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Diplomová práce

The representation of the House in British Fiction

(1906 - 2009)

(E.M. Forster, John Galsworthy, Simon Mawer)

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Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že diplomovou práci s názvem *The Representation of the House in British fiction (1906 - 2009)* jsem vypracovala samostatně. Použitou literaturu a podkladové materiály uvádím v příloženém seznamu literatury.

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Podpis:

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Abstract

The diploma thesis focuses on diverse representations of the house in selected British novels since 1906. The novels have been chosen in reference to the importance assigned to houses in terms of plot, characters, and setting, each offering a unique vision of the house. A house is perceived as a home, as a possession or as a work of art. The novels by E.M. Forster, John Galsworthy and Simon Mawer are viewed through the prism of Phenomenology, namely the essays of Martin Heidegger, Jan Patočka and Anna Hogenová. This type of analysis provides an insight into the motivations of the individual characters, but also a deeper understanding of the function and role of the house in fiction as well as in reality. All the works are studied accordingly in the context of a wider social, cultural and aesthetic background.

Key words: British fiction, Phenomenology, House, Home, Modernism, Work of Art

Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na různorodá ztvárnění domu ve vybraných britských románech od roku 1906. Romány byly vybrány na základě důležitosti připisované domům v rámci jejich „architektury“ - v kontextu děje, postav a prostředí, každý nabízí jedinečný obraz domu. Dům je vnímán jako domov, jako majetek, či jako umělecké dílo. Romány E.M. Forstera, Johna Galsworthyho a Simon Mawera jsou nahlíženy optikou Fenomenologie, jmenovitě skrze eseje Martina Heideggera, Jana Patočky a Anny Hogenové. Takové zkoumání přináší vhled do motivace jednotlivých postav, ale také hlubší porozumění funkcí a rolí domu ve fikci stejně jako v realitě. Všechna díla jsou tudíž studována v kontextu širšího sociálního, kulturního a estetického pozadí.

Klíčová slova: Britská fikce, Fenomenologie, Dům, Domov, Modernismus, Umělecké dílo

Contents

Introduction	7
1. <i>Howards End</i>: A House with a View	11
2. <i>The Forsyte Saga</i>: A House as a Possession	34
3. <i>The Glass Room</i>: A House as a Materialisation of an Idea	51
Conclusion	77
Bibliography	83

I would like there to exist places that are stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, deep-rooted; places that might be points of reference, of departure, of origin:

My birthplace, the cradle of family, the house where I may have been born, the tree I may have seen grown (that my father may have planted the day I was born), the attic of my childhood filled with intact memories...

Such places don't exist, and it's because they don't exist that space becomes a question, ceases to be self-evident, ceases to be incorporated, ceases to be appropriated. Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It's never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it.

My Spaces are fragile: time is going to wear them away, to destroy them.

...

Space melts like sand running through one's fingers. Time bears it away and leaves me only shapeless shreds:

To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs.¹

Georges Perec, "Species of Spaces"

¹George Perec, "Species of Spaces" in *Species of Spaces and other Pieces* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 91-2.

Introduction
The Representation of the House in British Fiction (1906 - 2009)
(E.M. Forster, John Galsworthy, Simon Mawer)

*Help me into some house, Benvolio,
Or I shall faint. A plague a' both your houses !
They have made worms' meat of me. I have it,
And soundly too. Your houses !*

Act 3, Scene 1, Lines 95-99, *Romeo and Juliet*²

A house as an inseparable part of human world has always been embraced by literature as its representation corresponds to the core part of the reader's understanding of the fictional world. From a materialistic point of view a house gives shelter, secures the basic needs and demands of humans as far as their safety, security and comfort are concerned; we are born in the houses and we die there. How sordid and gloomy do we find the ends of those dying on the street !³ A house, a building provides us with the primal simple division of the world into the inside and outside. At the same time the building conveys the characteristics of its owner, inhabitants or architect and expresses their relation towards the outside world. A house is an irreplaceable constituent of humanity, a place where human existence takes place. Therefore it is crucial for our understanding of the world. We judge different nations, different periods according to how and where people live. Houses are almost omnipresent, they mould our perception of reality, of the world, of ourselves. Only humans lean out of the world and “unlike other animals, build dwellings, because they are not in home in the world.”⁴ Though it is impossible to delimit the exact

² William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 139.

³ Even Mercutio, a compulsive talker, a source of much of the word-play in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a true incarnation of a public persona, does not want to die on the street. Despite the immense importance of the house as an expression of identity (there are only two types of houses in Shakespeare's Verona, those of the Montagues and those of the Capulets), the Prologue of the play even opens with the description of “Two households, both alike in dignity”, Mercutio denies the division and asks to be taken to “some” house. He then curses both participants of the feud, but he does not call them by name, but like in the Prologue he replaces it by the word “house” underlying the role of the house as a separate social unity suffering bitter losses because of the feud but ignorant of its cause or solution.

⁴ Jan Patočka, “Fifth Essay: Is technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?” in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, transl. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996), 115-6.

point in history when a den ceased to be a simple refuge and developed into a house, it is absolutely clear what had caused such transformation. What differentiates a house from a lair is the plurality of the functions and meanings it conveys. The variety of functions which a house displays ranges from a domestic setting to an ideological manifestation of prestige and power, from a home to a prison, from a temple to a Nazi laboratory. The meaning might be a treasured memory, frequently also social status put on display, exoticism or familiarity, a house may become an expression of power, of order, or even of chaos.

From the literary point of view, the presentation of a house provides the reader with a clue as far as the overall arrangement of the fictitious world is concerned, it may foreshadow the plot, it furnishes the setting as well as the description of characters. The houses as well as their representations are omnipresent and absolutely essential for our understanding and yet we do not delve deeper into their meaning, we content ourselves with a mere description or with a simple causal effect. Somebody is rich and therefore he or she lives in a beautiful, luxurious villa. Is that satisfactory? Why then do the Schlegel sisters, in spite of their considerable financial means, yearn for a humble country house, formerly a farm? Why do Liesel and Viktor despise the glitter of the golden ormolu and the solid walls represented by the respectable villas suitable for people of their rank? This diploma thesis aspires to find answers to these questions.

What has led to such questioning? It was the magnificent and illuminating novel by Simon Mawer, *The Glass Room*, which has inspired the birth of this diploma thesis providing it with the material and the major direction of study. What roles may houses assume in literature? How are they represented? Do their representations mark significant points in the history of literature? The following examination of other significant representations of houses in British fiction has resulted in turning towards older but nonetheless inspiring novels from the first half of the twentieth century, namely *Howards End* by E.M. Forster and three novels united in the single volume called *The Forsyte Saga* by John Galsworthy. They illustrate the different roles houses may play but at the same time they are united by the importance attributed to houses. The different representations of houses are to be viewed through the lens of Phenomenology. The novels are confronted with Heidegger's concepts of house, home and dwelling, mainly as he approaches them in his later essays called "...Poetically, man dwells...", "Building Dwelling Thinking" and "Die Sprache". Further on, these theses are complemented by "Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History" by Jan Patočka concerning the human condition and the state of the

Industrial civilization as the house typically does not speak only for its tenant but also for the period.

The Glass Room as well as *The Man of Property*, the first volume of *The Forsyte Saga*, have provoked an interest in the personality of the architect, who, apart from Nature, shapes the face of the world we perceive. To which extent is his or her personality projected in the final design, how does he or she determine the overall symbolic expression of the building? We tend to perceive Space as something obvious, clear, yet we encounter immense difficulties when we strive to describe it, to imagine it, to plan it. Space is simply there, it is apparent yet almost indescribable. The architect is a truly emblematic persona as he or she is able to capture the space within the walls of rooms and building, to “make room” for the space to fill in. The question which logically follows such characteristic concerns the capacity of Literature to capture the fleeting essence of Space.

The work is divided into three major chapters which in the chronological order study the novels and point to individual differences in the understanding of the house and its image in literature. *Howards End* by E.M. Forster published in 1910 brings the image of Howards End as “a house with a view” both in the metaphorical and the literal sense, untainted by hypocrisy and modern “homelessness” – “the bewildered wandering” as Patočka puts it, a house situated in the picturesque countryside in the paradise threatened by the gluttonous urban civilization. To dwell, “*to be set at piece, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature.*”⁵ is a motto of Ruth Wilcox and gradually becomes the motto of Margaret Schlegel, Ruth's successor. The loss of home which had filled Ruth with horror, strikes Margaret only later when the relationship with her beloved sister, Helen, falls apart. Their final union and Margaret's victory over “the criminally muddled” morals of her husband take place under the roof of Howards End.

The first volume of *The Forsyte Saga*, *The Man of Property*, was published in 1906, the two other volumes, *In Chancery* and *To Let* followed in 1920 and 1921. Their author, John Galsworthy, had been a well-established writer and dramatist prior to their publishing, but thanks to *The Saga* he received a worldwide attention. He was awarded The Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932. The house in *The Forsyte Saga* plays the role of possession, of investment, of an indicator of Property. The Forsytes value themselves and each other according to the position and furnishings of their houses. Their world is

⁵ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought* translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) 149.

London, and Soames, the Forsytes' representative leads their army into the splendid countryside by building a new house in Robin Hill, a golden cage for his beautiful, disapproving wife Irene. The city is again viewed as a hostile territory, the area where only the fittest, such as the Forsytes and their likes, are able to survive without any harm. However Soames's sound investment becomes the liberating force of his wife and the rebelling branch of the Forsytes lead by Old Jolyon and his son, Young Jolyon.

The Glass Room, a lustrous metaphor of the history and spirit of the First Czechoslovak Republic, short-listed for The Man Booker Prize for Literature in 2009, immediately became the source of a wider recognition of its author Simon Mawer. In this novel he grandly manifests the possibility of transposing the literary representation of a unique house into an ultimate metaphor of a period, human condition and its intellectual and artistic reflection. The Glass Room, an ageless place of reason and light, is opposed to the ephemeral human lives and volatile polity.

However these conceptions differ one from another, they hopefully demonstrate the immense importance of the house in the field of narration, in the characterization of characters and in human lives. The major concern of the thesis is to trace the essence of the various roles and positions the house assumes in the selected British novels and to underline the individual idiosyncrasies which appear but which are only the logical result of the relation of houses to humans.

1. *Howards End*: A House with a View

The vital importance which houses acquire in *Howards End* opens a new chapter in the understanding of the roles houses may assume. *Howards End*, modelled according to the Hertfordshire residence where its author E.M. Forster and his mother spent ten years, plays the part of a continuous contrastive background which reflects all the ideas involved in Forster's vision of the world. Continuous calling for connection and life in a spiritual continuum is opposed to the emerging civilization of flux, of constant and erratic movements, civilisation in which loss of internal existence had been replaced by external cumulation. The core once lost, the civilisation has no centre to refer to, no point of departure, it is “turning and turning in the widening gyre”⁶.

Forster responds to this circular movement of the whole civilisation by the circular structure of his novel. The reader feels the inclination towards fatality with the emergence and later resurgence of every motif. Speaking in terms of motifs, not only do they follow their own trajectories, but at the same time they seem to orbit the central motif of connection versus its loss. Thus the complicated universe of the novel together with its structures and sub-structures is united by a dualistic principle which may be perceived as steering the abounding, pregnant novel towards the direction of a more comprehensible “morality play”⁷ as Wilfred H. Stone, an acclaimed literary scholar, calls it. The basic dichotomy is established by the opposition of the Schlegel sisters, namely Margaret and Helen on one side and the Wilcox family on the other. But the basic opposition of “Mollycoddles” – the Schlegels and “Red-bloods” – the Wilcoxes as E.M. Forster labels the two groups of his interest in his unfinished novel *Arctic Summer*, is interrupted by the emergence of Ruth Wilcox and her “sanctuary”, *Howards End* and by the Schlegels all-comprising principle of connection. Being the Wilcoxes' country mansion, the house as well as its spiritual owner oppose every trait characteristic for the Wilcoxes and those like them. Whereas one would expect a simple dichotomy between the two clans, two households, Forster presents a participant of the opposite side at the very centre of the opposing side. Ruth Wilcox, wife of Henry Wilcox embodies the idea of connection which

6 William Butler Yeats, *The Second Coming [1919]* in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2000), 158.

7 Wilfred H. Stone, “*Howards End*: Red-bloods and Mollycoddles,” in *The Cave and the Mountain, A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 255.

Margaret attempts to re-create later by her own marriage to Henry.

The search of Ruth Wilcox for a spiritual heir to Howards End thus starts from the very beginning when the two families meet in Germany and the sisters are invited for a visit to Howards End. Later on in London, Ruth invites Margaret to Howards End again and her attempts culminate when she scribbles a note on her deathbed bequeathing the house to Margaret. This message being ignored by her family, Ruth does not give up and seemingly resumes her insistence even after her death. Margaret marries Henry Wilcox and after dubious series of attempts of connection Howards End finally becomes a home to the Schlegels, the material expression of their spiritual needs – “a house with a view”⁸.

Not only does the longing for the view mediate the overall picture, the unity of everything expressed in Margaret's wish to connect, but it also refreshes the senses immensely: “The house was insignificant, but the prospects from it would be an eternal joy,[...]”⁹ The process of the abstract marriage of the inside with the outside (a marriage which reaches its climax in *The Glass Room*) merge together beauty and delight. The question of aesthetics is essential for Forster as a member of Bloomsbury group and may be even seen as decisive: “His distaste for the modern world is largely aesthetic, a distaste for what was spoiling the view, and he was depressed largely 'because the human race seems advancing to disaster via vulgarity'(quoted from *Commonplace* 206).”¹⁰ The craving for the view appears in another work of Forster published two years prior to *Howards End* and that is *A Room with a View*. The very title refers to the necessity of undisturbed perception, of the visual, spiritual and social openness and though its scope is not as wide as that of *Howards End*, it reverberates its the major motifs through the whole of Forster's work.

The insistence on the view leads Forster into the field of Romantic detachment and that seemingly collides with his social concern:

[...] Forster's religion cannot exist without the sanctuary of unpeopled or secret places[...]. To love space is to wish people elsewhere [...] .For some of us who are non-Christian, there still remains the comfort of non-human, the relief, when we look

8 Wilfred H.Stone, “Howards End: Red-bloods and Mollycoddles,” in *The Cave and the Mountain, A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1966) 237.

9 E.M. Forster, *Howards End* [1910] (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 185.[Subsequent page references preceded with *HE* are given in parantheses in the text.]

10 Wilfred H.Stone, “Forster, the Environmentalist,” in *Seeing Double, Revisioning Edwardian and Modernist Literature*, ed. by Carola M.Kaplan and Anne B.Simpson (London: Macmilan Press Ltd, 1996), 184.

up at the stars, of realizing that they are uninhabitable'(quoted from *Two Cheers*, 276).¹¹

However, *Howards End* does not only adhere to Romanticism, but it enriches the Romantic vision with a number of unique motifs endowing it with an air of particularity. The idea Forster shares with Romanticism is the desire to merge tranquilly with Nature, to meditate in order to be able to join the union. Nature enables us to perceive the world in its complexity and to melt into it, to connect spiritually, to communicate, to transcend. It is the background on which our existence emerges in its uniqueness, but at the same time it connects us to the universe. If the Schlegels desire the view, they desire to be able to see, to connect, to marry senses and ideas. The reason why Forster finds civilization so disturbing and perilous is the way it prevents the tranquil contemplation of Nature by exploiting it only as a material source and thus spoiling the view.

Howards End becomes a residue of spiritual connection to Nature, “a beacon in the roaring tides of darkness”¹² as Forster argued in *A Room with a View*, but the menacing feeling of civilisation creeping in is omnipresent: “There are moments when I feel Howards End peculiarly our own. 'All the same, London's creeping.' She pointed over the meadow – over eight or nine meadows, but at the end of them was a red rust.” (*HE*, 289)

Howards End representing spirituality and Nature belongs to Ruth Wilcox and the Schlegel sisters. It is opposed to the corrupting forces of London represented by the rest of the Wilcox clan. London used to be a home of the Schlegels as well – Margaret, Helen and Tibby sharing a harmonious household in Wickham Place, an old paternal house providing a place for their intellectual cultivation. It has to give way to a new block of flats produced by the greedy expansion of the city. The loss of Wickham Place is followed by the rift and estrangement of the two sisters who get finally reunited in Howards End which belongs to them spiritually, simply “feels to be peculiarly their own”. At the moment of the expiration of the lease of Wickham Place, Margaret as well as Helen lose the anchor which had protected them against the sweeping tide of London: “The Londoner seldom understands his city until it sweeps him, too, away from his moorings, and Margaret's eyes were not opened until the lease of Wickham Place expired.” (*HE*, 92) London is seen as a city limiting the view and subsequently the potential to connect, replacing life and existence with a cold, mechanical pulsation: “Certainly London fascinates. One visualizes it as a

¹¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 179.

¹² E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* [1908] (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 177.

tract of quivering gray; intelligent without purpose, and excitable without love; as a spirit that has altered before it can be chronicled; as a heart that certainly beats, but with no pulsation of humanity.” (*HE*, 92) The limited space, the limited prospect with all the interferences and violations result in a fearful incapacity of the human being to connect, or even to communicate as their vision is diminished up to the point of a complete ignorance. And the modern expansion, the everlasting growth resulting from seemingly unlimited potential of Liberal market strikes also the countryside where “The suburban villas of Summer Street are gobbling up the country, cosmopolitanism is invading the precincts of simplicity and honesty. As cities grow, the divine becomes more distant.”¹³

The question of the exceeded cumulation is associated with vulgarity, the imperialistic tendencies of Germany making the sisters' father abandon it and making him also despise British Imperialism: “It is 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 miles are almost the same as heaven.” (*HE*, 25) But the idea of vague bigness as opposed to modesty characterize the different approaches of the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels towards property. When Helen writes a letter to her sister informing her about her visit to Howards End, she opens it by stating “It isn't going to be what we expected. It is old and little, and altogether delightful – red brick.” (*HE*, 3) The modesty of the house surprises her as she would expect such a family to live in an ugly suburban villa. The fact that the house used to be a farm, that it has its own history and above all a perceptible spirit confuses her. The house and its surroundings are cherished by Mrs Wilcox and despised by the rest of her family. Much later, when Margaret marries Henry Wilcox, she also falls prey to the phantom of bigness which she reveals in her conversation with Miss Avery after having found that the latter had accommodated the vacant Howards End with the furnishings coming from Wickham Place which had been only stored there: “We happen to need a much larger house. Circumstances oblige us to give big parties.” (*HE*, 232) This statement may result from her loyalty to her husband, but her desperate need to establish a permanent home quickly outweighs it and she clings to the house body and soul.

What makes Margaret Schlegel marry Henry Wilcox seems ambiguous. The name the reason takes in the novel is love. Whether Margaret married Henry out of charity, craving for the lost home, following her motto or their combination, remains a virtue of the

13 Wilfred H.Stone, “Howards End: Red-bloods and Mollycoddles,” in *The Cave and the Mountain, A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1966), 233.

plasticity of her character. Henry is not able to perceive the same way his wife does, he opts for a way of imaginary simplicity and lucidity. His is the right track, he is authorized to do whatever he considers right as the civilisation is founded on energetic men like himself. Even the Schlegel sisters are enchanted by the brutality of the Wilcoxes on first encounter:

The energy of Wilcoxes had fascinated her, had created new images of beauty in her responsive mind. To be all day with them in the open air, to sleep at night under their roof, had seemed the supreme joy of life, and had led to that abandonment of personality that is possible prelude to love. (*HE*, 20)

Margaret is able not to have illusions and yet to love and is prepared to sacrifice herself in the holy war of moulding Henry into a being aware of its complexity, somebody who is able to connect and see himself as a part of the cosmos, not as its sovereign:

She would only point to the salvation that was latent in his own soul, and in the soul of every man. 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 his highest. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die. (*HE*, 159)

Margaret's ardour hits the wall of Henry's obtuseness and his complete inability to connect and see life in its awesome complexity strengthen the exigency of Margaret's motto "Only connect" from what seemed to be a pure optative at the beginning, into a categorical imperative or even threat: "'Not any more of this!' she cried. 'You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry!'" (*HE*, 263) She blames Henry of hypocrisy, the inability to see and bear the consequences of his behaviour and calls him "muddled" and warns him against repentance as in his case it would not be sincere. What does cause such outburst of accusations and reproaches apart from Margaret's growing impatience and weakening sympathy? It is Henry's refusal of letting the now pregnant Helen to stay the night in Howards End which is not only a spiritual sanctuary but also a feminine one, it is the place of the only sincere love scene of the whole novel when Margaret and Helen are re-united in spite of Henry's will. Henry and men generally turn into intruders, into the ones who hold the keys but are not welcome.

