

Schlegel Capitalism: E. M. Forster and the Cultural Form of Modernist Adventure

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"So take warning: you must work, or else you must pretend to work, which is what I do. Work, work, work if you'd save your soul and your body."

—Margaret Schlegel, *Howards End* (1910)

Margaret's plea to her somewhat work-phobic younger brother might sound a little odd, since she does not—work, that is. Instead, as she enigmatically puts it in the preceding line, she "pretends" to work, engaging in a host of cultural activities with an energy redolent of work, perhaps, but with few of its economic imperatives. What this strange formulation *pretending to work* might mean in the context of E. M. Forster's 1910 novel—indeed, in the context of 1910 more broadly—is one way to frame the

question posed by this essay. On the one hand, it could be read as a familiar token of the liberal guilt that has come to define readings of Schlegelian privilege as leisure-class aestheticism. Margaret "pretends" to work, in this familiarly rehearsed account, to assuage her own bad feelings about people who actually *do*—whether the novel's downwardly mobile insurance clerk, Leonard Bast; his *déclassé* wife Jacky, formerly employed in the sex trade; the imperial business magnate and Margaret's prospective husband, Henry Wilcox; or indeed the colonial workforce notoriously laboring below the novel's diegetic horizon.[1] Nonetheless, bad as Margaret (and Forster) may feel about their personal and cultural embroilment in these forms of work and exploitation (indeed, bad as *we* may feel about them), there is another way to read this "pretend" work—as less compensatory, more aspirational.

Work (of the non-pretend kind) was of course central to the politics of first wave feminism that framed *Howards End* on both sides. It figures prominently in feminist literature and polemics from the New Woman novels of the *fin de siècle* with their stoically working heroines, to Olive Schreiner's manifesto, *Woman and Labour* (1911), published the year after *Howards End* (1910), which argued that bourgeois women had been reduced to "sex-parasites" entirely dependent on the work of others, and which called for women's "share of honored and socially useful human toil," through to Virginia Woolf's manifestos of the 1920s and 30s (*A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*), in which work bears the double burden not only of rescuing women from servility to men, but also of renovating feminine subjectivity and society in the process.[2] In all these cases and more, work of a nondomestic, remunerated variety becomes a complex, often overdetermined, sign for women's identity, independence, and freedom from traditional social structures and modes of patriarchal oppression.

Such a politically charged set of discourses about work did not arise in a historical vacuum. The period 1890–1940 saw an influx of women into, as well as a diversification of their roles within, the formal labor market, first as low-end professional workers—teachers, clerks, typists, telephonists, and so forth; then as precarious manual and cognitive workers for Britain's military-industrial complex during two world wars.[3] In between those flashpoints, an enlarging (if still minority) constituency was employed in mid to high-level professions such as journalism,

advertising, publishing, medicine, and artistic production of various sorts.[4] Add to that both the paid and unpaid domestic work that women still were (and are) expected to perform in the majority of households, not to mention the massive amount of political and civic activity that sought to secure better vocational conditions for their sex, and the picture as a whole looks more like overwork than anything else. So, why Margaret's pretending? Or, to put it another way, if Forster wanted Margaret to bear the utopian possibilities of work ("work if you'd save your soul and your body") then why did he not just give her a job?

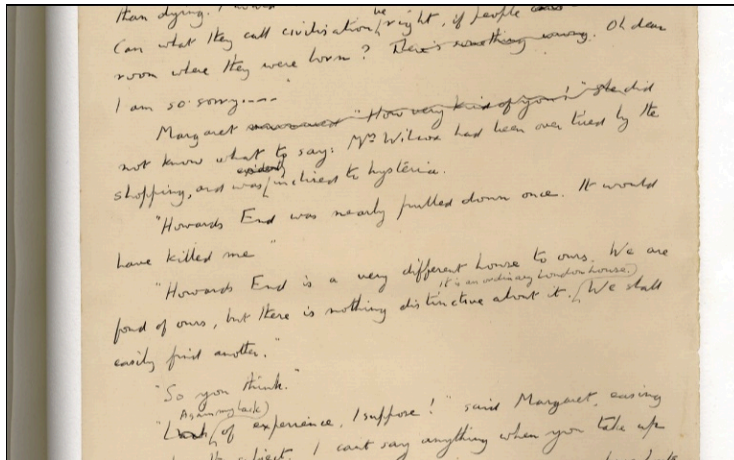


Fig. 1. Detail of manuscript draft of Howard's End by E. M. Forster, with some alterations (<https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/howards-end-and-the-condition-of-england>). Usage terms © The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge and The Society of Authors as the E. M. Forster Estate.

The answer to this question can be sought, I think, in the particular historical contradiction between work's aspirational values and its everyday, lived reality. As Morag Shiach has explored at length in her book, *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890–1930* (2004), women's relationship to work in the first few decades of the twentieth century was one of profound ambivalence. On the one hand, work carried the promises of social freedom, financial independence, and self-fulfillment. On the other, it meant new degradations, forms of mechanization, and alienation that were felt as sacrifice and loss. The form of this contradiction is perhaps most concisely represented in Schreiner's aforementioned call for "honored... toil," a phrase which awkwardly registers work's double status as both opportunity and burden. Thus, for many feminists of the period the challenge was to both infuse work with

aspirational content while simultaneously critiquing the workplace conditions and values of the labor market for their sex. [5]

The argument of this article, however, turns the screw of this logic one notch further, since my intention is not so much to recuperate a "feminist Forster"—although feminist principles certainly animate my own interpretation of his work—as it is first of all to demonstrate how Margaret's position as a financially independent and "cultivated" woman came to vicariously, or, in psychoanalytical terms, projectively, solve occupational deadlocks and workplace contradictions that Forster felt acutely in his own professional career as a male cultural worker. *Howards End* has been widely read as containing a trenchant critique of the inequities and injustices of twentieth century capitalism and imperialism, but in this reading it emerges as something else, too: an aesthetic romance in which Margaret's forms of "pretending" vie to displace industrial capitalism on its own symbolic terrain, as a form of enchanted adventure harboring a spirit of postindustrial, creative work.[6]

"There was something uncanny in her triumph": From Pastoral to Neo-Adventure

Margaret might not "work" in the ways that we have been trained to read work as literary and cultural historians. She does not have a job, nor does she embark on a career.[7] Living on the independent means of inherited and invested wealth, Margaret is a fictional manifestation of Bloomsbury's own rentier class privileges. Yet, like Bloomsbury, what's distinctive about the way Margaret occupies her class position is that, despite her freedom from work's necessity she desires fulfilment through work, nonetheless. Moreover, she seeks to disrupt and transform work's norms and values and inject it with creativity and imagination.[8] In narrative terms, we can say that Margaret harbors a surplus of aesthetic skills and cultural competencies that spill beyond the containers of both leisured aesthetics and domestic femininity, and take on a strange (and modernist) kind of productivity. In the novel's closing pastoral scene this vocational surplus is most powerfully detectible as a formal one. While her sister Helen chats breezily to the children of the yeomanry, Margaret's mind is conspicuously elsewhere, distracted by an item of work:

Margaret put down her work and regarded them absently.
 'What was that?' she asked.

'Tom wants to know whether baby is old enough to play
 with hay?'

