

**“... the very soul of the world is economic”:  
the Liberal Aesthetics of *Howards End*  
and the Portrayal of Leonard Bast<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** At a London railway station bookstall in 1903, E. M. Forster purchased a copy of the inaugural issue of *Independent Review* journal. Upon opening it, he felt that a “new age had begun” (Forster 1934, 116). Summing up the *Review*’s political perspective, Forster said that “[i]t was not so much a Liberal review as an appeal to Liberalism from the Left to be its better self” (115). This “Liberalism from the Left”, or New Liberalism as it was better known, aimed to be more ethical than its classically Liberal predecessor through the introduction of welfare schemes such as unemployment insurance and better housing for the poor. By analysing the fragments, working notes and manuscripts associated with *Howards End* (1910) alongside the published version of the novel, my paper aims to reveal how Forster’s affinity towards New Liberalism influenced his portrayal of the lower-middle-class insurance clerk, Leonard Bast, as he drafted his novel. From initially being rendered as a lothario and opportunist, Bast evolved into a lowly office worker, who is sympathetically depicted as a victim of *laissez-faire* liberal economics and at risk of falling into an abyss of poverty through no fault of his own. This article ultimately reveals that Forster’s delineation of Bast is more compassionate than some critics have argued, but it is a compassion which is obscured by what Forster refers to as his “failure of technique” in the published version of the novel (Wilson 1993, 32).

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1 My use of “aesthetics” encompasses an appreciation of the differing forms of liberalism. This includes rethinking what Amanda Anderson refers to as “literary engagements with liberal thought” (Anderson 2011, 249)



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## Introduction

In his 1934 biography of his friend, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, E.M. Forster reminisced about the *Independent Review* journal. Published between 1903 and 1908 the *Review* was supportive of a collectivist form of liberalism known as New Liberalism. Forster purchased the first issue of this short-lived publication at London's St Pancras railway station bookstall in 1903. With its Roger Fry illustration on the cover, he understood the journal to advocate "sanity in foreign affairs and a constructive policy at home. It was not so much a Liberal review as an appeal to Liberalism from the Left to be its better self" (Forster 1934, 115).<sup>2</sup>

This paper will first examine the rise of New Liberalism in the late-nineteenth century, Forster's response to it, and how it influenced his writing of *Howards End*. New Liberalism aimed to be more responsive than its classically liberal predecessor towards issues such as poverty and deprivation and it sought to achieve this aim through the introduction of welfare schemes such as unemployment insurance. It also wanted to improve access to education. This article argues that in the first decade of the twentieth century Forster reveals a sympathy towards this form of liberalism. After examining the changing landscape of liberalism at the turn of the century, this paper will then analyse the fragments, working notes, and manuscripts associated with *Howards End* to reveal evidence of Forster's affinity towards New Liberalism's social values as he drafted his novel. It is an affinity which impacted on his depiction of the lowly office clerk, Leonard Bast.<sup>3</sup> Forster's process for the writing of *Howards End* reveals a compassionate attitude towards Leonard Bast, which was influenced by a social liberalist philosophy, but it is a compassion which his writing technique obscures in the final version of the novel.

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2 You can see Roger Fry's illustration for the cover of *The Independent Review* via The Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/independentrevi01buxtgoog/page/n10/mode/2up>

3 There are no surviving typescripts or proofs for *Howards End*. It is also not possible to know with any certainty when Forster made his edits to Leonard Bast in the manuscript as he did not draft his novel using separate, distinct versions. The *Howards End* manuscripts are therefore unlike the manuscripts for *A Room With a View* where two separate drafts or fragmentary drafts (referred to as *Lucy* and *New Lucy*) are available which differ significantly from the published version. Having these separate versions enables scholars to more easily see the step-by-step changes Forster made

## The Rise of New Liberalism in the 1890s

From the mid-to-late Victorian period, Classical Liberalism was the dominant political theory in Britain. It was a capitalist endeavour characterised by a policy of non-intervention which effectively meant minimal state intervention, low public spending, and a lack of social welfare provision (Vincent 1990, 147-48). During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, this *laissez-faire* doctrine was increasingly questioned by prominent liberals who saw it as unethical because it took no account of the chronic social problems then prevalent in Britain (e.g. poverty). Theorists such as Leonard Hobhouse argued that what was needed was an organic conception of society in which there existed a nexus between an older form of liberalism, which emphasised individual freedom, and a New Liberalism, which aimed to promote common interests and social liberty.<sup>4</sup>

