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## ***HOWARDS END AND NORTH AND SOUTH – THE DANGERS OF A TOO FAST TRANSITION***

### **Abstract**

The motto of *Howards End* is “just connect” but connecting radically different eras, people and worldviews entails numerous dangers and unpredictable complications. Both *Howards End* and *North and South* deal with transitions of society on the macro level and of individual personalities on the micro level. The characters from the novels have to face new challenges and to either create a fuller understanding of both themselves and the society they live in, or be destroyed by them. The secluded and sheltered lives in a familiar environment the characters from the novels are used to are endangered and examined due to numerous changes around them. Their ways of life, sources of income, scales of morality, everyday environment are radically altered forcing the characters to adapt to the new conditions. Some characters, like Margaret Schlegel from *Howards End* or Margaret Hale from *North and South* seamlessly adapt to the new circumstances, while others, like Mr Hale or Leonard Bast, are destroyed by the changes they are forced to undergo. Mr Hale and his wife unwillingly accept their new life but cannot handle it, while Leonard Bast consciously desires radical changes in his life but is not properly equipped to deal with them. These characters simply do not fit into the new environment and lose the battle due to plain evolutionary inaptitude in Darwinian terms. Both Forster and Gaskell succeed in detecting the main problems of both individual people and societies in transition and seem to warn against the premature and radical changes on both the macro and micro level.

*Key words:* E. M. Forster, Elisabeth Gaskell, Charles Darwin, Margaret Mead, *Howards End*, *North and South*, transition, environment, evolution

Some characters from Forster's *Howards End* and Gaskell's *North and South* exhibit conspicuous difficulties in adjusting to the fast-changing world around them. Most of their issues stem from an unconscious belief in the infinite progress of civilization and humanity which has its roots in Hegel's philosophy and numerous misinterpretations of Darwin's theory of evolution. The "problematic" characters from these novels seem to interpret both their personalities and the world around them according to their personal or social misconceptions of progress and personal development. This unfounded progressivist tendency causes them to abuse and underappreciate their present lives for the sake of the more developed selves in an imaginary future. By neglecting what the anthropologist Margaret Mead calls "cultural continuity," they make their own lives miserable and unfulfilled due to the unbridgeable discrepancy between their present selves and their progressivist expectations.

These "high expectations" arise from numerous sources throughout the nineteenth century. For illustrative purposes in the discussion at hand, the birth of unfounded progressivism will be examined on the basis of Hegel's view of history, Goethe's *Faustus*, and various misinterpretations of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Hegel perceives history as the development of the world spirit from lower stages of existence to its higher versions on the chronological plane, implying that each subsequent phase is more perfect than the previous one(s). This "evolution" is perfect but never static (Brinton, 1953, p. 157) because it follows universal dialectic laws which govern all spheres of life. By following the dialectic triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, the world spirit ascends to more perfect degrees of existence (Simonić, 2002, p. 703). "This strange but lively procedure had been applied by earlier thinkers to the activities of the mind. Hegel's originality lay in applying it to the concrete realities of life" (Bronowski & Mazlish, 1975, p. 482). However, Hegel's pedantically created logical system contained in itself quite a few flaws which were revealed in hundreds of volumes written in the manner of antitheses to Hegel's ingenious synthesis.

A few decades after Hegel published his views on history, Goethe's *Faustus* enthusiastically presaged a bright future in which human endeavor, personal genius and scientific advancements would transform the earth into a kind of new paradise. He solemnly proclaimed that those who worked on advancement would eventually possess utter freedom and wisdom. *Faustus* enthusiastically exclaims:

This is the highest wisdom that I own,  
The best that mankind ever knew:  
Freedom and life are earned by those alone

Who conquer them each day anew.  
Surrounded by such danger, each one thrives,  
Childhood, manhood, and age lead active lives.  
At such a throng I would fain stare,  
With free men on free ground their freedom share.  
Then, to the moment I might say:  
Abide, you are so fair!  
The traces of my earthly day  
No aeons can impair  
As I presage a happiness so high! (Goethe, 1832/1990, p. 469)