'I haven't the least notion,' answered Margaret, and took
 up her work again.[9]

What kind of work is Margaret putting down and picking up in such absent-mindedness? Malcolm Page is one of very few critics who has commented on it, suggesting that it is "sewing," and thus a synecdoche for Margaret's gendered (if unconventional) reconciliation with the feminine domestic scene.[10] But this work is, in fact, embedded in Margaret's alienation from the expertise of childrearing ("whether baby is old enough"), as well as marked by her nonidentity with the earthly wisdom (and domestic toil) embodied by Mrs. Wilcox the first as a figure for traditional, matriarchal authority and agrarian rootedness, via the latter's repeated association with wisps of hay. Despite its incongruity, Forster keeps returning to this distracting item of work. Helen continues talking, but "Margaret never stopped working" (Forster, *Howards End*, 287). When Charles's younger son, Paul, comes to beckon Margaret into the house to discuss the family inheritance she "took her work and followed him" (290).

Margaret's "work" rubs against the grain of that final scene like an irritant in the novel's closural horizon, pointing obliquely to an alternative narrative of subjectivity, one which is registered via an inchoate, equally incongruous rhetoric of heroism used to describe her inheritance of the family property: "There was something uncanny in her triumph", writes Forster as Henry announces the transfer of title deeds, "She, who had never expected to conquer anyone, had charged straight through these Wilcoxes and broken up their lives" (291). Such a remark is truly "uncanny," and not only in the typically Forsterian manner in which it striates the home and the heterosexual romance plot with erotic and economic forces that feel distinctly *unheimlich*.^[11] The narration of Margaret's victorious "charge" through Wilcox lines also signals a weird familiarity of another kind in its diction, rendering Forster's reluctant domestic protagonist as if she were the hero of a *fin de siècle* adventure novel, arrogating to her a mode of heroic action out of joint with the pastoral idyll of the closing scene. Rather than read such rhetorical inflation as the

blackened irony of a pyrrhic victory—Margaret's ethical failure to "connect," as Wilfred Stone lamented long ago—I am suggesting we read it as an interpretive prompt to rethink the narrative symbolics (and workplace politics) of *Howards End*.^[12]

After all, this isn't the only place where Margaret's activity is described via the displaced generic tropes of imperial romance. As we shall see, her character is saturated by a modified language of heroic individualism redolent of the imperial adventurer novels of Rider Haggard or John Buchan. As several studies seeking to complicate the romance/modernism divide have demonstrated, the treasure-hunters of the *fin de siècle* also "pretended" to work, occupying a nebulous relation to formal economies of labor. Such heroes encoded fantasies of unalienated labor and sexual charisma that transcended the bureaucratic constraints of metropolitan rationality and anxiety ridden masculinity. For both Nicholas Daly and David Trotter, *fin de siècle* romance overlaps with a subset of modernist experimentalism, whether in their shared use of the global periphery to vanish the conditions of commodity fetishism, or to restore enchantment to the technocratic mental labor of cognitive elites via what Trotter calls the romance of "postliberal paranoia."^[13] Yet in both cases, the literary fantasy in question is avowedly masculinist. Margaret's "triumph" might be heroic but the action it encodes is more akin to the production of nonnormative social relations and kinship structures—*breaking up lives*, a phrase which, in that slightly oblique, Forsterian way, is meant to signal the strange familial compromise waged by the novel's ending.^[14]

What would it mean, then, to take the novel's generic displacements of romance seriously, and to read *Howards End* as a treasure story not, *qua* Wilcoxes, centered on the extraction of imperial rubber, but on a heist of English land and the occupation and modernization of a country house? What would it reveal to place Margaret at the center of this narrative as its buccaneering adventurer? What kinds of work does Margaret's uncanny heroism encode, and what sorts of value is it capable of producing other than those legible in the bourgeois languages of property?

As we have already seen via Margaret's uncanny or nondomesticated "work," we are not referring here to the unpaid labor of a housewife—a gendered mode of service that disappears from the novel with Ruth Wilcox's death.^[15] Rather

than trying to make Margaret fit within Forster's strained pastoral idyll, in this essay I argue that her heroism encodes a fantasy of charismatic, creative work, one that seeks to place feminized aesthetic sensitivity in the service of re-grounding property relations beyond the social mandate of patriarchy and the economic spirit of industrial capitalism. In this way, Margaret's visionary work also allows us to reconceptualize the recently elaborated "queer" component of *Howards End*, not from the standpoint of desire (Margaret and Ruth's brief rapprochement) but via the reconfiguration of kinship relations as they are structured by the gendered division of labor. The novel invests its queered vocational fantasy with enchantment via a modified deployment of the character tropes and rhetorics of heroic adventure, while simultaneously stripping vocational enchantment and charisma from the characters of imperial romance—i.e., the Wilcoxes and their West African Rubber Company.[16]

As Nathan Hensley has recently shown in *Forms of Empire: The Poetics of Victorian Sovereignty* (2016), adventure fiction mediated the contradictions of a hegemonic liberal state by dressing up neo-epic, masculine action (theft, murder, conquest, etc.) in the fine clothes of liberal ideas, whether family reunion, political regime change, or scientific exploration. *Howards End* reverses this mediation, investing liberal ideas and aesthetic capacities with all the robustness and extralegal sovereignty inherent in adventure's modes of renegade action. If *fin de siècle* romance attempted to render Britain's twilight bid for global hegemony the narrative semblance of liberalism, then Forster's aesthetic romance attempts to lend liberal values the force of heroic action. This rhetoric of action and questing, moreover, is also a fantasy of work. Much like his Bloomsbury colleague, Virginia Woolf, to whom I will turn briefly later, Forster renders the feminine aesthetic psyche *productive of value*. Such a generic reversal is so startling—both in literary and sociological terms—that it has gone under the radar of previous critics of both *Howards End* and modernism at large, who tend to read aesthetic and cognitive activities as a retreat from regimes of capitalist work, rather than as the emerging productivity of the aesthetic imagination.[17]

In Forster's case, what we might call the decadence of the intellect and the imagination has been doubly locked in by Lionel Trilling's seminal reading of *Howards End*. Writing at the apex of

midcentury American Fordism, when capitalist growth and industrial production had been welded to one another, Trilling figures the intellectual—embodied by the Schlegels—as parasitical “upon the business civilization he is likely to fear and despise.”[18] In this reading of the novel, Wilcoxes are the creditors funding Schlegel culture, or as Margaret herself admits at one point: “More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it” (Forster, *Howards End*, 149). But the corollary of this admission of liberal dependency was not predetermined, either narratively or historically. While *Howards End* might seem to have offered us one answer based on a kind of industrial patronage of the arts via its famously forced marriage plot, it also presents another—critically unexplored—that is centered on renewed economic competition via its representation of intellectual activity as economically productive and narratively heroic.

To analytically separate this account of cultural productivity and aesthetic romance from Trilling’s charge of intellectual parasitism, it is necessary to complexify his reading with a more nuanced account of the novel’s gender and sexual relations. The male gender of Trilling’s intellectual is perhaps nominal rather than particular. But if we *were* to particularize it then it would soon become clear that male and female intellectual ability are not represented as equivalent by the novel, neither across nor within class categories—nor even within the same family. Margaret’s virtuoso intellect and capacity for aesthetic synthesis is not only superlative among her peers but pseudomagical in its capacity to produce effects that are decidedly extra-aesthetic.

