the world – provoking the retaliation of other nations, leading to the world at war and the destruction of civilization as they knew it. Masterman’s prophecy is eerily accurate. Already, in 1909, he had a sense that the world would be at war, that that war would be fundamentally different from what has come before it, and that it would be against, even instigated (as far as the English imagination is concerned) by Germany. Ultimately, though, Masterman ends his prophecy on an ambiguous note, writing, “We are uncertain whether civilization is about to blossom into flower, or wither in a tangle of dead leaves and faded gold” (234). Indeed, Hynes calls the Great War “the great *imaginative* event” of its time (*AWI* xi, original emphasis). We must *now* take Hynes to mean not only that the war inspired the art from its outbreak through the 1920s and ‘30s, but also that so great was its magnitude that it inspired imaginations long before Archduke Ferdinand’s assassination or the invasion of Belgium.

Almost as soon as the war began, writers responded to it in aesthetic terms. The first war poem of the war appeared in *The Times* on August 5 (Hynes *AWI* 25). Poems by Poet Laureate Robert Bridges, Rudyard Kipling, Maurice Hewlett, Edmund Gosse, Laurence Binyon, and William Watson among dozens of others were printed daily for popular consumption (Hynes *AWI* 25). Still, the First World War is also notoriously known for its propaganda. As it should happen, Masterman became the head of the new Department of Information created as a central hub for Britain's official war literature (Hynes *AWI* 26). Masterman gathered together the strongest army of literati he could muster. At a single meeting on September 2, James Barrie, Arnold Bennett, A. C. Benson, Hugh Benson, Robert Bridges, Hall Caine, G.K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, Anthony Hope Hawkins, Maurice Hewlett, W. J. Locke, E.V. Lucas, J. W. Mackail, John Masefield, G. M. Trevelyan, H. G. Wells, and Israel Zangwill were in attendance – Rudyard Kipling and Arthur Quiller-Couch were unable to attend but promised their cooperation (Hynes *AWI* 26). Hynes focuses his attention on who was present for the meeting. While this analysis proves valuable, it should also be noted who was *not* invited or in attendance (it is unclear if the two are mutually exclusive or not).<sup>5</sup> Of course, E. M. Forster and George Bernard Shaw are absent and it is unknown whether this was because they weren't invited or because they could not attend.

It may well be that Forster and Shaw were excluded, in part, because of how their art differed from those present. Hynes writes, “the ideas and works of modernism... were all present

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<sup>5</sup> Hynes draws particular attention to the ages of the men, which average at “just over fifty” and pointing out that none of them were young enough to enlist (*AWI* 26). While this may be able to be read as a way for these old men to contribute to the cause, Hynes instead reads the moment as indicative of the gap to become apparent much later of the realities versus the expectation of war as exemplified by the writing these men ultimately did for the Department of Information, arguing that this further stigmatized and embittered the young men actually fighting against the old men that had sent them to war.

in England before the war: one could look at Cubist paintings, or hear Schoenberg conduct his own works, or read *Dorian Gray* or Nietzsche easily enough in 1914” (*AWI* 58). Art like this, said critics, had allowed England to slip into decay, to become complacent and decadent. Had modern art not been around, so they said, England would still be on top of the world. Modern art, as much as Germany, had caused the war. So, “to be Modern, they saw, was to be German, and it was right and patriotic that English critics should declare war on Modernism wherever it could be detected. This war against the modern was fought by critic, journalists, and politicians, in newspapers and periodicals, in House of Commons debates, and in the law courts; it went on as long as the war did” (*AWI* 58-9). Such critics though, also ignored the ongoing political failings of liberal imperialism. As Frederic Jameson writes, “[t]he structure of imperialism also [made] its mark on the inner forms and structures of that new mutation in literary and artistic language to which the term modernism is loosely applied” (44). Such literature varies from “the literature of imperialism, since that literature (Kipling, Rider, Haggard, Vern, Wells [the kind of writers involved in Masterman’s committee]) is by and large not modernist in any formal sense” (Jameson 44). In other words, modernism, to Jameson, is informed by a form dictated by the conditions of imperialism, not just a discussion or representation of imperialism.

The notion that modernism was Germanic and therefore evil was especially prevalent at the beginning of the war, when British society as a whole naively thought they understood what the conflict would look like. But, as the war went on, in what Fussell would probably identify as characteristically ironic, modernism would come to be seen as the only adequate expression of the war. This led Hynes to declare, “the war was Modernist” (*AWI* 136). It had ruptured history, accelerated it, and spewed it forth again in a mess. Eventually, it came to be understood “that the violence and mechanism of pre-war experimental art *had been validated as perceptions of reality*

*by the war itself*. Not only validated, but made necessary; for if war was a nightmare in reality, then only a distorting, *defamiliarizing* technique could render it truthfully – art would have to become ‘untrue but actual’” (*AWI* 164, my emphasis).

Forster and Shaw are both a part of this pre-war modernism that took the war to validate as modernist and not the lingering remains of an anachronistic realism. Their use of fantasy, as will be shown, distorts and defamiliarizes the reader and/or audience in order to render a truthful depiction of modern life. *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House* are both “untrue but actual” in their expression of a failing liberal imperialism that at once lends to the works’ content and form in a series of ruptures that are variously staged through narration, violence, and ambiguity. In doing so, they present a startlingly accurate and frightening portrayal of the condition of the world.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### “HOPE WITHOUT FAITH” – E. M. FORSTER AND *HOWARDS END*

#### Part I: “Hopeful Without Faith”

Forster was acutely aware of the instability of England and the Empire by the end of the Second Anglo-Boer War – the problems of which that war had made abundantly clear. The Empire was held together by a contentious relationship with economics and could now only be held together through armed force. This was absolutely at odds with Forster’s own liberal-humanism, which strove for the freedoms of the individual above all since such force infringed on those rights in order to maintain the status of the already-rich back home. An increasingly liberal government was building an increasingly militarized government and culture. At the same time, Forster was absolutely aware of the threat to the British Empire’s dominance from the German Empire. These tensions are reimagined in fantastical terms in *Howards End*, which uses its form and symbols to explore these issues – and his pessimism regarding the Empire’s future and what violence that might entail. *Howards End* is a strangely violent text, its language riddled with images of death, heat, fire, and doom (even if they are only used to describe a social *faux pas*). In addition, there are deaths in the story that are compounded by symbolic gestures relating to the Empire. All of this, taken together, permits a reading of the novel wherein Forster critiques the imperialist policies of the British government and society.

Forster admired the German people and their artistic culture yet feared their militant way of life and industrial prowess. *Howards End* is a space wherein Forster may critique what he saw

as problematic with the German way of life (violence and militarism) with what he admired (aesthetics and culture). Furthermore, it provided an outlet for Forster to transfer these issues into English contexts through the use of English settings, politics, world-views, etc. Forster made two trips to Germany that he writes about from which his views on that Empire might be gleaned. The first was in 1902, which he took with his mother, Alice Clara Forster. During that trip, Forster spent time in Munich which he “much enjoyed but spent most of [his] time in its Museums” (*SLF I 57*). “The New Picture Gallery and the Schade,” he writes, “are much better than the Tate – if such infinitesimal praise is worth giving. The only modern I really caught on to is Arnold Böcklin who pleases me immensely” (*SLF I 57*). Since Böcklin was Swiss and not German, though, it is difficult to glean much about Forster’s attitude about art in Germany beyond that they exhibited art that he approved of immensely. Indeed, during his 1905 trip, he commented that the Germans had “prigged so many Italian pictures” that it actually concerned him (*FJD I 134*). Still, Forster’s inclination to spend so much of his time in German museums indicates a kindred appreciation between himself and cultured Germany for art.

Forster most deeply and explicitly appreciated German culture through its music – an observation that becomes of some importance in *Howards End* through understanding the concert scene as well as the Schlegels, themselves the children of a German immigrant. On several occasions during these trips, Forster saw German opera productions. During the 1902 trip, he saw Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* (1791) which he “enjoyed... very much... but [was] yet too inexperienced a goer to listen properly to the music and singing” (*SLF I 58*). Instead, he tried to treat the operas like plays trying to “analyse the plot and the motives of the characters, for which I ought to be shot” (*SLF I 58*). During his 1905 trip, he saw productions of Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* (1869), *Seigfried* (1876), and *Die Walküre* (1856) – all of which he enjoyed as operas,

that is to say, as music, in their own right (*FJD I* 133-9). Forster also heard German music in concert halls in England and he frequently mentioned works by Beethoven in his letters – all of which he liked (*SLF I* 16, 28, 213, 274, 287).

In at least one instance, Forster encountered German hostility to England through a literary event. As opposed to music, German literature offered Forster a similar sort of English antagonism that the invasion novels in England had offered of Germany. In July of 1905, for example, he wrote to his mother that he saw “a play in which England was insulted” (*SLF I* 80). He recounts how one of his party, recognizing his nationality, told him, ““Had we known you were coming Never Never would this have happened. But the dresses are all bought and all rehearsed, and would you, could you, pardon our incivility”” (*SLF I* 80). The comment is a curious one, suggesting that the Germans are not only aware of their offense, but are aware of a general practice of hiding such “incivilities” from English eyes – England, Germany’s own rival. Forster writes,

The Englishman [in the play] was dressed in a white pot hat, with a blue veil, a long white coat like an umpire, check trousers, and red socks. In his hand he carried what must have been a Bædeker, and he sang a song with ‘Aow Yes’ at the end of each line. They fell on him and beat him; I could not make out why; and then they made friends – I could not make out why – and the curtain fell. (*SLF I* 80)

Forster’s experience watching this play now reads, in the twenty-first century, something like an Eugene Ionesco play, with its national stereotypes and the seemingly senseless violence and motives. While the language barrier was clearly the culprit behind Forster’s inability to follow the play, the fact that he was unable to understand why the Germans didn’t like the Englishman, beat him, and then only after beating him were friends, surely left an indelible mark upon Forster’s attitude toward Anglo-Germanic relations. What’s more, a cultural event – the singing of the “Aow Yes” song, according to Forster’s account – signals the tension. To Forster, the

tension between England and Germany is conceived, at least in part, by perceived cultural differences.

Beyond the realm of art, Forster's encounters with actual Germans also reinforced Forster's awareness of the potential for war between England and Germany. It may even be that Forster's time in Germany allowed him to see that the Germans saw a war coming as much as the English did. In a passage written on his Nassenheide experience, he recalls the kind of assignments and lessons he taught the three children under his tutelage. He reproduces one student's essay, the subject for which Forster provided: "If there was a war between England and Germany, which would you want to win?" (*TCAC* 210). "If there is a war between England and Germany," wrote the student, "I shouldn't care which won: I should run away as fast as I could" (*TCAC* 210). The student concluded her brief essay "with the passionate cry, 'I know I shall get no marks because I have spoken the truth'" (*TCAC* 210). How little well the child knew Forster, who, while he doesn't say so, was surely pleased with the essay, especially considering that he either kept it or was able to recall it well enough by roughly 1954, when Jeffrey M. Heath estimates Forster wrote this passage. While Forster *may* have fabricated the event, the fact that he does not discuss the war at all beyond the passage, nor does he even comment on the essay itself at all excepting that the student was "quaint and charming" (*TCAC* 210), seems to suggest no ulterior motive in the way of illustrating his prophetic accuracy in the prompt. He simply lets it stand for itself. If the moment really happened as Forster describes it, and there, again, seems no reason not to believe it, then Forster was, without a doubt, concerned about the potential of a war between England and Germany as early as 1905. What's more, he is comfortable enough with the topic to pose the question to *children*. At least one of the children gives a reasonably put, human response: the prospect of war terrifies her (it is a female student). Even the child

recognizes the very real threat of war between the Empires and generally what that will mean for the world as they know it.

As the Edwardian years wore on, Forster became more pessimistic towards the political-economic situation of England and how this might further agitate the people to war. He saw that Britain's culture had been infected by these conditions and that the political-economic ills of the nations were reflected in and the product of its people. In January 1910 (before the completion of *Howards End*), Forster wrote in a letter that he could call himself "happy if it were not for politics" (*SLF I* 103). Forster defines these times as "Dishonest, illiberal, the spirit of the petty tradesman, who doesn't mind if he's found out to morrow, so long as he cheats you today – that's the spirit of both sides as it appears to us: and I have continually to remind myself that there must be honest effort & conviction somewhere, hidden behind the froth of either party" (*SLF I* 103). He attributes this distasteful and unprogressive politics to "the German scare and snobbery" which seem to be "doing their worst" to England's culture (*SLF I* 103). Here we see not only that the threat of international violence and the threat of England's security but domestic "snobbery" as the contributing factors of the political ilk Forster disparages against. While "the German scare" – the 1909 debates in parliament over expanding the Empire's navy because of Germany's own expanding navy and Grey's failed peace talks in Germany – is clearly defined and has already been discussed here, "snobbery" remains more obscured. The term is at least partly imbued with an economic qualification. It is the recognition that one is better than the other based on superficial status – class. The use of "snobbery" in this context suggests a bit of a contradiction to Forster's later remark that "we none realised our economic position" – Forster, at least, was a bit aware of it in 1910, as evidenced by his use of the noun here. Taken together – the German scare and snobbery – they inform Forster's understanding of why politics (both

liberal and conservative, but he is more concerned with the liberal) have run amuck with their principals and they point to the broader concerns of the Empire and economics: how to defend the British Empire and maintain the economic status quo. "Politics," he writes, "is based on human nature; even a tyrant is a man" (*TCfD* 9). Class issues tinge the political and the human; but, political systems, to Forster, are ultimately the reflection of human character. If there is something wrong with the political system and the class system, there is something wrong with people. If there was something wrong with the people of England, then, to Forster, there was something wrong with England and, since England was the seat of the Empire, there was something wrong with the Empire.

In *Howards End* Forster recognizes what the world had become and what it was becoming: it is a novel about the changes taking place in the early twentieth century and it stages Forster's uncertainties and pessimism about these changes. Forster would later stamp out a solution of reconciling the past and the present in his collection of essays, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951), but in 1910 what he had to offer were not solutions but questions. At the end of the novel, past and present still stand at odds with each other and lead to the obliteration of a way of life. As Forster put it, during the Edwardian period, they were "in the garden in the pre-war summer sunshine, the sunshine that expected shadow but had no conception of disintegration" (*BBC* 456). Forster shared with Masterman what Hynes called "the vague, anxious mood of the time – a mood of nostalgia for the past, regret for the present, and apprehension for the future" (*TEToM* 68-9). Forster would later call it a time of "Hope Without Faith" (*TCAC* 99). Forster generally saw the Edwardian period as an apathetic period, aware of many of the domestic and international problems facing the Empire, but without any agency to do anything about them. There was hope that there would be change, that matters would turn out

for the best, and that England would sail on, but, at the same time, they didn't believe that such a future would actually occur. Dangerfield, describing the night Edward VII died in 1910, writes that England "was in a very peculiar condition. It was about to shrug from its shoulders – at first irritably, then with violence – a venerable burden, a kind of sack. It was about to get rid of its Liberalism" (20). Forster certainly felt this change, and described himself as "an individualist and a liberal who has found liberalism crumbling beneath him" (*TCfD* 76). He later famously described himself as belonging to "the fag-end of Victorian liberalism" (*TCfD* 56). Forster saw the Edwardian period as an ending – one that he languished over, lamented, and subsequently, worried about what the loss of such a world meant for the future. *Howards End* is the expression of these uncertainties and changing political, social, personal, and international sentiments.

## **Part II: "Internal Worlds" – Forster, Fantasy, and Modernism**

In his fictional writing, Forster needed a form that enabled him to not only tell a contemporary story but also encapsulate digressions on the politics of art and class. *Howards End* required a forum for discussing and commenting on the contemporary issues of the day and this was facilitated through what he called "fantasy." In *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster describes the standard elements of fiction (story, characters, and plot) as well other, perhaps, less obvious elements: prophecy<sup>6</sup>, pattern, rhythm, and fantasy. Forster simply defines fantasy as a form that "it asks us to pay something extra. It compels us to an adjustment that is different to an adjustment required by a work of art, to an additional adjustment" (*AN* 108). While he never provides an absolutely succinct definition, he works his way through the question with a series of

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<sup>6</sup> While "prophecy" might seem the more appropriate avenue to explore in relation to Forster's concerns about a war with Germany, Forster doesn't use the term in the regular, vernacular sense. Rather, prophetic writing is a different kind of form. He associates prophecy with writers like Dostoyevsky and George Eliot. The prophetic author is more concerned with the universal experiences, according to Forster, than the fantastic author.

observations and examples. “The general tone of novels,” he writes, “is so literal that when the fantastic is introduced it produces a special effect: some readers are thrilled, others choked off: it demands an additional adjustment because of the oddness of its method or subject matter” (*AN* 108-9). What Forster means is that literary novels tended to be (up to that point) literal in form and content – the representation of reality is, in other words, wholly realist. Fantasy, on the other hand, often *seems* realist at the onset but becomes highly pointed and symbolic. Other times, it seems pointed and symbolic at the start but nevertheless maintains a heightened quality to it as in the works of Joyce, Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence – all of whom he cites as particularly dependent upon fantasy.<sup>7</sup> Forster writes, “[t]he other novelists say ‘Here is something that might occur in your lives,’ the fantasist says ‘Here’s something that could not occur. I must ask you first to accept my book as a whole, and secondly to accept certain things in my book’” (*AN* 108). Fantasy allowed Forster to explore what *might* have been but never actually could be. Herein lies the form’s ability to become a space for political exploration.