Henry is accepted to Howards End only after his spiritual rebirth after his son, Charles, is sentenced to three years for manslaughter. If we apply the idea of the famous Czech phenomenologist philosopher Jan Patočka and view Margaret's and Henry's lives in terms of the theory of life movements, we may illuminate the mystery of Henry's sudden change. Patočka distinguishes “three fundamental movements of human life: the movement of acceptance, the movement of defence and the movement of truth.”¹⁴ In order to be able to distinguish a movement, a human being needs a referent, something stable and immobile. The referent for the first type of movement is a home, a family which is for a child the centre of the world and also gives meaning to everything. Later on, when a human being reaches the second movement, that of defence, it is the Earth which becomes the referent:

It is only later, in the second life movement, that an adult person defines himself/herself in their search for the meaning of life in relation to the planet Earth. He/she defeats the rejection of the Earth in relation to work, and is rewarded by the Earth by tools of survival and extension of life.¹⁵

This is the state which the Wilcoxes have reached. They seemingly grasp the sense of life in their assiduous work, their eternal belief in the power of possession and feeling of their slight superiority towards others. But when Charles Wilcox penetrates the sanctuary of Howards End and unintentionally kills another intruder, Leonard Bast, and is sentenced to prison for manslaughter, the Earth shudders and what used to be Life full of meaning, restraint and order turns out to be unfair, meaningless and even contemptuous. And Henry suddenly feels broken and weak, his “fortress gave way.” (*HE*, 285) Anna Hogenová, the follower of the Phenomenology tradition explains the transition from the second into the third life movement as follows:

But only the third referent turns us into free beings. This referent appears only after the two previous referents are shattered. Only the loss of the second referent opens

14 Jan Patočka, “Second Essay: The Beginning of History” in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, transl. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996), 29.

15 “Teprve později, ve druhém životním pohybu se dospělý člověk vymezuje ve svém životním osmyslnění vůči Zemi – planetě. Překonává její odpor v práci a za to dostává od Země prostředky k přežití, k prodloužení svého života.” in Anna Hogenová, “Domov jako problém”, in *Jak pečujeme o svou duši?* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta, 2008), 189.

the possibilities for encountering the third. Yet the third referent is something which is absolute and cannot be imagined at all. It is neither an object, nor a subject; it is something which embraces us and which we embrace.¹⁶

Margaret subsequently takes Henry to Howards End and treats him as an invalid, but without pity: “No sudden warmth arose in her. She did not enfold the sufferer in her arms. But all through that day and the next day and the next a new life began to move.” (*HE*, 285) Henry has collapsed because he “noticed a thing” (*HE*, 287). But how shall we understand the final dialogue between Margaret and Henry? Henry having bequeathed Howards End to the Schlegel sisters reveals to Margaret the wish of the late Mrs Wilcox to give Howards End to Margaret. Margaret assures Henry that nothing had been done wrong, but at the same time her life is “shaken in its inmost recesses” (*HE*, 293). Even though she considers life in its complexity and is capable of connection on whichever level, she is shaken by the degree of the obtuseness her husband and his family had manifested, she might marvel at the generosity and sagacity of the late Mrs Wilcox. Nevertheless, the circle closes and Howards End belongs to whom it ought to.

Even though Henry Wilcox may be considered as a person who has experienced a spiritual earthquake, a complete revision of values, he still cannot face the open view which Howards End provides and that leads to the conclusion that he got stuck on his way and hasn't achieved the third life movement. He remains in the dusky living room with the curtains drawn down to prevent the air bringing the hay seeds inside. Another dualistic division emerges and that is the tolerance of hay. In her first letter from Howards End Helen gives a picturesque description of Mrs Wilcox and her union with Nature: “Trail, trail, went her long dress over the sopping grass, as she came back with her hands full of the hay that was cut yesterday – I suppose for rabbits or something, as she kept on smelling it.” (*HE*, 4) Mrs Wilcox is the only one of all her family who is able to stand the hay. It affects neither Margaret nor Helen, but their brother Tibby cannot stand it. “‘There's not one Wilcox that can stand up against a field in June – I laughed fit to burst while he was courting Ruth. [...] This house lies too much on the land for them. Naturally, they were glad enough to slip at first.’” (*HE*, 233) The house lies too much on the land to them, it

16 “Ale teprve třetí referent z nás učiní svobodné bytosti. Tento referent se objeví jen pokud se ty dva předcházející oťresou. Teprve ztráta druhého referentu otvírá možnosti setkání s tím třetím. Ale tím třetím je něco, co je absolutní a co se vůbec nedá představit. Není to předmětem, ani subjektem, je to něco co nás zároveň objímá a my objímáme je.”

Anna Hogenová, “Domov jako problém”, in *Jak pečujeme o svou duši?* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta, 2008), 189.

stands too close to Nature, its view is too open.

The Wilcoxes cannot and will not be able to communicate or to connect with Nature, and that cannot be altered even by Charles' imprisonment or Henry's true repentance, they "little see in Nature that is ours"¹⁷, they are in a constant need for appliances, they lack the spontaneity and vitality:

If Margaret wanted to jump from a motor-car, she jumped; if Tibby thought paddling would benefit his ankles, he paddled; if a clerk desired adventure, he took a walk in the dark. But these athletes seemed paralysed. They could not bathe without their appliances, though the morning sun was calling and the last mists were rising from the dimpling stream. (*HE*, 186)

The Wilcoxes, although they embody the energy and vitality of the country, cannot face it without any tools which serve as mediators. They need appliances for bathing, they may move only by means of motor-cars, they communicate by cablegrams, that is the reason why they prefer London which incarnates a grandiose "appliance" with its hostile streets and red rust, they do not mind the cruelty as long as this urban microcosm places them on top of its hierarchy.

Howards End as an ancient farm plays a multiple role of home, of sanctuary both spiritual and feminine, and opposes to whichever aspect of Wilcox character and thus a duality of unbelievable efficiency emerges. What strikes us is that the late Ruth Wilcox is the spiritual authority and yet she belongs to the clan by name but by her blood as well. Why hasn't she lavished her children as well as her husband with her spirituality? Margaret thinks that she "spoilt" Henry by her reluctance to make him "notice a thing". The narrative strategy even underlines the abstract detachment of Mrs Wilcox from the rest of her family. She is almost always presented separated from them by an abstract or material barrier:

She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it. One knew that she worshipped the past, and that instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her – that wisdom to which we give the clumsy name of aristocracy. (*HE*, 19)

17 William Wordsworth, *The world is too much with us* in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by Henry Reed William Wordsworth (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun. And Brother, 1837), 185.

Mrs Wilcox is Howards End and she underlines this by saying that “Howards End was nearly pulled down once. It would have killed me.” (*HE*, 71) She merges with the house and cannot bear the separation when she is supposed to spend the rest of her days in London. In a desperate search for its spiritual heir, she asks Margaret to join her on her trip there. When she encounters the members of her family at the station, she suddenly rejects the idea and follows them home. And that is the major difference between the late Mrs Wilcox and the new Mrs Wilcox, formerly Margaret Schlegel. Although Mrs Avery mistakes her for Ruth Wilcox, stating that she has the same manner of walking, and Margaret Wilcox may be considered as her follower, her heir, she differs slightly in the degree of her independence and protest against the Wilcoxes.

When Margaret meets her pregnant and reputedly insane sister Helen at the threshold of Howards End, she “ [...] had time to whisper: 'Oh, my darling-' The keys of the house were in her hand. She unlocked Howards End and thrust Helen into it. 'Yes, all right, ' she said, and stood with her back to the door.” (*HE*, 247) She protects her sister and the house itself against the raids of Henry and the doctor, against any interference of the masculine world outside. She does not obey Henry, she even goes as far as calling him “criminally muddled”. She despises her husband for rejecting Helen's wish to sleep there and his hypocritical argument that Helen's illegitimate child would stain the memory of the late Mrs Wilcox. Although Margaret had married Henry and aspired to mediate a deeper understanding of the world to him, while experimenting with her ultimate ability to connect and enlarging the field of knowledge and understanding of people, her experiment fails and so the house becomes a symbol of her protest against the Wilcoxes, against their values and their perception of the world, their inability to connect and at the same time it embodies a feminine sanctuary and a place of sisters' poignant reunion. Men are banned or seen and dealt with as intruders. Henry is expelled, the creeping Leonard Bast dies and Charles is sentenced to imprisonment. The only masculine member of Howards End is Helen's baby, a future heir of Howards End. By Henry's bequeathing of the estate to Helen's baby the spiritual continuance is preserved with the house belonging to the Schlegels. What is also maintained is the symbolic link with the past where the estate used to be inherited by the masculine members of families.

It is especially the character of Ruth Wilcox which connects the present with the past as well as the future. She worships the past with all its myths and “festering superstitions” (*HE*, 61) and she believes that by bequeathing the house to her spiritual heir, Margaret, she

will preserve it together with all its magical power for future generations. From time to time she even appears as a silent ghost and assures herself that everything goes as it should: “Mrs Wilcox strayed in and out, ever a welcome ghost; surveying the scene, thought Margaret, without one hint of bitterness.” (*HE*, 142) She joins the author himself in his optimistic belief in an existence of future as such or even a better one where man will merge back to Nature, where his ability to connect will be resurrected: “[Margaret:] 'Do you think that the tree really did cure toothache, if one believed in it?' [Ruth Wilcox:] 'Of course it did. It would cure anything – once.'” (*HE*, 61) This remark corresponds to the remark uttered by Margaret who believes that maybe once the craze for motion will be followed by “a civilization that won't be a movement, because it will rest on earth. All the signs are against it now, but I can't help hoping, and very early in the morning in the garden I feel that our house is the future as well as the past.” (*HE*, 290) Future will revive the past with all its spirituality and connection. The circular movement of history will close in the same way in which the novel unravels, opening and ending with a description of the beauties and the pastoral charm of Howards End.

When the Wilcoxes decide to neglect Ruth's wish to bequeath Howards End to Margaret, the narrator as well as later Margaret show an understanding for such an ignorance. “To them Howards End was a house: they could not know that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir.” (*HE*, 84) The Wilcoxes' decision appertains to their world, to their values, it corresponds perfectly to their understanding of houses which are mere objects, things which are usually for sale. They are not able to draw any connection between a house and its spirit, houses are perceived only through the prism of their economic value - as investments. The Wilcoxes are said to “collect houses” and it is Helen who first expresses the wish to own Howards End: “I wish we could get Howards End. That was something like a dear little house.” (*HE*, 145) In this statement she seems to express her desire to save Howards End and to shield it from acquiring the position of a mere item on the list of Wilcoxes' estates.

Margaret Schlegel does not only dissent from the cumulation but is also annoyed by Henry's reluctance to settle down in a house where they would be able to found their home, she defies and rejects the idea of viewing houses as a mere commodity: “But I do budge. Gentlemen seem to mesmerize houses – cow them with an eye, and up they come, trembling. Ladies can't. It's the houses that are mesmerizing me, I've no control over the saucy things. Houses are alive. No?” (*HE*, 132) What Margaret stresses is the difference between “ladies” and “gentlemen”, she seems to draw a sharp division line between the

approach of both sexes. This statement may be also seen as a confirmation of what Wilfred H. Stone claims in the chapter dedicated to *Howards End* in his study of E.M. Forster: “How easily Margaret turns from talking about Henry to talking about “men” - as though Henry were not an individual but a symbol! And this, in large part, is what her problem in connection comes to.”¹⁸ Henry as a real person loses importance, what is vital for Margaret is that he comes from the other side, he represents Wilcoxes as a general label for the vices of modern society as well as the opposite sex. But with this statement uttered before Henry's marriage proposal, Margaret may be employing a generalisation in order to achieve the understatement of what is far less trivial and far more serious, she applies “the methods of the harem” in order to connect. This would also correspond to the employment of the playful expression “saucy things” in relation with houses. Neither of the two words correspond to Margaret's belief, they only endorse the amusing spirit of Margaret's remark and mask its immediacy. The gradual dissolution of Margaret's marriage is connected directly with her enhancing feeling of inappropriateness of her manipulation with Henry. Finally, she casts aside the mist by which she had enwrapped her sharpness and divergence does not wish Henry to connect but commands him to do so.

Apart from the final development of Margaret's relation to Henry, we may witness the first vital traces of her disobedience and drift away from her aspirations during her first visit of Howards End. She enters an unknown territory, a house which she has known only vicariously – from Helen's letters and narration and also from Mrs Wilcox herself. Before she enters Howards End, she develops the idea of the reverse world, where all people would be dead and the connection buried with them: “She must have interviewed Charles in another world – where one did have interviews. How Helen would revel in such a notion! Charles dead, all people dead, nothing alive but houses and gardens. The obvious dead, the intangible alive, and – no connection at all between them!” (*HE*,171). The “tangible” would be alive, but with nothing and nobody to establish the “connection” which Margaret considers absolutely essential for a full perception of the world and its interpretation. It seems that the ability to connect vanishes together with people. But why, if houses as well as gardens are alive and are able to express their own will? What houses as well as gardens lack, even though they are alive, is speech. They cannot connect as they cannot transfer the messages, they cannot describe the world and grasp its complexity for they do not have any tool which would enable them to express the existence of such

18 Wilfred H. Stone, “Howards End: Red-bloods and Mollycoddles,” in *The Cave and the Mountain, A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 256.

phenomena. As Martin Heidegger, a pioneer of Phenomenology, states in his lecture “Die Sprache”:

Speech does not arise from any special exertion of will. It is said that humans as living beings receive the ability to speak from nature in contrast to plants and animals. This sentence means that it is only the ability to speak that enables a human to be the being he or she is. By speaking, humans become humans.¹⁹

Heidegger underlines the importance of speech by proclaiming that what makes us human is our ability to speak, we encounter speech on many levels, when we start to think, we silently speak, the speech is capable to mediate the abstract concepts, we speak even when we listen to something, we speak continuously as it is natural for us. Although houses are alive, they will never exist in the same way humans do.

Regardless of this fact, they exist in their own peculiar way, they express their will independently from the wishes of their owners, as it may be witnessed in the case of Howards End:

The house was not locked up at all. She hesitated. Ought she to wait for Henry? He felt strongly about property, and might prefer to show her over himself. On the other hand, he had told her to keep in the dry and the porch was beginning to drip. So she went in, and the draught from inside slammed the door behind. (*HE*, 171)

The house is not closed and although she is not the one who possesses the keys, she is let in. This moment of reception slightly resembles the initializing ritual with its mysterious atmosphere with the door being opened as well as slamming abruptly behind. For the time being Henry is seemingly obeyed, because it was him who told his wife to keep in the dry and she only respectfully follows his orders. The suspense even increases when Margaret listens to the sounds of the old house and is able to detect beating of its heart “But it was the heart of the house beating, faintly at first, then loudly, martially. It dominated the rain.” (*HE*, 172) Then she meets Miss Avery who in a ghost-like manner descends the stairs and revives the memory of Ruth Wilcox by stating the resemblance between the late and the

¹⁹ “Mluvení nepovstává až z nějakého zvláštního chtění. Říká se, že člověk má řeč od přírody. Platí učení, že na rozdíl od rostlin a zvířat je člověk živá bytost schopná řeči. Tato věta míní nejen to, že kromě jiných schopností má člověk také schopnost mluvit. Tato věta chce říci, že teprve řeč člověku umožňuje, aby byl bytostí, jíž jako člověk jest. Tím, že mluví, je člověk člověkem...”

Martin Heidegger, *Básnický bydlí člověk* [1954] (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1993), 43.

new Mrs Wilcox, namely a specific manner of walking. Thus the already existing alliance between the two Mrs Wilcoxes is strengthened and the one between Margaret and Howards End is firmly established. The next time when Margaret visits the house, she will join Miss Avery in her revolt against the Wilcoxes, which is also hers. Miss Avery as an omnipotent instrument furnishes the house with Schlegels' belongings which fit there perfectly and later verbalises the deep wish hidden in the corners of Margaret's mind: "You are living here, and have been for the last ten minutes, if you ask me.' It was a senseless remark, but with a queer feeling of disloyalty Margaret rose from her chair. She felt that Henry had been obscurely censured." (*HE*, 232) Gradually, Henry is defeated and makes way for the establishment of Margaret together with the pregnant Helen in Howards End. Later he joins them, broken and defeated by disillusion, being capable of noticing things, of the insight into the world which turns him into a feeble man, dependent on his wife and the healing power with which the house lavishes him, for there is a feeling of past almost perceptible as well as the promises of the future which is to come. Howards End brings certainty and a stable point in the world of flux and most importantly it reverberates with life inside out.

By contrast, apart from the resurrection and emergence of one house, we may witness the slow decay and collapse of the other. Wickham Place which had been a home of the Schlegel sisters since their infancy has to give in and make way for new buildings. Its loss equals the loss of home, of the centre and that causes the disintegration of the formerly solid tie between Helen and Margaret. Tibby, their brother, is not mentioned on purpose, as he finds his home in Oxford, among scholars and books. So, when Helen and Margaret discuss an organization of the world expressed by the metaphor of warp and woof, they conclude saying that money is the warp of the world and the woof differs according to the individuals. For some that may be "walking at night", for Tibby Oxford and Margaret states that "Now that we have to leave Wickham Place, I begin to think it's that. For Mrs Wilcox it was certainly Howards End." (*HE*, 111) The closer the sisters stand on the verge of losing their home, the more they cling to it and Margaret maybe unintentionally mentions feelings corresponding to those of the late Mrs Wilcox, as if she were creating and maintaining a mystical bond between them and keeping her legacy alive.

The question of viability of houses becomes pertinent in the moment of the complete loss of Wickham Place. The immense importance of the house is even stressed by the personified description of its own peculiar way of dying:

Houses have their own ways of dying, falling as variously as the generations of men, some with a tragic roar, some quietly but to an afterlife in the city of ghosts, while from others – and thus was the death of Wickham Place – the spirit slips before the body perishes. It had decayed in the spring, disintegrating, the girls more than they knew, and causing either to accost unfamiliar regions. By September it was a corpse, void of emotion, and scarcely hallowed by the memories of thirty years of happiness. (*HE*, 219)

Why did the spirit slip so hastily? Did the place feel the void prospects for the future? Did it die of a broken heart? Or did the spirit slip together with the spirits of the sisters? The loss of home causes both sisters to drift away, to separate, only to merge together within the ancient walls of their new home. Wickham Place had fallen prey to the ferocious and conceited expansion of London within its own walls, London devouring itself from the inside. An ordinary house is replaced by an ugly block of flats. People's desperate striving for a safe home is ignored in the name of profit. The disastrous consequences of such general tendency may be witnessed in the case of Margaret and Helen, even though they may be considered exceptional and privileged due to their salvation through *Howards End*.

What *Howards End* examines minutely is the question of homelessness – both situational and abstract. The Schlegel sisters, and especially Margaret, suffer from the first case, they are forced to abandon Wickham Place. Margaret had underestimated the profound effect of their moving on their lives at first, which she reveals during her conversation with Mrs Wilcox:

[Ruth Wilcox:] 'Howards End was nearly pulled down once. It would have killed me.' [Margaret:] 'Howards End must be a very different house to ours. We are fond of ours, but there is nothing distinctive about it. As you saw, it is an ordinary London house. We shall easily find another.' [Ruth Wilcox:] 'So you think.' [Margaret:] 'Again my lack of experience, I suppose!' said Margaret, easing away from the subject. (*HE*, 71)

Only after she loses her home and her sister Helen and becomes engaged to Henry Wilcox, does Margaret cling to the idea of the essential role of a home in human life. When she is taken to Oniton Grange, to witness Evie's wedding, she is convinced that the house would become hers and Henry's permanent residence: "She was determined to create new sanctities among these hills." (*HE*, 189) She is shocked and feels deceived when she

learns about Henry's intention to sell the house because of its flaws in construction : “‘Where are we to live?’ said Margaret, trying to laugh. ‘I loved the place extraordinarily. Don't you believe in having a permanent home, Henry?’ He assured her that she misunderstood him. It is home life that distinguishes us from the foreigner. But he did not believe in a damp home. ...” (*HE*, 221) Although she later marries Henry, this betrayal is the source of their first conflict and becomes also the catalyst of Margaret's effort to make Henry see and connect. In spite of her endeavour, they do not settle down and found a new home until Helen arrives back from Germany and together they decide to stay and live in Howards End. She does not mind that Howards End is an ordinary rural house, a transformed farm as well as she would not mind that Oniton has damp walls, is placed too far within the countryside and is enclosed in its solitary atmosphere. The practicality or even aesthetics do not play a vital role in her decision. What is essential is her feeling and the ability of the place to provide a pleasant dwelling for her and her family. Unlike Henry and the rest of the Wilcox clan, Margaret does not believe in pure ownership of houses, as she does not view them as mere objects for sale and as she believes them to be living organisms, capable of displaying their own will and emotions as well as providing a spiritual background for the growth of a new home within their walls.