In its far-reaching (if underappreciated) bid to render aesthetic creativity available to capital, Margaret’s heroism is not only oppositional to late-industrial modes of value production; it also anticipates shifts in the locus of economic practice characteristic of our own historical moment. For our purposes, we can characterize this moment as one of “creative capitalism,” a phrase used by sociologists and, more recently, literary critics, to describe the processes by which capitalism post-1968 has incorporated an “artistic critique” of Taylorist tendencies in order to infuse work with “imagination,” “innovation,” and “creativity.” In the historical wake of what Andrew Ross has described as the “industrialization of bohemia” those terms are now capitalism’s own, but they weren’t always so.[19] As Sarah Brouillette has recently urged, more “research is needed to account for the

particularity, historicity, emergence, and spread of the vocabulary that makes contemporary labor an aesthetic act of self-exploration, self-expression, and self-realization." [20] The wager of this article is that modernism's peculiar reworking of creative activity as a frontier romance or "adventure," constitutes a crucially unexplored moment in the century-long spread of the vocabulary and the ideology of creative capitalism. "[M]oney, supremely useful; intellect, rather useful; imagination, of no use at all" (Forster, *Howards End*, 25). That's a choice Schlegel complaint from Margaret's late father, but what's its corollary? Not, I think, that we should bow before imagination's uselessness—which would be more akin to the Wildeian aestheticism espoused by Margaret's younger brother, Tibby—but rather that the imagination should be put to new uses, become the site of new use-values, without, crucially, being reduced to the nexus of pure exchange or commodification.

I emphasize that last caveat about commodification so as to remind us that Forster's historical moment was obviously not our own, and while this reading might carry a value for rethinking creative labor in the present, it does so only because the Schlegel ambition to render the imagination useful is not identical with the instrumentalizing imperatives of contemporary capitalism. Indeed, my hope is that by opening up for critique an earlier moment of disruption to industrial modes of production—at the near rather than far end of Fordism's triumph, at the first rather than second wave of feminist praxis—we might recuperate some of the more radical challenges issued to work culture by the workings of the imagination without, as Nancy Fraser has put it, "serving the legitimation needs of a new form of capitalism." [21]

Forster's critique of industrialism and imperialism was in many ways defeated by the placing of the economy on a war-footing post-1914, a development which saw the production of material goods (by a largely female workforce) become newly urgent, and which left little prospect for a national economy premised on the kind of feminized aesthetic activity exemplified by Bloomsbury. [22] But as Raymond Williams once argued, neither Bloomsbury's failure to universalize their boldest social ambitions, nor the uneven development of those ambitions across time, should prevent us from viewing them as "one of the advanced formations of their class," nor from better elucidating the "the *difference* between the fruit and its rotting, or between the hopefully planted seed and its fashionably distorted tree"

(emphasis added).[23] He already sensed in 1980 that many of Bloomsbury's "advanced" ideas about gender, sexuality and culture would be incorporated into bourgeois dogma and mainstream capitalism, including what he called "the cult of conspicuous-appreciative-consumption" (166). "Appreciation" will become a keyword of this analysis, too, but in its Bloomsbury origins we shall see that it was by no means straightforwardly collocated with conspicuous consumption.

Finally, to reread *Howards End* as an early romance of aesthetic work is also to enquire into the gendered development of contemporary creative capitalism. As Nancy Fraser (*Fortunes of Feminism*) and Sianne Ngai have both pointed out, sociological accounts of the feminization or "softening" of work—which often go hand in hand with discourses about workplace creativity—too often fail to ground their analyses in the material experiences of gendered bodies.[24] Against that abstracting tendency in sociological thought, this article reads workplace aspirations as conditioned, if never quite determined, by categories of gender and sexuality. By returning to an earlier bid to render cultural and aesthetic skills available to capital, I intend to account for the differential work of gendered bodies themselves, as well as the discursive "regendering" of work more broadly.

“Appreciate the Heroism”: Problems in Cultural Work

Toward those ends, let us return to Margaret's vocational pep talk to her younger brother with which we began. The conversation can be read as testing ground for vocational abilities inflected by gender and sexual identities. Urged by his sister to take up work, Tibby can only respond with groans. Advised to summon professional role models, he can only recall a man named "Mr Vyse," a pun underscoring his bleak view of the professions, as well as an oblique reference to Cecil Vyse, the emasculated antihero of *A Room with a View*. As we shall see in more detail, Tibby embodies masculinity's vocational as well as sexual fate under total expertise, of professional work evacuated of manly charisma. Margaret, however, is seemingly quite unflummoxed by her brother's lack of enthusiasm in the face of the job market, confident that "men have developed the desire for work" and that "for women, too, 'not to work' will soon become as shocking as 'not to be married' was a hundred years ago" (Forster, *Howards End*, 94).

Not sharing Tibby's vocational fatigue, Margaret's desire for work calls to her mind several role models, including her prospective husband, who has supposedly "worked regularly and honestly" (95). Such admiration for the work of the colonial classes, however, relies on some very subtle distinctions; namely, disaggregating workers and the ideologies which valorize them from ethically (and aesthetically) unworkable outcomes:

"I can't bother over results," said Margaret, a little sadly.
 "They are too difficult for me. I can only look at the men.
 An Empire bores me, so far, but I can appreciate the
 heroism that builds it up." (95)

Heroism without empire—if we can imagine such a thing in 1910—would be what Margaret describes as "activity without civilization," a utopian quotient so metaphysical as to be "what we shall find in heaven" (95).

Heaven, or, perhaps, *Howards End*, since "activity without civilization" can be taken as a working definition of Margaret's brand of vocational pretending: work written via a revised (or "appreciated") mode of "heroism" placed in the service of anticivilizational or antihegemonic ends. If Margaret can "appreciate" the heroism of empire, then her work is also a form of heroic appreciation. Indeed, "appreciation" names what Forster understood to be the kernel of charismatic culture-work under increasingly bureaucratic regimes of training. Margaret's pretend work solves occupational deadlocks that were endemic to the male professions of the modernist era, and that Forster, as a critic and broadcaster as well as a novelist, felt acutely in his own career. As we can see by turning to Forster's later work as a critic, he wished to exercise the most exuberant cultural charisma while severing it from the institutional strictures of rule-bound and hard-learned expertise.

This two-step maneuver is perhaps most deftly realized in Forster's 1947 essay, "The *Raison d'Etre* of Criticism in the Arts," a lecture delivered at a symposium on music at Harvard University. There, Forster would oppose the pleasure of "appreciation" to the skills needed for criticism. Forster turns to music as "the deepest of the arts and deep beneath the arts" in order to explicate the work of the professional critic.^[25] Having, he says, "no authority" and "being an amateur whose inadequacy will become all too obvious," he proceeds to develop a theory of

criticism founded on nothing more than "a desire to listen," a sense of "love" towards the music (Forster, "The *Raison d'Etre*," 107). But it turns out that love is a necessary but not sufficient condition for criticism, that while "appreciation ought to be enough," unless combined with specialist training "it will not bite" (107, 108). Yet training is quite literally undesirable, since it "may sterilize the sensitiveness that is being trained" (108). Stuck in this bad antithesis between amateurish dilettantism and professional expertise, Forster's essay tacks back and forth, seemingly unable to find a solution, and eventually insisting that "love" must form the *basis* of professional culture work, even if it cannot constitute its entire extent.[26]