New Liberalism sought to reconcile liberal notions of competitive commercialism with socialist concepts of collectivism whilst holding firm to traditional liberal ideals of individual freedom and human progress. It wanted to change liberalism so that it adopted a more progressive form of politics whilst endeavouring to distinguish it from Socialism (Collini 1983, 13-50; Freedon 1978, 25-75). On the back of its New Liberal agenda, the Liberal Party won a landslide victory at the 1906 general election. Classical Liberalism, however, did not suddenly disappear after 1906. As Greg Chase has recently highlighted, “by 1910, British society was embroiled in a contentious debate over what form its liberalism should take, as a more socially progressive strand of liberal politics increasingly challenged the principles of the older [Classical] version” (2020, 825).<sup>5</sup> The ongoing

to his Italian novel as he drafted it and to also speculate on why such changes were made. In contrast, the *Howards End* manuscripts held at the Archive Centre at King’s College, Cambridge are composed of just the one version which Forster edited as he drafted his novel. It is an almost complete version of the final novel. The manuscript also contains a number of fragments and working notes. Forster must have continued editing any typescript and/or publisher proofs after submitting the manuscript to his publisher (Edward Arnold) because, as Oliver Stallybrass highlights, the manuscript “differs greatly” from the published version (Stallybrass, vii). For example, the memorable opening sentence of the novel – “One may as well begin with Helen’s letters to her sister” – does not appear in the manuscript. It only appears in the published version. Without typescripts or proofs it is impossible to know with any certainty when this sentence was added.

4 For Hobhouse the “ideal society is conceived as a whole which lives and flourishes by the harmonious growth of its parts, each of which in developing on its own lines and in accordance with its own nature tends on the whole to further the development of others” (Hobhouse 1911, 136).

5 The continuation of these debates beyond 1910 is indicated in L. T. Hobhouse’s decision to publish a tract called *Liberalism* in 1911 - a tract which puts forward arguments in support of New Liber-

debate between an older form of Classical Liberalism on the one hand and a new model of social liberalism on the other therefore continued beyond the Liberals' 1906 election victory, and it is a debate which is evident within *Howards End*.

### The Spectre of Classical Liberalism Haunting *Howards End*

Classical Liberalism is represented in *Howards End* by the Wilcox family's colonial enterprise - the Imperial and West African Rubber Company - which will "keep England going" at a time when "the very soul of the world is economic" (Forster, 1973, 271, 58). However, on the flip side, it is a doctrine which is "not concerned with the very poor" (43). Social Darwinism permeates the pages of *Howards End*. Henry Wilcox's classically liberal stance is evidenced by his dismissive comment to the Schlegel sisters that "[t]he poor are poor, and one's sorry for them, but there it is" (188). His rejection of the idea of implementing any type of relief to help poor people like Leonard is indicated when he advises the Schlegel sisters to not get "carried away by absurd schemes of Social Reform" (188).

In contrast to Henry, the Schlegel sisters represent a more progressive form of liberalism, which engages with social problems such as poverty, and they attempt to resolve them altruistically. In a lively, high-spirited debate with her friends on how best to help poor people like Leonard, Margaret wants to maximise his freedom by giving him money because "[t]o do good to one, or, as in this case, to a few, was the utmost she dare hope for" (125). The "idealists" and "political economists" who oppose Margaret in the debate want to instead set up collectivist-style programs, which Leonard and others like him will benefit from (125). Resources such as "a free library" and rental subsidies are mooted (124). These are programmes which Margaret dismisses as "your socialism", an accusation which suggests she is not only opposed to socialism but also to proto-socialist New Liberalism (125).<sup>6</sup> Margaret believes that poverty can be solved at the individual level rather than through state intervention. She

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alism. He declares on the opening page of his tract that, "[t]he modern State is the distinctive product of a unique civilization. But it is a product which is still in the making, and a part of the process is a struggle between new and old principles of social order. To understand the new, which is our main purpose, we must first cast a glance at the old." (Hobhouse 1911, 7).