Forster’s fantasy is a political form. Since it offers a capacious space to stage a reality that is not but *could* be, it inherently suggests that the world represented in the text is a kind of alternative reality where life is different because of any number of reasons. In *Howards End*, the fantastic representation of the world is one wherein Forster’s liberal-humanist ideal may be taken to be the best possible option. This is why the Schlegels sisters appear to “beat” the Wilcoxes. The Wilcoxes, with their capitalist, imperialist, and conservative world-view *must* lose out to the cosmopolitan, cultured, and socially progressive Schlegels in Forster’s fantasy. This means, however, that this is not the case in the reality of England in 1910. Forster saw the decline of English liberal-humanism. Forster’s notion of fantasy, in this sense, might be more clearly

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<sup>7</sup> Forster devotes some time to these writers, explaining more thoroughly how some of them are engaged with fantasy. See *AN* 107-9, and 120-3.

understood as Forster's own personal fantasy world. The creation of art, to Forster, was the creation of a world. Art, he wrote, "is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony" (*TCfD* 92). A work of art is its own world. Forster's notion on art is perhaps most clearly articulated in "The Challenge of Our Time":

Art is valuable not because it is educational (though it may be), not because it is recreative (though it may be), not because everyone enjoys it (for everybody does not), not even because it has to do with beauty. It is valuable because it has to do with order, and creates little worlds of its own, possessing internal harmony, in the bosom of this disordered planet. (*TCfD* 60)

Forster's novels are each a separate, individual world – an individual fantasy – wherein he stages his various critiques. Art does not exist separately from reality or it would not have been created. At the same time, art is able to achieve what the world cannot: harmony within and through itself – its forms, structures, characters, stories, and plots. Yet, within this fantasy world, this dream, the liberal-humanist vision is built on the sand and threatens to be washed away. Even as a fantasy, British liberalism may not necessarily survive. The novel ends in ambiguity and this ambiguity itself is pessimistic because of the lack of certainty for a liberal future wherein one must reckon with its militarism and economic condition. It is unclear and therefore achieves Forster's notion that the period was one of having "Hope Without Faith."

Forster's fantastical aesthetic form is essentially one of pining for a reality that doesn't actually exist – and his reader is aware of this falseness. He wants these issues to be discussed: Forster wants his reader to think about the implications of a failing liberalism. The element of fantasy makes itself known. In other words, Forster's style is at least somewhat didactic.

Forster's novels proclaim their own messages through their worlds. They are self-conscious books – aware of their own audience as a reading audience. Forster uses his fantastical forms to his advantage. The fantasy is part of how Forster forces his audience to engage with his political

and social concerns. Widdowson called Forster's reality a "contrivance" (15). Kenneth Graham posits that Forster's novels "are always on the point of being controverted, twitched onto their backs, by his creative mental habit of disclaiming" (154). Hynes thinks *Howards End* too obviously moralistic and liberal. (EO 106). Forster's fantasy (contrived plot, knowingly disruptive and opinionated narrator, ambiguous ending, etc.) forces the audience to become aware of the unreality of the work. This causes them, rather than a purely emotional reaction (as would likely happen in standard realism), to react intellectually: to think about the structures and issues at play. In this way, Forster is anticipating the likes of Bertolt Brecht and his epic theatre and theories.<sup>8</sup> Brecht's aesthetic theories reacted against realism, pushing for a defamiliarization<sup>9</sup> effect that would disengage the audience emotionally in order to achieve an intellectual response. Brecht attempted to achieve this through "pointed," "contrived," and "self-conscious" scripts and stagecraft (such as breaking the fourth wall in a moment of high-tension to deliver the punch line of a joke).<sup>10</sup> Forster attempts to achieve a similar effect through his use of fantasy. His self-conscious novels make their readers aware of their artifice through the use of the artifice itself. Part of Forster's modernism is his didacticism, achieved through modes of heightened realities – unreal worlds that nevertheless contain their own internal harmony. It is through these aesthetic choices that he is able to comment upon the condition of England.

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<sup>8</sup> I do not mean to suggest political or ideological similarities between Forster and Brecht; rather, I want to suggest that the pair are aesthetically related to each other.

<sup>9</sup> Brecht's theories were originally translated into English for publication by John Willet. As Peter Brooker notes, Willet translated Brecht's term *verfremdungseffekt* as "alienation effect." Brecht has, ever since, been associated with "alienation" and "alienating the audience." Brooker notes, though, that the German word for alienation is *entfremdung* and "alienation effect" would be *entfremdungseffekt*. *Verfremdung*, the root of Brecht's term, translates more closely to "defamiliarisation" or "estrangement" (Brooker 191-3). As such, Brooker is able to distinguish between Brechtian "estrangement" and Marxian "alienation" – notions that, under Willet's translation, become muddled. While I employ the term, I do so as Brooker defines it rather than how Willet originally translates it.

<sup>10</sup> See Brecht, especially 20-42, for the pertinent English translations of his essays on aesthetics.

### **Part III: *Howards End*: Germany, Germans, and the Narrator**

The narrator of *Howards End* is one of Forster's primary tools for casting his story in a fantasy form. The narrator tells the story and is the only access the reader has to the novel's contents. He or she is particularly tricky and, at turns, makes the reader think that they are reading a character's thoughts but are actually just getting the information from the narrator. The narrator also provides a great deal of the commentary on politics, art, economy, the Empire, and the other issues at play. If, in some ways, the novel is about connecting the issues of Germany and England into a coherent harmony that could never exist in reality, then what the narrator says about this matter is especially concerning. Forster's narrator is one of the didactic, fantastic aspects of this novel – the narrator is pointed. Forster uses the narrator to pointedly make the reader aware that they are reading and force them to think about the text and its implications. The narrator makes the reader particularly aware of the elements of German culture – including art, militarism, and imperialism.

The narration of the novel is highly performative – the narrator is clearly in control of the story from the beginning and he/she makes his/her opinions and biases known. This narrative performance is how the narrator achieves his/her didacticism and is able to impart such proclamations as “Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man” (25). It is also this performance that creates the ambiguity of the novel's ending. The narrator distances the reader from the story by excluding information, vital or otherwise, its self-conscious style, and by ending the story in ambiguity – all tending to lead the reader into an intellectual, rather than wholly emotional or pathos-driven, response. This

intellectual response, in *Howards End*, is especially invested in politics: Forster uses the narrator to make the reader think about politics.

In the first chapter, Forster has his narrator take control of the narrative by making the narrator particularly invested in controlling appearances. Forster makes the narrator into a kind of director/playwright who controls what the audience (the reader) sees and how they see it to make the performative element of the narration and its didactic, fantastical quality clear. Helen writes in her first letter, “I inflict all this on you because once you said that life is sometimes life and sometimes only a drama, and one must learn to distinguish tother [*sic*] from which, and up to now have always put that down as ‘Meg’s clever nonsense.’ But this morning it really does seem not life but a play, and it did amuse me enormously to watch the W[ilcox]’s” (6). This passage is immediately followed by the series of “[omission]s.” The narrator presents, at the start of the novel, a description of life as theatre, of life as a series of staged, unreal, dramas, and then follows up this act by showing his/her control of the text. Specifically, the narrator omits information about their *appearances*. In theatre, all the audience has is what actually appears in front of them and what is said to determine meaning. The narrator’s hand is on the text and for whatever reason what he/she chooses to delete are the characters’ physical appearances. This moment, occurring at the very beginning of the novel points to the performativity of the narrative. The narrator acts as a director-playwright, controlling the narrative at every turn, whether he/she appears there or not. The narrator is always lurking beneath the text, breaking the narrative “fourth wall,” and thereby facilitating a didactic, intellectual response.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Critical debate about the narrator is varied. To Rosecrance and John J. Su, the narrator is controlling, biased, and unreliable (108 and 204, respectively). Duckworth, on the other hand, disagrees, arguing that the narrator is not enough like a character for it to be unreliable (116-7).

Forster's non-fiction supports the notion that *Howards End* is a particularly performative text. In 1909, as he was writing *Howards End*, he wrote the following in his journal:

Thought my novel very bad, but though it is pumped it's not quite as bad as I thought, for the characters are conceived sincerely. Will it ever be done? A fortnight ago I should have said not, but am hopeful now. The play [an unfinished play about St. Bridget] may also pan out. – But take it all round, I've lost inspiration, and not adequately replaced it by solidity. Words are more in the foreground than they were: even these I seem writing for an audience. (*FJD II 3*).

Perhaps Forster manages to finish *Howards End* by using elements from his unfinished St. Bridget play. The “words in the foreground” may be indicative of his decision to make the narrator's words shine forth rather than merely relegate them to the background, consigned to link the plot together rather than shape it entirely. His acute awareness of writing for an audience is also telling in this regard. He later ponders, “is it not extraordinary that plays on the stage are often better than they are in the study, and that the introduction of a bunch of rather ambitious and nervous men and women should add anything to our understanding of Shakespeare and Chekhov?” (*AN 67*). The novel is like the performance of a play where the appearances and words are controlled, but Forster puts this drama in novelistic terms, rendering it *only* able to be read in the study. Again, Forster is, in *Howards End*, asking something more of his reader. In doing so, like reading a play asks for a little more from its readers since the stage is only in the mind, so too does Forster ask for a little more from his reader by rendering the novel as a performance-like reality.

In this performance-reality, Forster puts the international political and cultural tensions on display through the characters and narrative voice. Forster very purposefully chooses to make the central characters of his novel English but of German descent. At the start of the second chapter, Margaret informs the reader that she and Helen met the Wilcoxes on a trip to their father's native Germany and met them in Speyer, where one of the electors who chose the Holy

Roman Emperor sat and from whence control of the Rhine Valley was delegated (7-8). Indeed, that the genesis of these families' relationship begins in the Rhine Valley and that it ends up being the central conflict of the novel is telling. The Rhine Valley, after all, is adjacent to Alsace-Lorraine – territory that Germany gained from France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and the birth of the German Empire proper. What's more, the Schlegels' father fought against Denmark, Austria, and France in the German army – all of the wars that Prussia fought in an effort to unite Germany and establish the German Empire in the 1860s and early 1870s (23). The narrator comments that after the wars,

Peace came – it was all very immense, one had turned into an Empire – but he knew that some quality had vanished for which not all Alsace-Lorraine could compensate him. Germany a commercial Power, Germany a naval Power, Germany with colonies here and a Forward Policy there, and legitimate aspirations in the other place, might appeal to others, and be fitly served by them; for his own part, he abstained from the fruits of victory, and naturalized himself in England. (23)

Mr. Schlegel finds the new German Empire deplorable particularly because he sees it as economic rather than cultural or intellectual. The narrator goes on to describe Mr. Schlegel speaking to his German nephew about Germans and Germany:

‘You only care about the things that you can use, and therefore arrange them in the following order: Money, supremely useful; intellect, rather useful; imagination, of no use at all. No’ – for the other had protested – ‘your Pan-Germanism is no more imaginative than is our Imperialism over here. It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile, and that a million square millions are almost the same as heaven.’ (23)

While Mr. Schlegel identifies Pan-Germanism (that is, the notion that all German-speaking peoples should be united into a single nation) as vulgar in its obsession with materialism – possessing more and more – he is quick to point out that Britain shares an equal vulgarity in its Imperialism. Really, they are much the same. This, he says, has killed the German imagination,

German culture. “When their poets over here try to celebrate bigness they are dead at once, and naturally. Your poets too are dying, your philosophers, your musicians, to whom Europe has listened for two hundred years. Gone” (23). Both England and Germany, according to Mr. Schlegel, suffer culturally by way of their Imperial ambitions. Forster’s critique of Germany is also his critique of England.

What’s more, Forster shows the Germans to be similar to the English to critique the attitudes towards Germans and their own sense of Imperialism. The narrator informs the reader that such conversations proved to be “a unique education for the little [Schlegel] girls” (24). The implication, of course, is that their father passed his Imperialist critique on to his daughters. The nephew, says the narrator, having grown up, was “convinced that Germany was appointed by God to govern the world” (24). The sisters’ very English aunt Juley was “convinced that Great Britain had been appointed to the same post by the same authority” (24). Margaret, having got the two together, once asked them to hash it all out, “whereat they blushed, and began to talk about the weather” (24). The novel stages such scenes time and time again. England and Germany are held up as binaries only to be revealed to be strikingly similar. Each is hostile to the other, but the novel never settles the question, constantly reveling in its own ambiguities. John J. Su claims, “Margaret’s inability to discern how to adjudicate these claims and the failure of the otherwise intrusive narrator to settle the issue point to a significant problem... compounded by the unwillingness of Margaret’s nephew and Aunt Juley to enter into direct dialogue” (202-3). The problem is one of identity and demarcating the differences between the two nationalities. As Jameson writes, “E. M. Forster’s Germans... function to reverse this xenophobia in a kind of therapeutic liberal tolerance and self-critique” (49).

Forster also uses German and English culture to illustrate how similar the two groups really are in their national character. In the subsequent chapter, the Schlegels' German and English relations spend an evening at a concert together in which both German and English music is on the concert's program. The chapter begins with the narrator proclaiming, "It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man" (25). The narrator's bias becomes one of the array of responses to the work in the chapter. Phyllis Weliver, in her recent study of British literary representations of audiences at musical events, expounds that, "Rather than a cohesive Victorian experience, where everybody is coordinated mentally as well as physically, the scene emphasizes individuality because each person appreciates the concert differently" (183). Art is, in this instance, understood through individual experience, moving away from the universal to particular. The individual is emphasized. Still, what Weliver doesn't acknowledge is that the individuals *do* experience the music at a collective level – it is simply demarcated by their nationalities. For instance, Aunt Juley likes and is proud of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* (1901). The Germans, "moved by a common impulse" leave the concert during the English composition (29). Helen and Margaret both love the Beethoven, although for different reasons. These three groups, the English, the German, and the Anglo-German, essentially stick together with regard to taste. Interestingly enough, the nationality of the composer does seem to have an impact with regard to musical taste. Once again, there are disagreements between the English and the Germans that are politely avoided rather than discussed, let alone reconciled. In a 1911 letter, Forster discusses how he has been reading Kipling's "child's history of England with mingled joy and disgust. It's a fine conception," he elaborates,

But oh is it necessary to build character on a psychological untruth? In other words to teach the young citizen that he is absolutely ~~like~~ the unlike the young

German or the young Bashahri – that foreigners are envious and treacherous, Englishmen, through some freak of God, never – ? Kipling and all that school know it's an untruth at the bottom of their hearts... but for the sake of patriotism, they lie. It is despairing. (*SLF I* 123)

Here, Forster lambasts “all that school” – the previous generation of writers, the ones, perhaps, that were soon to join Masterman’s propaganda committee – as liars. Their attempt to build up national character and pride is done so through false representations of Englishness and foreignness by Forster’s perspective. This letter was written less than a year after *Howards End’s* publication – a work in which Forster attempts to bring Germany and England together, to illustrate how little difference there is in national character, in the form of the Schlegels.

Rather than present a homogenous vision of England or Germany, Forster insists on representing a spectrum of human types. Instead of arguing against a particular nationality, Forster warns about certain types of people. These people are defined, though, by the economic and political positions. Without a doubt, the novel is antagonistic towards the Wilcox-type – the imperialist, business-minded capitalists, while favoring the Schlegel variety – cultured, cosmopolitan, spiritual, and progressive. The characters’ attitudes or interpretations of art, often by way of the narrator, illustrate these prejudices. For example, at the concert the narrator describes how Helen experiences the Beethoven symphony as a story involving goblins. Margaret later says that Helen “labels [music] with meanings from start to finish; turns it into literature” (31). The story Helen invents for the fifth symphony reveals, early in the novel, her sense of spirituality and pessimism toward the progress of man. The goblins are passive, always on the outside of the chaos of the world. “They were not aggressive creatures; it was that that made them so terrible to Helen. They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world.... The goblins were right” (26). After an apocalyptic battle, Helen questions whether or not they have been vanquished or whether they existed at all (27).