Simultaneously, however, there's another mode of reconciliation enacted in Forster's essay, which dresses down valuable professional expertise in the modest clothing of inexperience, and thus arrives at a form of charismatic ability via the backdoor. Let us call it *sprezzatura*. Forster enacts this strategy by insisting on his own amateur status as a musical critic, despite what the essay goes on to evince as a fairly impressive (if self-deprecating) repertoire of musical knowledge and skill.[27] Forster's self-effacing style thus attempts to embody what he outlines as his ideal (and impossible) professional, an individual who "is thoroughly versed in the score of the Ninth Symphony and can yet hear the opening bars as a trembling introduction in A to the unknown" —that is, as if hearing it with the "surprise" of an amateur (Forster, "The *Raison d'Etre*," 119). Only such a critic "has reached the highest rank in his profession" (119). Such listening would, Forster admits, be "super-rational" (119).[28]

Turning back to *Howards End*, we can see how the particular affordances of narrative allow Forster to solve this professional deadlock in more thoroughgoing ways. That is, Margaret's "pretend" work figures precisely a "super-rational," which is to say narrative and symbolic, attempt at solving the problems Forster could not fully resolve in his professional career. If the ideal critic-intellectual is the person who can listen to Beethoven in two ways at once—impressionistically and scholastically—this will no doubt remind us of the famous episode from chapter five of *Howards End*, in which the Schlegels attend a recital of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.[29] Margaret's younger siblings narrativize the sundered antitheses of pure appreciation and practiced expertise, alternatives which are written as mock-heroic femininity and antiheroic masculinity, respectively.

Helen sees "heroes and shipwrecks in the music's flood," "goblins, and then a trio of elephants dancing," absurd, synesthetic impressions which overwhelm her and send her fleeing from the concert hall mid-performance (Forster, *Howards End*, 26, 28). Helen's sheer appreciation passes over into a stereotypical *Bovarism*. Unable to distinguish between aesthetic representation and experiential reality, the two become conflated, with the result that meaning is both arbitrary and deterministic: "The notes meant this and that to her, and they could have no other meaning, and life could have no other meaning" (29). Helen's excessive appetite for the music not only has aesthetic implications, but erotic ones as well; her literally fatal attraction to Leonard is sparked by his own quixotic ramblings across Wimbledon Common in his spare time between work in mock-romantic imitation of what he sees as the heroic manliness of Stevenson and Thoreau. When Bast recounts his adventures to the Schlegel sisters following the concert, Helen listens, "her eyes aflame," seduced not so much by Bast himself as by the mirror image—and classed derogation—of her own aesthetic romanticism (103).

Margaret's younger brother, by contrast, attends the concert "profoundly versed in counterpoint, and holds the full score open on his knee" (26). Tibby spends the performance berating his aunt to listen for the "transitional passage on the drum" (28). He is so immersed in esoteric, codified knowledges (Forster has him end the novel studying "Chinese grammar") that both human and aesthetic relationships take on a secondary and unreal character. If Helen fulfills the stereotype of the overdesiring female aesthete, then Tibby is a figure for masculine expertise so removed from experience as to have become scholastic pedantry. Again, this vocational identity has erotic dimensions. In the job-market conversation with Margaret with which we began, Tibby desires not her "activity without civilization" but what he calls "civilization without activity," a dream of postwork, postmasculine decadence that Margaret ironically assures him he can find at Oxford (95). Tibby's *bildung* passes "gently from boyhood to middle age"; he "had never known young-manliness . . . was frigid—through no fault of his own, and without cruelty" (238). My intention of course is not to recuperate, nor far less to endorse, either Forster's misogynistic portrayal of Helen or his weirdly homophobic rendering of Tibby, but to grasp these vocational

and sexual stereotypes of failed heroism as foils against which Margaret defines her own brand of heroic work, her own ideal of professional and sexual identity.

Only she can mediate between the unruly desires of sheer appreciation and the rule-bound strictures of sterilized expertise to embody Forster's ideal cultural-worker and adventuresome hero. She does so, like a good professional, by removing herself above the fray and evaluating the cultural field as a whole, and all with the kind of effortless *sprezzatura* we saw Forster attempt in his professional address on music. Attending Leonard Bast to collect his infamous umbrella after the concert has ended, Margaret disqualifies both Helen's romantic impressionism ("what *is* the good of the ear if it tells you the same as the eye") and Tibby's dry expertise ("He treats music as music, and oh, my goodness! He makes me angrier than anyone, simply furious.") (33, emphasis in original). Simultaneously, she historicizes her sister's error as itself symptomatic of the immanent development of musical styles ("But, of course, the real villain is Wagner. He has done more than any man in the nineteenth century towards the muddling of the arts.") (33). If my own language here sounds like an overly scholastic vocabulary for describing Margaret's fluttery chatter with Leonard on her way home from a concert: good. I mean it to jolt us into reading her "natural" style for what it is—a camouflaged form of embodied cultural capital that secures her social status and makes Leonard feel nothing so much as the fact of his own social inferiority. From his perspective as cultural aspirant, Margaret's comments appear as the epitome of cultural acquisition, and her ability as the outcome of what he rather astutely (or inevitably) recognizes not simply as individual charisma or leisured taste, but of "reading steadily from childhood"; that is, as the outcome of an upper-middle class aesthetic education and work regime (not only *reading* but *reading steadily*) from which he feels himself thoroughly excluded, and which he cannot acquire in the scant leisure time allotted to him (34).[30]

Of course, if "reading steadily from childhood" is what equips Margaret with aesthetic skills and cultural competencies, then it also names precisely the routinized aesthetic schooling that *Howards End* elides via its own effortless self-inception. "One *may as well* begin with Helen's letters to her sister," announces the narrator demurely, casually evoking Austen in style while surreptitiously hitting the delete key to erase the very

prenarrative of feminine *bildung* that formed the content of her century's novels (3, emphasis added). Indeed, *Howards End* performs this foundational elision over and over again, bringing into view Margaret's bravura intellect while rendering invisible its origin in educational training. Like the novel's post-*bildung* timeframe, the sisters' orphaned standing and loose guardianship under a parochial and philistine aunt ("down at Swanage no one *appreciated* culture more than Mrs. Munt"), renders their intelligence and imagination autogenous (12, emphasis added). Likewise, their emotional and aesthetic sensitivity is only heightened by its contrast with the Wilcoxes' commercial philistinism ("Could [the Wilcoxes] *appreciate* Helen, who is to my mind a very special sort of person? Do they care about Literature and Art?" [7, emphasis added]). So successful has the novel been in obscuring Schlegels'—and more specifically, Margaret's—intellect, that it has I think bewitched even those critics who have otherwise provided trenchant critiques of modernism's mystification of its own expert status, and prevented us from grasping the alternative narratives of "heroic" valorization that Forster appropriates (or appreciates?) to lend enchanted form to Margaret's "pretend" work.[31]

A further example can crystalize what this pretend work looks like in a more overtly vocational context, as well as bringing into greater relief its status as a new mode of narrative adventure and value-production premised on feminine intellectual ability over and against masculine action. Shortly after her engagement to Henry Wilcox, Margaret decides (much, in fact, like "Miss Quested" in what forms the premise, and drives the crises, of *A Passage to India*) to visit her fiancé at his workplace, the offices of the West African Rubber Company:[32]