Goethe's optimistic thoughts, Carlyle's "hero-worship," Hegel's views of the historical development and the incredible technological advances of the day irrevocably lead to an unfounded belief in the continuous and unstoppable betterment of mankind. After the publication of *The Origin of Species*, a single theory seemed to provide a theoretical frame for all these mutually unrelated threads of thought. When applied in the intended field, the theory of evolution has proved to be unsurpassably efficient at explaining the development of species from the lower and simpler stages to the more complex ones, but, when applied to social sciences, it gave birth to both fruitful and ingenious insights about the nature of people and societies and to the twisted and horrendous theories and phenomena like racial supremacy, eugenics, social Darwinism, colonialism, etc.

While Darwin never created a philosophy based on his theory of evolution (Raeper and Smith, 2002, p. 257), people like Herbert Spencer, August Comte and dozens of others (mis)used his teachings by applying the theory of evolution to the development of societies, races, classes and other fields of social sciences, none of which was ever advocated by Darwin himself. Spencer "did most to popularize the term 'evolution' in its modern context" (Bowler, 1989, p. 9) and his doctrine of the "'survival of the fittest' seemed to offer scientific authentication of later racist theory" (Beer, 1998, p. 103). Similar to Hegel, Spencer "advocated a system of cosmic progress, which included a theory of the inevitable evolution of life toward higher forms" and thanks to these two thinkers "people still imagine that evolution is an essentially progressive process" (Bowler, 1989, p. 9). This line of thinking was further solidified by the "invention" of social Darwinism and Comte's positivism leading to the almost unchecked belief in the infinite progress of humanity and civilization which marked the whole nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, roughly up to the First World War. "The most dangerous aspect of these

evolutionist doctrines is that they combined the inheritance concept with the insistence on personal achievement and individual character which had been so important for the self-respect of the nineteenth-century middle class” (Arendt, 1975, p. 180).

This detrimental misconception irrevocably influences some of the characters from *Howards End* and *North and South*, Leonard Bast above all. *Howards End* deals with the destinies of two families, the aristocrat-like Schlegels who exhibit a deep sense of respect and knowledge about people, art and culture in general, and the Wilcoxes, who are business-oriented and obsessed with sports, physicality and money-making. Bast is a character who belongs nowhere because he despises his current life environment and desires what seems unattainable at that point of time. He is obsessed with improving his personality, manners and education, and this obsession eventually ruins both his life and the lives of some people around him. The root of the problem lies in the progressivist image of his future self, due to which he completely ignores, disregards and devalues his present life. As various thinkers, ranging from Epictetus to Coelho, have pointed out, in order to lead a relatively happy and fulfilled life one must live in the present and enjoy the present in order to hope for a better future (Coelho, 1988, p. 79). However, Bast does the opposite and thereby creates a whole range of incongruities in his life.

There are irreconcilable discrepancies among various aspects of his personal and business life and most of them seem to be of his own creation because his living environment and the actual circumstances he lives in can never allow for the creation of his envisioned and improved self. A seemingly inconsequential incident provides a very good insight into the nature of his predilection. Namely, he is deeply troubled by the loss of his umbrella during an opera performance. The grammar describing his loss proves the awkwardness of his situation. Interestingly, he has not lost “an” umbrella but “the” umbrella. His life conditions are so poor that he is not likely to easily replace the symbols of a relatively high social status at the time, a cylinder and an umbrella. However, this does not imply that what stands between him and his desires is plain poverty. Forster repeatedly stresses, more or less directly, that the shabby cylinder and umbrella are the only things which connect him to the class of people he aspires to belong to. Bast’s educational and financial inadequacy for the world he aspires to are perfectly matched. Forster reveals the problem quite conspicuously:

Oh, to acquire culture! Oh, to pronounce foreign names correctly! Oh, to be well-informed, discoursing at ease on every subject that a lady started!... His brain might be full of names, he might even have heard of Monet and Debussy; the trouble was that he could not string them together into one sentence, he could not make them ‘tell’, he could not quite forget about his stolen umbrella.