“One healthy human impulse would dispel them?” she wonders. “Men like the Wilcoxes, or President [Theodore] Roosevelt, would say yes. Beethoven knew better. The goblins really had been there. They might return – and they did” (27). The process repeats itself for a second time and still the goblins remain. There will always be those that are passive – humanity cannot be valorous and heroic to Helen. The narrator has cast the condition of the times, and Helen’s world-view, in obviously fantastical terms. By telling Beethoven’s Fifth as a narrative that illustrates the impossibility of heroism, the narrator ultimately makes a political comment. In a metaphysical moment, Forster stages a fantasy within his own fantasy wherein the political position of the world at large is shown to be rather bleak. The moment is a microcosm of the novel as a whole. The imperialists like the Wilcoxes and Roosevelt believe they can vanquish the goblins, but they can’t. Art becomes a way for the characters to negotiate their own political stance and in this instance Helen is identified as one who is wildly skeptical about an imperialist agenda as a means to solve problems.

Like the issues surrounding the narrator, the problems of Anglo-German relations are interwoven throughout the novel. In this section, I have merely provided an introduction to how the novel generally treats the issue: a bias is established by the narrator, the conflicting sides declare the superiority of their own side, simultaneously proclaiming their difference while the narration illustrates their similarities, and, at the moment of confrontation, nothing happens but deference resulting in ambiguity. This ambiguity, I argue, allows Forster to reflect the historical reality of the uncertainty of what was going to happen between Germany and England. Later in the novel, after the Wilcoxes move to a nearby flat, the narrator observes that Frieda Mosenbach is “quite capable of” asking Helen, ““You love one of the young gentlemen opposite, yes?” The remark would be untrue, but of the kind which, if stated often enough, may become true; just as

the remark, 'England and Germany are bound to fight,' renders war a little more likely each time that it is made, and is therefore made the more readily by the gutter press of either nation" (47). Not only does the passage make explicit the notion that a future war between the two countries (whose people happen to be at the crux of the story) may happen but it also complicates it by giving it to the narrator to speak. There is no evidence that Frieda ever actually says the remark. She is merely *capable* of asking the question. How often is the question of war actually raised? The narrator subverts the notion just as he/she also brings it to light – for while the comment may or may not be made elsewhere, the narrator nevertheless has made it here. What's, more the narrator's association of the question of war is irrevocably linked, here, to passion and romance – "untrue" romance which, through language, can become true. Then, by the narrator's estimation, it is not inherently true that "England and Germany are bound to fight" except through the perpetuation of linguistic action. Only through language, through culture, through *print*, will England and Germany fight. The novel itself, as a printed object, is enacting a similar effect as that of the "gutter press" that ultimately perpetuates this notion; however, since the narrator delivers this line, it is another didactic moment of fantasy wherein the reader is meant to respond intellectually. This is the first example of the sort of violence and conflict the novel anticipates – an untrue violence made true by way of cultural participation.

#### **Part IV: *Howards End*: The Inheritors of England – Empire, Class, and Violence**

Since Trilling's first study on Forster's novels, critics have frequently suggested that *Howards End* is about the question of who will carry England into the future, especially since the novel ends with Howards End, the "Little England" of the novel, literally being passed on to Margaret. Trilling declared, "It asks the question 'Who shall inherit England?'" (118). In Trilling's estimation, since Howards End, the house, is bequeathed by Henry to Margaret at the

end of the novel, and, assuming that they do not have any children together, “it is to pass beyond her to a little classless child, the son of Helen Schlegel and the pitiful Leonard Bast” (122). Why the child is “classless” isn’t entirely clear. He lives with Helen and Margaret at Howards End who continue to enjoy their income as well as Henry’s, which must surely contribute to certain aspects of their lives. They are still a part of the upper-middle class. What’s more, as Su notes, Helen and Leonard’s illegitimate child is not *necessarily* the heir apparent (202). Su’s emphasis on the child’s bastardy is not insignificant. While Henry doesn’t seem likely to put up much of a fight after his “collapse,” it may, however, become an issue of contention for the other Wilcox children, such as Charles and Paul. “Margaret is still married,” Su reminds us, “and her husband Henry Wilcox could at any time attempt to reassert his authority” (202). While this seems unlikely, it is a possibility. More probable is the idea that “Charles Wilcox, imprisoned for indirectly killing Leonard Bast, will eventually be released from prison, and would certainly harbor no generous feelings toward the Schlegels” (202). Still, others, like Wright, affirm that the ending is positive, illustrating what is wrong with England and concluding with a “normative quest for resolution” (23-4). The problem is that so many of the issues are *not* resolved – not least of all is the initial question Trilling identified. Rosecrance is pessimistic, writing, “England’s salvation... has become a lost cause” (107). While closer to the mark, I think, the answer is still too definitive – too certain. The novel, though, doesn’t try to solve the question. This is another instance of the narrator’s performance – the novel only *seems* to be making a gesture towards answering the question. Rather, what the novel does is set in motion is a scenario without a complete or definite resolution. This, under Forster’s fantastical *modus operandi*, allows Forster to pose the question to the audience and allow them to ruminate on the answer. In one sense, then, none of the critics are necessarily wrong. I suggest that each of the critics above,

in determining an answer, has done exactly what Forster intended them to do as readers: interpret the possible conclusions for themselves.

But the question Trilling asks is only part of the broader question Forster explores in the novel. Forster is not just interested in the future of England but the future of the Empire as well. Underneath the novel-length battle for *Howards End* the economic problems of the Empire bubble up to the surface. These problems are compounded by problems with violence, often militaristically charged violence. As Louise Harrington points out,

References to the British Empire are threaded throughout the text: the existence of the Imperial and West African Rubber Company, Paul's absence in Nigeria, the presence of the Anglo-Indian ladies at Evie's wedding, Charles overhearing mention of the word 'Imperialism' as he walks around the grounds of Oniton, the phrase 'I'll cable out to Uganda this evening' drifting towards Margaret during dinner at Simpson's. (284)

It has already been noted that both the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes derive their income from investments and projects concerned with the Empire. The Wilcoxes have several houses – not just *Howards End*. As Duckworth notes, Forster hated the “engrossment of the land by imperialists” but also recognized that without the money that imperialism brought into the land “there would be no *Howards End* to describe or value” (64). What's more, Duckworth writes, “Margaret, who has previously learned that Tom Howard, Mrs. Wilcox's soldier brother, was killed in a war and that the two remaining Howard women were unable to keep the place going, recognizes that Henry has saved *Howards End*” (64). Tom Howard is metaphorically and literally sacrificed to the sustaining of the Empire and seemingly in return for his sacrifice, his legacy, *Howards End*, is sustained by “the no-nonsense capitalist who makes his money in West Africa” (Duckworth 64). Despite this, the strict imperialists have a peculiar relationship within the house itself. It is only after Henry is “broken” that he is able to live there, and even the final line of the novel, when Helen and Tom return from the fields declaring, “The field's cut... the

big meadow! We've seen to the very end, and it'll be such a crop of hay as never" (243), there remains the sense that Henry will not be staying in the house. After all, we learn in the opening letters that the Wilcoxes all suffer from hay fever.

Whereas Forster uses German cultural items and events, like the Beethoven concert piece, to demarcate the differences between individuals he uses the aspects of German militarism and imperialism that frighten him in an English context to show the similarities between the German Empire the British Empire. The major element missing that will synthesize these only somewhat connected issues and will lead to a reading wherein this ambiguous ending will lean towards a pessimistic future is the element of violence and its relationship to the political notions of class and Empire. Johnson notes, "[r]ather than simple antagonism... the relationship between militarism and progressive politics by 1914 was one of ambiguity and unresolved tension" (4). I argue that *Howards End* illustrates this relationship and that it does so through its fantastical form's representation of the characters and their actions of violence: representations of violence and performances of violence, or representations of representations of violence. It is not simply a matter of class, but a vital argument for the future of the British Empire – and that argument is one that illuminates the problem of a liberal British Empire.

The answer to Trilling's question, if one exists at all, lies in the novel's conclusion; however, it must be remembered that this is Forster's fantasy world where what happens is only what *ought* to happen, not what actually *does* happen. That Forster is seemingly able to push forward various perceived inheritors to England is the primary reason why critics have suggested that the plot is "contrived." Forster is often seen as twisting and forcing the plot to a particular outcome through which he suggests what it is that he is doing. Such suggestions, though, undermine the ambiguity of the ending. Widdowson comes close when he writes, "[i]t says...

who the inheritors of 'England' *ought to be*, not who they *are*.... Much of the novel, therefore, is an artificial justification of the final 'vision'" (94). Even in Widdowson's version, though, he wants to see Forster as clearly demarcating who is and is not inheriting England. At the end of the novel, Henry gathers his children to him. Charles is in prison. "Henry's fortress" has given away and he is "broken.". Henry has just told his children that he is going to give Howards End to Margaret. "Does my arrangement suit you, Evie... and you, Dolly?" (241). Dolly responds, "I thought Charles wanted it for the boys, but last time I saw him he said no, because we cannot possibly live in this part of England again. Charles says we ought to change our name, but I cannot think what to," (241). "Then I leave Howards End," replies Henry, "to my wife absolutely... and let everyone understand that; and after I am dead let there be no jealousy and no surprise" (241). Margaret, will, he goes on to say, "diminish her income by half during the next ten years; she intends when she dies to leave the house to her – to her nephew, down in the field. Is that clear? Does everyone understand?" (242). First of all, Henry's own reluctance to call Helen's baby, her nephew – his hesitation or delay – is indicative of a lingering Wilcoxian attitude towards the bastard child of the man whose wife he slept with. As Henry asks his children "Does everyone understand?" he might as well be asking himself the same question. What's more, the narrator doesn't report any of the characters having actually agreed to this particular term. Paul even says, "Down in the field? Oh, come! I think we might have had the whole establishment, piccaninnies included" (424). While their agreement might simply be understood, the reader gets no absolutely definitive agreement from any of the Wilcoxes on his matter, let alone any information about any documents being signed. What's more it is not clear why Margaret is giving up half of her income. Does Helen intend to do the same thing? Will they

have enough money to pass on to Helen's child for him to keep up the house and its fields? Will *they*?

Forster uses his narrator to make the Schlegels only *appear* to have beaten out the Wilcoxes, recalling the notion that the Edwardian period was identified as projecting only the *illusion* of security, not actual security. The narrator speaks for Margaret, saying, "There was something uncanny in her triumph. She, who had never expected to conquer anyone, had charged straight through these Wilcoxes and broken up their lives" (241-2). The narrator forces Margaret to perform the role of a conqueror – a fighter. It is curious for someone who was earlier, again, by the narrator, to proclaim, "Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die" (134). How can someone who lives by this motto break up, or fragment, a family? Perhaps that is why it is "uncanny." I propose, though, that this passage, so near the end of the novel, is yet another unreliable intrusion on the narrator's part to make Margaret and the Schlegels *seem* like they are not just the inheritors of Howards End but the conquerors. Rather than being conquerors, the Schlegels have connected the Wilcoxes to the world – to other classes, to other struggles – recalling Masterman's notion of Imperial decline:

The conquering race cannot understand the conquered. No conquering race ever has understood the conquered: except when, understanding, its Imperial rule has begun its decline. If the English in India, it has been said commenced to understand India, the episode of English rule in India would be nearing its close. (48)

While the Schlegels or even the Bastis are not perfect parallels to the sort of servitude implied in the relation between India and Britain, the Wilcoxes nevertheless struggle to understand both of these families throughout the novel. The Wilcoxes dismiss Margaret and Helen as

cosmopolitans, cultured, and humanist. “‘She’s a cosmopolitan,’” said Charles, looking at his watch. ‘I admit I’m rather down on cosmopolitans. My fault, doubtless. I cannot stand them, and a German cosmopolitan’s the limit’ (75). Helen is forbidden to stay at Howards End when it is realized she is pregnant despite Henry’s own indiscretions. With regard to the Bastis, there is a complete lack of empathy for their situation once Henry realizes who Margaret’s “protégés” are. Once he begins to understand them, once he “connects” with them, he loses his hold over his dominion. Henry’s “fortress” falls and the Empire slips.

Despite Elizabeth Bowen’s claim that *Howards End* is a “violent novel,” the violence in *Howards End* is often overlooked (137),<sup>12</sup> especially in its connections to the Empire in one way or another. In this way, Forster critiques the tension between an imperial state and the seeming necessity of militarist activity that accompanies any Empire’s existence. The word “kill” appears in the novel 12 times. “Death” appears 53 times while “dead” appears 34 times. “Horror” is marked down a dozen times. “Tragedy” is chalked up to ten. While these words may not necessarily be violent, they nevertheless imply that the text is latent with psychic death – for each time the words pass before the reader’s eyes they enter into the mental theatre of language. Another word often associated with violence, rage, blood, chaos, etc. is red. The color red holds special importance in this novel. In his “Three Generations” talk, Forster says, “[w]e [the Edwardians] began by thinking we should paint the world red, red being in those days a most respectable colour, and indicating the British Empire. Kipling, the tribes without the law, the white man’s burden – these things were genuinely believed in for a few years by thoughtful people, but only for a few years” (*TCAC* 99). For Forster, red is emblematic of the Empire. His

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<sup>12</sup> That is not to say that none of the novel’s critics have dealt with the novel’s violence; however, none examine it at any length or in the same manner that I do here. See Graham and Duckworth for examples.

talk, here, suggests that he counted himself among those thoughtful people that saw through the red, imperial, veil and soon had enough of it. What has already been recounted here in regard to Kipling and the tribes without the law who had the law in particular confirms this. In *Howards End*, Forster uses the color red as a symbol for the imperial problems of modern England. Red is also used in a more heightened sense, appearing in the form of blood – outside of the body on one occasion and inside in the form of blushing, becoming flush, or even through the narrator’s use of phrases describing heat or flashes. In this latter sense, especially, the narrator is performing the text. These flashes, episodes of blushing, etc. are what I call “performances of violence.” They almost always occur in ways that cause disruption or the fantastical pointedness of the narration. These disruptions and interjections are violent because of their psychic agency to separate the reader from the pathos of novel to engage intellectually.<sup>13</sup>

Howards End, the house itself, is a symbol for the condition of the Empire, for the first use of Forster’s “red” comes in the first chapter when Helen describes Howards End itself as “Old and little, and altogether delightful – red brick” (5). The reader’s first moments with Helen, with the novel, and with the narration complicate these lines. Helen, at first, likes Howards End, the red brick house that stands for England; but the red brick allows it to be seen as standing for the Empire in particular. How comfortable it makes Helen feel. It is in this environment wherein Helen describes the world as being like a play, like an unreality – a world that merely *seems* real. Helen’s experience recalls Forster’s notion that the Empire was only attractive for a short time before it’s ugliness was revealed. By the end of the second chapter, Helen’s unreality is broken, along with her heart. The house is covered in vines, though, and Mrs. Wilcox keeps nature flourishing around the house (5). Perhaps this is most clearly seen in the evocation of the

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<sup>13</sup> Not all of these instances elicit a strong didactic response. Some of them are extremely subtle. Still, when pressed upon, they give way to remarkable revelations.

goddess Demeter in Mrs. Ruth Wilcox.<sup>14</sup> Still, even in garden of the “earth-mother goddess,” as Lyn Pykett calls her, she watches “the large red poppies come out” (6). Mrs. Wilcox’s comfortable nature is, as has already been said, owed to the Wilcox name. Her red poppies evoke the Empire both in their color and in what they are – poppies, of course, conjure up imagery of colonial China and Indochina. What’s more, their common use as opiates for British consumption also pervades the air as Helen continues to experience her fantastical not-reality.