The following morning, at eleven o'clock, she presented herself at the offices of the Imperial and West African Rubber Company. She was glad to go there, for Henry had implied his business rather than described it, and the formlessness and vagueness that one associates with Africa itself had hitherto brooded over the main sources of his wealth. Not that a visit to the office cleared things up. There was just the ordinary surface scum of ledgers and polished counters and brass bars that began and stopped for no possible reason, of electric-light globes blossoming in triplets, of little rabbit-hutches faced with glass or wire, of little rabbits. And even when she penetrated to the inner depths, she found only the ordinary table and Turkey carpet, and though the map over the fireplace did depict a helping of West Africa, it was a very ordinary map. Another map hung opposite, on which the whole continent appeared, looking like a whale marked out for a blubber, and by its side was a door, shut, but Henry's voice came through it, dictating a "strong" letter. She might have been at the Porphyry or Dempster's Bank, or her own wine-merchant's. Everything seems just alike in these days. But perhaps she was seeing the Imperial side of the company rather than its West African, and Imperialism always had been one of her difficulties. (167)

At first glance, Margaret's apprehension, mediated through the narrative voice, might be thought to reveal her so-called naivety regarding male spheres of commercial work, a naivety underscored by her idealistic separation of an imperial and West African aspect to patently Eurocentric modes of exploitation, as well as by her seeming failure to move beyond the surfaces of the office in order to comprehend structural depths. In this reading, Margaret would be less an economic agent of production (or of adventure) than a passive and somewhat unworldly intellectual spectator.

But there's another way to read Margaret's agency in this passage, one that arises when we think of it as a generic and gendered displacement within the symbolic field of adventure's modes of action. Margaret's symbolic "penetration" to the "inner depths" of the office not only poaches the trope of territorial mobility and libidinal potency from Forster's newly office-bound

and antiheroic imperial manager, but it also marks a broader redefinition of such mobility as *psychological*. Forster is investing intangible aesthetic thought processes with symbolic vitality and adventurous energy. But energy of a peculiarly softened—one can, I think, say feminized—kind, reflected in the passage's continual hedging and understatement ("even when . . . she found only . . . ordinary"). Margaret's contradictory agency in this passage blends masculine adventure and feminine amateurism to arrive at a new model of professional and aesthetic subjectivity. [33]

Read in this way, her adventurous impressions of surfaces in fact translate into a *sprezzatura* evaluation of economic structures. Her first impression of Henry as a metonymic "voice" behind a door—a weirdly bureaucratized echo of Conrad's Kurtz, perhaps—registers the workplace specialization that takes hold of Forster's characters from one end of the vocational spectrum to the other under the novel's grim depiction of late industrial capitalism. Indeed, it registers such a social malady as a soured and immured adventure plot.[34] Likewise, her nonchalant mention of the Porphyron and Dempster's Bank, seemingly a failure to sharpen distinctions, is in fact rather astute, here, performing what we might call a comparative, aesthetic mapping of workplace specialization that takes in the novel's downtrodden clerk, Leonard Bast, who understands "one particular branch of insurance in one particular office well enough to command a salary, but that's all" (193–4). And lastly, what might appear as an inability to grasp the symbolic architecture of the office, with its seemingly endless regressions and its parodies of biological reproduction ("electric-light globes blossoming in triplets") can just as much be read as a perceptually embedded critique of what Forster saw as the senseless perpetuation of an imperial regime anathema to his liberal conceptions of modernity.

To be clear, then, what I am asking us to recognize here is less Forster's diagnosis of the specializations and degradations of capitalist modernity per se—with which we can agree or disagree—so much as what is less disputable, the way he *dramatizes* this diagnosis (this depreciation, one is tempted to say) by embedding it in Margaret's aesthetic impressions of surfaces. In the Jamesian idiom that was dear to Forster, Margaret is able to "guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implications of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern." [35] She is thus to a certain extent what Jesse Matz has helpfully identified as a

distinctly modernist-era impressionist, able to mediate, like Forster's "super-rational" professional, between first impressions and objective truths, infusing social expertise with perceptual authenticity.[36] But she also importantly exceeds this model of the impression, since, for Matz, the impressionist writer's "collaboration" with (or psychoanalytical projection onto) a socially subordinated character (women, and the lower classes) always ends in the disciplinary, Bovaristic failure or the sublimation of "utopian impulses" and the buffing up against bad social actualities.[37] In this sense, Margaret's impressions are stronger, more *heroic*, than those explored by Matz's account of impressionist perception, since they bare within themselves the potential to appreciate new values and leverage consequences at the level of plot.[38] Here, then, is where the aesthetic economy of appreciation differs from that of impressionism, in its protocapitalist ability to become superadequate to itself, to produce a surplus of value that wasn't in existence before the moment of perceptive action.[39]

That Margaret's understated vocational activities—here, as at Beethoven—take as their object the activities and conditions of other workers, is entirely congruent with the professional dimensions of Forster's vocational fantasy. It is the special prerogative of professions—especially emerging ones—to become reflexive in relation to their position within the totality of social labor, so as to carve open and protect their own function within a market, or what the sociologist of professionalism Magali Larson would call a "monopoly of confidence." In order to unpack how Margaret's impressions narratively appreciate into a certain kind of protoprofessional knowledge-value we will need to scale back and consider not only the adventure *rhetoric* but the romance *structure* of *Howards End*. More specifically we need to read its closure not as a capitulation to the narrative mechanisms of Victorian domestic realism—not as an inheritance plot, per Trilling—but as the symbolic locus of a new model of heroic cultural work, one that produces normative or evaluative knowledges by working on what Brouillette describes as the raw material of today's creative class, "the general world of subjectivity and the environment" (*Literature and the Creative Economy*, 40). Forster's glamorization of aesthetic subjectivity itself as a sphere of adventurous work has profound implications

for how we think about the Schlegels' occupation of Howards End, and the social, sexual, and vocational meanings that attend that symbolic annexation of property.

“We know this house is ours”: A Newly Propertied Queerness

More recent queer scholarship on *Howards End* has, purposely or not, contributed to the project of re-evaluating Lionel Trilling's classical liberal reading of the Schlegels' intellectual dependency by complicating the novel's representation of gender and sexual agency. Writing of Margaret and Ruth's queer bond, Benjamin Bateman helpfully characterizes the older Schlegel sister as a “purposive queer agent who can rewrite the self's own story and thus reactivate the subjugated histories of attempts to pursue intimacies off the beaten path of procreative conjugality.” [40] In this reading, “Margaret's marrying Henry in the wake of losing Ruth can be understood [not as capitulation to bourgeois heterosexuality] but as an attempt to salvage a queer connection by annexing it to a conventional, socially sanctioned one” (190). To conclude this exploration of heroic work and literary adventure, I want to explore this reading of a “queer” *Howards End*—and *Howards End*—by looking briefly at the narrative mechanics that “annexing” entails—a word aptly connoting an improper seizure of property.