Yes, the umbrella was the real trouble. Behind Monet and Debussy the umbrella persisted, with the steady beat of a drum. (Forster, 1910/2012, 39-40)

The excerpt proves that he is out of his depth in almost all areas of his life. In evolutionary terms, he wants to “skip phases” and live on the scale which is a few levels above his current position. He has lived in one environment nine-tenths of his life, and is ill-equipped to master the one in which he grew up, yet he is obsessed with the accomplishments of people who have spent their entire lives in completely different “habitats.” He wants to speak easily about art, literature and music like the Schlegel family but neglects the fact that they have spent their entire lives doing almost nothing else but enjoying and discussing cultural activities. When the Schlegels judge a person they straightforwardly ask, “Do they care about Literature and Art? That is most important when you come to think of it. Literature and art. Most important” (Forster, 1910/2012, p. 7). They live art, they breathe art, and throughout their entire lives they have talked almost exclusively about culture-related issues, and Leonard Bast would discuss such matters on the same footing with them just because he has read a few books and watched a few opera performances.

His behavior is detrimental and bound to fail for two reasons. Firstly, he wrongly assumes that he would lead a happier and more fulfilled life if he managed to talk about cultural issues intelligently and in a learned way. Secondly, this way of thinking implies that there is a design both in life and in nature and that more complex structures are necessarily better than the simple structures or forms or organisms and hence more likely to ensure one’s happiness. He is so obsessed with what he perceives to be progress that he completely disregards evolutionary warnings that

New characters appear more or less at random and are whittled down by a merciless struggle for existence to leave only those with survival value. This is evolution by trial and error, not by design. It produces species adapted to the environment, but there is no drive to perfection and no trend leading to humans as the goal of creation. (Bowler, 1989, p. 80)

He forgets that “an organism’s ability to survive and reproduce depends not simply on its physical characteristics, but on how well adapted those characteristics are to the environment the organism inhabits, which in turn depends on the precise nature of the environmental demands, or *selection pressures*, an organism faces” (Buller, 2005, p. 28). In real-life terms, Bast is not even adapted to the environment he has spent his whole life in and aspires to more complex and more complicated ones, which, it must be added, do not hold any reliable promises to make his life more fulfilled and happier. In his particular

case, such “advanced and refined environments” would make him suffer more deeply. Even if he magically managed to acquire the eloquence and knowledge he desires, the abilities would just make him experience the *Weltschmerz* more deeply and render him more capable of expressing his newly-acquired misery in an elegant and eloquent way.

To Bast, culture is not a means of coping with one’s environment but an end in itself. The origins of this attitude are easily traceable to his devoted perusing of Ruskin and the likes of him:

For Leonard, Ruskin embodies a world all the more desirable because hardly attainable: a world of the educated, leisured and wealthy; because it is alien, it has the quality of dream. His own existence is ‘grey waters’; above and beyond lies ‘the universe’ in all its glory. Lacking wealth and leisure, Leonard sees education as the key to unlock the delights of paradise; and the key to education is Culture. Forster gives emphasis to the error of Leonard’s ideas by the ironic use of religious metaphor. Leonard repeats his favourite bits of Ruskin like a religious incantation, listening to the sound of the words ‘with reverence.’ (Edwards, 2002, pp. 51-2)

Instead of being an evolutionary tool for finding and understanding one’s place in the world, Bast treats culture as a savior capable of providing happiness, coherence and a sense of belonging. Forster ingeniously and quite sympathetically presents the discrepancy between Bast’s actual life and circumstances, and the world he dreams of. Mike Edwards (2002) sums up the inherent dangers and inappropriateness of Ruskin’s lofty prose for Bast’s present life conditions on the example of his flat:

The flat expresses Leonard. His mind and life, like his flat, are gloomy regions, illuminated only vicariously by the rays of Ruskin’s prose, or acquaintance with the Schlegels. But the rays of Ruskin bring danger with them: they may confuse and mislead, ultimately making practical living harder; Ruskin will never pay the rent. There is an implication in the novel that someone like Leonard may be destroyed psychologically by Ruskin as the Schlegel world destroys him physically. There is no suggestion in the novel of anything good about Leonard’s situation: Jacky is not good for him, but neither, in the end, is Ruskin. (p. 54)

Bast seems to take both evolutionary and educational short-cuts which are, as Forster aptly puts it, “peculiarly attractive to a half-baked mind” which has no idea of “a heritage that may expand gradually” and fervently desires “to come to Culture suddenly, much as the Revivalist hopes to come to Jesus” (Forster, 1910/2012, p. 51). Due to his unchecked delusions concerning progress, Bast fails to see the “culture of the Schlegels” and the “business-like life philosophy”

of the Wilcoxes as successful evolutionary adaptations to their respective sets of circumstances. Instead, he perceives them as a kind of Holy Grail which, once found, will inevitably bring happiness and enlightenment to his life.

The dismal failure of Leonard Bast's personal quest for knowledge and culture is inadvertently but aptly summarized by Hermann Hesse. Hesse's *Siddhartha* points out that real "knowledge has no worse enemy than the wish to know, than learning" (1999, p. 18) and the more one consciously and artificially strives to attain it the easier it evades attainment. *Siddhartha* claims that only [factual] knowledge can be communicated and learnt but wisdom never, and continues, as if having Leonard Bast's obsession with words and eloquence in mind:

But I cannot love words. That is why teachings mean nothing to me, they have no hardness, no softness, no colors, no edges, no smell, no taste, they have nothing but words. Perhaps that is what keeps you from finding peace, perhaps it is the many words. (Hesse, 1999, p. 127)

This excerpt epitomizes the utter futility of Bast's endeavors and reveals how far he really is from his ideals. While *Siddhartha* openly discards eloquence and factual knowledge as inherently inadequate for the acquisition of happiness and inner satisfaction, Bast is obsessed with them. His existential self is irrevocably settled in one dimension while his aspirations seem to belong to another—the incongruity which eternally bars him from achieving success.

Another literary (and philosophical) instance revealing the unsoundness of Bast's reasoning, behavior and prioritization is Nietzsche's ingenious test of one's current satisfaction with life. Nietzsche asks,

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, in the same succession and sequence - even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ~You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine. (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 273)

It is not difficult to imagine the amount of fear and disgust in Leonard Bast if he were to face such a test of his life circumstances. The only comfortable



vision of his life is always placed in the future and the possibility of the eternal recurrence of his present life would very probably be one of the most frightening visions of hell he is capable of imagining. He certainly possesses enough strength and willingness to suffer through it for one life time, but being forced to endure it for eternity would crush him.

Quite unlike him, Margaret Schlegel is firmly situated in the present. She has lived and breathed “culture” all her life. After the marriage, she does not put her life and habits on “stand-by” while experiencing the process of transition and getting accustomed to her husband’s reasoning and way of life. That transition becomes her life and that is why it is successful. She enjoys and fully appreciates her new circumstances because “no individual can arrive even at the threshold of his potentialities without a culture in which he participates” (Benedict, 1959, p. 253). She sees potential in that change and gradually embraces it but does not depreciate the value and necessity of her previous competences.