<sup>6</sup> In the manuscript, Forster initially has Margaret say "socialism". He then inserted "your" so that Margaret says "your socialism" (Forster 1910, 8/3, 161). The addition of the determiner distances Margaret more forcefully from having any association with either socialism or progressive social liberalism.

occupies a liminal space between Classical Liberalism and New Liberalism.<sup>7</sup> She sees the need for an ethical stance towards the poor within her liberal aesthetics but draws the line at implementing collectivist-style schemes because she sees them as socialism.

By portraying the Schlegels' ultimate failure to help Leonard through their individualist approach, Forster appears to reflect the position put forward in the editorial from the first issue of the *Review* from October 1903. It stated that “all the efforts of our thousand philanthropic agencies, all the devotion of countless individuals to the cause of charity, can scarcely keep the flood in check. We have over a million paupers [...] [and] nearly one-third of our town population lies on the border line of poverty” (*The Independent Review* 1903, 3). From the *Review's* perspective, what was needed was the “direct intervention of the State” which would function “to replace private initiative” (3-4). In their desire to assist Leonard at an individual level, the Schlegels fail to see that state intervention is now required if poverty is to be alleviated. Their individualist philanthropy is no longer effective in early twentieth-century Britain.

Not all critics agree, however, that *Howards End* hints towards the need for New Liberalist policies to resolve Britain's social problems. Michael Levenson, for example, states that the “liberalism which Forster sees crumbling around him [in *Howards End*] is clearly that New Liberalism which Hobhouse outlines, with its plans for continued legislative reform on a large scale” (Levenson 1985, 304). Similarly, David Medalie argues that the novel “abandons the hopes implied by the New Liberal agenda” (Medalie 2002, 24). However, that Forster remained sympathetic towards the progressive values of New Liberalism beyond 1906, and, in fact, beyond 1910 is suggested by another Roger Fry illustration, this time included in a 1912 reprint of Forster's short story collection, *The Celestial Omnibus*.<sup>8</sup> Fry's illustration of a rainbow for the end-papers of this edition took inspiration from “The Celestial Omnibus” short story which features a rainbow-bridge reaching towards Heaven. In contrast to the rainbow in the story, Fry's rainbow rises above a suburbia

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7 My reading of Margaret Schlegel's liberalism differs from that of Greg Chase who perceives her as possessing a “New Liberal vision” at the conclusion of the novels with her desire to unite the Wilcoxes, the Schlegels, and the Basts. (Chase 2020, 840.)

8 Four of the six stories from this collection were first published in the *Independent Review* between 1904 and 1908. “The Celestial Omnibus” short story was first published in January 1908 after the *Independent Review* became *The Albany Review*. *The Albany Review* did not survive beyond 1908.

of semi-detached and terraced houses and stretches beyond billboards proclaiming the watchwords of Classical Liberalism – “Practical Culture” and “Imperial Culture” – to reach towards a heaven of mountains and sun.<sup>9</sup> Stanford Rosenbaum correctly interprets Fry’s rainbow as one which “reflects the critical New Liberal values Forster thought the *Independent Review* and its editors [...] stood for” (1993, 45). Hence by 1912, the apolitical rainbow in Forster’s 1908 short story was transformed into a symbol of New Liberalism, which evoked positive memories of the by-then defunct *Independent Review*.

### ‘the new age had begun’: Forster and the *Independent Review*

Published in monthly instalments between 1903 to 1908, the *Review* aimed to combat the Liberal Party’s aggressive imperialism and to promote the need for state intervention to make Britain a fairer society. Upon reading the first issue in 1903, Forster felt that “the new age had begun” (Forster 1934, 116). He contributed numerous essays and short stories to the journal from its second number in 1903 through to 1908.<sup>10</sup> That he submitted material so frequently over the whole period of its short lifespan suggests that he was sympathetic towards the *Review*’s political values. He also had close ties with several members of its editorial committee which included Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862-1932) and Charles Masterman (1873-1927).

The plight of Britain’s working poor featured at regular intervals in the *Review*. In the December 1906 issue, for example, the trade unionist and social worker, Gertrude Tuckwell, wrote an article which raised awareness of the “bad conditions of employment, low rates of wages, and endless hours of labour” for many of Britain’s workers (1906, 297). It was a piece which continued the theme

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9 In *Howards End* we are given a clear indication of how “Practical Culture” and “Imperial Culture” are associated with *laissez-faire* economics when the mouthpiece for Classical Liberalism, Henry Wilcox, proudly refers to himself as a “practical” fellow who oversees the Imperial and West African Rubber Company (Forster 1973, 143). A reproduction of Fry’s rainbow is available in Stanford Rosenbaum’s *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group*, vol. 2. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 46.