The inability of Henry to perceive things in their complexity is given also by his prevailingly ignorant relationship to them as well as people. For Henry those are mere means of progress and profit, he manipulates them, he rules them and he requires a perfect obedience. Henry as well as all the Wilcoxes except the late Ruth Wilcox, had lost – if he had ever possessed it – the respect of the world. He believes it to be “a pleasant” place, where he can get whatever he wants, but this clearly shows that he has lost the understanding of the world which he would obey and respect without the need to command it. He cannot understand that to build or buy a house necessarily means to found home. Forster joins the phenomenological tradition in his belief that home is something which springs, emerges from our inmost, fundamental being. It is not an institution which could be installed whenever we wish to, on the contrary, it constitutes slowly in thousands forms.

When the Wilcoxes move from Howards End to London, Ruth Wilcox suffers bitterly there. She understands the value of home and treasures it. From what we learn, she married the promising Henry Wilcox quite unexpectedly, and despite their completely divergent personalities and aspirations, she was a respectful and loving wife to him and a devoted mother to their children. We learn that Howards End was in a desolate state and it

had been Henry Wilcox who finally saved the house and paid for its reconstruction and transformation into a more comfortable and representative place: “But Henry had saved it; without fine feelings or deep insight, but he had saved it and she loved him for the deed.” (*HE*, 175) Apart from the open criticism, we encounter also the brighter side of the Wilcoxes which is their vitality and energy. Although this positive feature is later challenged by their ignorance and hypocrisy, it partly contributes to the explanation of Ruth's and later Margaret's attachment to the Wilcoxes: “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. ... Without their spirit life might never have moved out of protoplasm.” (*HE*, 149)

Wilcoxes do not only mean energy and vitality, but they are also closely associated with money. “Money is a vital sub-theme in the book.”²⁰ In the Schlegels family it is Margaret who without any prudishness claims that she refuses to draw her income and sneer at those who guarantee it. She does not see money as the source of all evil, on the contrary, she admits that “independent thought are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means.” (*HE*, 109) Hers are not the pathetic gestures of charity, so characteristic for Helen. But at this point what has to be stressed is the repeating dualistic division of the poor and the rich. They seem to differ in their aspirations as well as characteristics, those who are rich remain so and likewise the poor. Leonard Bast, the incarnation of penniless intellectual, becomes a victim of the Schlegels as well as the Wilcoxes. Leonard, a slightly caricatured character whose moment of the upper-most happiness came when he talked for half an hour with an Oxford undergraduate on a train, cannot afford to trust people and therefore he thinks that Helen had been trying to steal his umbrella, not that she had taken it by mistake. Later, his wife Jacky, searches for Leonard in Wickham Place, for she is not able to understand an intellectual friendship, but immediately suspects Leonard of infidelity. Due to the erroneous assumption of Henry Wilcox Leonard loses his work. Then, after having been taken to Oniton Grange by Helen as a living reproach of Henry's ignorance, he spends a night with her. Helen haunted by the guilt tries to save Leonard from his poverty by donating him half of her wealth, but she is rejected and ironically, thanks to the clever investments, her wealth doubles. In the meantime she flees to Germany and finds out she is pregnant. Leonard does not know about it and when he accidentally meets Helen and finds out the truth, he is tortured by

20 Wilfred H. Stone, “Howards End: Red-bloods and Mollycoddles,” in *The Cave and the Mountain, A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 249.

reproaches. Although already forgotten by Helen, he follows her and Margaret secretly to Howards End and at the moment he tries to speak to them, he is attacked by Charles Wilcox, who defends "Helen's honour" as well as his mother's memory, and dies because of an inborn heart-disease. Leonard never abandons the class of the poor as well as Schlegels never abandon the class of the rich, standing on their wealth as islands.

Through the continuous contacts and unions of binary opposites characteristic of Romanticism and also Modernism *Howards End* becomes a novel of dialectic character, with firmly established dualistic divisions into the rich and the poor, men and women, of Schlegels and Wilcoxes or "Red-bloods and Mollycoddles". It is from their constant interactions the novel evolves, through their mutual enrichment and loss, with the ones emerging and the others perishing. The novel becomes a test of "Bloomsbury liberalism being able to survive a marriage with the great world."²¹ The two sisters, who are unbelievably similar to Virginia and Vanessa Stephens²², dwell in an old house in London on their own with their brother Tibby, educated and strongly influenced by their father's teaching, entertaining artists and musicians. They are both moralists and anti-utilitarians, persuaded about the righteousness of their attitudes they both believe in the power of Art and human relationships. Having lost their ties, they experiment – each of them in her own particular way, with their freedom and its possibilities to connect within society. The question which remains to be answered is whether the "marriage" turns out to be successful. Seemingly no, as we witness the sisters in a new separation from civilisation at the end of the novel. Their pastoral happiness conveys more or less a detachment. Although who does expect the marriage of such contradictory tendencies to run smoothly and without any lapses? Charles is punished, Henry is "broken". If Margaret and Helen have not achieved an ultimate connection, they have definitely achieved a partial one, theirs will not be the civilisation of "hurrying men and luggages", theirs will be a pastoral idyll of freshly cut meadow.

A phenomenon closely connected with the emergence of the "nomadic" civilisation, is the widespread use of motor-cars. If we search for traces of mythology in the works of

21 Wilfred H. Stone, "Howards End: Red-bloods and Mollycoddles," in *The Cave and the Mountain, A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 235.

22 E.M. Forster is classed as a member of 'Bloomsbury Group' together with Vanessa and Virginia Woolf, their husbands Leonard Woolf and Clive Bell, John Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry and Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, the group was linked by what Clive Bell later called "a taste for discussion in pursuit of truth and a contempt for conventional ways of thinking and feeling, contempt for conventional morals if you will". Their discussion combined tolerant agnosticism with cultural dogmatism, progressive rationality with social snobbery, practical jokes with refined self-advertisement."

Andrew Sanders, "Modernism and its Alternatives" in *The Short Oxford History of English Literature [1994]* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 521.

E.M. Forster, we can point to the motor-cars as some mythological monsters, spoiling the beauties of the countryside as well as the human perception of the outside world. To travel is not enriching any more, one can displace quickly and rather efficiently but only with a little pleasure. And the human creatures, drunken by the possibility of a swift movement, raid the countryside which is left alone and helpless. However, it is capable to brave a car as a rare occurrence as Forster describes it in *A Room with a View*: “As the motor-cars passed through Summer Street they raised only a little dust, and their stench was soon dispersed by the wind and replaced by the scent of the wet birches or of the pines.”²³ It is no wonder, that the Wilcoxes are great admirers and ardent fans of motoring. The cars become the symbolic extensions of the Wilcoxes to the same extent as houses stand for Ruth Wilcox or the Schlegels. It is their mutual contact which enables us to discover their actual relationships. Helen's initial enchantment by Wilcox family and her resignation to all her values is expressed by her swallowing the curious assertion without a gasp, and leaning back “luxuriously among the cushions of his motor-car.” (*HE*, 20) Ruth Wilcox, although she “seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor.” (*HE*, 19) finally lets the cars in even to Howards End, and allows her husband to transform what used to be a paddock for pony by her beloved wych-elm tree into a small garage. Now and then the glimpses of cars impositions and subsequent clashes may be caught, as the cars treat England in the same way as Wilcoxes do. They impose their will, they are the tools, the means without which Wilcoxes would not be able to deal with the countryside, with Nature. We learn of their crash with a cart while motoring in Yorkshire and while travelling to Oniton Grange for Evie's wedding, one of the cars runs down a dog or a cat (due to Wilcoxes' ignorance we will never learn what animal was actually “flattened out”) belonging to a village girl, whose “rude” behaviour is criticized later on by the drivers, and Margaret, who naturally wants to know what had happened, is forced to jump out of the car as the crew refuses to stop. Thus she opposes the car as well as Wilcoxes' arrogant persuasion of their own superiority, for she is convinced that a feminine touch is necessary in the situation. Her spontaneous reaction conflicts with Wilcoxes' understanding of the world, but is considered by Henry and his son Charles as a typical example of the flaws of a feminine nature. Not only do they ignore and diminish the value of Margaret's reaction, but they also crudely underestimate “feminine nature”.

As stated above, the novel *Howards End* enlarges the field of interest from the individuals to the whole society. Following Margaret's wish and later command, it

23 E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* [1908] (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 115.

connects. The conspicuous as well as inconspicuous interconnections create a continuum, a peculiar universe where everything connects and overlaps. Both differences and similarities are united, the dialectic character of the novel emerges from these unions. Another vital motif of *Howards End* is the motif of circle, the overall progress of the plot may be considered circular, the motifs themselves emerge only to resurge later. What a circle also conveys, is a trap. And the Wilcoxes may be considered as a perfect example of people who got caught in a vicious circle. This circle opens with their loss of respect towards Nature as such. They view it only as a source of their enrichment, of gaining of property. They know a lot about it, but they are completely unwilling to connect the information as well as connect themselves with it. They raid the countryside with their motor-cars, unable to marvel at the beauties of Nature. When they go bathing, they are lost without their “appliances”. They lack the spontaneity, they lack the willingness to respect. As they are not able to admire and to merge with it in connection, they are “uprooted” the way D.H. Lawrence describes this state in his famous poem *The Uprooted*, they have “lost some living connection with cosmos, out of themselves, //lost their life-flow//like a plant whose roots are cut.”²⁴ They are uprooted even in connection with the existence of home. They do not need to reside somewhere permanently. Residences, houses and flats are mere property for them, objects which are bought only under favourable circumstances and sold with profit. How can such people be expected to connect with Nature, if the connection which seems even closer to them, the connection with home is ignored, is lost in the name of constant movement and change? Being in fact homeless and “uprooted” than leads into a complete ignorance of wider connections with other people and the world as such. In order to understand it, to approach and later impose it without difficulties, it becomes essential to simplify, underestimate and ignore. Only thus can the Wilcoxes view and rule the world. And it is exactly thus how they get into the vicious circle.

The only thing which has the power to break the spell is the penetration of spirituality into it. This mysterious “spirituality” may acquire many forms. Is it not significant that Henry doubles his wealth only after the spirituality, so magnificently embodied by the late Mrs Wilcox, perishes with her death from his life? And when Margaret appears on the scene, she brings uncertainty, unsteadiness, reluctance to subdue to Wilcoxes' vision of the world, she brings love as well as she brings disasters and shame into Henry's life which will never be the same again.

At first, Margaret asks him to connect, she preaches about the necessity of doing so,

²⁴ D.H. Lawrence, *The uprooted* in Selected poems, (Everyman's Library, 1992), 204.

later she forces him, she is called “the heroic connector” by Wilfred H. Stone. But we shall remember the fact that Margaret struggles with connection as well, as she respectively loses the house where she used to live since her infancy and her sister – her home collapses. When Margaret is taken to Howards End for the first time, already engaged to Henry, she naturally does not enjoy motoring, she feels deprived of the sense of space and steady progress “once more trees, houses, people, animals, hills, merged and heaved into dirtiness” (*HE*, 174). Although when she comes back to the deserted Wickham Place, she is overflowed by pleasant feelings:

The sense of flux which had haunted her all the year disappeared for a time. She forgot the luggage and the motor-cars, and the hurrying men who know so much and connect so little. She recaptured the sense of space, which is the basis of all earthly beauty, and, starting from Howards End, she attempted to realize England. (*HE*, 174)

What had caused such emotions? What had drifted away “the sense of flux” and the impending loss of connection? What had finally soothed Margaret's mind? Clearly, it had not been the motor-car and as we learn later, it had not been her engagement with Henry, as he is one of the “hurrying men”, he is the one who prefers the civilisation of luggage. Henry and their marriage cannot provide her with sufficient feeling of peace and harmony, as it is later clearly stated: “Margaret was silent. Marriage had not saved her from the sense of flux.” (*HE*, 222) At the moment of a supreme need she encounters all the beauties and virtues of England, her homeland, incarnated into Howards End:

But an unexpected love of the island awoke in her, connecting on this side with the joys of flesh, on that with the inconceivable. Helen and her father had known this love, poor Leonard Bast was groping after it, but it had been hidden from Margaret till this afternoon. It had certainly come through the house and old Miss Avery. Through them: the notion of 'through' persisted; her mind trembled towards a conclusion which only the unwise have put in words. Then, veering back into warmth, it dwelt on ruddy bricks, flowering plum trees, and all the tangible joys of spring. (*HE*, 174-5)

If there ever existed a house capable to lavish its spectator with beauty, charm and harmony, it is Howards End. It is a simple and modest dwelling, which overcomes all the

obstacles given by character, society or period. It is stunning in its simplicity and modesty, and yet it abounds with such a binding force, cultivated for centuries, that it is capable to smitten even those who favour cosmopolitanism like Henry. Since the moment of losing home, Margaret is fully capable to understand Ruth Wilcox in her dualistic vision of London and Howards End. London is a place where there is “nothing to get up for” (*HE*, 59), which seems “satanic, the narrower streets oppressing like the galleries of a mine” (*HE*, 72), the city is constantly spreading and gobbling up places like Howards End, place enabling connection as they still have a view, places where spirituality still resides. Such places become sanctuaries of connection and residues of hope for next generations. In *Howards End*, they are represented by Helen's son, who symbolically freed from the patriarchal burden, will hopefully cherish and protect the place against the sweeping tide of London.*²⁵

Apart from preventing its tenants from connection and blocking the view, London also represents the emerging society, a new civilisation based on a continuous flow:

London was but a foretaste of this nomadic civilization which is altering human nature so profoundly, and throws upon personal relations a stress greater than they have ever borne before. Under cosmopolitanism, if it comes, we shall receive no help from the earth. Trees and meadows and mountains will only be a spectacle, and the binding force that they once exercised on a character must be entrusted to Love alone. May Love equal to the task! (*HE*, 222)

Forster criticizes such development on behalf of Margaret, she sighs and strives for the lost connection which may be provided by the earth. An alternative solution is offered instead, Love should become the binding force. But the formulation itself is an optative without a clear evidence that Love alone is capable of such performance. What may be found striking is that almost a hundred years later, the cosmopolitanism is still one of the major concerns of humanity and naturally of philosophers: A modern man is the citizen of the whole world, boundaries vanish and the travelling and commuting becomes a natural part of life. A contemporary man is a planetary being. While the whole planet becomes a place for living, we lose home, a place which enables us to understand the world in its

25 Howards End becomes a feminine sanctuary, all men intruders are either expelled or forced to succumb, men symbolising phallic shaped instruments are either lethal (Mr Schlegel's sword), or useless like the keys which Henry holds during Margaret's first visit to Howards End the doors of which are opened and let Margaret in.

complexity and the human existence in its fullness. “The planetary human being does not know the fiery center of the Earth which is the dwelling place for people, gods, Earth and the world.”²⁶ What modern people miss is the time and space to “wander lonely as a cloud”²⁷, to “in solitude slowly and painfully put forth new roots”²⁸. They are constantly surrounded, they are never left alone. What Margaret foretells is the civilisation which will be thoroughly connected by various channels and devices, but unable to achieve the feeling of silent unity with Nature and through it with the whole world.

Jan Patočka discusses the problems of humanity at its respective stages of development in his well-known work *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* published in 1975. There, he also illuminates the period of “industrial civilisation” the rise of which is depicted in *Howards End*. He does not consider the answer to the question whether the industrial civilisation is decadent or not, as a simple one. However what he blames the civilisation for is that it

[...] did not resolve the great, principal human – and so also its own – problem, namely, not only to live in a humanly authentic way, as history shows we can, but that it has actually made the situation more difficult because the matrix of its possibilities does not include the relations of humans to themselves and so also to the world as a whole and to its fundamental mystery. Its concepts encourage superficiality and discourage thought in a deeper, fundamental sense of the word. They offer substitutes where the original is needed. They alienate humans from themselves, depriving them from dwelling in the world, submerging them in the everyday alternative which is not so much toil as boredom, or in cheap substitutes and ultimately in orgiastic brutality..²⁹

What Forster describes with such eloquence and to which he opposes an ordinary rural house as a fountain of the lost connection has an affinity to Patočka's views of civilization. Thus *Howards End* differs immensely from other representations of houses in literature. It

26 “Planetární člověk už nezná ohňový střed země, ve kterém se „uvlastňují“ lidé, bozi, Země a svět.” in Anna Hogenová, “Jak pečujeme o svou duši?” in *Domov jako problém* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta, 2008), 184.

27 William Wordsworth, *I wondered lonely as a cloud* in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by Henry Reed William Wordsworth (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun. And Brother, 1837), 135.

28 D.H.Lawrence, *The Uprooted* from *Selected poems* (Everyman's Library, 1992), 204.

29 Jan Patočka, “Fifth Essay: Is technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?” in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, transl. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996), 117.

does not only play a role of a contrastive background or of an extension of a character. What the house abounds with is an immense spiritual authority which is capable to transform an ordinary rural farm into a resisting symbol of the eternal opposition to the flattening tendencies of civilisation. Therefore, it is able to mediate the lost connections with Nature and the whole world. Elevated to the position of a spiritual sanctuary, Howards End abandons the rank of simply charming houses and becomes the point of departure of the whole fictional world of the novel and the symbol of E.M. Forster's vision of the world.

2. *The Forsyte Saga: A House as a Possession*

The first volume of *The Forsyte Saga* called *The Man of Property* was published in 1906. Abounding with satirical features, fitting descriptions and a bitter ending it might be considered as a typical representative of the novel criticizing the traits of upper-middle classes during the late Victorian period. The novel of already well established writer and dramatist John Galsworthy had not been actually intended as a first volume of what later flourished into a voluminous epic covering the fates of almost three generations of the Forsyte family. Some of the major features almost directly correspond to Galsworthy's background and are inspired by his real-life experience. The moment his personal situation changed, he felt the desire to pursue his wandering through the fields of upper-middle class society, inducing admiration as well as contempt, nostalgia as well as loathing, sympathy as well as hostility. With himself belonging firmly into the rank of upper-middle classes, he could not have missed the chance to paint a magnificent portrayal of their aspirations, their religion as well as their history, in short their world. He applies the same mastery when he brings back to life their London and their England. Galsworthy claimed later “that in these pages he had pickled the upper-middle class, placed it 'under glass for strollers in the wide and ill-ranged museum of letters to gaze at. Here it rests, preserved in its own juice; the sense of Property.’”³⁰

Property, Possession and Profit are the key words of the Forsytes' religion and they mould the prism of their perception of the world. A Forsyte may be considered as a limit of materialistic perception of the world. “The verb 'I have' is of more importance than its object. 'this interests me, not in itself, but because it is mine' - is their motto.”³¹ And it is exactly this limit and its extent which are carefully contemplated and studied by Galsworthy. What he particularly pursues are the rencontres of the Forsytes with Beauty as they contain an immense artistic potential. All relationships of the Forsytes develop in terms of possession and thus they possess their houses, their wives, their children and grandchildren, objects of art as well as talents of those who create them. They strive in order to possess even more abstract values such as Beauty or Love, but usually fail and

30 Quoted in: Dudley Barker, *The Man of Principle, A view of John Galsworthy* [1963] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967) 106.