Cars are another symbol for imperial expansion and economic prosperity as well as an agent of violence. Andrew Thacker notes that owning a car in the British Edwardian period was one of the ultimate sign of personal wealth – linking cars to the issue of class (22). From London, the heart of the Empire, the upper class drove their new motorcars upon roads that stretched across the island, seeming to provide them with the agency to go anywhere at anytime on their own while those without cars still needed to rely on horse-driven vehicles and trains. The roads that crossed Britain from the epicenter of London might be seen as a miniature representation for the Empire, with modern technology, affordable only to the rich, providing the agency to go anywhere and conquer anything. Forster’s novel supports this vision and provides a pessimistic view of the motorcar and what it stands for. When Mrs. Munt rides with Charles to Howards End in his car, she is enveloped in “a luxurious cavern of red leather” (14). As they bounce along the road, Mrs. Munt realizes the mistake that has been made and is embarrassed, and, as the narrator puts it, she gets “blood-red in the face” (16). As they drive along dust flies about the car as they travel down the dirt road (15). “Some of it had percolated through the open windows [of the village], some had whitened the roses and gooseberries of the wayside gardens, while a certain proportion had entered the lungs of the villages” (15-6). As Charles, the son of the capitalist with

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<sup>14</sup> Lyn Pykett’s study of the novel thoroughly explores these allusions through the lens of feminist theory.

investments in African rubber production, and Aunt Juley, the defender of all things English but who is afraid of her own aggression or the aggression of others, bound down the road in their red-leather modern contraption, the residue of their trail literally permeates the countryside – covering nature, and even penetrating humanity. Forster, here, begins his critique of cars and uses it to contribute to his more general commentary on the Empire and economics; to wit, the dust that the car billows up after it passes represents the inescapable cloud that is the economic condition of the Empire. It pervades every aspect of their lives, choking those who do not immediately benefit from its “progress” on the metaphoric road to conquest.

The cars in *Howards End* also symbolize the violence that maintaining the British Empire required. Motorcars are all but synonymous with accidents in the novel and, as Thacker notes, both of the accidents that occur in the novel precede human death (42). The first of these is the death of Mrs. Wilcox, who dies shortly after Henry drives his car into a merchant’s cart (65). Henry dismisses the incident, especially since he has insurance. It should here be noted that Leonard Bast is an insurance clerk, but I’ll return to the significance of this later in the chapter. The second incident is much more complicated. When Margaret leaps out of Charles’ car when he refuses to stop after a dog has been hit. The following statement, its own paragraph, follows a lengthy description of the scenery: “They spoke of Tariff Reform” (151). A political discussion, one of lampoonish qualities, precedes the event itself. “Mrs. Warrington was just back from the Colonies,” says the narrator. “Like many other critics of Empire, her mouth had been stopped with food, and she could only exclaim at the hospitality with which she had been received, and warn the Mother Country against trifling with young Titans” (151-2). Warrington then tells Margaret that she should “undertake to keep Henry sound about Tariff Reform” (152). Warrington is of the conservative variety who believes that if she can’t influence her husband to

vote for her viewpoint then she has failed as a wife. The discussion is an anti-liberal one and Margaret makes her opposing viewpoint known but doesn't push her views as she and Helen did together during the Wickham Place days (152). She has become somewhat complicit to the viewpoints of the Wilcox variety. The moment is made all the more symbolic as the group travels in the red-leather car of the Empire on roads stretching into infinity during which they kill an innocent animal by accident and carry on as if nothing has happened. Forster's critique of the middle and upper classes is, here, one of complicity, regardless of political viewpoints, to what was *actually happening* in the Empire. Africa, India, and the other colonial possessions were the subject to martial rule for the benefit and comfort of those seated on the red-leather cushions that drove the Empire forward with little regard for the blood it spilt on its way to dominance.

What's more, Forster manages to pile issues of the Empire and women's right into what is about to become an even more complicated commentary on class, gender, and imperial economics, arguing that both the conservatives and the liberals exacerbate the problems of the Empire. Margaret is horrified and shocked out of her complicity when she learns that a pet has been killed and even more so when it's revealed that no woman has been left behind to help the situation. "I expect a little of" – Mrs. Warrington scratched her palm – "will be more to the point than one of us!" (153). Warrington expects the men to pay off the poor owners of the dog – poor in the sense that they've lost their animal as well as poor in the economic sense. "The insurance company see to that," remarked Charles, "and Albert will do the talking" (153). Ever his father's son, Charles hides behind insurance just like Henry did with the incident at the cart. Everyone but Margaret agrees that the "Men will see to it" (153). Margaret leaps from the car, cutting her hand in the process (153). The narrator frames Margaret's actions as a revolt – a militaristic resistance fought with words and the leaping from cars. Margaret bleeds. The narrator continues,

“But Margaret walked forward steadily. Why should the chauffeurs tackle the girl? Ladies sheltering behind men, men sheltering behind servants – the whole system’s wrong, and she must challenge it” (153). Here, as Margaret via the narrator understands the situation, women rely on men and the men rely on whomever they pay. In other words, here is a metaphor for the privileged class not having to deal with the mess (literally) that they’ve made. They have insurance – they have money. As long as the upper classes have the necessary insurance, responsibility may be thrown to the wind. Insurance takes on a double-meaning: it is, of course, literal car insurance, but it is also the reassurance that even though the vehicles (literal and metaphoric) of class have changed, they still are above the lower classes and may do with them as they will. Their money has come from investments in colonial pursuits at the expense of the lower classes. That is what is wrong with the system. Their money has distanced them from the reality of the situation: a girl has clearly lost her pet.

Margaret doesn’t make it to the scene of the crime, though, implicating even her complacency of her imperialist companions. She turns around and returns to the car, allowing her hand to be bandaged. The episode is highly symbolic: the issues of class and gender, the communal agreement of the colonial imperialists, even the blood – for as Margaret bleeds, the red of Empire appears in the reader’s mind. It’s ultimately the imperialist class system that compelled Margaret to take action. In her “revolt,” she is literally wounded and Charles, the “head” imperialist in the scene, doesn’t know what to do with her. The scene becomes emblematic of the condition of England and its Empire. Margaret, seething with liberal-humanist progressivism, dispatches herself from the out-of-control and now deadly urban modernism that is the motorcar that is propelled forward by the Empire. It leaves her bloody and wounded. She challenges the system by merely walking away from it; yet, she returns, not having actually done

anything to help the poor girl who lost her pet. What's more, Margaret recognizes this! She is aware of her complicity in the system, and even in her revolt she was not able to live "deeply." Like the liberal political system in the pre-war days, Margaret is caught going against her own progressive policies and these imperial, international issues affect the *domestic* conditions of England.

For Forster, the ill effects of money and materialism were the nation's primary problems as he wrote the novel. In 1909, while Forster was writing the novel, he wrote in his journal that he was "grinding out my novel into a contrast between money & death – the latter is truly an ally of the personal against the mechanical" (*FJD II 2*). If "mechanical" is taken in relation to money, it may signify all of the modern encroachments to life Forster was so adverse to, such as automobiles made affordable by imperial economy. This seems to resonate particularly clearly in Helen's speech that, "Death and Money are the eternal foes. Not Death and Life... We are all in a mist... men like the Wilcoxes are deeper in the mist than any. Sane, sound Englishmen! building up empires, levelling [*sic*] all the world into what they call common sense. But mention Death to them and they're offended, because Death's really Imperial, and He cries out against them for ever" (171). As the dust billows up their fortunes increase and the speed of modernity, the creeping London city-life into the country (which leads Paul at the end of the novel to comment, "It's not really the country and it's not the town" [241]), threatens to overwhelm its subjects in a deep divide between the rich and the poor.

Nowhere else in the novel do the issues of class abound as they do in the chapters concerning Leonard Bast. His death is the "forthcoming human tragedy" that second motorcar accident signals even though it doesn't take place until some sixty pages after the event. But the next chapter sets those events in motion: when Helen appears with the Basts and it is revealed

Henry had an affair with Mrs. Bast. He is first introduced at the symphony concert chapter as yet another one of Weliver's individuals to experience the concert. In the scheme of representative figures known to be at the concert, he is the sole member of his group. He is of the lower-middle class; one who pines for culture yet cannot seem to attain it. Widdowson writes that Bast, in fact, is "another type of modern English society. He is one of the 'losers', a modern figure and yet connected in the past to the 'England' which London and Wilcoxism are destroying" (70). Trilling says that Leonard is an "'intellectual', the 'freest' of men, consciously the most liberated from class, [but] is actually the most class-marked and class-bound of all men" (124). Everything in the Basts' basement flat (another symbol of his class position) is borrowed, the narrator informs us, except for some Cupid statuettes, his books, and a photograph frame containing a picture of Jacky in her youth (38). As Leonard is taking off his shoes, he accidentally knocks over the picture frame, smashing the glass (37). "Leonard tried to pull out the fragments of glass, and cut his fingers and swore again. A drop of blood fell on the frame, another followed, spilling over on to the exposed photograph" (37). In another heavily symbolic moment, Leonard's blood falls on and stains the photograph of Jacky. Leonard gave his life, in many ways, to protect the image of a woman "ruined" at the hands of someone else. "'Damn, damn, damnation!' he murmured, together with such other words as he had learnt from older men" (38). Even his language is borrowed. At every turn, in this scene, Leonard is framed in economic terms – he is a borrower because he can afford to be nothing else. He has no insurance, although he works for a fire insurance company. Inevitably, and metaphorically, his life goes up in flames.

Leonard's death scene, more than any other in the novel, illustrates Forster's critique of militarism and violent attitudes in pre-war England and is wildly complex. Leonard's journey to Howards End, his journey to England and Empire, is something of an allegorical satire of the

displaced lower classes in a militaristic imperial world-view. As Leonard approaches Howards End, he observes the countryside and takes in its people. By way of the narrator, Leonard thinks, “Here men had been up since dawn. Their hours were ruled, not by a London office, but by the movements of the crops and the sun. That they were men of the finest type only the sentimentalist can declare.... They are England’s hope. Clumsily they carry forward the torch of the sun, until such time as the nation sees fit to take it up” (229). Returning to his roots, for Leonard was originally of yeoman stock, he sees the country as a respite for the otherwise chaotic and business-driven world England has become. Strangely enough, though, “Nature favours – the Imperial” (229). Despite the fact that the imperialists aren’t connected to nature, they are “favored.” According to Leonard/the narrator, economy still dictates the nature of the realm. The imperialist “hopes to inherit the earth.... But the Imperialist is not what he thinks or seems. He is a destroyer. He prepare the way for cosmopolitanism, and though his ambitions may be fulfilled, the earth that he inherits will be grey” (229). The narrator sets the scene with images of an England with something at stake – its past, its way of life. But this way of life is already lost to the imperialist. The imperialist sets out to conquer and destroy abroad to save home, but this only changes home into something it neither wants nor desires. It no longer fits or belongs in its own house, as it were. Leonard arrives at Howards End. “Contradictory notions stood side by side in his mind. He was terrified by happy, ashamed, but had done no sin. He knew the confession: ‘Mrs. Wilcox, I have done wrong,’ but the sunrise had robbed its meaning, and he felt rather on a supreme adventure” (230). The red sunrise, as it appears above the homeland of the Empire upon which it never sets, *robs* the meaning from a moral and ethical confession. It steals. It destroys. The contradictory notions that fill Leonard’s head just before his death recall Fussell’s notion of the war as an ultimately ironic event. Even the notion that Leonard is about to

embark on “a supreme adventure” only to be killed feels reminiscent of the early wartime sentiment.

Leonard’s death is Forster’s ultimate critique and warning of the dangers of imperialism and is the culmination of the violence, the performativity, and the sociological problems of the novel. The actual death scene is, like the previous car accident scene, loaded with symbolism. Leonard walks through the garden, passes the car, and enters the house. He hears his name,

and a man whom he had never seen said, ‘Oh, is he there? I am not surprised. I now thrash him within an inch of his life.’  
‘Mrs. Wilcox,’ said Leonard, ‘I have done wrong.’  
The man took him by the collar and cried, ‘Bring me a stick.’ Women were screaming. A stick, very bright, descended. It hurt him, not where it descended, but in the heart. Books fell over him in a shower. Nothing had sense.  
(230)

The “stick” is Margaret and Helen’s father’s sword from his days in the Prussian army. It is later understood that Charles, the man, hit Leonard with the flat of the sword over his shoulder (232). Leonard makes his confession and, just like the red sunrise, Charles, imperial and blindly furious, robs him of its salvation. The English Imperialist, the businessman, takes up the German weapon and strikes Leonard, the destitute clerk of just over 21 years of age. Fussell notes that this harkens to what became a common motif of actual war writing, writing that war writers proper placed “before themselves and their readers the most moving image they could think of – the sudden death of boys. E. M. Forster was also excited by this ‘period’ motif: witness the number of boys who meet inexplicable sudden deaths in the novels Forster wrote from 1905 to 1910” (309). This indicates that it was, in fact, for Forster, at least, a pre-war trend as well. Hynes notes that middle-class men, clerks, secretaries, assistants – educated men – were for the first time in the front lines of war, men exactly like Leonard (*AWI* 28). But it is not the blow itself that kills him, but a problem with his heart. The books that fall down upon him as he,

himself, falls are emblematic of the waste of cultured England – they cannot help him, nor do they kill him. Culture merely accumulates and falls with the fallen. It is, of all things, the death of a lower-class clerk at the hands of an imperialist capitalist that causes the novel’s climactic turn that symbolizes the threat of continuing the blind obedience to the political *status quo*.

The following sequences are no less prophetic and are eerily parallel to the attitudes of those that stayed at home and continued to live while the imperialists who had started the war sent younger men to die for the maintenance of their prosperity. The next day, the narrator tells us, “Charles returned, leaving Leonard dead upon the gravel, it did not seem to him that he had used violence” (231). Charles is blissfully unaware of the implications of what he has done let alone that he even did anything wrong to begin with. It takes a great deal of time before the seriousness of the situation is made real to Charles. Even when it happened, Charles says, “we all thought he was shamming. However, he’s dead right enough. Awful business!” Charles isn’t able to perceive that Leonard has died. It isn’t real to him. Even after the fact, he is able to simply chalk it up to “business.” Henry recognizes himself in Charles through the whole ordeal. When Charles asks if he was right in doing what he did, Henry responds, “Right, my dear boy? I don’t know. But you would have been no son of mine if you hadn’t” (232). Charles and Henry typify what Shaw will call the “Junkers,” the old men of material wealth who made the war happen. After Charles recounts the story to Henry, we learn, “They went into breakfast.” Leonard’s death, to them, is a casual matter of business – certainly nothing worth missing a meal over. What’s more, Charles is utterly aloof to the notion that he may be in any sort of trouble with the law for what has happened. The narrator tells the reader, “He was also anxious about the future, reflecting that the police must detail Helen and Margaret for the inquest” (232). His only fear in this thought is that Margaret and Helen may experience some distress. When his father returns

from the police station, “looking very tired,” he tells Charles “the police required his son to attend” the “inquest on Leonard’s body to-morrow” (233). He responds, “I shall naturally be the most important witness there” (233). He won’t only be a witness, but a suspect to Leonard’s murder. The scene only becomes more chaotic in the next chapter. We are told, “Events succeeded in a logical, yet senseless, train” (233). Here, again, is the sense of paradox. “People lost their humanity” and it was all “natural, but unreal” that things should come about as they do (233). While it is agreed by doctors that heart disease is to blame, Henry tells Margaret that the “verdict at the inquest will be... manslaughter” (237). “Charles may go to prison. I dare not tell him. I don’t know what to do – what to do. I’m broken – I’m ended.” (237). Charles is found guilty and imprisoned for three years. “Then Henry’s fortress gave way” (237). It is in militaristic terms that the narrator performs Henry’s fall. “It was against all reason that he should be punished,” says the narrator, “but the law, being made in his image, sentenced him” (237). The irony is palpable. The Empire, whose reason and logic no longer hold ideological sway in liberal England, which *destroys* the rights of individuals and individuals themselves, which is caught in a militaristic anti-military conundrum, which builds arms in the name of peace, prevails. The Wilcoxes are undone. Sherry’s modernist language of linguistic death takes its place here in the imperialist destruction of the imperial Wilcoxes.