10 The works Forster published in the *Independent Review* were: “The Road from Colonus” (June 1904), “The Story of a Panic” (August 1904); “The Other Side of the Hedge” (November 1904); “The Eternal Moment” (June 1905); and “The Celestial Omnibus” (published in *The Albany Review* in January 1908). The essays he wrote for the journal were “Macolnia Shops” (November 1903); “Cnidus” (March 1904); “Rostock and Wismar” (June 1906); “Cardan” (April 1905); and “Gemistus Pletho” (October 1905). Forster also wrote a review of John Fyvie’s book, *Some Literary Eccentrics* (October 1906).

of Charles Masterman’s 1904 article for the *Review* in which he shared his understanding of how Britain’s unemployment figures continued to increase when there was an economic downturn. In his article, Masterman states:

And, at every time of depression [the numbers of unemployed are] recruited in dismal fashion by large additions from those who have collapsed from the classes above, as workmen who had hitherto maintained home and a reasonable standard of life are flung over, after greater or less resistance, into the slime and welter of the abyss. (1904, 555)

This perceptive account of the plight of the “classes above” the working class who fall into unemployment echoes Leonard Bast’s experiences in *Howards End* after he loses his job at Dempster’s Bank. In a conversation with Helen Schlegel, Leonard declares,

I had my groove, and I’ve got out of it. I could do one particular branch of insurance in one particular office well enough to command a salary, but that’s all [...] I mean if a man over twenty once loses his own particular job, it’s all over with him. I have seen it happen to others. Their friends give them money for a little, but in the end they fall over the edge (Forster 1973, 224).<sup>11</sup>

Forster’s portrait of Leonard’s precarious working life and his descent into poverty dramatises Masterman’s insight into how the masses of unemployed were recruited from the lower end of the middle class through no fault of their own in a *laissez-faire* capitalist society.

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11 Forster’s understanding that Leonard Bast falls victim to a lengthy period of unemployment because he only knows “one particular branch of insurance in one particular office” is particularly perceptive. G. L. Anderson highlights how, if they lost their job, a late-nineteenth century office clerk found it very difficult to find employment elsewhere because their skills were limited to a particular office or trade which could not be transferred to another industry. The feelings of one Victorian clerk Anderson quotes regarding the issue of unemployment mirror those of Leonard: “Clerks are not in the position of tradesmen”, the clerk reasons, “who may lose employment but still find work at the same rate of wages in other localities. If clerks lose their situations it may be a long time before they again obtain employment even at less and altogether inadequate remuneration” (Anderson 1977, 125).

Improved access to education was also important to New Liberal theorists and articles supporting its wider access were published in the *Review*.<sup>12</sup> In its editorial from October 1903, for example, the *Review* stated that “all who can do so with profit should be not only permitted, but actively encouraged, to go on to the higher branches of study” (*The Independent Review* 1903, 20). However, what these calls for improved access overlook is the physical exhaustion experienced by the likes of lowly-paid clerks pursuing a ‘higher branch’ of education in the evening after spending a long day at their offices. It is a situation, however, which Sheila Rowbotham usefully highlights when she reveals the experiences of evening study for one such clerk - Ramsden Balmforth. His monotonous office work exhausted him so much that he found it difficult to focus on his studies. In a letter to his university lecturer from December 1892, Balmforth wrote,

I am *hors de combat* [out of action] just now feeling quite limp and almost helpless with overwork. It is as much as I can do to scrape through the daily work which brings bread and butter - the feeling of mental weariness is quite maddening (1981, 68).

From his time spent teaching at a London Working Men’s College from 1902, Forster was probably aware of the barriers to learning which working-class and lower-middle-class students faced.<sup>13</sup> An understanding of their exhaustion is reflected in passages from the manuscripts of *Howards End* – passages that did not make it to the published version. Although Leonard is an autodidact and not enrolled at an evening college, we witness the

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12 See, for example, liberal theorist J. A. Hobson’s article “Millionaire Endowments” (Hobson 1905, 90-100). The New Liberalist Hobson argues in this article “that national efficiency requires (among other things) a very large expenditure of money upon the building and equipment of colleges and other apparatus of higher education” (90).