31 Sheila Kaye-Smith, *John Galsworthy* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1916) 58-59.

replace these noble ideas by less subtle, nonetheless more solid substitutes. Their perception of the world or of nature is the one of a source and its exploiter. Together with their indefatigable energy and immense vitality, the Forsytes belong to the same family of “Red-bloods” as the Wilcoxes of E.M. Forster's *Howards End* do. They recognize the same values and follow the same trajectories of constant development and enrichment. While the Wilcoxes embody the “wandering” and the modern “voluntary and enforced mobility, the gigantic migrations that now affect nearly all the continents” symptomatic of the “modern homelessness” typical for the profit-driven society, the Forsytes have replaced the vacant centre with Property:

The greatest homelessness, however, is in our relation to nature and and to ourselves: Hannah Arendt used to point out that humans no longer understand what it is they do and calculate. In their relation to nature, they are content with mere practical mastery and predictability without intelligibility.³²

The Wilcoxes as well as the Forsytes do not worship their ancestors, because they think in terms of future, believing that they may ensure larger profit through their toil and bequeath it to the future generations. On the one hand they are disappointed by the humble cottage of their great grand father, but on the other hand they assemble eagerly at the houses of their elder relatives. The family and its force may be preserved only by its unity which is thus maintained. As a consequence of their future-oriented characters the main protagonist of *The Forsyte Saga* is Soames Forsyte, one of the younger members of the family. It is in his character that all the traits typical for Forsytes reach their zenith – he is essentially the Man of Property. The pleasure he derives from his possession, the passion it nurtures comprises even the ownership of his own wife Irene, a woman of a “disturbing” beauty. Her complete attachment to him should be materialized by the construction of a house in the countryside, namely in Robin Hill. Little does Soames know that it will be this particular house which will inspire the revolt of his wife. And although all houses in the Forsytes' world are mere things, mere shelters, Robin Hill, charged with visual grandeur and artistic value, makes an exception. We still remain in the world of the Forsytes and thus the house never openly manifests its will in the way *Howards End* does, it is not a protagonist, it resumes the role of a setting. Yet, it is this setting which turns out to be the

32 Jan Patočka, “Fifth Essay: Is technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?” in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, transl. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996), 115-6.

instrument of the liberation of other treasured possession – Irene. As a monument of love of Irene and Bosinney, two persons “standing for all that is antagonistic to the Forsytes”, it later becomes a shelter to the rebel branch of the Forsytes pioneered by Old Jolyon.

The houses in *The Forsyte Saga* are of vital importance, they are absolutely essential as the means of the expression of the Forsytes' characters which are inextricably linked with their fortune: “The position of their houses was of vital importance to the Forsytes, nor was this remarkable, since the whole spirit of their success was embodied therein.”³³ Consequently, all characters appearing in *The Forsyte Saga* are characterized in terms of their property - their houses and their furnishings, clothes or typical festive dinner. From the point of view of characters, houses are regarded as possession. Houses are not “alive” as they seem to be (especially in the eyes of the Schlegels) in *Howards End*. Galsworthy was even criticized for his strategy of characterization through materialistic distinctions. Robert Liddell, an acclaimed English literary critic, joins Virginia Woolf in the criticism of Galsworthy's “upholstery”:

[...]describing the town, then the street, then the house, then the room, then the clothes, and then the body that enclose the soul. They hope they have got their net so tightly round the soul itself that it cannot escape them, but I always does. Each Forsyte, or group of Forsytes, is build up from the background; we learn to know them apart by their furniture or their food.[...]This is not a clear way of distinguishing character.[...]If you collected and multiplied traits of the kind Galsworthy has here given, you might in the end at some slight discrimination of character.³⁴

But the consistent pursuit of such narrative strategy underlines the top position of Property on the scale of the Forsytes' values. Material evaluation, calculation, augmentation of profit are their means of approaching and understanding the world. The Forsytes and their Property are inseparable. Had Galsworthy described them regardless of their property which is their material extension, it would have had disastrous consequences, because their world and consequently the world of the novel would have completely lost its integrity and its inner logic.

But the world of the Forsytes suffers a series of perturbations which are caused by

33 John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga Volume One - The Man of Property* [1906] (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 24. [Subsequent page references preceded with *MP* are given in parentheses in the text.]

34 Robert Liddell, “Galsworthy contrasted with Henry James” in *A Treatise on the Novel*, [1947] (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), 125-6.

the disastrous intervention of Beauty into the world dominated by the god of Property. The beauty of Soames's wife Irene is tempting, alluring and fleeting. Enigmatic as she is, her beauty escapes the logic of the Forsyte's world. Although she is unattainable, to her beauty they all yield without exception. But only a few of them are able to unveil her seemingly incomprehensible behaviour exceeding the limits of the Forsytes' understanding:

That she was one of those women – not too common in the Anglo-Saxon race – born to be loved and to love, who when not loving are not living, had certainly never even occurred to him. Her power of attraction he regarded as part of her value as his property; but it made him, indeed, suspect that she could give as well as receive; and she gave him nothing! (*MP*, 59)

For Soames, a man of property, she embodies a triumph of possession, she is yet another beautiful and outstanding object in his collection. He is the one who delimits the extent of the force of Property. The goal he wants to achieve is the possession of a human being regardless of her feelings, regardless of her soul. But Soames is not satisfied with a mere physical ownership, he wants love. For the Forsytes the summit of all happiness is property, but that does not mean they are incapable of other feelings. They are in fact in love with property and in their particular way they also fall in love with other human beings. It is the question Galsworthy thoroughly explores whether the idea of love is not defied by the understanding of the beloved person as property:

Could a man own anything prettier than this dining-table with its deep tints, the starry, soft-petalled roses, the ruby-coloured glass, and quaint silver furnishing; could a man own anything prettier than the woman who sat at it? [...] Soames only experienced a sense of exasperation amounting to pain, that he did not own her as it was his right to own her, that he could not, as by stretching out his hand to that rose, pluck her and sniff the very secrets of her heart. (*MP*, 70)

Even in this scene we witness the brutality and arrogance of such love. Soames cannot contemplate the beauty of the rose as such, he wants more, he is not satisfied with a mere scenting – he is tempted to “pluck” it, to invade it aggressively and “sniff” the very secretes of her heart hidden deep within the corners of her mind. For him beauty is not an object of awe and admiration, beauty provokes action of quick and firm snatching in him.

If somebody perfectly personifies the Forsytes' scheming and brutality of negotiation, it is again Soames. He persistently pursues Irene and makes her marry him at the moment of her utmost resignation and fragility. That she had surrendered to his pleading, Irene regrets to the end of her life. Due to her bad decision made under pressure, she is sentenced to an unhappy marriage depriving her of any feeling of liberty or satisfaction. She becomes a wife, a necessary part of Soames's habitat: "[...]they are never seen without habitats, composed of circumstance, property, acquaintances, and wives, which seem to move along with them in their passage through a world composed of thousands of other Forsytes with their habitats. Without a habitat a Forsyte is inconceivable [...]." (*MP*, 92) Why is the habitat so important for the Forsytes? Not only does it secure their position in society, but above all it is the marriage which secures the procreation and thus the future well-being of the clan and that is what the Forsytes yearn for.

Soames acts in the same way when he decides to buy a piece of land in Robin Hill for a new house where his marriage can finally "flourish", far from the corrupting tendencies of London. Apart from that Soames views the house in Robin Hill as an attractive possibility of investment: "Within twelve miles of Hyde Park Corner, the value of the land certain to go up, would always fetch more than he gave for it; so that a house, if built in really good style, was a first class investment." (*MP*, 60-61) and at the same time a proper expression of love: "To get Irene out of London, away from opportunities of going about and seeing people, away from her friends and those who put ideas in her head ! That was the thing !" (*MP*, 61) For Soames to love means to own and if his wife's attention is disturbed by London and its society, he will take her away, completely disregarding her aversion towards him, lock her in a golden cage so she can fully concentrate on the fulfilment of their relationship by conceiving a child, Soames's heir. The setting must also meet his requirements concerning its beauty and grandeur, for his wife is a precious possession and ought to be "stored" in suitable conditions. And the landscape in Robin Hill not only provides a suitable setting, but it abounds with the beauties of Nature which with its pastoral charm and sensual delights leaves a man overwhelmed and enchanted standing on the threshold of its voluptuous realm. The beauty of nature merges with the beauty of Irene and Soames falls prey to its charm as well as he had fallen prey to the allure of his wife:

Soames looked. In spite of himself, something swelled in his breasts. To live here in sight of all this, to be able to point it out to his friends, to talk of it, to possess it ! His

cheeks flushed. The warmth, the radiance, the glow, were sinking into his senses as, four years before, Irene's beauty had sunk into his senses and made him long for her. (*MP*, 67)

Soames's ardent admiration of Beauty and the collector's passion are also manifested in his collection of pictures. He buys them secretly and creeps with them home "generally after dark". On Sunday afternoons he spends hours locked in his small private room, unwilling to share his enthusiasm with his wife, he turns the pictures to the light and examines the marks on their backs. But apart from their commercial value, these pictures have another potential: "They were nearly all landscapes with figures in the foreground, a sign of some mysterious revolt against London, its tall houses, its interminable streets, where his life and the lives of his breed and class were passed." (*MP*, 60) Soames is an aesthete and so he flees the ugliness of London. First, to Robin Hill and later to a residence called "Shelter" near Mapledurham. This appreciation of Nature with all its beauties may seem challenging Soames's position of the chief representative for the Forsyte family. But as stated above, all Forsytes are capable of feelings, their sense of Property does not prevent them from the ability to be enchanted, nevertheless the awareness of property is always there. Soames, his father James, his uncle Swithin and old Jolyon as well as young Jolyon all admire Irene and are absorbed by the sensuous beauty of Nature which they encounter in Robin Hill: "The earth gave forth a fainting warmth, stealing up through the chilly garment in which winter had wrapped her. It was her long caress of invitation, to draw men down to lie within her arms, to roll their bodies on her, and put their lips to her breast." (*MP*, 111)

Soames is the first member of the Forsytes who decides to live in the country, for they generally despise the countryside and prefer London: "Their residences, placed at stated intervals round the Park, watched like sentinels, lest the fair heart of this London, where their desires were fixed, should slip from their clutches, and leave them lower in their own estimations." (*MP*, 25) But Soames is a Forsyte and a very progressive one, so he leaves London to become a part of a huge wave of the upper-middle classes moving away from the cities and founding new residences in the countryside. "Soames, the pioneer leader of the great Forsyte army advancing to the civilization of this wilderness, felt his spirit daunted by the loneliness, by the invisible singing, and the hot sweet air." (*MP*, 66) Even in this sentence we can feel the opposition of "the civilization" which we would expect to be urban, but which is its opposite "the civilization of wilderness" and the

Forsythe “army” connoting aggression and threat of which Soames is “a pioneer”.

The author of the house in Robin Hill is a promising young architect Philip Bosinney, June's fiancé. Soames seems to be able to detect the enormous talent of this young man, although he despises his peculiar behaviour and above all his obvious indifference to Property and the whole materialistic universe of the Forsytes. The quality Soames cherishes the most is that he is a future member of the family – so everything will “remain in the family”. Bosinney designs an innovative house of indisputable charm, full of space and light, a house of strict lines and balanced proportions.

'It's an odd sort of house !' A rectangular house of two storeys was designed in a quadrangle round a covered-in court. This court, encircled by a gallery on the upper floor, was roofed with a glass roof, supported by eight columns running up from the ground. [...] 'The principle of this house,' said the architect, 'was that you should have room to breathe – like a gentleman!' [...] I've tried to plan a house here with some self-respect of its own. If you don't like it, you'd better say so. It's certainly the last thing to be considered – who wants self-respect in a house, when you can squeeze in an extra lavatory?' (*MP*, 96)

Soames accepts Bosinney's uncompromising propositions hesitatingly for the proposed financial limit had been exceeded: But at the end the possible profit of such investment outweighs all his doubts: “Conscience told him to throw the whole thing up. But the design was good, and he knew it – there was completeness about it, and dignity[...] He would gain credit by living in a house like that – with such individual features, yet perfectly well-arranged.” (*MP*, 98) Soames's feeling of satisfaction doesn't last long as Irene seems less and less willing to move to Robin Hill and the overall cost of the house keep exceeding the limit: “Nothing in the world is more sure to upset a Forsythe than the discovery that something on which he has stipulated to spend a certain sum has cost more.” (*MP*, 227) Although reluctantly, he accepts Bosinney's proposals and lets him finish the interior furnishings. But what strikes Soames with an unexpected force and makes him cast aside all control is the horrible revelation of Irene and Bosinney's growing intimacy. Had there been signals previously, he had ignored them, in fact, such idea had never crossed his mind. Suddenly Irene and Bosinney become a pair of two outcasts, two representatives of “all that is antagonistic to the Forsytes”. They ignore the moral code of the contemporary society, they desert those “intended” for them, despising their wealth and proprietary

attitudes. Soames feels his property is endangered and starts to act immediately: “The attitude of the confident and friendly husband was gone. To preserve property – his wife – he had assumed it, to preserve property of another kind he lost it now.”(MP, 227)

First, he sues Bosinney for exceeding the financial limit of the furnishings, and later on he also “yields to his overmastering hunger [...] breaks down the resistance which he had suffered now too long from this woman who was lawful and solemnly constituted helpmate.”(MP, 264) Trying to suppress bitter remorse, he wins the trial and thus ruins Bosinney financially and spoils his reputation. However, he cannot relish his triumph of seeing Bosinney broken and humiliated as he is not present during the trial. Irene leaves him that very day, so he cannot break the news to her either. The next day, Bosinney is proclaimed dead, having probably committed suicide. Irene returns home to Soames. Property triumphs, Love loses. The final catastrophe induces the haunting spirit of the novel, “something in the gloom of its ending which makes us shudder after it is closed.”³⁵

However vital and important the relationship of Irene and Bosinney may be for the plot line, it is never seen directly through their own eyes. We never hear their interior monologues. In fact, we almost never hear them saying much, apart from a few overheard lines. All their relationship is mediated by somebody else giving his or her evidence of having seen the pair strolling in the park or cuddling in the garden, their love scenes appear as phantoms in dreams of either Soames or Swithin. What makes the couple even more mysterious and enigmatic, is Bosinney's death. Has he committed suicide? Has he fallen under the wheels of a cab? The main motive the Forsytes see is Bosinney's disastrous financial situation, a situation which haunts the Forsytes' dreams, which is “a far-off nightmare” (MP, 306). But on no account should the suspicion of suicide be entertained, that would be a scandalous stain on their name and prestige. Is there a different explanation? Bosinney may have been distressed to such a point that he hadn't noticed the cab coming, although according to the Inspector “It was not so very thick just there. The driver says the gentleman must have had time to see what he was about, he seemed to walk right into it.” (MP, 306) But what could have caused such a terrible distress, that it would make Bosinney delirious? If we want to understand the background of his deed, we should delve deeper into the sphere of his probable motivations.

Bosinney incarnates magnificently a persona of an architect. Uncompromising, obstinate and tenacious he follows his conviction, he implies his lucid vision of the world into the architecture he produces and the other way round. When Soames asks him to

35 Sheila Kaye-Smith, *John Galsworthy* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1916) 62-63.

design a new house in Robin Hill, he produces a unique and magnificent work of art. For him the house and his design are superior to personal feelings and intentions. Although he persuades Irene to flee from her husband, he knows that she will never live there, he finishes the house including the interior furnishings with an upper-most attention. And it must be said that it reaches the summit of perfection. The exceeding of the financial means is of secondary importance to Bosinney. He gives the final genial touches to the house which belongs to a man he despises and probably even hates. The house in Robin Hill later becomes a symbol of love of Irene and Bosinney, but for the time of its construction such destiny had not been intended. Another question which may arise is the inspiration, there we may argue that the impact of Irene's beauty may have disastrous consequences in one case, but it is utterly beneficial as far as Bosinney's creation is concerned. Further on, Bosinney does not belong to the rank of "men of Property", so his financial situation is not a burden for him, he had always manifested his indifference to the material circumstances of his own living. He also never paid much attention to his appearance which, however surprising that may be, might be also one of the reasons of Bosinney's attractiveness for Irene. He is in fact the very opposite of Soames, whose mind is preoccupied with Property and its manifestation. Nevertheless, it is the attraction between the architect and the wife of his client which associate *The Man of Property* with *The Glass Room* on the level of motifs.³⁶ The question of Bosinney's death remains mysterious or at least ambiguous. Sheila Kaye-Smith, an English writer and a literary scholar, whose study of John Galsworthy was published in 1916 introduces a very daring, yet relevant hypothesis:

Bosinney is beaten and killed by the Man of Property, and Irene is brought back to the slavery from which she revolted. [...] Thus the curtain rings down on Irene Forsyte, crushed under the heel of prosperity, robbed of her love by a sudden awakening of the sense of property in the heart of the man she had thought clean of it...³⁷

She suspects Bosinney of a violent upheaval of the sense of Property hidden under the mask of jealousy and consequent suicide. The worse for Irene, who is deprived of her lover, of all her illusions, of any feeling of security in the world. She ends "crushed", injured, trembling in the corner. That is undoubtedly a tragic ending of a promising love

36Although the mutual attraction between Liesel and Von Abt is almost palpable, it never becomes a lover's relationship.

37 Sheila Kaye-Smith, *John Galsworthy* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1916) 62-63.

story. The fatal rule of Property is finally restored.

Gloomy and bitter as the ending of *The Man of Property* may be, *Indian Summer of a Forsyte* or *Interlude* softens its impact. Old Jolyon as a representative of the progressive branch of the Forsyte family moves to the deserted house in Robin Hill which he had bought from his nephew Soames. He is joined by the Young Jolyon, his wife and children who fulfil Jolyon's yearning for the presence of the little ones in his life. This desire of his is motivated by his sense for Property, for he replaces the vacant place in his life formerly occupied by June. Jolyon turns his back to the rest of Forsytes and to London as well and rejoices from the gifts of Nature in Robin Hill. He is enchanted by its beauties, his senses and his soul are refreshed and old Jolyon contemplates the immense sweetness each spring brings feeling "as if he had been getting younger every spring, living in the country with his son and his grandchildren [...] in a delicious atmosphere of no work and all play." (*MP – Interlude*, 318) Old Jolyon is now reverent before three things only:

[...] – beauty, upright conduct, and the sense of property; and the greatest of these now was beauty. [...] Upright conduct – property somehow, they were tiring; the blackbirds and the sunsets never tired him, only gave him an uneasy feeling that he could not get enough of them. (*MP – Interlude*, 319)

And it is through his encounter with the incarnation of Beauty - Irene, that the Indian summer comes, with a sharp twinge, melting away the memories of past pleasures. And Old Jolyon yields to it, all his senses intoxicated by her mystic charm. Passing a few days in a sweet ecstasy, Jolyon restores the position of Irene in society bequeathing her a considerable sum and dies peacefully under an old oak tree with the dog Balthasar lying at his feet and with a vision of a beautiful woman coming towards him across the sunlit lawn. The language of the scene masterly echoes the exquisite impression:

He smelled the scent of limes, and lavender. Ah ! That was why there was such a racket of bees. They were excited – busy, as his heart was busy and excited. Drowsy, too, drowsy and drugged on honey and happiness; as his heart was drugged and drowsy. Summer – summer – they seemed to be saying ; great bees and little bees, and flies too ! (*MP – Interlude*, 363)

The contagious sensual delight with which this pastoral scene abounds together with the

gradually growing intensity of the exclamation “Summer – summer!” create a profoundly touching atmosphere of the death of an old man. Old Jolyon is a rare occurrence in the Forsyte family capable of casting aside the conventions in the name of Beauty and Love.

The bitter ending of *The Man of Property* contrasts sharply with the sweetness of the pastoral *Interlude* published two years later. Both Irene's and Jolyon's places in society are restored, old Jolyon dies peacefully with the dog Balthasar, whom he previously disliked, sitting by his chair. The house in Robin Hill, the seed of the feud of Soames and Bosinney but at the same time a chef d'oeuvre of the latter, becomes a refuge of Old Jolyon who bequeaths it to his son, Young Jolyon who is, like his father, able to treasure its elegance. All this “sweetness” counteracts the hostility of the previous part and change the tone of narration and the point of view of a reader. Dudley Barker claims that:

“*The Indian Summer of a Forsyte* [...] made Galsworthy a quite different novelist from the man who wrote *The Man of Property*, and completely changed his whole Forsyte theme.[...] He betrayed his own purpose but he made the Forsyte idea much more acceptable to the English reader.”³⁸

The edge of criticism is blunted as both Irene and her real-life inspiration, Galsworthy's wife Ada, had been brought back into respectability³⁹. The moderation of the first part allows Galsworthy to pursue *The Forsyte Saga* by turning *Interlude* “into a possible prologue for a whole long history of the Forsytes, the people whom he basically wished to write about, because they were the people to whom he naturally, and now in sympathy, belonged.”⁴⁰

The house in Robin Hill becomes a sanctuary of harmony, peace and of connection

38 Dudley Barker, *The Man of Principle, A view of John Galsworthy*[1963] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967) 183.