And what are the families to do at Howards End? How does Forster deal with these tensions? He doesn’t provide the answers. The characters will go on as best as they can. They have cleared the first catastrophe of their lives, but what the future holds is utterly uncertain. The unreason of imperialism still holds sway. Leonard’s death has not “fixed” its problems but merely illustrated them. Masterman writes,

The wise man will still go softly all his days; working always for greater economic equality on the one hand, for understanding between estranged peoples

on the other; apprehending always how slight an effort of stupidity or violence could strike a death-blow to twentieth-century civilization, and elevate the forces of destruction over the ruins of the world. (233)

Such seems to be the condition of the Wilcoxes and Schlegels left at Howards End. The uncertainty of their future, and, by extension, the future of England, is one of “Hope Without Faith.” Even in the final lines of the novel, with what effect will the cosmopolitan Schlegels and the imperialist-businessman Henry turn yeomen? Can they turn to the land, which has become “grey” as a result of its endorsement and reliance on the “red,” back into what it was before? The sense of nostalgia and loss for what has passed, for what has been destroyed, that pervades the end of the novel in the fragmenting of the families, the death of Leonard – who never knew he would be a father – and Helen’s loss of her lover suggests a weary future for the survivors. For despite the land, as Masterman points out, “Never, perhaps, in the memorable and spacious story of this nation’s history has the land beyond the city offered so fair an inheritance to the children of its people, as today, under the visible shadow of the end” (161). Something lingers in the atmosphere around Howards End. Forster, I suggest, means for the end of the novel to not offer solutions or even suggestions. Rather, again, as Masterman put it, “In the face of such uncertainty, the verdict is often one of criticism and despair” (234). Liberalism is failing. It has failed in the novel to progress life as it has intended. And yet there remains faith that things will get better, even if hope has vanished.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### THEATRE OF WAR: GEORGE BERNARD SHAW AND *HEARTBREAK HOUSE*

#### Part I: GBS and GB: 1914-21

Even more so than Forster, Shaw was invested in critiquing the condition of England and the Empire through the metaphoric domestic space with representative figures from each class by conflating violence and imperialist policies. This was probably because, by the time he was writing *Heartbreak House*, the war had broken out and Shaw saw the war as a result of these policies. To him, the war was an utter waste although he was much more critical of those who remained in England than those who fought at the front. In his wartime non-fiction writing, Shaw makes it clear that, as far as he is concerned, the Great War is a war of imperialism and capitalist economics. He sees the war as a waste of life that won't solve any of the world's problems. At the same time, he articulates a desire for the violence of the war to be redirected by those actually fighting it (the lower classes) towards those who sent them off to war (the upper classes). This senseless violence is reflected in *Heartbreak House*.

What is particularly curious, though, is the zeal to which Shaw takes to violence. The language of the play, from the stage directions to the dialogue, is latent with violent imagery and action. What's more, the more overtly violent events of the play don't seem to have the realistic repercussions that they do in *Howards End*. When a character dies, that's the end of it. No one is held responsible and nothing is really done about it. The violence of the play is met by some of the characters as blasé and has practically no affect on their existence. To others, it is exciting

and enjoyable – even desirable. While the violence in *Howards End* evokes a sense of pessimism about the future and a growing concern for the condition of the Empire, in *Heartbreak House*, violence is *wanted* and practically inevitable. In depicting violence in this way, in a domestic setting wherein the capitalists die, while the other characters thrill in their wake, Shaw extends Forster’s critique of how imperial violence seeps into English society as Shaw satirizes an English desire for violence in *Heartbreak House*.

In 1914, Shaw found himself, for the first time in his life, really, in the position of a *popular* artist. He had a smash on his hands and was riding high on his *über*-celebrity – or, he would have been riding high had he actually approved of the reason behind it. His play *Pygmalion* had just opened, and Shaw disapproved of the production – particularly of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s romanticized and bombastic performance as Professor Henry Higgins. Still, Shaw was making money and was popular with the public in April of 1914 (Weintraub 1-21). Then the war began, and shortly thereafter, Shaw published a pamphlet entitled *Common Sense About the War*. Dan H. Laurence describes how Shaw went from being among the most popular literary celebrities in England to a ruined name overnight with its publication, noting that he was verbally assaulted and “cut dead” by friends and officials, that “booksellers and librarians removed his works from their shelves” (qtd. in Gibbs 8). *Common Sense About the War* was scandalous. In it, Shaw pontificated and expounded why the war started, what it would be like, and what life might be like after the war, by his estimation. It is, given its reception, a rather surprisingly straightforward, honest, and logical evaluation of the war and the events leading up to it. What’s more it is a pro-British document. The scandal came as the result of few actually having read carefully what Shaw said, misconstruing him as a pro-German or as a pacifist –

either being a traitorous position in the autumn of 1914.<sup>15</sup> Shaw's position could never have been so black-and-white, so easily understood. After the publication of *Common Sense*, Shaw went to work on a sequel of sorts: *More Common Sense About the War*, written in 1915. Naturally, no publisher would touch this pamphlet and it remained unpublished until after Shaw's death. Taken together, along with selected letters and other paraphernalia, Shaw's take on the War at every turn may be recognized. Of particular concern to this study are his attitudes towards Germany, class, and domestic life during the war, and the violence of the war itself. In addition to these, Shaw's thoughts on Ireland also factor into the equation, as Shaw saw the Irish problem not only as a class problem but one of dire tension. Ultimately, these historical contexts will permit a reading of *Heartbreak House* in which an absolutely pessimistic Shaw satirizes life at home during wartime. This world that he sought to criticize is one wherein violence, death, and destruction, is welcomed as a thrill and even looked forward to. In doing so, I argue, Shaw indicates that the violence of the war, perhaps even the war itself, is not over.

As we saw in chapter two, prior to the First World War, Great Britain was rife with social discontent. This was particularly prominent, for Shaw, in the case of Ireland, which represented England's thrilling sense of class violence on an international level. To Shaw, the Irish problem was endemic of the broader problem of class within the nations of the British Empire. Since, in those days, Ireland's business was England's business, any domestic problem in Ireland became an international problem for England. What's more, he was extremely cognizant to the threat Ireland posed to both herself and Britain and that this threat was a violent one. The Irish problem was endemic of the broader problem of a British imperialist class system driven by capitalist economics. He even identified the Curragh incident as "a class mutiny, and [the officers] would

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<sup>15</sup> For an utterly thorough narrative of the publication of *Common Sense About the War*, see Weintraub 53-82.

have been punished severely had it been a mutiny of common soldiers instead of officers, or had a Government that represented the soldier class instead of the officer class” (*MCS 165*).

Referring to Ireland, Shaw wrote, “There is, of course, what the Germans call the Class War always with us” (*TMWI 116*). The Class War is a part of what makes Ireland what it is, according to Shaw, and it is seemingly infinite in its scope. In other words, it was there before the war, and it will be there after. Shaw’s own relationship to Ireland was peculiar. Born in Dublin in 1856 to Protestant parents, he left the country in 1876 and would never reside there again. Shaw was fond of his heritage despite his self-exile from his homeland. On more than one occasion he wrote and/or said statements to the effect of “The mere geographical accident of my birth, for which I deserve no credit whatever – this fact that I am an Irishman – has always filled me with a wild and inextinguishable pride” (*TMWI 81*). In a letter to Mabel Fitzgerald, he wrote that Ireland, “is too small for me... but Ireland must have an ambassador in the great world; so here I am” (*SCL II 275*). As such, Shaw spent not a little bit of his energies on Ireland throughout his life.

Shaw was a critic of both England and Ireland in regard to Irish affairs; but, these incidents carry a profound weight with them that is reflected in *Heartbreak House*: both the English and the Irish are thirsty for violence. At the start of the war, Shaw saw the threat of an Irish-German alliance and was extremely concerned about what such an alliance would do to not only the British cause but the Irish one as well. Rumors abounded that Irish nationalists were plotting a conspiracy with Germany – later aggravated by the Casement affair. In November 1914, as Shaw was at his lowest point, he wrote in an article to the Irish people arguing, “It is said that there is no such thing as gratitude in politics. If so, Ireland is absolved from all obligations to the French Republic” (*TMWI 101*). He argues that if Ireland helps Germany, and

“if the English are willing to stand by their old enemy, is Ireland going to turn its back on its old friend?” (*TMWI* 103). Shaw also spoke on Ireland’s behalf after the Easter Rebellion in 1916, equating England’s treatment of Ireland to Germany’s treatment of Belgium (*TMWI* 120). At the same time, Shaw lamented the bombardment of Dublin during the Rebellion in satirical terms. “It is to be greatly regretted that so very little of Dublin has been demolished.... [The General Post Office’s] demolition does not matter. What does matter is that all the Liffey slums have not been demolished” (*TMWI* 122).<sup>16</sup> Again, these are turned into or already seen by Shaw as issues of class. What is disturbing about these incidents as they relate to Shaw’s creative writing is the eager and violent English response. In Shaw’s writing about the Casement affair and Irish-German rumors is the sense that Shaw is trying to stay Ireland from tempting the English retaliation as much as he is trying to prevent the Irish from being violent themselves. He is acutely aware that the British will respond with force and that it will all be a tremendous waste of life. That comes to be exactly what happens during the Easter Uprising: the English overcompensate and the result is destruction and ruin. It cannot be a coincidence that Shaw begins writing a play which figures as part of its primary theme the British delight in violence the same year of the Uprising.

The Great War itself, to Shaw, was the result of two imperial powers, goaded on by their upper-class members in particular, simply wanting to fight each other. Shaw also saw the antagonism of the English in their relationship to Germany and blamed the European class system and imperialism for the war. Shaw identifies the roots of the tension between England and Germany stretching back “for the last forty years on both sides” in “the history of the literary

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew Yde, in his recent and fascinating study on *Shaw and Totalitarianism*, explores Shaw’s embrace of violence in the late 1920s and ‘30s, facilitated by his misplaced and ignorant interests in the projects of Adolf Hitler. In some ways, my own study might be the prelude to Yde’s work.

propaganda of war between England and Germany” (*CSAtW* 18). Shaw even identifies specifically *The Battle of Dorking*, the first invasion novel published in 1874 and republished in 1914 as the beginning of “English Militarist literature... in which it was assumed as a matter of course that Germany and not France nor Russia was England’s natural enemy” (*CSAtW* 20). Shaw pinpoints the moment when such literature turned its representation of a defensive to aggressive nation as “the moment the Kaiser began to copy our Armada policy by building a big fleet, the anti-German agitation became openly aggressive; and the cry that the German fleet or ours must sink, and that a war between England and Germany was bound to come some day” became a daily occurrence, perpetuated by those whom Shaw calls “Militarists” and “Junkers” (*CSAtW* 20). “What is a Junker?” Shaw rhetorically asks. “Is it a German officer of twenty-three, with offensive manners, and a habit of cutting down innocent civilians with his sabre? Sometimes; but not at all exclusively that or anything like that” (Shaw *Common Sense* 18). A Junker was a materialist of the upper class, a capitalist, an imperialist, and a member of the landed gentry, accustomed to leisurely country life, and stubbornly nationalistic (*CSAtW* 19). These were the people to blame, according to Shaw, who goaded the country onward, building armaments and agitating through propaganda, working the people into a fit wherein they seemingly *needed* the war to happen.

Not unlike Forster, Shaw admired German culture but despised its imperialism and economics – which, as has already been shown, were remarkably similar to Britain’s. In a 1915 letter to his German translator, Siegfried Trebitsch, he writes, “Germany is the standard bearer of Culture: Britain is the champion of Liberty” (*SCL II* 285). While this might, in part, have been influenced by the fact that his plays were popular in Germany long before they were popular in London, Shaw illustrates that his admiration for German art runs deep. “He greatly valued

German culture and on the whole preferred it to that of France, and this cultural affiliation colored his whole response to the war,” write J. L. Wisenthal and Daniel O’Leary (9). His essay, *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898) expressed his admiration for Wagner’s music. Shaw despised Prussian militarism, though – that is to say, Shaw didn’t care about nationalism in any flavor, whether it was English, Irish, German, or French. This is the reason he was ultimately pro-British in the war. “We must beat Germany,” he writes, “not because the Militarist hallucination and our irresolution forced Germany to make this war... because she has made herself the exponent and champion in the modern world of the doctrine that military force is the basis and foundation of national greatness, and military conquest the method by which the nation of the highest culture can impose that culture on its neighbors” (*CSAtW* 78). But, if he is against German or Prussian militarism, he is equally against British militarism, writing,

Between the German army and the British army and navy I am very strongly pro-British not in the least because I think the ethical position of the British different from or one jot sounder than the German, but for the very simple and solid reason that I do not want to have my throat cut, my house blown down about my ears, and my income cut off to pay an indemnity of ten thousand millions instead of a war bill of five or six hundred, to say nothing of being dragged behind the triumphal car of the German Junker, to whom I object quite as strenuously as to the British Junker. (*MCS* 135)

Indeed, to him, the hypocrisy of the war was stifling. “Let us have no more nonsense about the Prussian Wolf and the British Lamb, the Prussian Machiavelli and the English Evangelist. We cannot shout for years that we are boys of the bulldog breed, and then suddenly pose as gazelles” (*CSAtW* 22). Throughout the war, Shaw criticized the home front, not the war front, for being hypocritical, nasty, and little more than imperialistic warmongers bent on maintaining the capitalistic *status quo*. Indeed, Shaw even put the stakes of the war into economic terms: “Victory to the capitalists of Europe means that they can not only impose on the enemy a huge

indemnity, but lend him the money to pay it with whilst the working classes produce and pay both principal and interest” (*CSAtW* 77).

Shaw supposed that the English equivalent of Junkers had been planning the war for years and that they “were willing and ready to” go to war with Germany and that they are to blame for the perpetuation of violence during the war (*MCS* 103). As they did so, the rest of the country stood by, complicit in the race to doom (*MCS* 135). This was, in part, because of the class system, which had rendered the middle and lower classes the playthings of the upper class, refusing to grant them the agency to affect change or even be aware that change was possible. Class issues abound in the Shaw’s wartime writing. On this issue, he *was* willing to attack the military. “The officers’ mess of a British regiment will now, even when we are at war with Germany, entertain a German officer at dinner with the utmost good humor. Ask it to sit down to a table with a British private of the laboring class, and it will resign its commissions passionately sooner than comply” (*MCS* 165). While this critique is of the class divisions within the British ranks, it is ultimately yet another attack on the Junker, now turned officer. Fussell attributes the major losses on the Western Front during the first years of the war, in part, “to the class system and the assumptions it sanctioned. The regulars of the British staff entertained an implicit contempt for the rapidly trained new men of ‘Kitchener’s Army,’ largely recruited among workingmen from the Midlands. The planners [of the war] assumed that these troops... were too simple and animal to cross the space between the opposing trenches in any way except in full daylight and aligned in rows or ‘waves’” (Fussell 14). The result, of course, was that these men were plowed down by the German machine guns.

Shaw was rarely critical of these poor souls, focusing, instead, his critical attention on the Junkers in England, and the followers of the Junkers. His critique was of those at home, not those

at war. After the publication of *Common Sense*, he responded to a rather nasty article on his pamphlet, writing, “In my case you said that I had attacked the soldiers. I did exactly the opposite: I shewed that the soldiers saved the situation while a noisy gang of civilians were disgracing us” (*SCL II* 643). In *More Common Sense About the War*, he goes as far as to say that the soldiers are merely fighting for the “diplomatists and statesmen” (101). In his most scathing critique, though, he writes, “[s]ome of my civilian fellow passengers were more bloodthirsty in their conversation, more malicious in their enmity, than any soldiers with actual field experience I have ever talked to. Why they should be allowed to hide behind the soldier and let him stop all the bullets and ward off all the bayonets and snuff up all the chlorine is more than I can see or say” (*MCS* 115). After visiting soldiers at the front, Shaw reported, “Talking about the war among soldiers is not depressing and something revolting, like talking about it among civilians. To the civilian the war is often not a war at all: it is a squabble, to be conducted by writing anonymous postcards and throwing a dead cat back and forward over the garden wall” (*JRF* 204). Once again, Shaw is, in these instances, critiquing the behavior of those back home and underlines his critique with their bloodlust.