13 In an interview with *The Paris Review* from 1953, Forster stated that he “knew nothing” of “[t]he home life of Leonard and Jacky in *Howards End*”, but that he believed he “brought it off” (Furbank and Haskell 1953, n.p.) Although Forster may not have had personal knowledge of the home life of people like the Basts, he did know and befriend working-class and lower-middle-class students from the Working Men’s College. In a diary entry from 8 August 1910, for example, Forster says of his friendship with the printer Alexander Hepburn that “[i]f there was any class barrier between us it has gone.” (Forster 2011, 11). It may have been through friendships with students such as Alexander Hepburn (i.e. students working in working-class or lower-middle-class occupations) that Forster came to understand the precarious employment circumstances of clerks in Edwardian London (see footnote 11).



struggles he faces as a poorly-paid clerk attempting to pursue a cultural education after his working day has ended:

That truth, which so irradiates the Englishman who has had a ~~good~~ hearty dinner, shone also before Leonard with a fainter but perhaps a diviner light. He had had sham meat for breakfast, sham meat for lunch, ~~and with for~~ the addition of two dissolved squares ~~in water~~ at supper [...] Yet ~~the~~ he saw the light that lies beyond all culture – the very shadow that is light, that renders the world intelligible. He saw it only ~~a mo~~ for a moment, and ever so faintly, and ‘it doesn’t do to give in’ was all the expression he could find (Forster 1910, 8/2, 64 verso).

He replaced the book [Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice*], but with a feeling of profound sadness. For this feeling ~~that~~ there were many causes: I will only mention one of them: he had not had enough to eat. The effect of the tongue and the two dissolved squares was passing away (Forster 1910, 8/5, 483).<sup>14</sup>

Leonard’s hunger is preventing him from studying. Although in the published version we read about the Bast eating a “soup square” and “tongue”, the drafts more clearly link Leonard’s inability to continue reading with his poor diet (Forster 1973, 51). There are further differences between how Leonard is depicted in the manuscripts compared to his portrayal in the published version of *Howards End* - the portrait of him we see in the published version of *Howards End* is very different from Forster’s initial conception of Leonard when he started writing his novel in 1908.

### **From cad to cause: the development of Leonard Bast in the drafts of *Howards End***

The manuscript for *Howards End* consists of four large volumes bound in red Morocco. A working note within them contains this outline recording the first appearance of Leonard Bast or “L.” In it we read the following:

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14 These and further transcriptions from the manuscripts in this article are my own work.

Mrs Wilcox; her illness & death.  
 Rapprochement of M. & Mr W.  
 Return of L. to Wickham Place  
 M. & Mr W. engaged married. Ructions in the W family Helen's  
 disapproval. Break up of W. Pl.  
 The ? of L's separation.  
 Mr Wilcox induced to help Kind. Sees for Leonard. meets Jackie &  
 is confronted with [1 illegible word].<sup>15</sup>  
 M's life at Howard's End. her child; Mr W. offended that it does not  
 nail her down.  
 L. & Helen.  
 "She must be rescued."  
 Then I think that Charles goes is sent by his father to horse whip  
 Leonard, and is killed by him, and L flings himself out of the  
 window.  
 Or it may be that Helen & Leonard die.  
 Or perhaps Leonard lives (Forster 1910, 8/5, 483).

With Mr Wilcox's desire to "help" or "see for" him, Leonard appears to be already delineated as a member of the 'lower' classes. Whether this assistance is financial or not is left unsaid. What is also noteworthy is that Leonard and Helen appear to be in a relationship. There is "The ? of L's separation" from Helen and we then read that Helen "must be rescued" from Leonard's clutches by Charles Wilcox. These are indications that Leonard and Helen have been together for some time. His relationship with Helen resembles one that Forster had already depicted in his fiction: that of Gino and Lilia's from Forster's 1905 novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. In that novel there is a similar plan by the Herriton family to send out Philip to rescue the upper-middle-class Lilia from her Italian lover, Gino, the humble son of a provincial dentist who is referred to as a "cad" (Forster 1975, 25).