39“Now that he had brought Ada back into respectability, back into the Forsyte family, and the intervening war had erased all public memories of his personal scandal, it was necessary for the original novel of protest to be hidden by the huge humanity – sometimes even sentimentality – of the saga of English prosperous family life.”

Dudley Barker, *The Man of Principle, A view of John Galsworthy*[1963] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967) 185.

“Because Irene was Ada, Galsworthy had from the start avoided any interpretation of her feelings. In *The Man of Property*, as he himself pointed out, she never takes the stage but is always seen by some other person; she is the disturbing essence of beauty, [...] Certainly Irene's lack of substance in the novels eased the task of forgiving and gradually coming to sympathize with Soames, which was essential if the Saga was to be continued[...].”

Dudley Barker, *The Man of Principle, A view of John Galsworthy*[1963] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967) 195.

40 Ibid., 184.

with Nature. Young Jolyon deeply admires its dignity, he is bestowed with the same ability of appreciating Beauty as his father had been, just his appraisal might be viewed as less practical and more sentimental:

Often, within and without of it, he was persuaded that Bosinney had been moved by the spirit when he built. He had put his heart into that house, indeed !It might even become one of the 'homes of England' – a rare achievement for a house in these degenerate days of building. And the aesthetic spirit, moving hand in hand with his Forsyte sense of possessive continuity, dwelt with pride and pleasure on his ownership thereof. (*IC*, 408)

His sense of Property, no matter how he despises it is maintained. Thanks to its exceptional qualities the Robin Hill house may be viewed as a representative of “ homes of England”, the quality shared by *Howards End*, which is undoubtedly less aesthetically elaborate but not less harmonious.

Although situated only “within twelve miles of Hyde Park Corner”, the very centre of London and the Forsytes, Robin Hill lies in the heart of the countryside. Nevertheless, London is creeping and the approaching “red rust” threatens to invade the paradise of innocence and spoil it: “Would it hold its own and keep the dignity Bosinney had bestowed on it, or would the giant London have lapped it round and made it into an asylum in the midst of a jerry-built wilderness?” (*IC*, 408) The city together with its irreplaceable part are considered oppressive and evil, we encounter the satanic face of the city, with “narrower streets oppressive like the galleries of a mine”⁴¹, the spirit inevitably darkens to match the darkness within. The London of Galsworthy matches the London of E.M. Forster, both are ruled by the possessive instinct with gentlemen mesmerizing houses as well as wives or works of art, where all life follows the pattern of “getting and spending”⁴², with the inhabitants “laying waste their powers”:

Under the sun-soaked wall ran a narrow strip of garden-bed full of mignonette and pansies, and from the bees came a low hum in which all other sounds were set – the mooing of a cow deprived of her calf, the calling of a cuckoo from an elm tree at the

41 E.M. Forster, *Howards End* [1910] (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 72.

42 William Wordsworth, *The world is too much with us* in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by Henry Reed William Wordsworth (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun. And Brother, 1837), 185.

bottom of the meadow. Who would have thought that behind them, within ten miles, London began – that London of the Forsytes, with its wealth, its misery; its dirt and noise; its jumbled stone isles of beauty, its grey sea of hideous brick and stucco? That London which had seen Irene's early tragedy, and Jolyon's own hard days; that web; that princely workhouse of the possessive instinct !⁴³

Galsworthy compares London to a “ web”, a symbol emblematic of everything that is sordid in *In Chancery*. Human relationships are mutually seen as “webs” with both Irene and Soames accusing each other of spinning webs. Irene, now financially independent, suffers a series of Soames's propositions to restore their marriage and conceive a child, Soames's heir. Alarmed and disgusted Irene searches for protection at Young Jolyon's. Now a widower, Jolyon first pities then admires and cherishes Irene's beauty and character. She incarnates the beauty he has longed for all his life, the harmonious amalgam of proportions and charm:“ [...]disturbed in his sense of compassion which was easily excited, and with a queer sensation as if his feeling for beauty had received some definitive embodiment.[...]Her beauty must have a sort of poignant harmony !” (*IC*, 459) If Soames is to replace his wife, he needs a reason to divorce. Irene's reputation is stainless, but in order to purge herself of Soames, she becomes Young Jolyon's lover and later his wife and a mother of his son.

Soames freed from the burden of his ghastly marriage acquires a new wife, a new “lawful and solemnly constituted helpmate”, the property of high value: “Her beauty in the best Parisian frocks was giving him more satisfaction than if he had collected a perfect bit of china, or a jewel of a picture; he looked forward to the moment when he could exhibit her in Park Lane, in Green Street, and at Timothy's.” (*IC*, 602) Anette should fulfil Soames's desire for a child, an heir of his fortune, of his Property. The very night his father dies a daughter is born, to Soames's grief and disappointment. This feeling of frustration does not last long as Soames suddenly grasps the main characteristic of his daughter, of his new precious property: “Fleur,' repeated Soames: 'Fleur ! We'll call her that.' The sense of triumph and renewed possession swelled within him. By God ! this – this thing was his !” (*IC*, 632) But there Soames's yearning for an heir is not regarded with contempt but is viewed with much more sympathy than in the case of his previous marriage. What alters considerably *In Chancery* from the preceding volume is the shift of Galsworthy's bitter

43 John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga Volume One – In Chancery* [1920] (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 588.[Subsequent page references preceded with IC are given in parantheses in the text.]

tone into a sympathetic one:

When *In Chancery* was published in October 1920, it was received with the respect which Galsworthy by the commanded, but no critic perceived the essential change that had taken place in the conception of the Forsytes and of the author's whole attitude to property, including even property of the person; for he recognizes with sympathy Soames's desire for a son and for the first time Irene's loathing of the man she had married assumes a little of the taint of unreasonableness."⁴⁴

What also undergoes a profound change is the spirit of the period, for a new era opens with the death of Queen Victoria and Edward's succession to the throne, an era of a social and economic decline, of The Great War. The representative of the Forsytes' younger generation Soames predicts the changes with anxiety: "Like James, Soames didn't know, he couldn't tell – with Edward on the throne ! Things would never be as safe again as under good old Vicky !" (IC, 605) and with the same anxiety sees his predictions to fulfil: "[...] he ruminated. Money was extraordinary tight; and morality extraordinary loose! The War had done it. Banks were not lending; people breaking contracts all over the place."⁴⁵.

The Forsyte Saga opens in 1886 and covers the period which ends by the death of hundred and one year-old Timothy in 1920.

Between 1880 and 1910 England gradually changed from the leading industrial power in Europe into the leading financial power, [...] Money acquired by manipulation than manual labour inaugurated a morality so much larger and more exciting than a pinch-beck calculus of right and wrong that writers found themselves in possession of a new vital theme.⁴⁶

The period Galsworthy portrays is essential for the development of a modern British society. From this point of view we can understand *The Forsyte Saga* as a *Zeitgeist* novel conveying the characteristic mood and qualities of the transforming British society. The

44 Dudley Barker, *The Man of Principle, A view of John Galsworthy*[1963] (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1967) 195.

45 John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga Volume One – To Let* [1921] (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 787. [Subsequent page references preceded with TL are given in parantheses in the text.]

46 Wilfred H.Stone, "Howards End: Red-bloods and Mollycoddles," in *The Cave and the Mountain, A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1966) 250.

theme of money, of power, of property is depicted with eloquence and innovativeness. The “blunting of the edge” of *The Man of Property* by its sequels and the whole transformation of a single novel into a saga should be therefore viewed more as the opening of the narration to new spheres and dimensions enriching it with subtler psychological portrayals and a less straightforward plot.

As the house in Robin Hill stands for Art, Beauty, Freedom and Love, the houses of the Forsytes placed round the Hyde Park stand for the period dominated by Profit, Property and Expansion. Houses are connected with the Forsytes to the same extent as the individual Forsytes are bound up with their houses. A house is an irreplaceable means of self-expression, it is the extension of the Forsytes into the world. But as all houses, even those houses “die”, losing their spirit which usually goes hand in hand with the loss of their proprietor. But all the Forsytes try to preserve the symbolic link with the tradition, to strengthen the unity of their family and thus maintain the integrity of their world. For that reason uncle Timothy, the last of the six brothers and the incarnation of the past world, is nursed and his house is kept “alive” as with him the past world of the Forsytes perishes for good:

There are houses whose souls have passed into the limbo of Time, leaving their bodies in the limbo of London. Such was not quite the condition of 'Timothy's' on the Bayswater Road, for Timothy's soul still had one foot in Timothy Forsyte's body, and Smither kept the atmosphere unchanging, of camphor and port wine and house whose windows are only opened to air it twice a day.” (*IN*, 689).

Nostalgia inevitably emerges as well as the yearning for the past idyll disguised by the veil of sweet oblivion.

The vital importance of the houses in *The Forsyte Saga* is underlined by the name of the third part *To Let*. Soames's daughter Fleur and Irene's son Jo meet and fall deeply in love. Despite their mutual feelings, the old feud is not forgotten and Irene and Jolyon after a long hesitation finally elucidate the cause of the rift to their son. Jo decides in favour of his mother, his love for her triumphs and makes him abandon the idea of pursuing the relationship with Fleur. It should be stressed that the rift might not be the only reason why Irene prevents her son from leaving her, for their relationship reminds us of the famous love polygon depicted by D.H. Lawrence in his novel *Sons and Lovers*. Although *In Chancery* presents such relationship with lesser sensitivity, the two instances of the

mother's kiss resemble strikingly: “And, stealing up to her, he put his arm round her waist. She kissed him swiftly, but with a sort of passion, and went out of the room.” (TL, 867) D.H. Lawrence describes a similar scene as follows: “Well, I don't love her, mother,' he murmured, bowing his head and hiding his eyes on her shoulder in misery. His mother kissed him along, fervent kiss. 'My boy !' she said, in a voice trembling with passionate love.”⁴⁷

Jolyon dies and Fleur marries a man she does not love. Jo and Irene, no longer bound to England by any family ties decide to leave for good. Unlike the Forsytes they do not cherish the possessive continuity, they abandon their property, they abandon their homeland and decide to let the house in Robin Hill. Only thus can their symbolic as well as practical liberation from the Forsytes be accomplished.

'I feel England's choky.' They stood a few minutes under the oak tree[...]The branches kept the moonlight from them, so that it only fell everywhere else – over the fields and far away, and on the windows of the creepered house behind, which soon would be to let. (TL, 887)

Soames is destined not to be loved, his second wife Anette despises him for the same reasons as his first wife did. His daughter, Fleur, is “substantially” his own, but she neither obeys him, nor loves him as much as he would like her to. When her plan to marry Jo fails, she marries Michael Mont, the heir of a ninth baronet, and thus the classes of rich bourgeoisie merge together with the aristocracy which is itself a sign of a considerable social change. But this marriage is destined to be a failure since its very beginning, because Fleur does not love or even like Michael Mont. She is condemned to suffer for Soames's guilt, for his marriage with Irene and above all for his “assertion of the rights of husband”. For Fleur such guilt is almost metaphysical, she is forced to endure the plight, she is punished without being guilty and without knowing the exact reason of her sorrow. The *Saga* ends with a scene of Soames paying a solitary visit to the family tomb at Highgate cemetery. Surrounded by a scenery of Impressionist quality Soames knows that he would never achieve Beauty and Love, two things he had strived for all his life and never fully possessed:

And only one thing really troubled him, sitting there – the melancholy craving in his

47 D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 243.

heart – because the sun was like enchantment on his face and on the clouds and on the golden birch leaves, and the wind's rustle was so gentle, and the yew tree green so dark, and the sickle of a moon pale in the sky. He might wish and wish and never get it – the beauty and the loving in the world ! (TL, 906).

The character of Soames has developed considerably and as he who had been who had been previously an exemplary man of property becomes gradually a fully-fledged protagonist. The more the end is approaching, the less abhorrent he seems to be. The metaphysical guilt his daughter has to suffer almost approaches the rank of Greek Tragedy with the doomed families where all the generations either repeat the failures or are punished for those of their ancestors without being directly involved. And the same principle applies to the whole *Saga*. What had started as a novel criticizing and portraying the late Victorian society acquires a multiple new dimension of a chronicle, a love story, a Zeitgeist novel, a psychological study. The relationship between Beauty, incarnated either by Art or by people, and Property is the vital theme of the *Saga* and the source of its basic dichotomy. *The Forsyte Saga* explores Property to its limits. Can we own a beloved person? What is the difference between the possession of a beautiful house, a beautiful picture, or a beautiful wife? Such questions are partly answered by the tragic fate of Soames and his daughter who pay for the flaws of their ancestors. Soames pays for his self-righteous belief in the unlimited power of Property firmly established in the tradition of his family, Fleur atones her father's guilt. How roughly Galsworthy deals with the man of property, how severely he punishes him. E.M. Forster regards the Wilcoxes, the hurrying men and their motor-cars, the “Red-bloods” with the same austerity, with the same lack of sympathy: Soames is alone, Charles Wilcox is sentenced to prison, Henry Wilcox becomes a broken man. Those unable to see the connection, those “criminally muddled” are forced to repent. And whereas *Howards End* becomes a refuge, a sanctuary where Margaret looks after the “invalids” and where Helen raises her son, the house in Robin Hill is deserted. Jo and Irene abandon the house even though it is their home, turning their backs to the god of Property, the idol of all the Forsytes. Their final severing of all ties thus illustrates the disastrous consequences of Property invading Beauty and Art.

3. *The Glass Room*: A House as a Materialisation of an Idea

“That was it: perfection. Perfection of proportion, of illumination, of mood and manner. Beauty made manifest.”

When Simon Mawer first came to Brno sixteen years ago he was particularly interested in the Augustinian monastery, a place where Gregor Mendel, a famous biologist and a founder of modern genetics, carried out the experiments concerning cross breeding. For a writer and a former biologist Mendel incarnated a fascinating source of inspiration, but having found his life rather “dull”, he opted for his distant relative Lambert, whose genius as well as his handicap turned him into the main protagonist of Mawer's fifth book *Mendel's Dwarf* published in 1997. However, the visit have proved to be far more inspirational than Mawer had thought. When he visited the Tugendhat Villa, the pearl of Modernist architecture, little did he know that the tour would lead to the publication of *The Glass Room* published in 2009 and short-listed for The Man Booker Prize. He was fascinated, he marvelled at the beauty of the house and at the skill of its architect, Mies van der Rohe. What had resulted from his awe is not a biography, but a novel of an unexpected intensity, a novel turned into an apotheosis of Art resulting from the infiltration of architecture into the field of literature. Mawer himself stresses his position of novelist by stating: “I'm a novelist. I don't want to tell the truth. I want to manipulate things as I choose. I want to lie.”⁴⁸ The strategy he applies in *The Glass Room* is that of drawing from real life events and adjusting them to his artistic aims. The procedure may lead to the perception of *The Glass Room* as an example of historical revisionism fictionalizing the history of the Tugendhat family, their villa and the overall historical development of the Czech Republic in the twentieth century. Mawer enriches the narration by frequent assertions of real life contemporary artists, who are also employed as the inspiration according to which the novel's characters are modelled. These two groups, one of the real life personae and the other one of the purely invented, meet at the house-warming party and the final effect is playful and stimulating, not affecting the novel's integrity. The readers are not limited by their knowledge of the history of the Czech Republic or

48 Sarah Crown, “A Life in Books – Simon Mawer,” *The Guardian*, Saturday 3rd October 2009, 10-11 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2009/oct/03/simon-mawer-life-in-books>, 1.11.2010)

architecture, because the facts are not essential for the understanding of the novel. What is exceptional is Mawer's brilliant evocation of the spirit of interwar Czechoslovakia which turns the novel into what Anna Grmelová in a radio interview describes as : “[...]a rhapsody on the Glass Room of the Landauer Villa and [...] also a rhapsody on the ideals of interwar Czechoslovakia, of the First Czechoslovak Republic.”⁴⁹ The motif of its tragic destiny stretches like a red thread throughout the novel starting in the Prologue describing Liesel Landauer's return to the villa in the late 1960s:

The slow slide of the pane downwards as though to remove the barrier that exists between reality and fiction, the fabricated world of the living room and the hard fact of snow and vegetation. There is a pause during which the two airs stand fragile and separate, the warmth within shivering like a jelly against the wall of cold outside. And then this temporary equilibrium collapses so that winter with a cold sigh intrudes, and presumably, their carefully constructed, carefully warmed interior air is dispersed into the outside world.⁵⁰

In this case it is the air from the inside which after a short interval of “equilibrium”, of opposition to the “wall” of the cold air from the outside, vanishes into the outside world as the Landauers, and as the young Republic swept away by the lethal tides of the Second World War do.

What is the Glass Room to which the novel owes its title? Technically speaking, the Glass Room is a unique room covering the whole floor of Villa Landauer without any barriers dividing the space according to the functions of the room and what is more, most of its walls are replaced by gigantic floor-to-ceiling panoramic windows, so that the interior and the exterior are visually connected. This effect is even enhanced by the sinking windows which can be retracted to the floor. The Glass Room is a continuum of light and space, a realm of reason and lucidity, of unconstrained freedom, of immense possibilities. Together with the rest of the villa it represents the new society, pure and unspoilt, freed of all kind of persecution, the society of unlimited possibilities and unimportant borderlines. The whole villa is exceptional with its proportions, its particular treatment of space and materials, its innovative division of functions. Nevertheless, it is the Glass Room where the heart of the house beats, from where its uniqueness springs. It is not a simple setting of the

49 <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/books/czech-history-through-a-glass-darkly>, 14.3.2010

50 Simon Mawer, *The Glass Room* (London: Little, Brown, 2009), 5.[Subsequent page references preceded with *GR* are given in parantheses in the text.]

story, but it becomes its main protagonist either appearing or being mentioned in every single chapter of the novel. Unlike in *Howards End* or the *Forsyte Saga* which stress the importance of the whole house, *The Glass Room* concentrates on the individual existence of a particular room. The heart of the whole house turns into the heart of the whole novel with characters coming and going, the political situation changing, history passing, while the Glass Room remains untouched and untouchable. It is not a part of characters' history, but, like *Howards End*, it invites them to become parts for its own colourful and rich history. And not only the characters but the whole history yields to the shimmering walls of the Glass Room: "history doesn't take place outside it, it comes to it."⁵¹

The Glass Room functions as an extended metaphor of the period, but the ideas it materializes are those of Viktor and Liesel or Eliška, a newly-wed couple, both descendants of upper-class families, willing to be modern body and soul. They want to express their split with the past by constructing an exceptional house: "... this clinging to the past. This is everything our new house will not be!" (GR, 9) Their house should become the incarnation of their belief in progress, in future, in the emergence of modern society which would not be encumbered with prejudice and imposition, but would replace these by reason and democratic values. Despite the enormous cost of their villa, Viktor and Liesel do not wish to show off their fortune, to manifest their privileges. Their intentions have a deeper philosophical significance. However trivial this may sound, all they want to do is to "dwell" in a house which is a real house. A house which is neither a mere instrument providing a place for living, nor a manifestation of their superiority on whichever level. The philosophical background of their effort corresponds directly to the theory of Martin Heidegger a German phenomenologist quoted above in connection with the question of human "dwelling" presented in *Howards End*. What is it this dwelling? Heidegger explains this notion in his essay called "Poetically Man Dwells" drawing from the poem of the German Romantic poet Hölderlin. Dwelling is something profoundly human, because humans, as Jan Patočka states, "unlike other animals, build dwellings, because they are not in home in the world, because they lean out of the world"⁵². They lean out of the world, however, at the same time they cling to it, they want their house to remind them of their true origin - of the world. Humans dwell in the world by means of dwelling in houses, with the houses bearing resemblance to the world. To dwell means to

51 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/jan/24/simon-mawer-the-glass-room>, 1.11.2010

52 Jan Patočka, "Fifth Essay: Is technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?" in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, transl. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1996), 115-6.

exist. Consequently, a house becomes a real house, a house which exists and provides existence in return, only by means of dwelling which comprises its building as well as its maintaining and inhabiting. “Dwelling” is the designation of the way the humans wander on the Earth, under the vault of Heaven from birth to death. Varied and variable as this dwelling may be, it is the main trait of “dwelling” as the human manner of staying between the skies and the earth, the birth and the death, pleasure and pain, word and work, approaching alternately either the first or the second option.