Forster’s insistence on what Margaret Mead calls “cultural continuity” is plainly visible in the episode of the novel directly following the death of Mrs Wilcox. Namely, Mrs Wilcox leaves her estate Howards End to Margaret Schlegel, who is neither a long-term acquaintance nor a blood-relative. Interestingly, Mrs Wilcox does not even want her house to undergo the “shock” of a radical change. She does not want the owner, even if it is her children, to be someone unable of appreciating it. She does not want Howards End to be perceived as a piece of property or a mere business asset. Forster explicitly points out that to the members of the Wilcox family “Howards End was a house: they could not know *that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir*” (Forster, 1910/2012, p. 102, emphasis mine). Mrs Wilcox “seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it.” She possessed the wisdom “to which we give the clumsy name of aristocracy” (Forster, 1910/2012, p. 21). Due to her exquisite bond with the house, Mrs Wilcox feels that the only person who can ensure some kind of continuity is Margaret Schlegel because in her she finds a unique aristocrat-like appreciation of the past and the cautious but constant respect towards the future.

The psychologist, Jordan B. Peterson (2018), points out that only individuals with such a disposition can successfully bridge two different environments or two different eras without ruining the structure of their lives. He claims that radical revolutions are inherently dangerous on both the social and personal scale and that one should have stable footing in the tradition, in the known and familiar while investigating the possibilities of adventure or growth (p. 63). He seems to concur with Forster because Margaret Schlegel and Leonard Bast seem to epitomize the positive and the negative examples of this precept. The Schlegels possess a refined taste for art and culture. They respect the tradition



and their livelihood is based on the traditional aristocratic sources of income. However, their refined manners and the embeddedness into the cultural and emotional side of life makes them incompetent in the fast-changing business world around them which values physicality, money, business abilities, courage and every-day risk taking. The Wilcoxes seem to thrive in such an environment but when emotional and deeply personal issues come to the fore, they prove to be utterly incompetent because they completely lack the depth, education, sensibility and care exhibited by the people like the Schlegels. These two families seem to represent two sides of the coin, which are destined never to see each other properly.

However, in her microcosm, Margaret turns out to be capable of connecting two eras, two social strata, and two ways of life. She openly admits the deficiencies of her own kind, the people like the Schlegels, and their dependence on the people like the Wilcoxes. She completely discards the possibility of the supposed spiritual superiority of the Schlegels over the Wilcoxes. Helen hints at because she is clever enough to see and fair enough to admit that

If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even. Just savagery. No—perhaps not even that. Without their spirit life might never have moved out of protoplasm. More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it. (Forster, 1910/2012, p. 182)

Margaret is perfectly aware of their qualities as a family but she is the only one conscious of their deficiencies and undeserved privileges. Her brother and sister cannot fathom the underlying dependence of their way of life on the bustling industry of the time they know nothing of. “Making that connection between material circumstances and the labour which produces them eventually makes Margaret a heroine. She rescues her sister from her impetuosity, and Mr Wilcox from his inhuman obtuseness about human relations” (Robbins, 2003, p. 203). She is the only character in the novel who can ensure continuity and stability in the two families because she seems to possess the best of both “worlds.” Through her character, Forster convincingly presents both radical idealism and every-day practicality as well as the necessity of their co-existence both on the personal level and on the level of the society. As the writer of an unsigned review of Forster's novel points out, “It is almost with surprise that we realize that the author, who can show such very unusual insight into the rarefied atmosphere of the idealist's inner life, can at the same time appreciate all that goes to the making of the more conventional types” (as cited in Gardner, 1973, p. 147).

Indeed, the novel contains quite a few memorable characters most of whom belong to the upper or lower echelons of the middle class. Forster may not know first-hand the everyday predilections of people from the lower classes (and he does not even pretend to possess such knowledge), but what he does possess in great measure is an acute awareness of how slow and painful the process of change and development is both on the societal and on the personal level. His characters who live their lives fully under the given set of circumstances prove to be the only ones capable of development while the ones who consciously attempt to change either themselves or others bring about nothing but misery.

Very similar issues are dealt with in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*. The novel presents a radical change of environment when a preacher's family, the Hales, is forced to move from their pastoral home in the south of England to the industrial north. They settle in the town called Milton where they meet a cotton-mill owner Thornton, with whom Margaret falls in love, and a simple worker who becomes her best friend.