It's perhaps telling of the ongoing, if narrowing, divide between materialist and queer analysis, that neither of these groups of critics of the novel have picked up on what we might call the *work-intensive* nature of Ruth's and Margaret's queer bond. Their sexual attraction is largely written as the former's valorization of the latter's verbal flare and aesthetic ability: “I think you put it best in your letter . . . Yes. You've got it. Inexperience is the word . . . I think Miss Schlegel puts everything splendidly” (Forster, *Howards End*, 58–65) In short, Margaret's sexual charisma is inextricable from her dazzling intellect. While occupying a very different and more privileged social position, Ruth's standpoint resembles Leonard's in so far as her exclusion from the novel's account of elite, metropolitan subjecthood (as residual domestic housewife, rather than downtrodden white-collar worker) places her in a more clear-sighted position to view Margaret's forms of *sprezzatura* cultural-work as a bid to reground the sexual relations of property ownership and its attendant divisions of labor—indeed, a bid to reground them beyond the stark division of

unpaid female domestic work and remunerated male managerial work that characterizes Ruth's own marriage to Henry Wilcox. Ruth's relation to Margaret's cultural skills can be seen most powerfully in a passage in which she attends a Bloomsburyesque lunch at the Schlegel's family home:

Yet the little luncheon party that she gave in Mrs. Wilcox's honour was not a success. The new friend did not blend with the 'one or two delightful people' who had been asked to meet her, and the atmosphere was one of polite bewilderment. Her tastes were simple, her knowledge of culture slight, and she was not interested in the New English Art Club, nor in the dividing-line between Journalism and Literature, which was started as a conversational hare. The delightful people darted after it with cries of joy, Margaret leading them, and not till the meal was half over did they realize that the principal guest had taken no part in the chase. There was no common topic. Mrs. Wilcox, whose life had been spent in the service of husband and sons, had little to say to strangers who had never shared it, and whose age was half her own. Clever talk alarmed her, and withered her delicate imaginings; it was the social counterpart of a motor-car, all jerks, and she was a wisp of hay, a flower. Twice she deplored the weather, twice criticized the train service on the Great Northern Railway. They vigorously assented, and rushed on, and when she inquired whether there was any news of Helen, her hostess was too much occupied in placing Rothenstein to answer. (63)

Margaret's "demon of vociferation," as the narrator puts it in the next sentence, indexes unstable and shifting relationships to property. What Mrs. Wilcox—here archetype of nineteenth-century domestic femininity as virginal flower and dutiful mother at once—cannot follow in this passage, is not only the sudden movement of Margaret's picaresque chatter ("all jerks"), but its slip-sliding relations to modes of consumption and production, as both landed, aristocratic leisure (figured as the "chase" of the Sunday hunt) as well as industrial manufacture ("the social counterpart of a motor-car"), a form of transportation almost exclusively associated with the Wilcox men.

This passage, in other words, seems to be equivocating about the generic problem of how to translate leisured intellectual abilities into the languages of work, property, and industry. And below that discursive equivocation is a material one, as the Schlegel family home in which they are being uttered is itself earmarked to be demolished for "new buildings, of a vastness at present unimaginable" (40). Industrial development is thus posed as the literal usurper of bohemian domestic space, a threat which prompts, as if spontaneously, the Schlegels' work to find a new property (and, indeed, a new property relation). As both vocational foil and love-object at once, Ruth Wilcox offers Margaret a way out of both these double binds. Their sexual magnetism is quite literally represented as an opportunity to translate cultural activity into the solid stuff of real estate. In the narrative terms of romance, Ruth stands in relation to Margaret as a donor figure, an anachronistic source of value that cannot be authentically integrated into the story's metropolitan, modernist worldview—whence her ghostly presence and sudden death—but whose supplementary function as both matriarchal property owner and work-fantasy-supplier is vital to advancing the plot's aspirational content.[41]

Ruth's famous "queer invitation" has been rightly read by Bateman and others as indexing a queer mode of loving, but it is no less crucially for our purposes a proleptic sign for a queered form of working: "'Come down with me to Howards End now,' she had said, more vehemently than ever. *'I want you to see it. You have never seen it. I want to hear what you say about it, for you do put things so wonderfully'*" (71, emphasis added). Is this an erotic invitation, or a vocational one? A date, or a job interview? Of course, it's strictly neither, but rather a solicitation to perform a newly heroic mode of aesthetic work in order to "annex" a home for bohemian queerness. As we shall see, both *seeing* Howards End and *saying* nice things about it—in a word, appreciating it—are in no way incidental to Margaret's coming to own it.

In a perfectly ghostly manifestation of what Robert K. Martin has described as Forster's knack for "queer begetting" between nonfilial generations, readers may recall that Ruth leaves Howards End to Margaret upon her deathbed.[42] I say *may* recall, since the narrator, surprisingly given her general accord with Schlegel interests, does everything in her power to downplay and undermine the legitimacy of this semilegalized deed: "Ought the

Wilcoxes to have offered their home to Margaret? I think not. The appeal was too flimsy. It was not legal; it had been written in illness, and under the spell of a sudden friendship . . ." (84).[43] But how do we read such demurral on the narrator's part? I would suggest that what is being rejected here is not the principle that Margaret should *own* Howards End, but more specifically that she should *inherit it*—a form of property transfer too leisured and aristocratic to carry Forster's nascent, productivist romance. From the perspective of the vocational adventure this essay has been tracking, it is not enough that Margaret should simply inherit the property, and by synecdoche, England: *she needs to work for it*. Or else, pretend to. The house, we might say, functions not unlike the treasure of imperial romance, standing as a back-formation that allows Margaret to perform a qualitatively new form of heroic work.

At its decisive plot-turn, *Howards End* shifts into a tellingly picaresque mode, proliferating romance motifs in a time signature of sudden action and reaction reminiscent of the "and then" temporality that Northrop Frye identified with romance as such.[44] Margaret travels to Howards End with Henry and the family doctor to "capture . . . Helen" and rescue her from "madness" —an offstage extramarital pregnancy with Leonard Bast. At one point Henry tries to escape and leave Margaret behind but gets snared up on the driveway by his infant niece, while Margaret dashes out just "in time to jump on the footboard" (245). This episode, I am arguing, is a transvaluation of the hegemonic narrative content of the imperial quest that nonetheless retains its narrative structure, in which an imperiled journey becomes the occasion for testing heroic modes of action and guile, as well as their capacities to produce forms of value. Certainly, the style here is parodic, but as critics from Linda Hutcheon to Fredric Jameson will remind us, parody signals not a disavowal of historical forms but an ambivalent recognition of the residual affordances or values of narrative technique for expressing new social content.[45] Modernism knows that dilemma well. This episode, in short, embodies not simply the antiheroism we might usually associate with Forster's tonally dry, self-deprecating variety of modernism, but a *displacement* of heroism and of adventure's locus of fantasy from the industrious male body—defeated, ironically, by an infant!—to the feminine aesthetic psyche.

What, then, is the telos of Margaret's adventure if not the sublimated treasure of imperial romance? An answer to this question can be gleaned by considering Margaret's own commentary on the journey at its outset: "But why *should* it be just like Helen? Why should she be allowed to be so queer, and to grow queerer?" (240, emphasis in original). As we shall see, such a remark can be read as a call for sanctions not in one but in both senses of the word—most obviously a rebuke of Helen's flighty behavior, but also, I think, a covert appeal to ground or sanction a project of bohemian social opposition (or Bloomsburyite domesticity) on a regime of aesthetic work. Margaret's arrival at *Howards End* with her husband and the family doctor is the apex of Forster's aesthetic adventure, a romance whose telos is "queerness" understood not as a principle of erotic connection but as the production of domestic and kinship relations as a subsector of modernist cultural-work. Margaret's objection to the male medical professional and business magnate who accompany her to rendezvous with Helen is put in a free indirect discourse that brings the narrator into a relationship of collaboration, we might even say solidarity, with her vocational thoughts:

How dare these men label her sister! What horrors lay ahead! What impertinences that shelter under the name of science! The pack was turning on Helen, to deny her human rights, and it seemed to Margaret that all Schlegels were threatened with her. Were they normal? What a question to ask! And it is always those who know nothing about human nature, who are bored by psychology and shocked by physiology, who ask it. However piteous her sister's state, she knew that she must be on her side. They would be mad together if the world chose to consider them so. (246)

This passage does nothing less ambitious than attempt to raise bohemian subjectivity to the status of a class-cadre recognizable in world-historical terms ("if the world chose to consider them so") by reversing the civilization/barbarism dichotomy of the imperial quest in order to exoticize male vocational elites. The "horror" of civilization itself here reads like an uncanny inversion of the recent "horror" of imperial space made newly infamous by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.^[46] This reverse anthropological

quest relies on a certain carefully poised perception of a nonnormative subject position. That is, as far as the narrative mechanics of this episode are concerned, being "mad together," or defying patriarchal ideology, depends *precisely* upon Margaret's perception of Helen's extramarital pregnancy as a paradigmatic moment of aesthetic appreciation, as if she were the centerpiece of an impressionist *tableaux vivant*. Helen appears in the porch of Howards End "framed in the vine, and one of her hands played with the buds. The wind ruffled her hair, the sun glorified it; she was as she had always been" (246).

Margaret's appreciation of Helen as if she were a timeless work of art displaces judgment from moral to aesthetic registers, just at the moment when we would expect it to cascade in the other direction. For just a few lines later, having outstripped Henry to the front door, "Margaret saw [Helen] rise with an unfamiliar movement, and, rushing into the porch, learned the simple explanation of all their fears—her sister was with child" (246). That Helen, rendered so magisterially via Margaret's appreciative perception, should "rise," just here, at the very moment when we—as much as Forster's 1910 audience—would expect to see her descend into the abjected figure of the "fallen woman," seems too algebraic an inversion to ignore. Margaret's perception, I am arguing, appreciates—*raises in value*—a certain livable subject position for Helen by producing the normative or evaluative content of social knowledges about kinship and sexuality.[47] Her perception dissolves the boundaries upon which forms of social exclusion and sexual discipline are premised and results in the valorization of the novel familial structure that comes to inhabit the property. Seeing Helen both "as she had always been" at the same time as "with child"—without a trace of contradiction!—Margaret herself occupies a position analogous to Forster's "super-rational" cultural worker, one who is both "thoroughly versed" in the musical score—the norms and laws that govern the orchestra—and yet simultaneously open to "the unknown" which is listening to every new iteration of the music.

This is the perceptual crux of Schlegelian appreciation, the ability to mediate between socially sanctioned knowledges and personal experiences and desires. It is a profoundly aesthetic capacity, even as it refuses precisely the separation between aesthetic and social spheres. The protovocational dimensions of this aesthetic action can be sensed in the necessity of warding off of competing competencies, discourses and qualifications which,

as we have heard already, "know nothing about human nature." Protecting her aesthetic jurisdiction over the sphere of kinship, Margaret insists to Henry that she "will manage it all," while he responds that they "had better work all together"; the doctor, versed in sterilized medical training, "murmur[s] something about a nervous breakdown," and Margaret insists that he is "not qualified to attend my sister" (247–48). And yet it's just here, upon its symbolic entry into professional workplace imaginaries, where we must think Margaret's counterhegemonic perception dialectically, for the redemptive moment in which she perceives Helen is also the moment in which impression appreciates into a bourgeois property relation. It's the culminating moment of the novel's appropriation and transvaluation of frontier adventure rhetoric, as the phallic heroine takes for her own the forbidden territory: "[t]he keys of the house were in [Margaret's] hand. She unlocked Howards End and thrust Helen into it" (246–7).

But like the heroes of adventure tumbling into the treasure-cave, the house is not yet theirs, since it hasn't yet been worked for, or, to name the form of that work, it hasn't yet been *appreciated*. Indeed, if this word's transvaluation from aesthetic to economic registers over the course of my readings is still not persuasive, let us note one final usage placed in the mouths of the Wilcox men, who, upon discovering Ruth's impromptu will, justify not revealing it to Margaret on the grounds of appreciation: "it isn't like [mother] to leave anything to an outsider, who'd never appreciate" (85). It's unclear, in this instance, whether Margaret is the subject of a transitive verb, or the object of an intransitive one, herself appreciating in value upon the inheritance of the property. Of course, the very overlap between the two senses of the word is precisely what is at stake in this final episode, which translates a regime of aesthetic valorization (*seeing* Howards End, as Ruth put it) into an economy of property value (*owning* it). The women walk around the house admiring how their cultural accoutrements have been mysteriously arranged by the housekeeper who "must have worked for days" (231).[48] Such aesthetic heroism goes on for a remarkably long time, I think, and it looks like this:

The sword looks well, though . . . Magnificent . . . It is far too beautiful . . . *what* a place for mother's chiffonier . . . Oh, look at them! . . . Feel. Their dear little backs are quite warm . . . the chairs show up wonderfully . . . Ah, that greengage tree . . . I love yellowhammers . . . Helen uttered cries of excitement. (253–56, emphasis in original)

Despite the cries of excitement, however, this is not the sheer Bovaristic impressionism which overwhelmed Helen at the Queen's Hall and sent her fleeing, but rather a *qualified* mode of appreciation, in both the grammatical and professional senses of the word. Appreciation is combined with its opposite—discrimination—in order to arrive at a more balanced form of judgment that brings the sisters into a proto-professional relationship of aesthetic proficiency:

Where's the piano, Meg? . . . The carpet's a mistake . . . this floor ought to be bare . . . But why has Miss Avery made them set to partners . . . The window's too high . . . No, I don't like the drawing-room so much . . . It would have been so beautiful otherwise . . . It's a room that men have spoiled through trying to make it nice for women. Men don't know what we want—' (253–56)

Raymond Williams might have identified in these passages the cult of "conspicuous-appreciative-consumption." And, certainly, this scene can be read as a nascently consumerist reproduction of bourgeois taste, the shoring up of aesthetic distinctions that are barely concealed social ones.^[49] But such a reading would, I think, be lazily (rather than critically) presentist. If we attend more closely to this aesthetic activity what must strike us as decisive is that the household objects that the sisters appreciate are not ranged on a market as fungible commodities, but appear as homely goods, or *potentially* homely ones, if only they can be felt about in the right ways. The sister's shared mode of perception is distinctly feminine and anti-heteronormative ("men don't know what we want"). What it imagines into being is not a relation to consumption, but an appreciation of new sororal kinship and domestic relations founded upon shared modes of aesthetic perception. It's Helen—aesthetically retrained, we might say—who is given the crucial line in this regard: "We know this house is

ours, because it feels ours. Oh, they may take the title-deeds and the door-keys, but for this one night we are at home" (257). In this little empire of appreciation, aesthetic feelings are sovereign.

In Hollywood there's a name for the "fairy-dust" music, the tinselly diminuendos, that attend moments of pseudomagical wish-fulfillment within otherwise secular and everyday plots. Helen's remark is one of those moments, after which nothing can prevent the illiberal power of the wish.[50] Does it not strike readers as somewhat disproportionate that when Margaret petitions Henry to spend one night in the house with her sister, he concludes that her request "is connected with something far greater, the rights of property itself"? (278). Reputation, certainly, even the protection of family respectability and social class, perhaps, but *the rights of property itself*? Isn't that a somewhat hyperbolic conclusion at which to arrive? Indeed, it is, but it is also the correct one when viewed within the romance *topos* that governs the closural phase of Forster's novel, in which the glamorized work of aesthetic appreciation emerges as triumphant in securing Margaret and Helen a new home over and against the legalized entrenchment of patriarchal property rights and their phallic icons ("the title-deeds and the door-keys"). But such a "triumph" for feminized and queered cultural work comes at an ironic cost.