Marie Hodrová, Czech literary scholar, whose essay “Sense of a Room” explores the poetic significance of different rooms, states that a room becomes one of the fundamental places of human existence. Dwelling expresses the way humans exist in the world and their relation to it to the same extent as “[...]the manner how the subject moves either in the landscape or in the city.”⁵³ Liesel and Viktor, their new house and especially the Glass Room become pioneers of such expression, adjusting the place of their “dwelling” to their vision of one another, of the society and of the world. The glass walls open the room to the world and at the same time the world is let in, is included within the Glass Room, thus the boundaries melt and the interior and the exterior merge and create a continuous space. Hodrová explains the further significance of the room's windows and doors as follows: “The openness of the of the room is provided by the windows and doors(if they can be opened), via which the subject can communicate with the outside world, exit and enter. We can say, that a room is a place on the borderline between the pure interior and pure exterior – the landscape, the city, the world.”⁵⁴ Not only is the Glass Room a material expression of a prevailing tendency to dissolve all barriers and obstacles preventing the creation of a smooth, unmarked space, the tendency which prefers inclusion to exclusion, a metaphor of the modern society, but it also mediates the ultimate frankness and candour of Viktor and Liesel. Their house should be a kingdom of Reason and Lucidity, Opacity and Deceit are expelled. On the occasion of the house-warming party Viktor pronounces a speech drawing inspiration from a surrealist novel *Nadja* where the main protagonist pronounces her desire to live in a house similar to theirs:

I shall live in my glass house where you can always see who comes to call, where everything hanging from the ceiling and on the walls stays where it is if by magic,

53 Daniela Hodrová, “Smysl pokoje” in *Poetika míst, Kapitoly z literární tematologie* (Praha: H&H, 1997), 217.

54 “Otevřenost pokoje je zajištěna okny a dveřmi (pokud jdou otevřít), jimiž může subjekt komunikovat s vnějším světem, vycházet a vcházet. Dalo by se říci, že pokoj je místem na hranici mezi ryzím vnitřkem [...] a ryzím vnějškem – krajinou, městem, světem.” Ibid., 219.

where I sleep nights in a glass bed, under glass sheets, where the words who I am will sooner or later appear etched by a diamond.' [...] 'Well, this glass house says who Liesel and I are,' Viktor tells them, taking her hand. 'In our wonderful glass house you can see everything.'" (GR, 76)

And yet, the Glass Room will witness deceit as well as other tragic flaws of human nature. It will contemplate infidelity, lying and even rape, remaining remote, indifferent and cool, pitiless. Is the room which incarnates a magnificent work of Art immoral? No, but its inhabitants from time to time fall prey to the feeling of the unconstrained freedom it abounds with and the worshipped reason slips away. Neither Liesel, nor Viktor are faultless and perfect, they have their fears and hidden desires. When Rainer von Abt, an architect they had met during their honeymoon in Venice, sends them the plans for their new house, Villa Landauer, they are shocked and especially Viktor opposes Rainer's propositions. They are afraid, they are not Modern Titans performing radical changes and revolutions without any traces of hesitation or doubt. They are human beings standing in awe in face of a stunning work of art. It is Liesel who first grasps the sense of its uniqueness and who encourages the dubious Viktor:

Raum, she says and suddenly she sees the space projected into her inner vision, the purity of line, the thrill of emptiness. 'Can't you see it? It'll be wonderful.' [Viktor:] 'I can see it in theory. The fact seems rather remote at the moment. And frightening.' (GR,43)

The Glass Room would never come into the existence, unless Liesel and Viktor had met its creator in Venice. Rainer von Abt appears in their lives accidentally and quiet unexpectedly and both sides immediately realize that they are kindred spirits. In Venice which is "the most ornamental city in the world" (GR, 24) Rainer von Abt makes a proposition, he offers the very opposite of what the city embodies, he offers to design a new house, a new world for the Landauers. They follow the same ideas, they share ideals. According to them the future can be planned, they do not believe in citizenship of a particular country, what they believe in is the citizenship of the whole wide world. No restrictions, no limits should prevent humans from the free creation and suppress the continuous progress. Rainer von Abt embodies an exemplary architect, a man with a clear vision and firm resolution to turn the world into a better place. Although he even mentions

his contemporaries and their work, admires them and calls himself a disciple of Adolf Loos, he is the incarnation of a perfect architect resulting from mingling of the traits of several famous real life architects who served as inspiration, most prominently Mies van der Rohe, a famous German architect, the author of the design of Villa Tugendhat and Theo van Doesburg, a multi-talented Dutch artist, one of the “most daring and influential of the avant garde”⁵⁵. Rainer von Abt is surrounded by a mystical halo of philosophical power and unbelievable vitality. He is the originator of the buildings which materialize thoughts and at the same time shape our perception of the outside world. Anna Hogenová explains the respectability of the architect as follows:

[...] That is why the architect abounds with such philosophical power, he is joint with the origin, with *arché*. 'Tekton' is a Greek word derived from *technai*, that is creation. The architect returns to the dignity of the origin in a philosophical form, which is a hardened motion of 'music', the result is a building. This melody is *harmonia afanes*, it is the harmony of the spheres, it is the invisible harmony, testifying to the origin, to the dignity of origin!⁵⁶

According to Heidegger's theory Rainer is the incarnation of the poet capable of understanding the deep significance of a building and erecting houses which correspond to the needs of human existence. The architect - “poet” is thus able to mediate “dwelling” to others.

Man does not dwell in that he merely establishes his stay on the earth beneath the sky, by raising growing things and simultaneously raising buildings. Man is capable of such building only if he already builds in the sense of the poetic taking of measure. Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling.⁵⁷

55 Simon Mawer, “Diagonal Lives,” *Review in The Guardian*, Saturday 23rd January 2010, 16-17.

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/jan/23/theo-van-doesburg-avant-garde-tate>, 1.11.2010)

56 “Proto má architekt takovou filosofickou sílu, on vlastně se pojí k počátku, k *arché*. 'Tekton' je řecké slovo odvislé od *technai*, tj. od tvoření. Architekt se vrací k důstojnosti počátku ve filosofickém útvaru, jenž je ztvrdlým pohybem 'hudby', výsledkem je stavba. Tato melodie je *harmonia afanes*, je to harmonie sfér, je to nezjevná harmonie, vypovídající o počátku, účtyhodnosti počátku!”

Anna Hogenová, *Jak pečujeme o svou duši?* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Pedagogická fakulta, 2008), 176.

57 Martin Heidegger, “... Poetically, Man Dwells...” [1951] in *Philosophical and Political Writings*, edited by Manfred Stassen (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 276.

An architect, a poet should build by “poetic taking of measure”, his designs should not be laden with purely materialistic constraints. Rainer von Abt's vital force and the material of creation are the ideas, hopes, dreams, wishes and persuasions of his clients as well as his own. That is the reason why Rainer contradicts Viktor who calls him “an architect”:

'I repeat,' replied Rainer von Abt, 'I am a poet of space and form. Of light' – it seemed to be no difficulty at all to drag another quality into his aesthetics – 'of light and space and form. Architects are people who build walls and floors and roofs. I capture and enclose the space within.'*(GR, 16)*

Rainer von Abt is a true poet of “light, space, and form”, his magnificent poetry achieves the utmost peak in Villa Landauer which is a true manifestation of the harmonious mingling of the ideas of his own, the atemporal ideas of proportion and balance and the ideas of those “dwelling” there. Von Abt himself goes as far as saying “I work with nothing but ideas.”*(GR,22)*

What Rainer von Abt desires is to give a shape and proportion to the ideas the Landauers and himself worship. He is willing to transpose the world within the walls of the villa and to sow a seed of a new reality there. “I wish,' he was telling them, 'not just to design a house but to create a whole world. [...] I will design you a life. Not a mere house to live in, but a whole way of life.” *(GR,28)* And although his proposition may seem too directive or even manipulative, they contradict neither Viktor nor Liesel, they are the result of the mystical bond between the architect and his clients:

.Liesel and Viktor stood and marvelled at it. It had become a palace of light, light bouncing off the chrome pillars, light refulgent on the walls, light glistening on the dew in the garden, light reverberating from the glass. It was though they stood inside a crystal of salt. 'Isn't it wonderful,' she exclaimed, looking round with an expression of amazement. 'You feel so free, so unconstrained. The sensation of space, of all things being possible. Don't you think it is wonderful, Viktor? Don't you think that Rainer has created a masterpiece for us? *(GR, 65)*

What may seem striking is the obvious sexual attraction between Liesel and von Abt, and although it is never fulfilled, it is omnipresent and much more obvious than the attraction between Liesel and Viktor, her husband. A “poet of form and light and space”

working with the essences of human thinking and understanding, is described as “a boxer in the early stage of his career” (*GR*, 12) The Ideas wedded to flesh? The personal characteristic seemingly full of contradictions, is in fact the source of vitality and inspiration for Rainer as he manifests when Liesel calls his design “cold”: “This is the first work of art: the woman who lies down. [...] And this. This is the man who penetrates her. The result is the rectangular cross that underpins all my art. What could be warmer than that?” (*GR*,24) Not only does sexuality play a crucial part in von Abt's creation and in Art as such, but it also underpins the whole world of the novel.

Accordingly, Liesel's pregnancy is mirrored in the construction of the house, both processes following the path of perfection, with both final “products” incarnating beauty, joy and hope. Liesel's pregnancy is thus celebrated and elevated upon the level of pure physicality as well as the construction of the house acquires a new dimension. “Nature seemed suspended in this icy season, but still things grew – the child in Liesel's womb, the house in Rainer von Abt's mind. The one convolute, involute, curved and complex – there are no straight lines in nature – the other simple and linear.” (*GR*, 44) The successful completion of the house together with the painless delivery of Otilie echo the optimistic belief in a better future, full of growth and development. “In April, while the frame grew, the baby was born.” (*GR*, 45) Liesel's second pregnancy takes place within the walls of Villa Landauer. Liesel floats like a goddess through the ethereal house in her long white dresses, barefoot and dreamy. Viktor perceives her like a fantastic creature, wafting above the shining linoleum. “How strange, this metamorphosis from flesh to spirit, mediated by the frame of the Glass Room that is intended to be so literal and exact and yet has become sublime.” (*GR*, 83) However, Martin's delivery is not as painless as Otilie's and Liesel lies for days in hospital in a high fever. It is as if her second delivery was foreshadowing the tempest which is coming and gradually clouding the bright blue skies of the young family and their homeland.

The Glass Room stands for a room with a view, it is a barricade against the emotion overwhelming those who enter with light and dazzling shine. “It had become a palace of light, light bouncing off the chrome pillars, light refulgent on the walls, light glistening on the dew in the garden, light reverberating from the glass. It was though they stood inside a crystal of salt.” (*GR*, 65) Liesel's mother, standing for the aesthetics of the turn of the century incarnated by her portrait created by Gustav Klimt⁵⁸, considers the new house

58 Klimt's work is often distinguished by elegant gold or coloured decoration, spirals and swirls, and phallic shapes used to conceal the more erotic positions of the drawings upon which many of his paintings are based. This can be seen in *Judith I* (1901), and in *The Kiss* (1907–1908), and especially in *Danaë* (1907). One of the

sterile and cold, according to her a house should not look like an office or a shop. But if Klimt had painted his picture as a portrait of Liesel's mother, then Rainer von Abt designed the villa according to Liesel's model. Each of the two artists expresses himself in a different way, but the mighty overtone of sexuality pervades the creation of both. Regardless of the criticism of the "coldness and strictness" of the room, whoever enters this temple of Light and Reason marvels at the magnificence of "That peculiar bath of light, the sky's light reflected upwards from the blanched lawn to light the ceiling as brightly as the clouded sun lit floor. Light become substance, soft, transparent milk." (GR, 4) Light becomes a substance, palpable, perceptible, enwrapping the visitors with a touch of almost sensuous delight, refreshing their senses and reviving their spiritual potential. The Glass Room seems to fulfil Plato's vision of Enlightenment with the Idea of Goodness mingled with the Light infusing the room with its ethereal shine. The room's perfection refers to the perfect eternal forms of Plato's world of Ideas. However those entering the Glass Room cannot escape the urging of their enchanted senses, so the room is usually perceived by their means which is the manner of cognition Plato criticized and wished to suppress.⁵⁹ And although they enter the territory of pure, simple lines symbolizing the Reason, the simplicity and yet the excellence of the original form, they view the room as "[...] a place of dreams, a cool box where you can project your fantasies and sit and watch them." (GR, 346) But only a few inhabitants of the Glass Room are able to abandon its other significations and perceive it as their bridge between the cave and the world of Ideas. The sensual ecstasy may be understood as the moment of the abandonment of the cave: "When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities. He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world."⁶⁰ The power by which the Glass Room attires its admirers is not necessarily connected only with its aesthetic superiority and mystical power, but with a deeper philosophical significance of the room as such.

What the room excels in is the number of roles it plays. It is a home, a concert hall, a laboratory, a gym for polio victims and a museum. One would understand such variety as a proof of its striking variability, but the truth is the very opposite. The Glass Room does not change, it pervades everything with its lustrous shine, yet it does not place any obstacles to whichever use or even abuse. Again, the comparison with the Idea of Goodness seems

most common themes Klimt used was that of the dominant woman, the femme fatale.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klimt>, 10.11.2010

⁵⁹ http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/plato.html, 10.11.2010

⁶⁰ Ibid

pertinent as it also pervades everything, making it visible, giving it a clearly distinguishable character and yet being invisible itself. Despite of the blinding force of the light the room undermines another basic certainty of the man and that is stability, walking in the Glass Room equals floating, it is a sort of fulfilment of Von Abt's vision, the house floats with those inside it as well: "Stability is the last thing I want. This house must float in light. It must shimmer and shine. It must not be stable!" (GR, 47) But at the same time Von Abt says that the house is "a machine for living in", purely functional, designed with a mathematical precision. With what ease he places the contradictory features side by side! Such a combination of contrasting elements and procedures turns out to be triumphant. The Baroque alternation of compression and sudden expansion is applied with an utmost success to the stairway leading to the Glass Room which is situated in a tunnel made of the milk-white glass panes. One goes through the tunnel surrounded by opaque walls letting through a creamy light and suddenly is thrust in the middle of the infinite space of the Glass Room. The actual rooms where the members of the Landauer family live are situated in the upper floor, surrounding the terrace as camping tents, abounding with the feeling of privacy, warm cosiness and modesty as far as the space is concerned, they manifest the difference between *das Zimmer* and *der Raum*: "On the upper floor there were rooms, zimmer, boxes with walls and doors; but down here there was room, *raum*, space." (GR, 72)

Inside the Glass Room there are no decorations, no ornaments in the sense Adolf Loos had given it by stating "Ornament is a crime" in his famous and frequently quoted essay. Ornament, according to Loos and Rainer von Abt as his follower, is a decoration of short-lived endurance and low quality, encumbering the interior instead of enriching it. What is acceptable in the interior is an ornament of permanent value and unexpected splendour, noble and exceptional. It is the stone or even the precious stone which embodies all these qualities and embellishes the interior with its pomp and grandeur. The Light, the Idea of Goodness is even able to enliven the stone, the incarnation of the absolute contrast, the counter-balance of everything living. Thus the Onyx wall, one of the rare decorations of the Glass Room, "seemed to take hold of the light, blocking it, reflecting it, warming it with a soft, feminine hand and then, when the sun set over the Špilas fortress and shone straight in a stone, glowing fiery red." (GR, 72) Apart from this onyx wall, the interior, seemingly pure or even sterile, is refreshed by a sensuous statue "[...] a life size female torso sculpted by the French artist Maillol, the belly faintly swollen as though in early pregnancy, the breasts full, the hips wide, the face with something of the fecund

composure of a Renoir nude.” (GR, 74) The contrastive principles are assembled creating a perfect unity, the onyx wall symbolising death, and the female torso symbolising fertility and fruitfulness, incarnating life, joy and hope. The final marriage of spirit and flesh, of Idea and form, of purely linear and purely involute and convolute, of razor-cut lines and prehistoric landscapes underline the overall effect of perfection, of composure, of the intersection of the fourfold (Heidegger), of the skies and the earth, humans and divinities.

Except for the obvious fascination with the Villa Tugendhat, Simon Mawer strived to incorporate another exceptional feature into *The Glass Room*. This feature is the harmonious co-existence of multiple mixture of nations in the newly born Czechoslovak Republic. The bilingualism of the City, its vitality, its “homogeneity”, the impossibility of clear distinction and classification have probably lead the author to name the city “City”. And although Lukáš Novák, the author of the Czech translation, found this universal designation disturbing for the Czech readers and replaced it by “Brno”, Mawer disagrees with his choice and would have favoured the maintenance of the formal distance and universality which the name “City” conveys.

However Viktor and Liesel insist on a formal divorce with the past, they draw inspiration from its heritage, for the new Czechoslovak Republic is a descendant of the amalgam of various nations found on the basis of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Viktor Landauer refuses to fall to any category, he rejects the idea of membership of any ethnic community and his cosmopolitan belief is logically mirrored in his house, the material extension of his opinions. It had taken long before Rainer von Abt and his design fulfilled his conception:

But nothing had seemed right for Viktor's vision of the future, his desire not to be pinned down by race or creed, his determination to speak Czech as well as German, his insistence on reading Lidové Noviny, his talk of inovace and pokrok, innovation and progress. 'Let the world move on,' he would say. 'We' – he meant those newly created political beings, the Czechoslovaks – 'have a new direction to take, a new world to make. We are neither German nor Slav. We can choose our history, that's the point. It's up to us, don't you see? People like us.'(GR,20)

The space of the Glass Room is without any internal obstructions, it is floating, it is boundless as well as the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The possibilities are immense and ethical or linguistic membership insignificant, negligible. As far as the

architecture is concerned, the cosmopolitan belief of the whole generation subsequently lead to the emergence of a new global architectural style, namely the International Style⁶¹. The new state is not a complete negation of what had preceded, but rather a higher step of development where the monarchy is replaced by the republic following democratic principles. A new Age of Reason is installed and Villa Landauer is its realm, the materialisation of an ephemeral dream, of a shimmering Idea.

Space, light, glass; some spare furniture; windows looking out on the garden; a sweep of shining floor, travertine, perhaps; white and ivory and the gleam of chrome. The element moved, evolved, transformed, metamorphosed in the way they do in dreams, changing shape and form and yet, to the dreamer, remaining what they always were: der Glassraum, der Glasraum, a single letter change metamorphosing one into the other, the Glass Space becoming the Glass Dream, a dream that went with the spirit of the brand new country in which they found themselves, a state in which being Czech or German or Jew would not matter, in which democracy would prevail and art and science would combine to bring happiness to all people. (GR,26)

What an optimistic belief, what a noble idea ! The sense of stability and continuous development shimmers and shines as the light reflected by the gleaming chrome pillars of the Glass Room. The future can be trusted, it may be ensured by right decisions and suitable choices, the nation united by the same idea will overcome the obstacles without any difficulty. Yet, there is already a dark stain on the smooth, bright surface of the twentieth century, the First World War: “Liesel felt all the possibilities of the future. How remarkable this century, which had started so disastrously, might yet prove to be.” (GR,27) But the world has learnt its lesson and will not make the same mistake again.