During his writing process, however, Forster made the decision to not portray Leonard in the mould of Gino and to instead depict him as a poor clerk who is struggling to make ends meet. Rather than being a cad Helen needs rescuing from, Leonard is portrayed in the published version as someone who

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15 Oliver Stallybrass transcribes this illegible word as "idea" (Stallybrass 1973, 355).

is in danger of “joining the unemployable” and falling into the abyss after losing his job (Forster 1973, 315). At one point in the novel he is described as a “cause” who Helen goes out of her way to call attention to.<sup>16</sup> As Herbert Howarth rightly states, *Howards End* “is a dramatization [...] of the social debate that was going on during the first decade of [the twentieth] century” (Howarth 1965, 201). And, as we have seen, it is a social debate which appeared regularly within the pages of the *Review*.

Yet if Forster criticises Classical Liberalism’s impact on people like Leonard in *Howards End*, how do we reconcile this with the perception by some critics that Forster is prejudiced towards his insurance clerk? Jonathan Rose, for example, believes Forster’s portrait of Leonard exemplifies “the class prejudices of modernist intellectuals” (Rose 2001, 402). Similarly, Frank Kermode claims that “Forster could not bear [Bast] or his wife, and made sure they were pitiable, indeed repulsive” (Kermode 2009, 99). These views are based on the Leonard Bast we see in the published version, but by analysing the novel’s manuscripts alongside the published version we see how Forster’s editing technique caused a discordance between how Leonard is portrayed in the manuscript to how he is depicted and perceived in the final version of the novel.

In her analysis of the *Howards End* manuscripts, Mary Pinkerton highlights that Forster initially constructed Leonard’s character by personalising him with the use of pronouns and interior monologues - pronouns and interior monologues which Forster later discarded or heavily edited (1985, 237). In the manuscript, there are also nearly five pages of text from Chapter 41 which failed to make it into the published version. They contain observations about Leonard and insights into his thoughts in the months after his night spent with Helen at a Shropshire hotel. We get, for example, a graphic description of his descent into poverty after he loses his job: “One day he sat thinking at Trafalgar Square. They [Leonard and Jacky] had got through the winter somehow. They were so poor that they made his relatives uncomfortable” (Forster 1910, 8/5, 491). We also read how a “Mr. Edser” had got Leonard “a place temporarily as a book-keeper in a ~~hotel~~ commercial hotel at ~~Exeter~~ Plymouth” (Forster 1910, 8/5, 491). By deleting passages such as this, Leonard’s character becomes less personal. Pinkerton rightly argues that Forster’s “strategy of revision” brings into question “[his] class consciousness and points to the problematic role

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16 At the beginning of chapter 40 we read, “Leonard seemed not a man, but a cause” (Forster 1973, 309).

of Leonard in the novel" (1985, 245). It is precisely the "problematic role of Leonard in the novel" and Forster's class prejudice that Rose and Kermode criticise.

Such criticisms come into question, however, when we refer to an interview between Forster and Angus Wilson from 1957. In it, Forster told Wilson that he "had no intention of condemning Leonard" and that with regard to his portrayal, "[c]ircumstances were against him. Perhaps it's a failure of technique" (Wilson 1993, 32). Unfortunately, Wilson did not seek to clarify what Forster meant by the "circumstances" which were "against Leonard" and he also did not enquire what the possible shortcomings of Forster's "technique" were. What still remains interesting about this interview, however, is that Forster does not express any class prejudice or repulsiveness towards Leonard. Keeping these comments in mind, the "circumstances" working "against" Leonard are likely the unregulated Classical Liberalism represented by the Wilcoxes; and Forster's "failure of technique" is probably the series of edits he made to his depiction of Leonard - changes which made him more abstract and less personal. These changes cause a dissonance between what Forster was attempting to say in the manuscripts about the effects of a Classical Liberalist ideology on people like Leonard and how his portrayal in the published version has been received by some critics.

## Conclusion

From initially depicting Leonard Bast as a cad like Gino Carella from *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Forster's portrayal of his London insurance clerk becomes one in which the social problems facing the poor are raised - and they are social problems which featured regularly in the *Review*. Whilst Forster was drafting *Howards End*, he remained sympathetic towards New Liberalism's proto-socialist values and through Leonard he critiques *laissez-faire* liberalism's unethical approach to society's poor. That Leonard is not seen in this way by some critics is due to Forster's "failure of technique;" a technique which edited out the "[c]ircumstances [that] were against [Leonard]" in the published version of *Howards End*.

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