Once again, a Margaret (Margaret Hale) is someone who both willingly and unwillingly initiates the necessary changes in everyday life and in the views of people and society. Both her day-to-day routine and life philosophy are forced to adapt to the new circumstances. She and Thornton successfully deal with the challenge but her parents prove not to be sufficiently strong and/or willing to change their personalities and interests to fit the new environment.

Gaskell speaks almost openly about the evolutionary potential or (in)aptitude of her protagonists. In her opinion the world is a tough place to live in (Gaskell, 1854-5/2012, p. 364) even without radical changes taking place all around. The older generation of the Hale family find it hard to cope with the fast-changing world but the young ones, Frederick and Margaret, successfully deal with it. Mr Hale finds something dazzling "in the energy which conquered immense difficulties with ease; the power of the machinery of Milton, the power of the men of Milton, impressed him with a sense of grandeur" (Gaskell, 1854-5/2012, p. 80). The raw power and resilience of the inhabitants of Milton fill him with admiration because they see the world as an evolutionary battlefield which they intend to conquer.

The world of commerce, industry and business is depicted in purely evolutionary terms, and Thornton may be perceived as the best representative of such an attitude. He is fully aware of the fact that while some prosper, others "must go down into ruin, and be no more seen among the ranks of the happy and prosperous. He spoke as if this consequence were so entirely logical, that neither employers nor employed had any right to complain if it became their fate" (Gaskell, 1854-5/2012, p. 183). Margaret and her father are stunned by his passion and readiness to fight as long as it is required of him. His comparison

of North and South makes Margaret aware of the deficiencies of her former social circles in the South. Thornton proudly and self-consciously exclaims that he would “rather be a man toiling, suffering-nay, failing and successful” in Milton “than lead a dull prosperous life in the old worn grooves” of the aristocratic society down in the South. He stresses that aristocracy may well be “clogged with honey and unable to rise and fly” (Gaskell, 1854-5/2012, p. 95).

However, Thornton’s previously unquestioned “survival of the fittest attitude” is directly confronted by Margaret’s actions because she feels and proves that both Thornton and the society have to go beyond it. She accepts the fact that the world of Milton functions in that way, she openly admires the positive aspects of it but, nevertheless, is on constant lookout for ways to amend it and make it more humane and consequently more efficient. Initially, Thornton cannot comprehend the paradox of such reasoning but gradually sees the truth of it. She makes him realize that there is always a choice and that the evolutionary inept can be “trampled on” or “gently lifted aside out of the roadway of the conqueror, whom they have no power to accompany on his march” (Gaskell, 1854-5/2012, p. 80).

The conflict and bond between Margaret and Thornton are extremely important because they are what Margaret Mead calls “the meeting points of two networks” (2012, p. 152) and therefore essential for the “constructive borrowing” between the two groups of people or two classes to take place. Thanks to her openness and humanism, Margaret Hale lives Forster’s motto from *Howards End* and literally connects three different groups of people forcing them to take human interest in each other and consequently improving both herself and others. She accepts the values of the people of Milton and admires them, however, she forces Thornton to see the benefits of classical knowledge and humanism even when applied to the field of industry and business. Perhaps the most important bond she originates is between Thornton and his worker Nicholas Higgins, because it eventually improves the health, well-being and working conditions of thousands. Without her mediation Thornton would never become personally acquainted with Higgins, would never hear his workers’ side of the story and would never take a human interest in them. Gaskell vividly depicts how this newly formed and previously highly unlikely friendship improves both personal and business life of John Thornton:

He was but like many others – men, women, and children – alive to distant, and dead to near things. He sought to possess the influence of a name in foreign countries and faraway seas – to become the head of a firm that should be known for generations; and it had taken him long silent years to come even to a glimmering of what he might be now, today, here in his own town, his own factory, among his own people. He and they had led parallel lives – very close, but never

touching – till the accident (or so it seemed) of his acquaintance with Higgins. (1854-5/2012, p. 510)

Just like Margaret Schlegel, Margaret Hale “connects” because she acutely feels that all the three networks in question: the timid aristocracy, the resilient entrepreneurs and the oppressed workers have come to a point when they do not need new things, new inventions and novel theories but a simple and humane form of constructive borrowing. Consequently, it turns out that the solutions to both personal and class problems do not need “more progress,” more discoveries or more inventions but a mediator willing and capable of connecting both people and ideas in novel ways. As Margaret Mead points out, the best solutions are already there, just in another “network.”