That bloodlust – the thirst for the excitement of violence – came to England’s shores and Shaw experienced it himself firsthand. Indeed, with Shaw’s sudden awakening to the thrill of watching violence, he made himself complicit to his own critique. In addition to the Uprising of 1916, the same year Shaw began to write *Heartbreak House*, Germany began bombing England via zeppelins. Hynes writes of those times: “To see a zeppelin above your head in Hampstead or Kensington, to open your *Times* and find the names of your civilian acquaintances among the *Lusitania* dead, was to experience war differently; if such things could happen, then *everyone* was in the war, everyone was a potential tragedy” (*AWI* 100, my emphasis). Yet, if this is the

case, as Shaw records history, the sense pervading the air was more in the comitragic mode. It may have been tragic in one sense, but it was nevertheless thrilling and even entertaining. In a letter to Beatrice and Sidney Webb in October 1916, Shaw recounts his own run-in with a zeppelin:

The Potters Bar Zeppelin... made a magnificent noise the whole time; and not a searchlight touched it.... And not a shot was fired at it. I was amazed at its impunity and audacity. It sailed straight for London and must have got past Hatfield before they woke up and brought it down.... At two o'clock another Zeppelin passed over Ayot; but we have no telephone, and nobody bothered. I went to see the wreck on my motor bicycle. The police were in great feather, as there is a strict cordon, which means that you cant get in without paying. The charges are not excessive, as I guess; for I created a ducal impression by a shilling. Corpses are extra, no doubt; but I did not intrude on the last sleep of the brave. What is hardly credible, but true, is that the sound of the Zepp's engines was so fine, and its voyage through the stars so enchanting, that I positively caught myself hoping next night that there would be another raid. I grieve to add that after seeing the Zepp fall like a burning newspaper, with its human contents roasting for some minutes (it was frightfully slow) I went to bed and was comfortably asleep in ten minutes. One is so pleased at having seen the show that the destruction of a dozen people or so in hideous terror and torment does not count. 'I didn't half cheer, I tell you' said a damsel at the wreck. Pretty lot of animals we are! (*SCL II* 425-26)

Shaw's excitement is palpable. His descriptions are grisly. The sound is "magnificent" and "the sound of the Zepp's engines was so fine" that it almost sounds like it must be music. He hopes for another raid the next night and falls asleep without a problem despite witnessing the flesh melt off of those onboard. He even refers to it as a "show." It is a performance, a spectacle. The moment had a profound impact upon Shaw and his art.

Shaw was to continue to explore this theatricality in his later war pamphlets and even satirize it in *Heartbreak House*. Militarism was already seen as a somewhat theatrical even before the war, and the violence of the war made the event all the more theatrical. Johnson observes, "[s]ince most Britons had no personal experience of military life, direct physical contact between soldiers and civilians was generally limited to public spectacles such as parades

and military reviews – and even at these events the military was often represented by local Volunteers or militia rather than by regular soldiers” (26). War must clearly have been something of a spectatorial event – a performance. Another connection to performativity and the war is a curious one: athleticism and sports. As already noted, the Edwardian project of creating a generation of young men, fit for war, was clearly a step towards militarism. Sports, playing and watching, became increasingly popular as England became “fit.” This trend transferred into military life. Fussell recounts: “One way of showing the sporting spirit was to kick a football toward the enemy lines while attacking. The 1st Battalion of the 18th London Regiment at Loos first performed this feat in 1915. It soon achieved the status of a conventional act of bravado and was ultimately explored far beyond the Western Front” (28). The “sporting spirit” pervaded the battlefield with or without the presence of a football:

The English tank crews, Lord Northcliffe finds, ‘are young daredevils who, fully knowing that they will be a special mark for every kind of Prussian weapon, enter upon their task in a sporting spirit with the same cheery enthusiasm as they would show for football.’ One thing notable about Prussians is that they have an inadequate concept of playing the game. Thus Reginal Grant on the first German use of chlorine gas: ‘It was a new device in warfare and thoroughly illustrative of the Prussian idea of playing the game.’ (Fussell 28)

War, itself, is a kind of game to be played, a spectacle to be watched from all sides. The war, in other words, *was* paratheatrical. Shaw most certainly exploited this sense of theatricality for his second published pamphlet on the war, *Joy Riding on the Front* (1917). Having been invited to the front to observe the troops in action, Shaw was given a chance to experience a taste of the war and report on it. Bear in mind, Shaw was, at this time, still working away on *Heartbreak House*. This text is a bit more playful. At one point, Shaw resorts to onomatopoeia: “Boom! whizzzzzz! Boom! whizzzzzz! Boom! whizzzzzz!–all fortissimo diminuendo; then, crescendo molto subito, Whizzzzzz-bangclatter! (JRF 196). Not only is Shaw clearly having some fun, here,

but also he manages to work in a musical reference as well – rendering the war in artistic terms.

He also describes an incident of personal embarrassment:

An aeroplane flew across above me: a British aeroplane... and presently the sky about him flowered into puff-balls. He sailed on triumphantly; and I had an extraordinary lapse of patriotism, and indeed of decency... I, forgetting that the warrior in the sky might easily be one of my own personal friends, demanded why the guns did not keep it up... It was explained to me that the guns would have to be relaid in bringing them on a target that was travelling [*sic*] at a hundred miles an hour. As a person of my intelligence ought to have known this without having to be told, I was somewhat abashed, and also a little horrified on reflection by the discovery of myself in the character I have so often reprobated: that of a sportsman. (*JRF* 197)

The most important line is the final denouncement. Shaw, here, recognizes the sort of fervor of watching war and violence as similar to watching sports. Like the Potter's Barn zeppelin, Shaw shows a sense of excitement and desire for more violence, writing, "I had a wild hope that Brer Boche would send over something" (*JRF* 197). What's more, at the end of the pamphlet, he writes, "I am bound to state plainly, as a simple fact to be exploited by devils or angels, according to its true nature, that I enjoyed myself enormously and continuously, in spite of exposures and temperatures that finally gave me my first taste of frostbite" (*JRF* 199). Even in inclement weather, he had a delightful experience watching the war about him. Now, that is not to say that Shaw was some sort of thrill-seeker who lived for the rush of danger. On the contrary, he writes, "I was safer there than in London after dark" (*JRF* 201). Nevertheless, Shaw's sense of excitement – joy, even – and his sense of anticipation, the desire for continuing action, at the front and elsewhere is clear.

Shaw's "solutions" and "visions" for how the war could or should end all involve, each and every one of them, the notion that fighting and violence will not end with a truce between Germany and England – and at every turn the issue that still needs to be resolved is one of class. In 1914, he suggested that the soldiers in all armies involved in the conflict "should shoot their

officers and go home to gather in their harvests in the villages and make a revolution in the towns,” but also acknowledged the impracticality of this solution (*CSAtW* 166). Shaw expressed skepticism at the notion of preventing violence at home, writing,

The question is, what have we to expect if domestic differences arise in our own country after the war, and we attempt to settle them by fifteen inch artillery and bomb rain? We must not dismiss the possibility incredulously or impatiently: it has been prophesied quite as often as the present war; and there are only too many instances in history of the difficulty of overcoming the inertia of our social order without resorting to violence. (*MCS* 166)

He supposes, “the war... has suspended” the social class struggle, “but in the end the war will precipitate it” (*MCS* 167). Ultimately, the Junkers have to go, thinks Shaw. It will be a revolution. “Wars for freedom and an idea, are the only respectable wars in history. The only throats we have any right to cut are our own; and we have no right to cut our own throats for anything less than an idea which promises to raise the standard of human life for the whole species” (*MCS* 169). Whether or not such a struggle would be a success, Shaw does not address. Regardless, it would be worth it to fight for an idea. With that, we turn to the reckless violence of *Heartbreak House*.

## **Part II: “A Fantasia in the Russian Manner” and the Violence of *Heartbreak House***

Fantasy enables Shaw to represent violence and the reactions to it in the way that he does in *Heartbreak House*. Shaw’s play puts violence onstage (or just offstage) and has some of the characters revel in it and others all but ignore it. In order for such behavior to occur, Shaw had to use fantasy in order for the audience to digest these bizarre reactions to atrocity. Despite the very real truth to the attitudes he puts on display, fantasy assists the audience’s ability to engage intellectually with the implications of Shaw’s world by taking it all to a hyperbolic degree. The play is subtitled “A Fantasia in the Russian Manner.” *Heartbreak House*, like *Howards End*, uses a heightened reality in order to stage its problems. It, too, “asks for something more” from its

audience. As Wright notes, “*Heartbreak House* typically draws fire from those who expect of Shaw a realistic drawing room comedy” (2). Shaw’s play is not a naturalistic play. Even when the play takes place is not entirely clear. Hynes and Wright both agree that the action is set during the war (*AWI* 142-3 and 66, respectively). A. M. Gibbs, though, convincingly argues that Shaw purposefully avoided direct references to the war that was taken place as he wrote, suggesting that the work may “represent ‘cultured, leisured’ Anywhere, at any time” (13). While freeing the play from any definite historical setting is part of how Shaw accomplishes a fantasy-like world, it is only part of the equation. Shaw’s fantasy is constructed in a much different way than Forster’s. Shaw overlays his play with parodic references and allusions to other literary works, creating a sort of hyper-intertextuality that is not particularly difficult to pick up on (provided the audience is familiar with even some of the texts Shaw conjures up). This results in hyper-awareness, or even a self-consciousness, of the text in relation to itself: it asks a bit more of its audience.

The play has to be heightened in order to transmit its critique of a complicit society that could discuss massive destruction and teatime in the same breath. Like in *Howards End* with the death of Leonard, at the end of the play, culture piles up in the form of literary and artistic references, and then the bombs begin to fall. A “fantasia” refers to “musical compositions that are not tied to strict or regular form (such as that of the fugue) but instead comprise a series of freely arranged improvizations” (Gibbs 61). Given the subtitle’s meaning, it is interesting that the play moves from conversation to conversation, from reference to reference, and allusion to allusion. The play is full of twists and surprises – moments that seem like “improvizations.” One of the methods Shaw uses is to saturate the text to references from and to other texts. Shaw himself pointed out that the play bore a certain resemblance to *King Lear* with its 88-year old

father and two scornful daughters (*SCL II* 498). What's more, *King Lear* exists within a pagan world with nature-Gods not unlike the one described by Forster as aiding in the achievement of fantasy (Weintraub 336). Shotover is reconciled to the youngest girl at the end of the play. Hesione, Hector, and Ariadne are all named via classical allusion – again, a pagan world with nature-Gods (Gibbs 45). As Gibbs points out, in addition to allusions to *King Lear*, “Shaw deliberately deploys... allusions to *Othello*” in order to create a sense of doubt or uncertainty about the relationships in the play (48). Shotover's alleged backstory recalls the Faust legend, having sold his soul to the Devil in Zanzibar. Shotover is also searching for a way to commit “that supernatural destruction,” as Gibbs understands it, taking the audience away from “the bounds of *vraisemblance*” (71). “At the end of act 1 Shaw momentarily abandons naturalism altogether when he has Shotover, Hesione, and Hector break into a weird chant on the darkened stage about the Shotover household” (Gibbs 69). The Burglar, and the reactions to him by the audience and the other characters on the stage, indicates that he, too, is a fantastical element. As Gibbs puts it, “the Burglar [becomes] an old friend” in spite of entering their house as a stranger (108). It must be noted, though, that just because Shaw alludes to another text or work of art, that he is more “parodic than imitative” of them (Gibbs 61). Matthew Yde comments that the play's pessimism is a counterblast to the utopian vision that was his next play, *Back to Methuselah*, suggesting a dystopian, otherworldly quality to *Heartbreak House* (113). Gibbs notes this, too, but attributes this otherworldliness to the likes of Swedish experimental playwright August Strindberg, whose work Shaw was certainly aware (4, 20, and 27). Finally, the work is hugely influenced by Anton Chekhov's plays, which Shaw reports made him feel wildly inferior as a playwright (Gibbs 27). By overwhelming the play with literary references – especially dramatic

references – Shaw achieves a sense of heightened reality through which his violence becomes more pointedly self-conscious.

The language of this play is loaded with violent imagery. The violence of the play is linguistic and metaphorical in nature. It is at the end of the play that the underlying violence exhibited in subtle and not-so-subtle behavior and dialogue that the violence finally manifests itself in tangible terms, but even that violence is offstage. How the characters react to the violent imagery and action wildly depends upon the context; however, by the end of the play, the violence has become so explicit, so ardently a part of the world of the play, that it is hoped for in the future. In doing so, Shaw comments upon how the Great War changed the way humanity interacted with violence.<sup>17</sup> So much of the play is seemingly idle talk as the audience waits for something to happen. All of that waiting (and the tension it creates) comes to a head during the bombing sequence at the end of the play. I argue that the underlying violent and militant language is one of the ways Shaw builds this tension until it explodes in the form of bombs actually falling from the sky and killing people.

Shaw also deploys the language of passionate emotions as well as that of the military and war to imply by way of the stage directions how his characters' everyday behavior permeates with a violent subtlety. The first violent image comes from a stage direction for Shotover. He is described as "*rising wrathfully*" to Ellie (53). This brings her "*almost to tears*" (53). So violent is this image and so sudden that it shakes Ellie to nearly cry. Being the first moment of severity, it shocks her a bit. The next moment comes after Ariadne and Hesionie reunite. Ariadne is given the direction "*rising suddenly and explosively*" (60). This is a moment of passion, and as Hesionie

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<sup>17</sup> There is, of course, a great deal to do with the Empire, capitalism, and performance throughout the play. Some of these issues are taken up alongside those already established for *Howards End* in chapter five. Imagery and issues dealing with the houses are in chapter five.

has removed herself enough from Ariadne, she is not particularly moved by it. The next moment is another stage direction; however, it is really more militant than violent – but as this is war literature, it seems, therefore, relevant. Hesionne is told by the directions to “*march about*” (65). Similarly, in the vein of Forster’s red/heat references, Ellie blushes as she tells Hesionne about who turns out to be Hector. Again, we are still in a relatively innocent world. The expository sequence is relatively calm, but it probably needed to be in order to allow the background information to percolate through the otherwise violent play.

Shaw develops this sense of domesticated violence by staging the eruption of aggression even during the seemingly nonchalant atmosphere of afternoon tea. Randall wants to have a tour of the house and grounds, but Hesionne doesn’t seem too keen on the idea. “Theres nothing to see in the garden except papas’s observatory, and a gravel pit with a cave where he keeps dynamite and things of that sort,” says Hesionne (81). Randall reacts, asking, “Isn’t that rather risky?” while Ariadne realizes, “That’s something new. What is the dynamite for?” (81). Hector replies, “To blow up the human race if it goes too far. He is trying to discover a psychic ray that will explode all the explosive at the will of a Mahatma” (81). Ellie replies, “The Captain’s tea is delicious, Mr Utterword” (81). For the first time, explosives are mentioned in dialogue – potential, even ludicrous, violence – and it is treated as blasé. Violence, at this point in the play, only receives a reaction equally violent if it is an action. Spoken language, while it might provoke some slight concern, is ultimately not terribly urgent. This is an instance of Shavian fantasia: the reality of the situation is not true to our world.

Shaw uses satire in order to make clear the ridiculousness of a militarized British Empire managed by Junkers. Hesionne continues to treat dynamite as if it were any old thing – a baby with a rattle or a dog with a bone – even when the dynamite is physically present on the stage.

MRS HUSHABYE. What have you got there, daddiest?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. Dynamite.

MRS HUSHABYE. Youve been to the gravel pit. Dont drop it about the house: theres a dear. (85)

The moment is comical. Shaw masterfully undermines the seriousness of the arms race by having the upper-class figures and their mad parents carry explosives through a house that resembles a ship. Shaw's satire, here, leaves the problem of militarism and even national defense in the hands of incompetents and people who don't understand the severity of what they're dealing with.

One such person is Shotover. Shaw makes Shotover not only a retired sea captain but also an inventor of weapons in order to illustrate the commodification of war that can lead to a cultured, leisurely life. Shotover essentially profits from the deaths of other people not unlike the old men who sent the young men off to war, for he is paid less for his inventions that save lives rather than ones that kill. He was paid £500 for a lifeboat patent and £12,000 for "a magnetic keep that sucked up submarines" (89). Hesion tells her father, "Living at the rate we do, you cannot afford life-saving inventions. Cant you think of something that will murder half Europe at one bang?" (89). He replies, "No. I am ageing fast. My mind does not dwell on slaughter as it did when I was a boy" (89). Maturity has actually made Shotover *more* humane and *less* violent. He blames his age, otherwise, he would make more – it's just a matter of pragmatics. But, something that could kill half of Europe in one bang might be simply the Great War itself. Shotover certainly is old enough to send young boys to die for him – and, what's more, there are no younger men in the play! While Shotover is, in some ways, an allegorical militarist Junker, he might also be a figure for the future: the result of raising boys to be violent militarists. At the very end of the first act, Shotover is left alone in the dark. He tells Hector not to turn the lights on. "Give me deeper darkness. Money is not made in the light" (91). In this heavily symbolic

moment, Shotover is about to start working on a doomsday device, one that will make him money. Shaw connects militarism and Junkerism in this single moment and casts his almost overly obvious shadow across his face in the form of the last line.