However, as the time passes, the certainty of a promising future development suffers several strikes, the growing power of NDSAP in Germany, the Anschluss of Austria and the deteriorating political situation, until it vanishes completely. The absolute stability and rationality of the Glass Room are shaken by the accidental appearance of Kata Kalman, Viktor's lover whom he had met in Prater in Vienna. Kata is a seamstress, a single mother

61 This style was coined by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in 1930 on the occasion of the exposition held in New York Museum of Modern Art in 1932: “The effect of mass, of static solidity, hitherto the prime quality of architecture, has all but disappeared; in its place there is an effect of volume, or more accurately, of plane surfaces bounding a volume. The prime architectural symbol is no longer the dense brick but the open box.” Quoted in *Architecture in America: A Battle of Styles* edited by William A. Coles and Henry Hope Reed (New York: Ardent Media, 1961), 74.

of Marika and is Jewish which Viktor hadn't known as she had not considered it important. It had not been important and suddenly it had become the vital characteristic of a person. Kata is there, she had been saved with a couple of other refugees, and Viktor's secret is unveiled and stripped of its irrationality by the stern look of the Glass Room:

The whole essence of the Glass Room is reason. That is what Viktor thinks, anyway. For him, it embodies the pure rationality of a Greek classical temple, the austere beauty of a perfect composition, the grace and the balance of a painting of Mondrian. [...] There is nothing convolute, involute, awkward or complex. Here everything can be understood as a matter of proportion and dimension. Yet there, standing mere feet away from him, is Kata. (GR, 137)

The Glass Room was meant to be the incarnation of dreams, hopes and aspirations of the Landauers, but also of those of the young, fragile Czechoslovakia. The republic with a president philosopher, a country of immense economic as well as artistic potential, a country the inhabitants of which are not classed, they are neither German, nor Slave, they are standing on the crossroads and the choice seems to be theirs: “And both that morning equally lay//In leaves no step had trodden black.”⁶² The room remains untouched by the external situation, it seems indifferent to the struggle of the young republic. It even becomes a sort of a sanctuary for the Landauers and their friends surrounding them with a feeling of certainty and stability: “The house has become a refuge for them, the Glass Room, that least fortress like of constructions, bringing the consolation of reason and calm, while outside the confines of their particular lives, *the world is crumbling*.” (GR, 159, emphasis added.) If we search for a metaphor, expressing its precipitate birth and rash first steps, considerable talent, splendour, energy and courage and hasty decisions, we would find all these written in the life story of Vítězslava Kaprálová, a child prodigy, an immensely talented Czech musician, conductress and composer. She even performs on the occasion of the house warming party of Villa Landauer: “This is the artistic future of our country,’ he announces. ‘Vitulka and people like her. A young country with so much energy and so much talent.” (GR, 77) and her further life is summarized in the news given by Hana Hanáková to her best friend, Liesel Landauer. Vitulka, as she is called to underline her youth, sweetness and purity, dies in the beginning of war in France. Her dazzling

62 Robert Frost, “The Road not Taken” in *The Road Not Taken, Birches, and Other Pages* (Claremont, California:Coyote Canyon Press, 2010), 9.

career with a steep rise and a sudden fall mirrors the bitter ending of the short-living Czechoslovak Republic. If the Glass Room stands for the ideals of the First Czechoslovak Republic, then the life of Vítězlava Kaprálová incarnates its fate.

Throughout the first part of the novel, the images of the distant tempest threaten the precious harmony of the Glass Room. During the house warming party, it is only Hana Hanáková, who realizes the frail, ephemeral, temporary equilibrium. She had always doubted Viktor's belief in the better future or the idea of the absence of deceit in the lives of the Landauers. And she turns out to be right in every sense. The war as well as Viktor's infidelity deny the possibility of existence of the ideal world from where the Glass Room originates. But at the house warming party, except for Hana, everybody agrees enthusiastically with Viktor:

They crowd into the space of the Glass Room like passengers on the observation deck of a luxury liner. Some of them maybe peering out through the windows onto the pitching surface of the city but, in their muddle of Czech and German, almost all are ignorant of the cold outside and the gathering storm clouds, the first sign of the tempest that is coming. (*GR*, 78)

And the tempest really comes and the First Czechoslovak Republic is betrayed, left alone and finally killed and cut to pieces, the horrible political betrayal even underlined by the personification of the republic during the process: "That autumn the Great Powers assisted at the dismemberment of the country. They witnessed the cutting off of limbs from the body, the severing of arteries, the snapping of ligaments and tendons, the sawing of bones." (*GR*, 175) The Landauers leave the country, because race becomes the question of life and death and Viktor is a Jew and his children so-called half-caste. Viktor finds out how foolish it was to think he could steer the wheel of the future: "Viktor has always worked on the principle that the future is there to be handled, manipulated, bent and twisted to one's own desires but now he knows how untrue that is." (*GR*, 168) The moment of Liesel's parting from the Glass Room echoes the sadness and fatality of the scene of the prologue when she comes back, thirty years later. Mawer's careful composition unveils its potential to the full. Although the Glass Room is a sanctuary of reason and seemingly denies any sentimental interpretation, Liesel cannot help feeling hurt and lost, deeply touched by the loss of her home, of her spiritual connection with the world, her essential part: "This is no place for sentiment. It is a place of reason. And yet sentiment is what she

feels, the anguish of departure, the exquisite pain of remembering, the fragility of being. When will she be here again?" (GR, 184)

After the Landauers leave for Switzerland, the room remains bare, stripped of all its exquisite furnishings, of all fantasies of its former owners projected on its cool face. The moment the family leaves, the room undergoes its rebirth, it is freed from all the impositions like the disturbing appliances or haunting thoughts, all that is left is

[...] Just the space, the light, the white. Just the gleaming chrome pillars. Just the onyx wall and the curved partition of Macassar wood. The cool, calm rationality of the place undisturbed by any of the irrationality that human beings would impose upon it. They pause for a moment and look. (GR, 183)

The Glass Room is not left empty for long; the whole Villa Landauer is confiscated by the government, expropriated, stolen and turned into a laboratory, a research centre of "*Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt Forschungsstätte für Biologie, Biometrik Abteilung*". Thus the Glass Room transformed into a perfect Petri dish continues its indifferent existence providing its space, light and the air of pure rationality for the scientific experiments serving as the basis of denial of racial equality, rejecting the democratic principles on which the room stands. "*Gläzend!* Even more impressive than the photographs: a great open space of a place, almost the entire floor area of the whole building. Open plan. Stahl likes that. Ideal for a laboratory. Clean and bright, with those huge glass windows shedding the cold light of reason into the place." (GR, 218)

But the Hauptsturmführer Stahl repeats the mistakes of his predecessors and falls prey to the alleged rationality of the Glass Room. He believes this place to be the incarnation of scientific precision: "Precision, the cool gaze of scientific objectivity. The measurement is perfect as the dimensions of the Glass Room itself." (GR, 222) The trick the room plays on those who enter it is enveloping them in its air of rationality, of reason and stability. All tend to believe that by entering the palace of Light, a crystal of salt, their minds would correspond to it, would establish a mystical bond and make their actions reasonable and utterly rational, but that is not true. As Hana Hanáková acknowledges many years later, one should not be "[...] fooled by the Glass Room. It is only as rational as the people who inhabit it." (GR, 360) The room has no power over its visitors, it cannot act and affect them directly, that would deny the principles on which it is found. It is a pure space, a bright projection surface, the balance and the reason vanish from it as soon as they

vanish from people's mind. Seduced by Hana Hanáková, Stahl wonders at her arrogance and his own dismissal of the Glass Room, his abandonment of its perspective: "There is no light, no smell, no taste, no touch that is not hers. The Glass Room is not there. The balance and the reason has vanished." (GR, 260) The Glass Room actually becomes a place of Hana's humiliation and pain, an indifferent witness of the rape. "The doors are locked, the staff dismissed, the Glass Room silent and reserved, observing impassively whatever might happen." (GR, 280) But the Glass Room is not a fortress, it does not prevent all sorts of vices and flaws of human nature, it contemplates them and the only thing it is able to provide from this point of view is distance which might mediate the insight and deeper understanding of one's own flaws, troubles and mistakes. When Hauptsturmführer reflects upon his own situation in the air of rational balance, he finds the only possible solution, he gets rid of Hana and of his alleged child. He informs against Hana and her Jewish husband and they are deported first to the Ghetto in Terezín and then to concentration camps in Germany, where Hana gives birth to Stahl's child and Oskar, her husband, finds death.

Twenty years pass and the Glass Room remains the same, pure, balanced, perfect and indifferent.

Architecture should have no politics, Rainer von Abt said. A building just is. Bellow it, lapping up to the foot of the garden, were the rough tides of those political years, while the Landauer House stood beached on the shore above the tidemark like a relic of a more perfect golden age. (GR, 100)

The Glass Room had been transformed into a gym where the polio victims come to exercise. It is also a place where Tomáš, a young doctor from the Paediatric department of the hospital, meets and makes love to Zdenka, a former ballerina turned into a physiotherapist. Tomáš is strikingly similar to the main protagonist of Milan Kundera's worldwide known novel *L'Insoutenable légèreté de l'être* (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*). Both are doctors, womanisers, encapsulated in the present, unwilling to plan the future or to consider the past. "Tomáš does not wish to talk about the past, or the future, or anything temporal. For Tomáš there is no such thing as time." (GR, 327) Kundera's protagonist Tomáš is the instrument of the author's polemics with Friedrich Nietzsche and his idea of "eternal recurrence". Kundera opposes the belief stating that each person lives only one life, so whether recurring or not, he or she will never know, whether the life he or she lives is just a draft, a sketch or whether this life is the real one, the only one, not a

provisional one. What happens in life, happens only once, it does not come back, so while Nietzsche warns us against hasty decision reminding us that if we make a mistake, its consequences will haunt us again and again and this makes life and all decisions unbelievably difficult and burdensome, Kundera offers an opposite point of view that from the perspective of the transience and insignificance of human life, the decisions we make are negligible. But that is unacceptable if we take into consideration the transcending aspirations of some of us. Having accepted our ephemerality, our being is bestowed with a feeling of lightness and ease, but the question is whether these are better than their opposite – the weight caused by the possible immense impact of our decisions?⁶³ That is the question reverberating through Kundera's famous novel. Simon Mawer presents Tomáš who is the follower of the lightness of being, time and its run are insignificant to him, he understands that he is the victim of Time, Time has him and not the other way round, that is why he does not miss any occasion of sneaking in into the Glass Room, the atemporal place, there, he looks out of the window and smokes. The room appeases him with its delicate atemporality and apoliticality: “The place appeared quite without reference to period or style – just a space of light and stillness where, when his work was over, he could be with Zdenka.” (*GR*, 333)

Zdenka, his lover, does not share his “lightness of being”, she needs certainty, she is unable to accept Tomáš's denial of time, his reluctance to remember or to plan. She struggles to make the lives of her patients, the polio victims, better in the future. She believes in their progress, in the possibility of improvement. Sometimes she cries because her faith abandons her. The children she trains profit from the space and light the room abounds with, since “their lives are too often dark and closed, shut away indoors because they can't go out to play, that kind of thing. Coming here is a kind of liberation for them.” (*GR*, 348) Tomáš's infidelity hurts her, she is a charming incarnation of Ondine⁶⁴, a water nymph longing for forbidden love, sacrificing her immortality for it. While Ondine dies and curses her lover Palemon, Zdenka finally finds the true love in the arms of Hana

63 “Ale je tíha hrozná a lehkost nádherná? Nejtěžší břemeno nás drtí, klesáme pod ním, tiskne nás k zemi. Ale v milostné poezii všech věků žena touží být zatížena břemenem mužova těla. Nejtěžší břemeno je zároveň obrazem nejintenzivnějšího naplnění života. Čím je břemeno těžší, tím je náš život blíž k zemi, tím je skutečnější a pravdivější. Naproti tomu absolutní nepřítomnost břemene způsobuje, že se člověk stává lehčí než vzduch, vzlétá do výše, vzdaluje se zemi, pozemskému bytí, stává se jen napůl skutečný a jeho pohyby jsou stejně svobodné jako bezvýznamné. Co si tedy máme zvolit? Tíhu, nebo lehkost?”
Milan Kundera, *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* (Brno: Atlantis, 2006), 13.

64 The motif of Ondine is frequently employed within the whole novel. At the house warming party, Vítězslava Kaprálová plays one of the movements from the piano suite Gaspard de la Nuit entitled 'Ondine' by Ravell. It is also the choice of Zdenka who dances on this music first for Tomáš and later for Hana. One of patients Tomáš treats in hospital suffers from a mysterious illness which may be regarded as the embodiment of the curse of Ondine, if she falls asleep, she stops breathing.

Hanáková, a former cynical man-eater, a woman who had lost her only treasure, her child, in the mist of a concentration camp. Those two souls yearning for love and understanding find a happy ending in each other's arms. Due to the reference to Ondine, Zdenka may be also viewed as a follower of Vítězslava Kaprálová as a representative of the artistic future of the country. As the first Czechoslovak Republic, Vítězslava dies shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War and quite significantly, Zdenka's career is ended by a devastating injury before it could have started. She embodies the new Czechoslovak Socialist Republic with its crippling politics.

When Mawer describes Tomáš's vision of the Glass Room, he refers to the linguistic impoverishment, to the meanings lost in translation: "The word he used for room, pokoj, can also mean peace, tranquility, quiet. So when he said 'the glass room' he was also saying 'the glass tranquility'. Thus does one language fail to make itself felt in another. He loved the Glass Tranquillity." (GR, 333) The multilingualism of the First Czechoslovak Republic fascinates Mawer, according to him culture is associated with language and a mingling of cultures and languages leads to unbelievable cultural refreshment and enrichment. The English version of the book contains words in Czech, in German, even in Russian and consequently, the Czech translation of the book is impoverished by the loss of the effect the mixing of the languages brings. Mawer informs his readers about the difference between the German *Raum* and English *Room* in the afterword saying that:

Raum is, of course, 'room'. Yet this is not the 'room' of English, the *Zimmer* of our holidays, with double bed, wardrobe and writing desk beneath a print of some precipitous Alpine valley. Within the confines of the Germanic 'room' there is room for much more: *Raum* is an expansive word. (GR, 405)

The novel is enriched by the assertion of either playful or mysterious words, which serves as an evidence of the immense cultural and linguistic potential the mingling of different languages, periods and cultures may engender.

The linguistic richness of the First Czechoslovak Republic goes hand in hand with its cultural diversity. As it had been stated above, Mawer mingles real personalities with fictitious characters and even with the characters to whom the real life personalities had served as models. Thus Vítězslava Kaprálová gets presented by the pianist Němec, Rainer von Abt is a disciple of Adolf Loos, Hana Hanáková seduces Hedy Kiesler, the star of Gustav Machatý's film *Ectasy* and helps her to flee from her over-controlling husband

Friedrich Mandl. Apart from direct presentation of the artists, we encounter their work and qualities indirectly by means of innumerable references to them, Liesel plays compositions by Janáček, Rainer von Abt mentions Theo van Doesburg and Mies van der Rohe as his inspirations, he also praises the work of Mondrian or De Stijl. The image of the famous contemporary artist is mirrored in their fictitious descendants and so we may understand Rainer von Abt's visions better if we perceive them in the context of the work of his models, in this case namely Theo van Doesburg:

In the drawings perspective is ambiguous; walls are no longer supporting structures but floating, intersecting planes of primary colour; rooms are not static boxes but conceptual spaces hovering in the air. The volumes of the buildings seem to explode from an inner core, as though erupting into the third dimension and straining for that elusive fourth.⁶⁵

The skilful combination of seemingly contrasting items pervades the whole novel. Viktor and Liesel meet Rainer von Abt in Venice, in the most ornamental city in the world and it is there he enchants them with the razor-cut lines of his designs. Villa Landauer is unlike any other house with its steel “as translucent as water. Light will be as solid as walls and walls as transparent as air.” (GR, 43) The glass as material incarnates the marriage of the opposing characteristics, it is transparent yet it divides sharply the inside from the outside, it is firm yet fragile. The actions taking place in the Glass Room systematically contradict the idea of purity and reason on which the room had been founded, it becomes a place of deceit, of scientific study of the proofs of human inequality, of “the wild variance of lust, the catharsis of confession and the fear of failure.” (GR, 270). And however departing we find these actions from the original idea, they all underline a simple fact and that is that the Glass Room comes to existence and manifests its utmost superiority on the background of human failing and lapses. Hana Hanáková, who denies Viktor's ideals of purity, reason and transparency which he expresses in his speech at the house warming party, is amused by it and goes as far as saying: “You are spoilsport, Viktor,' she accused him. 'I love deceit. Everyone loves deceit. Without deceit there would be no art.’” (GR, 169-70) Sarah Crown, the author of Mawer's portrait in *The Guardian* states that the the juxtaposing of contrastive elements and motifs is almost omnipresent in

65 Simon Mawer, “Diagonal Lives,” *Review in The Guardian*, Saturday 23rd January 2010, 16-17. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/jan/23/theo-van-doesburg-avant-garde-tate>, 1.11.2010)

all of his novels:

These two threads – order versus chaos, impulse balanced by propriety – pursue each other through his fiction as through his life, intertwining and grappling down the pathways of his novels. And nowhere are they more clearly pitted against each other than in the pages of his latest book, the Man Booker-short-listed *The Glass Room*.⁶⁶

Although the *Glass Room* is one of the main protagonists of the novel appearing directly or indirectly in every chapter, it does not impose its will on others, it is not dictating the others what they should do, that would be a propaganda and that would be the utter contradiction of its chief message which is rationality and purity. Apart from the aesthetic delight, the only way the *Glass Room* affects its inhabitants is by representing an alternative point of view, which is sharp and bright, unconcealed by any emotions and individual distortions. And it is from this tension, from this assembly of opposite tendencies that the absolute perfection and stability of the room emerge.

The harmonious union of the seemingly opposites motifs is mediated also by the omnipresent motif of sexuality. Sexuality lies at the bottom of Rainer von Abt's creation, the rectangular cross underpins all his art. Viktor is a devoted father of his two children, Martin and Otilie, yet he is unable to give up his lover Kata, who even accidentally appears within his family circle. Liesel is torn between her love to Viktor and Hana. Suddenly those who had preached water, drink wine. Hana is the one who declares and manifests her sexuality openly and frankly. Unlike Hauptsturmführer Stahl whose sexual suppression leads to a brief eruption with a catastrophic conclusion for Hana. Tomáš cannot help cheating on Zdenka, he does not seem to consider infidelity as betrayal. On the one hand the protagonists' characters may become ambiguous through such revelations, but on the other hand they gain a considerable depth. *The Glass Room* is not only a rhapsody on the particular room, it is also a rhapsody on the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic and this manifests also its sexual liberalism. In a radio interview concerning *The Glass Room* Anna Grmelová states that:

Interwar Czechoslovakia was quite exceptional if you compare it with the countries around it. It was a very liberal country. It was a country where D.H. Lawrence's

⁶⁶ Sarah Crown, "A Life in Books – Simon Mawer," *The Guardian*, Saturday 3rd October 2009, 10-11. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2009/oct/03/simon-mawer-life-in-books>, 1.11.2010)

Lady Chatterley's Lover was translated; it was actually the second translation after the German, even before the French. But the German translation omits whole paragraphs, the Czech does not. So it was a very liberal country, even in terms of sexual life.⁶⁷

The Glass Room frames the history of Viktor and Liesel, the symbol of whose union it should have become. Being a devoted supporter of modernity, Liesel considers her first love making with Viktor, to be the proof of his devotion: "The experience was curiously dispiriting but it was, she supposed, rather a modern thing to do." (GR, 10) Nevertheless, during Liesel's first pregnancy, Viktor meets Kata, a poor seamstress from Vienna, and quite unexpectedly and inexplicably falls in love with her. He is fully aware of the fact that Kata does not love him in return, that he pays for her "services", and still he cannot help it. "He wanted to wake in the morning and find her there with him. If not love itself, he wanted the simulacrum of love." (GR, 71) Up to this point, Viktor had always thought that he could affect the future, that everything, including love, stands on the principles of reason and purity, yet, suddenly, it is him, the propagator of progress and cool consideration, who is trapped by powers vanquishing his rationality, bewitching him body and soul:

Rue, regret for a whole universe of things, the irrevocable nature of one's life, the unbearable sorrow of being, the fact that things cannot be changed, that love, the focused light of passion and hunger should be centred not on the figure of his wife but on the body and soul of half-educated, part-time tart. (GR, 111)

His wife, Liesel, almost loses physical existence during her second delivery, even during the pregnancy, she seemed to become a fantastic creature, a goddess floating above the ground of the Glass Room, and after she comes back from hospital following a complicated delivery, she walks in the open spaces of the Glass Room as a "cool white ghost". Her and Viktor's relationship matures into: "love translated into affection, and lust into a kind of placid contentment." (GR, 87) Liesel in the meantime gradually concedes the fact that Hana's love to her is a mutual feeling. "Liesel watches Hana as though with new eyes and marvels that the form is the same but not the substance. Hana loves her. The word 'completeness' comes to her mind and brings with it a shade of guilt. *J'ai deux amours.*"

67 <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/books/czech-history-through-a-glass-darkly>, 14.3.2010