The whole process of cultural evolution depends on borrowing of this kind as much as it does on the identifiable innovations. Furthermore, at present, our survival depends, perhaps in equal measure, on the success with which models from one type of culture can be borrowed and reworked in other cultures and the success achieved through innovation. Both borrowing and innovation are necessary aspects of the task of working out forms of global integration in which men, now able to destroy themselves, can protect themselves against destruction. (1854-5/2012, p. 189)

This procedure has proved fruitful in all areas of human life for thousands of years. Whenever writers, scientists or artists find themselves stuck they look around more carefully or reach back to the knowledge and experience bestowed upon them by previous generations and adapt and reshape it according to their respective needs. All three Margarets, Margaret Schlegel, Margaret Hale and the anthropologist Margaret Mead seem to possess the necessary wisdom to realize that progress and improvement do not always mean going forward and marching into the unknown but, more often than not, looking more intently around, borrowing, reworking, reshaping and adapting the existing means and solutions to one’s own purposes. Such solutions tend to be more humane, better tested, more durable and more convenient than reckless, idealistic plunges into the unknown performed by the likes of Leonard Bast.

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## **HOWARDS END I NORTH AND SOUTH – OPASNOSTI PREBRZE TRANZICIJE**

### **Sažetak**

Iako je glavni moto djela *Howards End* „samo povezuje“, spajanje različitih era, ljudi ili svjetonazora povlači za sobom brojne opasnosti i nepredvidive poteškoće. Djela *Howards End* i *Sjever i jug* bave se tranzicijom društva na makro razini i transformacijama individualnih osobnosti na mikro razini. Likovi iz navedenih romana suočavaju se s novim izazovima i prisiljeni su ili dublje razumjeti sebe i društvo dok savladavaju te prepreke ili dopustiti da ih ta tranzicija uništi. Dotadašnji izolirani i zaštićeni život u poznatom okolišu se dovodi u pitanje i preispituje zbog brojnih promjena u društvu. Način na koji ljudi provode svoje živote, njihovi izvori prihoda, moralne ljestvice po kojima se ravnaju i svakodnevne životne navike se radikalno mijenjaju i zahtijevaju od likova prilagodbu novim uvjetima života. Neki likovi, poput Margaret Schlegel iz djela *Howards End* ili Margaret Hale iz romana *Sjever i jug* se uspijevaju adaptirati novim uvjetima života bez većih poteškoća dok se likovi poput gospodina Hale-a ili Leonarda Bast-a slamaju pod teretom promjena. Gospodin Hale i njegova supruga nevoljko prihvaćaju novi način života ali se nisu sposobni nositi s tim izazovom dok Leonard Bast svjesno planira i priželjkuje radikalne promjene u svojem životu ali ga praktična implementacija tih promjena u njegovome životu potpuno slama. Ovi likovi se jednostavno ne mogu nositi sa novonastalom situacijom i promjenjenim životnim okolišem i gube bitku zbog darvinovske evolutivne neprilagođenosti. I Forster i Gaskell uspješno detektiraju glavne probleme društava u tranziciji i upozoravaju na opasnost preuranjenih i previše radikalnih promjena kako na društvenoj tako i na osobnoj razini.

*Ključne riječi:* E. M. Forster, Elisabeth Gaskell, Charles Darwin, Margaret Mead, Howards End, North and South, tranzicija, okoliš, evolucija