Shaw's use of extreme violence at the end of the play in the form of the bombs expresses his pessimism for the future of humanity. The characters' idiotic behavior in their attraction to violence as entertainment, as a way of life, prevents its use as a utility to enact improvement. The violence is a waste like that of the Great War. Near the beginning of the act, Hector makes a deadly prophecy: "I tell you, one of two things must happen. Either out of that darkness some new creation will come to supplant us as we have supplanted the animals, or the heavens will fall in thunder and destroy us" (140). This act is, in some ways, the test to see what will happen. The former option leads to Shaw's notion of the "Life Force" – his notion of creative evolution wherein man will eventually become superman. The latter option leads to their doom. And yet, neither seems to happen in the absoluteness that Hector foresees, at least not at this moment. Finally, a bomb falls. Just before it falls though, the following exchange is given:

HECTOR. Well, I don't mean to be drowned like a rat in a trap. I still have the will to live. What am I to do?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. Do? Nothing simpler. Learn your business as an Englishman.

HECTOR. And what may my business as an Englishman be, pray?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER: Navigation. Learn it and live; or leave it and be damned.

ELLIE. Quiet, quiet; you'll tire yourself.

MAZZINI. I thought all that once, Captain; but I assure you nothing will happen. *A dull distant explosion is heard.* (156-57).

The dialogue leading up to the explosion is reminiscent of what is at stake in *Howards End*:

"Who will inherit England?" The effects of the war have rented that question, though. Now we ask, "Who cares? Is it worth it?" The explosion sounds after Mazzini says, "I assure you nothing will happen," and then something *does* happen. The light goes out and Hector is "*furious*" – or,

as Grey might have put it: the lamps are going out all over Europe. The answer, for some, became the fury of war.

The nature of the violence changes to farce. That is not to say it is not saying serious things. On the contrary, the topsy-turvy world recalls the likes of Gilbert and Sullivan's operettas but without their frivolity. It is chaotic – unpredictable yet wildly selfish. The next bomb falls and the excitement builds. Hesionne says, "Did you hear the explosions? And the sound in the sky: it's splendid: it's like an orchestra: it's like Beethoven" (158). Ellie replies, "Hesionne: it is Beethoven" (158). This is a line that could be read as Ellie saying, "Hesionne: it is Germany." It is also art – specifically concert music, heightened expression. The two women embrace "*in wild excitement*" (158). Ellie and Hesionne are thrilled with the show they are about to witness. Mazzini becomes "*anxious*," perhaps the only realistic response that Shaw lends the scene (158). Ariadne doesn't even stir from her hammock, and merely complains, "The governor's wife in the cellars with the servants! Really, Randall!" (158). Ariadne's classist, imperialist comment leads to her next exchange, when Randall asks, "But what shall I do if you are killed?" "You will probably be killed, too, Randall," she replies. "Now play your flute to shew that you are not afraid; and be good. Play us Keep the home fires burning" (158). Nurse Guinness ironically replies, "Theyll keep the home fires burning for us: them up there" (158). Grim as Guinness' reply may be, it is all comedic – it should get a laugh in performance. And Guinness probably means it as a joke. Not only is the response to death, via Ariadne, "You can die for me. We'll die together, who cares?", but, through Guinness, it's "time for a joke!" Mazzini is the only one who shows concern for their collective safety after the joke – perhaps because he has a daughter that he loves: he's one of the few with anything to lose by the attack.

The penultimate bomb reveals a nihilist attitude that is then projected into the future: for the characters are complicit in the destruction that has been wrought and several of them hope for it to return even at the risk of British lives and/or Britain herself. The thrill of the bomb is worth whatever may come. The group argues over whether or not to leave the lights on or not, and whether or not to add more – lights being attractive to the bombers. Ellie wants to set the house on fire. The final bomb drops and it lands on the caves holding the dynamite – causing a huge explosion; or, as Shaw puts it “*a terrific explosion shakes the earth*” (159). Guinness proclaims “*with hideous triumph,*” “Right in the gravel pit: I seen it. Serve un right! I seen it [*she runs away towards the gravel pit, laughing harshly*]” (159). Mazzini, of course, asks if all is well. The Burglar and Mangan have been killed. Shotover laments the “waste” of his dynamite (160). Another bomb falls, but in the distance, and they lament the passing of whatever it was dropping the bombs (160). Ellie is “*disappointed*” and Hector “*disgusted*” that Heartbreak House is safe (160). Mazzini is surprised to be among the living (160). The play ends with the following:

MRS HUSHABYE. But what a glorious experience! I hope theyll come again tomorrow night.

ELLIE [*radiant at the prospect*] Oh, I hope so.

*Randall at last succeeds in keeping the home fires burning on his flute.*(160)

For none of them is the event quite real. It’s thrilling for Hesion and Ellie, horrifying to Mazzini, the Judgment to Shotover, the salvation that failed to Hector, and not much of anything to our imperialist Ariadne. They each experience the bombs differently, but in the end, the only lamentation comes from Mazzini who is more surprised than grieved. Ellie and Hesion welcome more bombings for the spectator-sport experience, while Hector looks for his annihilation in it. For Guinness it freed her of a husband. To the Burglar and Mangan, it took their lives. Two men died. And Randall returns the act to art, to a heightened reality and aesthetically keeps the home fires burning in a final gesture to the continuity of violence.

All of the characters are either complicit in the attack or even wish for it. And all the while it was the Burglar and the Businessman/Politician who died. For all intents and purposes, they seem satisfied with that. By Shaw's estimation, the question of continued violence after the war loomed heavily in his mind. In a 1919 letter he wrote, "You think the war is over, but the sense of proportion has not yet been regained. Shame, guilt, disillusion have even upset it more. Read H.H. a year hence to find out its infamies; and you will not discover one of them" (*SCL II* 638). In *More Common Sense About the War* he wrote, "This war will not be ended by party office holders, however popular, though no doubt the office holders will have an air of doing it if the war ends itself by exhaustion of all combatants and their relapse into the *status quo ante* of accumulating ammunition and building navies for another Armageddon" (90). If these comments were meant to be about England or civilization at large, he also commented on the return of trouble to Ireland immediately after the war. Indeed, as Shaw was proofing the manuscript for publication and making performance edits, the Anglo-Irish war had begun. In 1920, he wrote, "I do not hesitate to foretell here and now that we shall yet see Sir Edward calling on every Protestant in Ireland, and indeed on every landholder, Protestant or Catholic, Royalist or Republican, Covenanter or Sinn Feiner, to rally for a struggle to the death against Partition" (*TMWI* 259).

The violence in *Heartbreak House* afforded Shaw an opportunity to let loose like he never had before – creating an un-naturalistic world wherein he could stage the struggling mentality of his adopted country to come to terms with their own militarism and violence. In doing so, he suggests that the violence of the Great War has been so wide-ranging, so intense, that it has had a hand in changing the way people respond to violence. But, he also used the play to comment explicitly on problems he saw within the British and Irish class systems and the

Empire more broadly speaking. The next chapter addresses these issues and others through a side-by-side comparison to *Howards End*.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### HOWARDS END AS A HEARTBREAK HOUSE

Howards End and Heartbreak House both stand for and upon the British Empire. They are sites of the Empire's violence. While England appears at the center of these two texts, the Empire spreads outwards from it, much like the countryside roads that extend from London in *Howards End*; but the Empire is always there, supporting these houses and their residents. For instance, the Utterwords resemble the Wilcoxes in some ways. Both families have invested interest in specifically West African affairs: the Utterwords because Hastings is the colonial Governor, and the Wilcoxes because Paul works there and Henry has business interests in the rubber industry. Both families essentially derive their income from the African continent specifically through imperialist policies. Hastings Utterword does not even appear in the play and the Wilcoxes (at least for the time being) have left Howards End excepting Henry, who is under Margaret's care and is allergic to the environment around the house. Both exhibit the loss of life, and those deaths are bound up in the symbolism of liberal Britain's political failure in its mad continuance of militarist, imperial policies. Figures like Hastings, Paul, the Anglo-Indian guests at the Wilcox wedding, and the imaginary Devil in Zanzibar lie on the margins of the text just as imperialism was marginalized to the geographical edges of the Empire at whose center stood England. Nevertheless, England was standing upon its Empire and if these two houses represent England, they must by necessity also represent the Empire.

Shaw and Forster both take a longstanding, nineteenth century tradition and evolve it, complicating the houses by infusing them with imperial undertones which ultimately makes them violent spaces. As already noted, Masterman called the literary country house “little Englands,” but the cultural consciousness in Britain of the significance of its country houses pre-dates Masterman’s work. Indeed, at the 1900 Paris World’s Fair, each participating nation chose a representative building for their culture to be used as the façade for their pavilions. “From the Byzantine spired domes of the Russian pavilion to the grand neo-Classicism of the American – the English representatives to the fair expressed their homeland with a modest country house” (Hegglund 398). The country house served as a cultural pillar of traditions and standards. That was in the nineteenth century. Indeed, to recall the literary country houses of the Victorian era is to recall some of the time’s greatest literary achievements: Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1852-53), Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814), and Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847). This brief list is far from exhaustive. Of the canonical writers, alone, the works of Walter Scott, Henry James, Anthony Trollope, Henry James, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and Thomas Hardy all feature symbolic country houses (some are, admittedly, more symbolic than others). The literary houses of the nineteenth century were, like *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House*, a place to stage the problems of the country. Victorian critic John Ruskin wrote,

This is the true nature of home – it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury but also from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home: so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home.... But so far as it is a sacred place a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods. (38)

While I must concede the difference between the “country house” and Ruskin’s conceptualization of the “home,” the country house is, after all, one place where home might be

found. *Howards End* is certainly “home” as far as the Schlegels are concerned at the end of the novel. *Heartbreak House*, while less comforting overall to all of the characters in the play, is “home” to Captain Shotover and Hesionne at the very least – and probably to Ellie, too. There can be no doubt, though, that by the time Forster and Shaw are writing, even the configuration of what “home” means has changed. Neither *Howards End* nor *Heartbreak House* are “places of Peace.” *Heartbreak House* is a hostile place, beset by mad inhabitants and visitors and bombarded from above by forces much greater than the games employed by the likes of Randall and Ariadne.

While Forster’s ending and Shaw’s pre-bombing evocation of the Life Force coupled with the use of supernatural symbols might suggest the potential for peace, these ultimately give way to pessimism and/or chaos. With regard to the house as a “temple” watched over by “household Gods,” this certainly seems to have at least some resonance in *Howards End* in the form of Ruth Wilcox née Howard, who, as Pykett calls her, is “the earth-mother goddess” (121). Ruth is the spiritual being who seems to exude Ruskinian “Peace.” It is, after all, Mrs. Wilcox who brings the feud between Aunt Juley, Helen, and Paul to a deft, anti-climactic end. Holding strands of hay from the fields, perhaps she even evokes Demeter, the Greek goddess of fertility and agriculture. In this way, she even fulfills Forster’s notion that “fantasy” recalls the polytheistic spirit of paganism. Still, Ruth dies near the beginning of the novel, leaving the house without its denizen spirit until Margaret tentatively fills the vacancy. Margaret is, as has already been discussed, not necessarily a perfect fit for Mrs. Wilcox’s shoes and her security at *Howards End* really is only so secure. In *Heartbreak House*, on the other hand, no such spirit ever seems to exist – except, perhaps, in a parodic version. Captain Shotover may function as an anti-God – his imaginary deal with the Devil in Zanzibar may well point to this idea. Gibbs posits, “[t]he

texts of Shaw's plays bear an ironic and parodic relation to the texts and literary motifs they echo. Rather than simply borrowing from other texts, Shaw typically creates a counterdiscourse" (41). Part of what Shotover does for the play is preside over the house as an agitating, erratic, and violent figure – the very reverse of the Ruth Wilcox vision of peaceful domesticity. Both Anthea Trodd and Victoria Rosner echo the sentiments of Ruskin, but recognize that such literary traditions were in flux from the *fin de siècle* onward (157 and 13, respectively). The tradition of the country house was changing. It was changing in terms of what it looked like, what it stood for, and function it served within the texts. What's more, because the houses were changing, so were the characters. In this regard, Forster's work can be seen as a transitional work, leading to Shaw's bleakly pessimistic world in *Heartbreak House*. While the characters are different, the houses themselves are strikingly similar. As a result, what the houses themselves *mean* within their textual contexts is also very similar. The houses reflect a changing, troubled Empire on the verge of collapse.

Shaw begins his preface by stating, "Heartbreak House is not merely the name of the play which follows this preface. It is cultured, leisured Europe before the war" (7). *Howards End* is a kind of Heartbreak House at the basic level in that it, too, at the end of the novel represents cultured, leisured England. Shaw writes that Chekhov's plays are also about Heartbreak Houses, "it was to him the house in which Europe was stifling its soul" (7). Chekhov, he writes, "had no faith in these charming people extricating themselves" (7). In some ways, Shaw's analysis seems to anticipate Forster's recollections of the Edwardian period in their general feeling of "Hope Without Faith." Indeed, Forster's characters and world in *Howards End* seem to fit within the same comment. Forster also doesn't seem to have faith in the Schlegels' attempt to restore the nation. There remains, at the end of *Howards End*, the sense that something has been

permanently lost, reflected in the general nostalgia for the past. London, creeping evermore into the country, spreading its grey dust, letting loose its cars full of wealthy imperialists, encroaches upon and then swallows the countryside – silencing the chance at peace, the city, the heart of the Empire grows outwardly; and Helen and Margaret are both aware that their world is shrinking. The narrator’s casting of the world and ending it without providing definitive answers or closure also seem to suggest a kind of fading faith in the certainty that life will, in fact, get better. *Howards End* is a world of purely hopeful sentiments. Faith is conspicuously absent. The Schlegel sisters arrive in their position, hoping to affect some sort of positive change to their little corner of the world, but their ability to see it through is to be doubted at the very least. As Shaw might put it, the Schlegel sisters are another example of “The same nice people, the same utter futility” (8).

Both Shaw and Forster indirectly suggest that the natural space of the imperialist has evolved through providing them with a new space that metaphorically and literally serves destructive purposes. Shaw identifies the “alternative to Heartbreak House” as “Horseback Hall” (9). Horseback Hall consists of the house’s stables and “an annex for the ladies and gentlemen who rode them, hunted them, talked about them, brought them and sold them, and gave nine-tenths of their lives to them” (9). These people were the “exiles from the library, the music room, and the picture gallery” (9). In other words, Horseback Hall was a place for the leisured class who either had no interest in culture or couldn’t take part in its machinations for whatever reason. Whether they were self-exiled or exiled by the rest of the household, Horseback Hall was where this group of people found their solace – where they managed to continue on. “Hardy horsewomen who slept at the first chord of Schumann were born, horribly misplaced, into the garden of Klingsor,” writes Shaw (9). There is, here, a sense of societal misplacement. Shaw

suggests, although not directly, that the Horseback people and the Heartbreak people are different at the level of “placement.” What is different about the two? For, indeed, Shaw writes, “[t]he two were apart and knew little of one another... And of the two atmospheres it is hard to say which was the more fatal to statesmanship” (9). Both types of people, then, had to be implicated in the same political-economic structure. Both types of people had to be at fault when it came to the catastrophe of 1914. They are the yin and the yang of the British leisure class. There were cultured people and there were sportier people and, while Shaw doesn’t try to claim that the two are mutually exclusive even within the life of a single person, he nevertheless doesn’t try to pin the blame for the decline of English politics and the war on either group. Without a doubt, the Schlegels belong to Heartbreak House while the Wilcoxes are members of Horseback Hall. Both are a part of leisurely Europe. The Wilcoxes, so adamantly in their speech and actions against the cosmopolitanism and cultured nature of the Schlegels, so interested in speed and the Empire, are, in many ways, perfect fits for the annex of Horseback Hall. The Schlegels, with their discussions of art, their liberal humanitarian projects (like the Basts), and their concert going, fit the bill. Both families, as has already been noted, are particularly caught up in the problems of the Empire. Their existence, cultured or otherwise, is supported by the economic and political machines of the day. What is particularly curious, here, is that neither Heartbreak House nor Howards End actually have stables. They are utterly absent from the former, and have been demolished in the latter. Instead, in each work there is modern evolution of the Horseback Hall. In *Howards End* Henry has built a garage “not far from the wych-elm, in what used to be the paddock for the pony” (54). In *Heartbreak House*, Shotover’s dynamite store in the cave surely has taken the place of the stables as the social, recreative space for the imperialist.