(GR, 122) When Liesel finds out the truth about the relationship of Viktor and Kata in Switzerland, she neither argues, nor asks for a divorce. She accepts Kata as Viktor's somewhat official lover and is even slightly attracted to Kata. Although we may find the marriage of Viktor and Liesel untrue and spoilt, contradicting the laws of morality, it turns out to be a confirmation of the liberal principles of the whole novel. The Glass Room stands for reason and balance, but it also provides space, a space which is continuous and boundless, a metaphorical space of unlimited possibilities and unconstrained movement, a space which is not owned or labelled, a space which simply is. This continuous space is the basic substance of the Glass Room and *The Glass Room* as well. And humans should be as free and unconstrained as the space they inhabit. The same principle is developed within the novel *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje where the calling for the absence of mapping and labelling contrasts with the profession of the protagonist, Count László de Almásy, who is a cartographer and a desert explorer:

We die containing a richness of lovers and tribes, tastes we have swallowed, bodies we have plunged into and swum up as if rivers of wisdom, characters we have climbed into as if trees, fears we have hidden in as if caves. I wish for all this to be marked on my body when I am dead. I believe in such cartography – to be marked by nature. Not just to label ourselves on a map like the names of rich men and women on buildings. We are communal histories, communal books. We are not owned or monogamous in our taste or experience. All I desire was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps.⁶⁸

The space for which the protagonists of both books metaphorically and literally call is that of Nomads, an undisturbed space where a trajectory is more important than its points, where to dwell does not mean to stay or even to own, where everyone and everything are opened for new experiences. Such type of space has been explored by two French philosophers - Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who established a dichotomy of a “smooth” space and a “striated” space. The “Nomads” understand the changeability of the outside world and reflect it in their own lives. The key term of their existence is not individuality and delimitation from the outside world, but its very opposite – coalescence, movement, the ability to “affect and be affected” coined as “haecceitty”. The principles of the Nomad thinking may be applied to all sorts of human activities. “Nomad thought' does

68 Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* [1992] (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), 277.

not immerse itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference.”⁶⁹ Even the movement of Nomads leaves traces and if those prove to be of permanent character, the formerly smooth space turns into a “striated” or “sedentary” space. But the relationship between the smooth and striated space is not that of exclusion, but that of mixture:

And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space. In the first case, one organizes even the desert; in the second, the desert gains and grows; and the two can happen simultaneously.⁷⁰

If we follow this notion, we may illuminate the repeated co-existence of the opposites, the assembly of contrasting motifs which functions on all levels of *The Glass Room*. The Glass Room itself demonstrates the transformation of “smooth” space into “striated” and back. These are the moments of its re-births when the former inhabitants had left and the new ones had not arrived and the space is bare, unmarked. When Hana confides the sombre history of her confinement in the concentration camp where her child had been taken away from her to Zdenka, the room which had always seemed indifferent, undisturbed, eternal, suddenly changes into the place abounding with memories:

And all around them is the past, frozen into a construct of glass and concrete and chrome, the Glass Room with its onyx wall and its partitions of tropical hardwood and the milky petals of its ceiling lights, a space, a *Raum* so modern when Rainer von Abt designed it, yet now, as Hana Hanáková sits and weeps, so imbued with the past. (*GR*, 372)

The understanding of the urban civilization in the Glass Room marks an immense shift from the Romantic understanding of the urban civilization, so typical for the Modern era, as oppressive, spoilt or muddled. Unlike in *Howards End* or *The Forsyte Saga*, the city is not a corrupting force, a sweeping tide or a “red rust”, it does not incarnate a dangerous beast threatening the innocence and purity of a detached house in the countryside. If we

69 Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Brian Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), Translators Foreword, xii.

70 *Ibid.*, 524.

apply the notion of the “smooth” and the “striated” space, we may view the city as an integral part of the civilization, a microcosm of the perpetual transition of the “smooth” into the “striated”. The view of the Villa Landauer is the city's panorama which is beautiful and attractive, its effect is not devastating, the Romantic detachment of Forster is replaced by a positive vision of the city as an irreplaceable part of civilization. The whole Villa Landauer also embodies the belief in the ability of Art to deny and oppose possible corrupting forces resulting from the interventions of the civilization. The absence of the toponym naming the City underlines the universal meaning of the novel. It also marks the opened, boundless, unmarked, smooth space where the toponyms are redundant, which is the possible future vision of the optimistic and liberal society of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

The Glass Room of the Villa Landauer is the manifestation of a possible combination of interior and landscape, of a connection between the inside and the outside world. The nature and the house do not stand in opposition, they merge together. Rainer von Abt wanted to create a continuous space, “a house that merges seamlessly into the garden outside, a place that is at once of nature and quite aside from nature....” (GR, 43) The question is why? Why is it possible to challenge or even completely remove the barrier between the two worlds by sliding downwards the glass pane which is at the same time the wall of the room? The answer seems to reside in the aspirations of Mies van der Rohe, Rainer von Abt's real life model. The famous designer of Villa Tugendhat left Germany in 1938 and continued his career overseas, namely in the United States. There, almost twenty years after the completion of Villa Tugendhat, he designed “Farnsworth House”, an entirely open glass pavilion, simple, beautiful and elegant which follows the same principles applied in Tugendhat. The interior and exterior merge together seamlessly, they neither copy each other, nor try to overwhelm one another. Mies explains:

Nature, too, shall live its own life. We must beware not to disrupt it with color of our houses and interior fittings. Yet we should attempt to bring nature, houses, and human beings together into a higher unity. *If you view nature through the glass walls of the Farnsworth House, it gains a more profound significance than if viewed from outside. That way more is said about nature – it becomes a part of a larger whole.*⁷¹

⁷¹ Quoted in Claire Zimmerman, *Mies van der Rohe: The Structure of Space* [2006] (Köln: Taschen, 2009), 63 (emphasis added).

Mies van der Rohe wanted to achieve “a higher unity” so that the inside would become the organic part of the outside. The openness of the building as well as the openness of the morality and human thinking join the aesthetic ideas concerning the house, the nature around it and its inhabitants. Only such process may ensure the materialisation of Heidegger's notion of “poetic dwelling” where the emphasis is given to the need of a dwelling which is not a mere shelter, but where humans may project their ideas so that the place of dwelling enables the mingling of humans' physical as well as metaphysical needs. Villa Landauer with its strict, razor cut lines belongs to the human sphere, the sphere of Ideas with its “ruled lines as sharp as razor cuts, a mathematical precision beyond natural.” (GR,41) It does not belong to the Nature in the way Howards End belongs there, it does not want to stay hidden or to merge with it. When Rainer von Abt says he wants to free man from the cave, he means that he wants to free man from the subjugation to Nature, house should be the prolongation, extension of humans, it should be able to co-exist with the Nature, to create its respectable counterpart, to maintain its human identity:

He extolled the virtues of glass and steel and concrete, and decried the millstones of brick and stone that hung about people's necks. 'Ever since Man came out of the cave he has been building caves around him,' he cried. 'Building caves! But I wish to take Man out of the cave and float him in the air. I wish to give him a glass space to inhabit.' Glass Space, *Glassraum*. It was the first time Liesel had heard the expression. (GR, 18)

What should be stressed is the need to exist in a symbiosis, to CO-Exist, not to disturb but to form a clearly defined, clearly distinguishable part and thus to achieve a higher unity, a perfect harmony, where the identities of both are preserved and enrich one another. Nature, house and man are united, man's vision is taken into account. Man and Art become counterparts of Nature. Humans are incorporated into the understanding of the house and Nature as they present their irreplaceable parts. We should not forget that it is through our eyes that the world is perceived, the objects are seen and evaluated, it is through our eyes that the objects form unique combinations. Humans constantly measure, compare, it is an essential part of our nature. It is through this measurement that humans exist, that they dwell on Earth. Architecture is then a unique expression of such measurement. And Rainer von Abt underlines the emergence of a higher unity, a whole which is undoubtedly more elaborate and mediates the shift in the understanding of the

relationship between Man, Nature and Art from the Romantic coalescence to the Modern co-existence. However, this understanding includes also almost the essence of fragility and a possible misuse as it depends on mutual respect without which such philosophy may be viewed only as a more elaborate and cunning imposition of Will.

The Glass Room and the whole house are deserted by its original owners as those are forced to emigrate. Since then nobody views Villa Landauer as a home. It is turned into a laboratory, a gym and a museum and although it may seem tragic that it never resumes its original function, the constant changes only emphasize the eternal, atemporal existence of the room. It is like a ship ploughing through the waters of the twentieth century. “The sound of the wind in the trees is a sea sound and the house itself is a ship pitching out into the choppy waters of the city with the wind beating about the stanchions and bulkheads.” (*GR*, 167) An incarnation of a perfect object of Art, the Glass Room defines Space and defies Time, referring to the ageless world of Ideas, standing absolute and untouchable in its perfection. “Perfection of proportion, of illumination, of mood and manner. Beauty made manifest.” (*GR*, 74) Years pass, polity alternates, but the house exists, “fixed in time and space like a fossil”, a monument of a golden age, a temple of space and light: “And all around them is the Glass Room, a place of balance and reason, an ageless place held in a rectilinear frame that handles light like a substance and volume like a tangible material and denies the very existence of time.” (*GR*, 404)

Conclusion

*The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is Buan, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.*⁷²

Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"

*[...] it never occurs to us to embody the main principle in life in our buildings; we load our houses with decoration, gimcracks, corners, anything to distract the eye. On the contrary, the eye should rest ; get your effects with a few strong lines.*⁷³

John Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*

We live in a world of houses and buildings. We are born and die inside, we work and rest there, we are either enchanted or disappointed by their design, but almost never unconcerned. Martin Heidegger calls the activity humans perform in their houses "dwelling". According to him, to dwell means to exist. And consequently the way we dwell illustrates the way we live, it illustrates the multitude of actions, attitudes and emotions linked to the place of our existence. What is vital for human life, from the perspective of Phenomenology is a home, an anchor, a point of departure of understanding and respect of the world. Home may be viewed as a miniature, as a microcosm of the world, so that we are able to overcome the Cartesian reduction into subject and object, them and us, inside and outside. Although we operate with those terms, we understand that they do not stand in opposition, but that they are a part of a larger whole.

The role assigned to houses in fiction corresponds to their importance in reality. They are inseparable from the image of the character and even if their role is diminished or they are left out completely, it is perceived as significant in the context of the complex understanding of the work. On the other hand, the space given to the representation of the house in novels vary largely according to the individual differences of the authors, but also according to the period and the current literary style. Nevertheless, we may say that some representations mark significant points in the history of literature. And this thesis

⁷²Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 147.

⁷³ John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga Volume One - The Man of Property* [1906] (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 96.

concentrates on such cases in the context of British fiction since 1906 up to the present.

An exceptional novel by E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, opens a new chapter in the understanding of a house. It manifests the importance of home, of a stable centre in the chaos of modern industrial civilization. *Howards End* is not a mere extension of a character, it is not a mere descriptive device, on the contrary, it is a house full of spiritual power and authority. It is a place which brings people back to earth, back to simple pleasures of smelling the freshly cut hay or watching the mowers cutting the meadow. Regardless of its simplicity, it is an incarnation of all that is exceptional, exquisite and endearing in English culture, at least from the point of view of Margaret Schlegel, the “heroic connector”. What Margaret strives for is not only the ability to perceive the world in its complexity, to assign importance to all events, minor or major, to assign respectability to all living creatures, but she also yearns for illuminating those who are not capable of such perception. Those like the Wilcoxes, who secure the smooth running of the society and the omnipresent and omnipotent business, but who stand too close to see, to be able to fully understand the consequences of their activities. *Howards End* as a symbol of a harmonious union of humans and nature resists the corrupting forces of the urban civilization invading the countryside with its motor-cars and “red rust”. The house is also a living proof of Margaret's perception of houses as living organisms, it demonstrates its own will and thus it becomes a feminine sanctuary, a matriarchal community of the Schlegels, their new home and means of their connection to the past with its traditions. *Howards End* is transformed into a peaceful island in the roaring tides of “nomadic” civilization which transforms humans into planetary beings severing all the ties with their ancestors or even their contemporaries. By re-uniting in *Howards End*, Margaret and Helen Schlegel fulfil the definition of “dwelling” given by Martin Heidegger in his later essays “Building Dwelling Thinking”: “To dwell, to be set at piece, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. The fundamental character of dwelling is sparing and preserving.”⁷⁴ What *Howards End* also brings is the vision described almost sixty-five years later by Jan Patočka. In *The Heretical Essays in the Philosophy* he studies the state of the Industrial civilization and its impact on human lives and his conclusion matches perfectly the standpoint incarnated by the novel and particularly by the house. In the introduction it has been said that a house does not speak only for its tenant but also for the period and that is true, however the statement needs to be

74 Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought* translated by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 154.

clarified. Not only does the house speak for the period of its origin, but it also conveys the attitude of the past period towards the contemporary period. Thus is *Howards End* turned into a living memory.

The Forsyte Saga explores seemingly similar themes as *Howards End*, but what has to be born in mind is the switch of optics, the shift of the point of view. *The Forsyte Saga* comprises three novels - *The Man of Property*, *In Chancery*, *To Let* and they are all centred on a typical representative of English upper class and a close relative of the Wilcoxes – the Forsyte family and it is through their eyes that the world is perceived. And although their views are opposed to those of a free-thinking architect, a desperate wife or even a rebel branch of their own family represented by Old Jolyon, they are always at the centre of the author's attention with their unique sense of Property. Their relationship towards houses reflects the god they worship. According to them houses are investments, and vital ones, not only because of the considerable sum of money they require, or the fact that their prize may rise, but because their houses are expression of their wealth, of their position in society, they are temples of the cult of Property. And the author, John Galsworthy test the limits of such a cult and puts the results on display. So thus we witness Soames Forsyte's unsuccessful attempts to own people, namely his wives, or to possess an exceptional house in Robin Hill designed by Bosinney. True, Soames appreciates the unique design of the house, but that is largely due to the fact that he views it as a great investment and a splendid golden cage for his revolting wife Irene. The moment he finds out that his plan of transposing her there would not be realized, he sells the house. The question is whether because of the bitter memories or owing to the fact that he is not able to possess fully a house which expresses by every line, by virtually every detail harmony, balance and liberty. The singularity of the novel does not reside only in the presentation of a particular social group, but in the way the author handles even the subtle details of its existence and provides a deep insight into the motivation of the individual protagonists and thus exceeds the limits of a mere social satire. The house in Robin Hill thus incarnates the function of the catalyst for the outbreak of the irreconcilable combat of Art and Possession.

The Glass Room written almost a hundred years later presents a concept of home and house which seemingly contradict the concepts presented by both previous instances. *Howards End* is an abode of spirituality and tradition, the old house of uncle Timothy is the residue of the past in the centre of progressive London. Ruth Wilcox even states that “it would have killed her” if *Howards End* had been torn down; the idea of destroying an old building horrifies Ruth, she pities Margaret because of the loss of Wickham Place. And the

Landauers? The Landauers despise clinching to the past, the thick walls, heavy cushions and golden ormolu do not tempt them, it represents all that “their new house is not going to be”. They want to start anew, find a new home in a house which does not limit or bound their potentials, but on the contrary, which lets them breathe and ideally even provides an inspiration. Their house should mirror Viktor's perception of the world as a boundless, continuous space, space of immense possibilities, space which is smooth and unmarked. And it is exactly what the Glass Room provides with its large window glass panes and the space undisturbed by any partitions. Does this oppose to Heidegger's conception of dwelling as a place which is marked, which grows out of the striated space? Yes and no. Although the Glass Room successfully fulfils Viktor's desire, the rest of the house furnishes the cosy, closed and private rooms which serve as bedrooms and children rooms which enhance the feeling of intimacy and which are as important for human life as the Glass Room downstairs. Despite the fact that the Glass Room is a palace of balance, harmony and lustrous shine, implying Plato's World of Ideas, the world of perfect forms and proportions, pervaded by light and reason, it is also a home, even though only for a short time.⁷⁵ The farewell scene of Liesel saying goodbye to the room, to the house and the whole optimistic period of the First Czechoslovak Republic is highly emotional and manifests movingly the pain caused by the loss of the “dwelling”. “This is no place for sentiment. It is a place of reason. And yet sentiment is what she feels, the anguish of departure, the exquisite pain of remembering, the fragility of being. When will she be here again?”⁷⁶(GR, 184)

What all the novels have in common is that they depict the protagonists in quest of a home, although their conceptions differ. The Schelegel sisters are even separated due to their loss of Wickham Place. The Wilcoxes are the representatives of the impending “nomadic” civilization, their convictions notwithstanding lack the qualities of the true “Nomads” as described in *A Thousand Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, they are not able to disentangle themselves from the tendency to own, to manipulate, to direct and to establish more or less stable home somewhere. Old Jolyon yearns for a new start of

⁷⁵ Avšak teprve tím, že se v něm bydlí, stává se dům domem. Stavění domu je opravdu tím, čím je, jen tehdy, je-li již předem určeno tím, že má umožnit bydlení. Toto umožňování spočívá v tom, že probouzí a zaručuje našemu bydlení jeho původnější možnosti. Jestliže promyslíme slovo bydlet v dostatečně šíři a bytostné hloubce, stane se pro nás pojmenováním toho, jak lidé na zemi, pod klenbou nebes putují od zrození k smrti. Je to putování mnohotvárné a proměnlivé. Vždy a všude je však toto putování základním rysem bydlení jakožto lidského způsobu zdržování se mezi nebem a zemí, mezi zrozením a smrtí, mezi radostí a bolestí, mezi prací a slovem.

Martin Heidegger: “Hebel – Domáci přítel” in *Básnický bydlí člověk* (Praha:OIKOYMENH, 1993), 143.

⁷⁶ Simon Mawer, *The Glass Room* (London: Little Brown, 2009), 184.

his relationship with his son and his illegitimate family and the house in Robin Hill becomes a perfect refuge and a respectable investment. Old Jolyon cherishes Beauty and Youth, but that does not mean he despises or ignores the charm of Possession. Their individual conceptions, the idiosyncrasies their choices incarnate underpin the unique and determining relations between a house, a dwelling and its inhabitants. The level of complexity of such relations has been hopefully elucidated to some extent by this diploma thesis on the examples of the selected novels.

Although the Schlegels, the Wilcoxes, the Forsytes and the Landauers all belong to the rank of upper classes, this thesis rejects any elitism. It may seem that only people with considerable financial means may build houses according to their preference and only those are able to “dwell” in the sense of Heidegger's conception. That is not true. As E.M. Forster illustrates in *A Room with a View*, to dwell does not necessarily mean to own an exceptional villa, it means to love and treasure home, to be able to appreciate its deep significance for our lives, to comprehend its firm bonding with our existence:

The situation was so glorious, the house so commonplace, not to say impertinent. ... So impertinent and yet the house 'did', for it was the home of people who loved their surroundings honestly. Other houses in the neighbourhood had been built by expensive architects, over other their inmates had fidgeted sedulously, yet all these suggested the accidental, the temporary; while Windy Corner seemed as inevitable as an ugliness of Nature's own creation. One might laugh at the house, but one never shuddered.⁷⁷

Both Philip Bosinney and Rainer von Abt incarnate emblematic examples of perfect artists, of explorers of harmony and balance, they are both rare examples of personae capable to capture the space within the walls of rooms and buildings, to imagine and design the boundaries from which the space may start “presencing”. Rainer von Abt shows a rare understanding for the needs, beliefs, ideas and wishes of his clients, as he shares these with them. He proposes to the Landauers to design a whole new way of life and he succeeds in it. Philip Bosinney in *The Man of Property* on the other hand strives in order to elevate his work above the level of its future owner, he tries to add some qualities like the sense of liberty and respect which Soames does not possess. The conflict which follows does not result only from Soames's jealousy, but is provoked by the clash between the

77 E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* [1908] (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 164.

message the house conveys and its owner.

In the opening quotation Georges Perec underlines the transient character of places. Viewed from the perspective of the defining relationship between a place and its inhabitant, our lives as well as our dwellings seem to be destined to flux. Nevertheless, by means of literature we may overcome this obstacle. E.M. Forster, John Galsworthy and Simon Mawer all have succeeded in capturing the fleeting essence of the places. They have enclosed the ephemeral space within the walls of Howards End, the house in Robin Hill and Villa Landauer, having transformed these houses into ageless, floating and divine objects of Art, with their “deep -rooted, untouched and almost untouchable” spaces leaving furrows and traces of indisputable importance and irrepressible charm.

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