One of the ways in which Forster brings the Empire and the violence it is built upon to *Howards End* is through the garage, which is a house for one of the imperialist's favorite toys: the motorcar. By providing a separate house for the motorcar, the Wilcoxes are enacting a ritual of permanence for the car and everything that it stands for as now a part of *Howards End* – a part of England. The garage at *Howards End* is brand new and was built, assumedly, to house the Wilcox's vehicles. This is yet another marker of a changing world. A paddock with a pony is hardly a Horseback Hall. Had the novel been set fifty years earlier, a more complete stable might be exactly what Henry would have built next to the house. Instead, it is the Edwardian era and the motorcar has supplanted the necessity for horses in the Wilcoxian worldview. Industrialism is leaving the city and entering the country life – spreading like the dust it kicks off of the country roads it travels upon. "Like the car which emerges noisily and conspicuously from it," writes Wright, "the city, in *Howards End*, connotes change" (32). If the city indicates change and the car is a signifier of that change, the erection of a garage in the country must also be a sign of changing times. The car is a symbol for the speed and danger of a progressively changing world, and the garage is indicative of this change – a permanent addition to the house. Widdowson notes, "[o]ne of the iterative motifs of the book is of buildings being pulled down to make way for yet vaster buildings (This, of course, is what happens to the Schlegels' quitted and cultured house in Wickham Place)' (65). The same is true in regard to the pony's paddock being torn down for a garage. Indeed, in some ways, the fact of a garage replacing a small enclosure for a pony takes Widdowson's reading to an extreme degree – for even if the garage is small, it would still dwarf the pony paddock in terms of human construction. Bigger must surely always be better to the imperialist.

The country house is yet another attempt at conquest. It is, in some respects, the final frontier – the one place they have never belonged. They can go anywhere: to Crimea, to India, to Egypt, China, or South Africa and be triumphant; but, in their own backyard they have never had a place – except in the form of the stables, which *Howards End* never had in proper! They build the garage as their colonial outpost. The garage represents not just a simple modern addition to the country house or the country lifestyle but the permanency and intrusive nature of the Empire and everything that it stands for. Replacing the stable/pony grange with a garage brings *Howards End* into the realm of modern living. It is no longer a mere country house, old and bound to its farm. It is outfitted for the latest modern life has to offer. What’s more, and more importantly, it is an attempt on Henry’s part to reclaim the country. But, as Masterman put it, the Conquerors have no place in the little England except to run the Empire. The garage provides a space for Henry, Charles, and Paul in the mother’s, and later, in Margaret’s, house that is all their own. When even the world around them in the form of the hey allergens seems to reject the Wilcoxes, they attempt to conquer it by reshaping it to fit their needs.

While the family doesn’t, strangely enough, attempt to re-name the place (*Wilcoxes End?*), the building of the garage can be read as an attempt to undermine the spirit and history of the house by hacking away at its metaphorical roots in spiritualism by literally hacking away at the actual roots of the wych-elm tree. The wych-elm has spiritual significance. The pig’s teeth buried into the trunk of the tree have superstitious powers, according to the locals. Even its name allows for an association to witches and the spiritual. Rosner notes, “[t]he ancient wych elm in front of the house is... another incarnation of a value system that is older than the Wilcox line” (142). The construction of the garage permanently damaged the tree. Henry even recalls that they “messed away” with the roots in order to build the garage (99). In this case, the wych-elm tree

stands for the spiritual place of England, under attack by the likes of the Wilcoxes and their imperialism who are trying to conquer the space on physical and metaphysical levels. Malcolm Kelsall adds, “Cutting off the garden round the house from the meadow outside they sever too the link (only symbolic now) between the house and productive Nature” (174-5). The tree is the connective tissue between nature, spirituality, and history in *Howards End* and by attempting to uproot it the Wilcoxes are attempting to rupture the tie between these elements of England to supplant it with their own brand of “England” – by transitioning the house into a symbol for the Empire.

Shaw, on the other hand, uses the storehouse to allegorically represent the store of weapons built up by the British liberal government that simultaneously led to its own demise, as exemplified by the blowing-up of the Burglar and Mangan. Dynamite had particular connotations with anarchy for being relatively easy to possess, wield, and hide. Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1907), for example, depicts terrorist attacks on the Greenwich observatory by way of concealed dynamite. Shotover’s dynamite, too, is a hidden threat and is only accidentally detonated at the end of the play by a bomb that penetrates the cave where it is stored. In doing so, it kills Mangan and the Burglar who, strangely, hide in among dynamite in order to protect themselves. While the pair of crooks, or would-be crooks, probably are more interested in the location for its subterranean rather than its explosive qualities, the choice is nevertheless intriguing. The pair literally hides behind weapons. As a result, they are blown to bits. Shaw uses this moment to comment on the foolishness of building up arms in an effort to protect anything. In a twisted satire, Shaw spins the liberal policy of building armaments to ensure peace by placing the parasitic businessman and the societal parasite in the dynamite store to suggest the perversion of such policies. The Junkers of the play, one of them, anyway, in the form of

Mangan, perish while he thought he had secured his safety. Had he stayed at the house, he probably would have lived. The underground nature of the store also suggests a tone of “burying one’s head in the sand,” refusing to come to terms with reality. This, in some ways, seems to be what Shaw wanted to get across in that particular action: to demonstrate the folly of England’s parasitic leaders. All they have done is allowed themselves to get blown up – metaphorically speaking in the sense that liberal England would take decades to restore itself and literally in the sense that the countryside was actually bombed.

The store belongs to Shotover, who Shaw uses to symbolize the old men who built up arms and allowed others to die for their own illusionary security. Shotover is, perhaps, the greatest imperialist of all of the characters in this study. He is, undoubtedly, more akin to the Wilcoxes than to the Schlegels. Valerie Murrenus calls Shotover “the most dangerous and destructive force of *Heartbreak House*” (17). This seems to fit nicely with Pykett’s notion that “The Wilcox world is violent and defensive, and verges on the barbaric” (119). His militarist tendencies and his own investment in Africa (extending even to the investment of his soul even if that episode was a performative one that enables him to mythologize himself [Rabey 205]), also bear striking resemblances to the Wilcox clan. Shotover’s dynamite store is his pastime. He is seen walking around with sticks of dynamite, going to and from the pit. He devises doomsday devices to earn money. The dynamite storage is his Horseback Hall. By replacing the stables with a repository for explosives, Shaw is giving breath to the madness of the pre-war world. Recall the militarist training projects for young boys. Shaw lampoons such notions as training boys to ride and fight by converting that space into nothing more than a pile of the weapons themselves actually predominately used in modern warfare. The Captain makes money from his endeavors with dynamite and other machines of war. While Gibbs calls Shotover “the arch

enemy of capitalism,” he also points out that, “significantly,” he is “identified with the creation of munitions” and is trying to “wrest the power over life and death from the likes of Mangan and the ‘Foreign Office toff’ and idle amorist, Randall” (100). Shotover cannot be wholly anti-capitalist, though, since he chooses to build death devices over life-saving machines because death is more profitable. He makes much more money for his war machines than he does with his lifeboat design. Shotover is, then, in some ways, a collaborator with Mangan’s type. Shotover is even worse because he’s the one doing the making, although he seems to need to do so out of economic necessity. Captain Shotover is equally caught in the cogs of modern political problem that binds militarism, politics, and economics. Even if he is complicit to his own socio-economic place, Shotover is nevertheless an irrational fellow – commenting on the likes of the military men back home who built arms and sent boys to war.

Heartbreak House is outfitted to look like a ship, and Shaw draws on the militaristic and economic functionality of sea vessels to illustrate England and the Empire as a ship – except the ship is sinking. Shaw’s stage directions even indicate where the various furniture pieces and set dressings are located in nautical terms (“*port side*,” “*stern gallery*,” “*starboard*,” etc.). The room that is visible to the audience is part library, part sitting room. The garden can be viewed through the rear windows and doors, though, disallowing the mistake that the room is part of an actual ship. Still, the evocation of a ship is a loaded way to present the house. Hynes suggests that this is used to suggest England, and everything that it stands for (capitalism, freedom, free-trade, Empire,) as a sinking ship (*AWI* 141). Gibbs writes,

The ‘ship’ is embarked on a dangerous, apparently rudderless and unnavigated voyage in history – a voyage with a calamitous wreck as its possible conclusion. Whereas at the beginning of the play the setting may seem no more than a whimsical piece of interior domestic design, creating opportunities for various jokes and the device of Shotover’s occasional blast on his Captain’s whistle, by the end it has become a powerful symbol of national destiny. (71)

The house most certainly illustrates these notions. Specifically, Heartbreak House is the Empire on the edge of ruin, beset by bombers, inhabited and “piloted” by lunatics who build their own bombs and those two delight in violence, visited by complacent imperialists who are content enough during a bombing to simply relax in their hammock, by fraudulent businessmen, by hopeless romantics, and other such types. The capitalistic vision that supported the Empire lit the match and now there are explosions everywhere. There is no “Goddess” of the house to restore peace. There is not even an heir to take her place. Instead, there is the mad captain of the ship, our Lear who only scorns, who, when he bellows at not Nature but at War, prepares for his death, rather than fight it. Still, the ship metaphor has particular ramifications since it was written during the First World War. England, prior to the war, had been protected by her island status. It had even kept Napoleon at bay. The Great War changed that with the use of aerial warfare. Suddenly, England could be attacked from above. The notion that the house is like a sinking ship also suggests the sudden inadequacies of naval warfare. To a nation that built its Empire through its naval prowess, there must have scarcely been a more threatening image. Again, recalling the armaments race, Britain also continued to be highly invested in their naval forces. But the Captain of this ship is an old madman. Shotover’s position surely resonates as a hallmark of leadership gone wrong. He cannot protect his ship from the airstrikes. Even his stockpile of weapons is ultimately destroyed. Heartbreak House is, in a word, doomed.

Howards End is a much less obviously doomed place but one that, nevertheless is covered in the residue of imperial policies. Howards End is a tense space almost always on the verge of collapse. Within the story itself it is “saved” initially by Henry Wilcox through his marriage to Ruth Howard. After Ruth’s death, the Wilcoxes lease the property. Later, it becomes little more than the storage place of the Schlegel’s remaining effects from Wickham Place. The

redbrick house covered in ivy, by the time Margaret sees it, is also covered in the modernist dust. Margaret writes the word “affection” on the wall of the house, and, as Rosner suggests, in doing so, commits the first act of redecoration. The word, inscribed in the dust, she says, “opens the house to a new code of conduct based not on law but on rights of affection” (144). And yet, even Rosner concedes “Margaret is only writing in dust, redecorating the house in a fashion even more superficial than Mr. Wilcox [after Ruth’s death, for the tenant]” (144). Margaret’s new motto for the house may be easily wiped away by another hand or become allowed to continue to sit and accumulate more dust. In other words, the dust may simply return. The dust of the Empire has settled, but it has not yet been wiped away.

Indeed, by the end of the novel, all of the symbols and problems of Imperialism remain intact. London continues to creep into the country. Motorcars continue to billow up their dust. Leonard has died and Jackie’s fate is never revealed. Helen is heartbroken at the loss of Leonard, not just in person but also in her heart’s memory. In the final chapter, she confesses “‘I ought to remember Leonard as my lover,’ said Helen stepping down into the field. ‘I tempted him, and killed him, and it is surely the least I can do. I would like to throw out all my heart to Leonard on such an afternoon as this. But I cannot. It is no good pretending. I am forgetting him.’ Her eyes filled with tears” (239). Helen vows never to marry – and she may or may not keep that vow. As a single, unmarried woman with a child in Edwardian England, she may not have a choice in the matter. Still, she and Henry finally seem to be reconciled. Yet some tension may yet remain between the two. Their final exchange is described as such: “From the garden came laughter. ‘Here they are at last!’ exclaimed Henry, disengaging himself with a smile. Helen rushed into the gloom, holding Tom by one hand and carrying the baby on the other. There were shouts of infectious joy” (243). Into this otherwise cheery scene, I invite the scrutiny of two words. Henry

has to “disengage” from himself in order to smile at Helen and the baby. How genuine is his smile? To what degree does Helen sense that ambiguous smile as she walks into the “gloom” of the room? This suggests that the ending of the novel is not quite as happy and certain as it seems. A tension between the liberal progressiveness of the Schlegels, who have effectively taken over England in the form of the house, for now, and Henry, who has to sit by, for now, and rebuild his fortress. As Duckworth notes, “*Howards End* entails the identification of political threats to a traditional moral order that the fictional house, in a more or less healthy way, embodies” (59). Forster “uses place as a forum where the opposition between traditional ideals and an increasingly urban and commercial civilization can be debated and, if possible, reconciled. And like Austen, he uses garden and house improvements as a way of criticizing the destructive effects of free-market capitalism on a traditional society based in a rural community” (59). And yet, at the end of the novel, those ideals have not been wholly reconciled. A man has died and another man has gone to jail over these issues. While the baby may be seen as the answer to all this tension, his material claim on the house which will come once he reaches maturity and/or Margaret dies (that is, if he himself survives England’s future conflicts), is still not yet, at the end of the novel, officially bound to any legal agreement and could easily be disputed in a court of law. The material nature of this world, whose mother is the Empire, still has lingering effects on the people who inhabit it. While the country houses become “faded relics of imperial glory,” they nevertheless remain imperial (Harrington 283). The vines may grow over the house and the grass may creep up the side of the garage, but the house is still red underneath, it may still get dusty, and there may be more violence on its behalf yet.

## POSTSCRIPT

In the post-war haze, Forster and Shaw met to discuss the continued demise of the British Empire. After he returned from Egypt, Forster wrote a political pamphlet in which he outlined the recommended path for Egyptian independence when they should begin to desire it. It is brief enough, but also minor enough that it does not tend to be collected in anthologies of Forster's non-fiction. In a February 1920 letter, Forster indicates, "I had a funny day in London Friday – I forget whether I told you: I have written a memorandum on Egypt for the Labour Party. This entailed a pleasant tête-a-tête with Woolf and Shaw" (*SLF I* 314). As they trio enjoyed a lunch of oysters, Shaw provided Forster with feedback on the pamphlet. In a letter nearly a month later, Forster writes, "[t]he Egyptian [pamphlet] you will find enclosed – as you see it is very agreeable.... The pamphlet has Bernard Shaw's corrections, which may interest you. He was very complimentary about it" (*SLF I* 315). Those corrections appear to have been lost, unless they remain tucked away in an archive. Regardless, these brief moments represent the only incident of Forster and Shaw interacting with any detail whatsoever. The pair obviously ran into each other from time to time. For instance, they both attended the funeral of Thomas Hardy in 1928 with most of England's other notable writers. Forster spoke of Shaw admiringly in his BBC broadcasts, even referring to Shaw as "our greatest living writer" in 1944 (*BBC* 306). In fact, in a short talk on contemporary English theatre, he discussed *Heartbreak House* and *Back to Methuselah*, concluding, "England is at last beginning to admit he is not an amusing buffoon but a consistent *thinker* and a great man" (*TCAC* 60). Despite such praise, when it appeared that

Shaw was on his deathbed, Bertrand Russell was asked to read his obituary over the BBC Radio and comment on him personally, including criticism, if he so wished. Russell was in such a state, though, that Shaw's executor also contacted Forster to see if he would be willing to announce Shaw's death on the radio in the event that Russell had, himself, already passed, or was too ill to make the announcement. For reasons utterly unknown, Forster declined (Conolly 167-8).

Perhaps he saw himself as an inappropriate figure to speak for a socialist who made his career largely as a playwright. Perhaps their views on imperialism diverged sometime after the 1920s. It may also have simply been that Forster felt that he and Shaw were too divergent in personality. We may never know, and the fact remains that Forster did not read Shaw's death announcement.

Regardless of what little interaction the pair may have had or how they may or may not have disagreed, I have striven to show that *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House* share striking similarities. Despite the former being written by a liberal-humanist and the latter by a Fabian socialist, the texts share similar aesthetic choices in their form and design. They are both violent texts in different ways, commenting on an England that was caught in the mud of the pre-war quagmire and the bloody rivers formed by the trenches. In the end, both were pessimistic about the future of England and the future of humanity. In a presentist sense, these texts carve spaces for contemplation and solace in our own times of uncertainty. With Russia having undertaken, just this past summer, an invasion of Ukraine and Crimea, the confusion of policy within France regarding free speech and racism in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, and the attitude of tolerating injustice in the United State in the form of the Ferguson and New York police incidents, *Howards End* and *Heartbreak House* are repositories for the human condition, allowing their readers to contemplate and live through the pessimism, uncertainty, and catastrophic violence of the past.

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