Invested with a sufficient amount of discriminating appreciation, the novel finally suggests, the cultural objects of the newly feminized *Howards End* take on a truly magical—and martial—power of their own. While it is Charles who is sanctioned by the law for striking Leonard with the Schlegels' family sword—another telling instance of mock-heroic masculinity—the *coup de grâce* was actually delivered by the books which "fell over him in a shower. Nothing had sense" (277). Once converted into icons of private property, the novel suggests, the appreciated cultural objects of *Howards End* cannot be shared, rejecting as if of their own initiative all cultural imposters and claimants to ownership while the Schlegel sisters stand by innocently. Such melodramatic sorcery on Forster's part might arrogate to the sisters a significant sum of symbolic and material capital, and to the imagination a significant degree of power, but such gain comes at a loss. Cultural appreciation's ascendancy to symbolic hegemony also signals its abandonment as a utopian social alternative ("what we shall find in heaven") and its conversion into the civilized

languages of heterosexual romance and literary pastoral—languages in which, to return full circle, the “triumph” of Margaret’s “conquest” can only appear as “uncanny.”[51]

That narrative movement, from aesthetic appreciation to propertied pastoral, is analogous to a political shift from an inchoate reimagination of the commons to a form of aristobourgeois security excluding—quite literally, killing—common life. Triumph, indeed, as Wilfred Stone might have complained. But *Howards End* doesn’t so much finesse this contradiction as it does probe the limits of the imagination conceived as a differential source of value. There is no “activity,” aesthetic or otherwise, the novel begrudgingly and no doubt ironically admits, that can blithely immure itself against the logic of patriarchal, capitalist “civilization,” no triumphant account of cultural work that does not at the same time risk being re-tuned to the key of bourgeois ideology—an irony that will no doubt feel all too familiar from our own cultural and economic standpoint.

Modernism and the Neoliberal Imagination

Margaret’s uncanny heroism applies to quite a number of other female modernist characters whom we might not usually think together, but who collectively participate in aesthetic modes of perception at the historical threshold of economic regimes of labor integration. The language of adventure runs through Virginia Woolf’s fictional as well as nonfictional oeuvre like a thin utopian ribbon, on the one hand denigrating the work of colonial classes and their dreams of imperial expansion, while on the other valorizing the vocational skills of a newly feminized creative class.[52] To very briefly sketch this genealogy of female modernist adventurers, we could join the dots between Elizabeth Dalloway, Lily Briscoe, and Orlando, all of whom embody identities striated by heightened aesthetic capabilities, gender and sexual queerness, and vocational romanticism, all of which are complexly expressed via the rhetoric and character tropes of heroic adventure. Moreover, none of these figures “work” in the strict sense of becoming wage laborers or salaried professionals; rather, like Margaret, they perform adventurized and idealized vocational activities outside of the institutional protocols that were increasingly felt to be anathema to the career aspirations of middle-class men and women alike. Along with Margaret Schlegel, these figures embody a weird blend of heroism and *sprezzatura*, of adventure and effortlessness. Rather like their

Bloomsbury authors, they discover new and enchanting use-values for the imagination while attempting to avoid the degradations of commodification and exchange.[53]

The treacherous narrative balancing act involved in such forms of aesthetic appreciation can perhaps be most clearly illuminated by considering them from the standpoint of creativity's more total incorporation into capitalist structures of valorization, a standpoint we can detect long before bohemia's fully-fledged commercialization in the wake of the 1960s. Indeed, the shift from aesthetic romance to creative capitalism might be thought of as a late modernist one.[54] To get a brief sense of this shift, we might turn to a novel such as Elizabeth Bowen's *To the North* (1933) in which one should hear more than an echo of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Both center upon creative protagonists of sorts, but whereas Woolf makes sure to remove Lily Briscoe to the outer echelons of British territory so she can experience aesthetic adventure free of metropolitan commerce, Bowen sets up shop for Emmeline Summers on the street adjacent to the Woolf's Bloomsbury residence. Emmeline co-owns a travel agency, which feels to her like "a studio . . . even a shrine." [55] But this heady—we might now say Schlegelian—mixture of creative and theological investment in Work, is ironically undercut by the ruthless way in which Bowen embeds her protagonist in processes of self-commodification. *To the North* narrates this fate as a woman-centered adventure plot gone sour, Emmeline's job being to sell adventure holidays to needy men. Her service work involves the expropriation and instrumentalization of feminine affects and aesthetic capacities, which Bowen registers in her characteristically algebraic style: "[Clients] come in when they're back and give us their impressions," Emmeline explains to a potential customer, "we get them tabulated" (26). Out goes the baby of impressionist heroism, and with it Bowen flushes the bathwater of creative work conceived as an exalted adventure. The novel ends—spoiler alert!—with Emmeline speeding up the M1 and smashing into oncoming traffic with her lover in the passenger seat, a closure which seems to dangerously deregulate, so to speak, the thrill-seeking tendencies of frontier ideology. Vocational romance has become corporeal precarity.

One might be tempted to chalk up this dire pessimism to Bowen's conservative and even reactionary streak. But read against accounts of creative capitalism from the last few decades, *To the North* seems to offer a trenchant and prophetic warning

about the dangers of psychic investment in creative work as an adventure romance. As Andrew Ross notes in his ethnography of US dot com tech companies, that ideology is still alive and kicking today in elite creative industries, where "the zeal of employees [is] more like a quest for personal and existential stimulation, closer in spirit to extreme sport or adventure travel than to the sobriety of the self-dependent man who saw himself as a pious and productive member of society" (*No-Collar*, 12). Such ideologies of work as a creative adventure have powerfully legitimated and glamorized new kinds of intensified labor regimes, in which "burn-out" after marathon shifts is considered integral to workplace satisfaction, part of the "risk." Such discourses ultimately amount to an enchantment of economic precarity, which is perhaps the reason why they often go hand in hand with others—let's call them neo-*sprezzatura*—that deny that creativity can *be* work in any arduous or toiling sense. Work is "not considered creative work," Ross explains, "if it's labored" (31).[56]

As Sarah Brouillette summarizes, such a neoliberal mythology of creative work as an aesthetic romance stems from and perpetuates a misreading of aesthetic and cultural activity itself as a "fundamentally insular expression of one's personally directed passionate devotion to "the task itself," "the materials at hand," or simply "the work"" (*Literature and the Creative Economy*, 7).[57] Such an ideology of work as enchanted adventure and artistic self-reverie not only masks the hyper-exploitation of creative labor by discouraging its self-conception as work *tout court*; it also elides the majority of labor that falls below the horizon of such workplace glamorization. Like Miss Avery, who "worked for days" to arrange *Howards End* for Margaret and Helen's effortless appreciation, or like Woolf's interned housekeepers in the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*, whose exterior relation to aesthetic romance is signaled by their cleaning of the Walter Scott novels, or indeed like "Miss Tripp," Emmeline Summers' parodically named and poorly paid clerical employee: like all of these workers at the margins of adventure, the offices of glamorous creative-sector firms are built and maintained by modernized service labor, often nonwhite and/or female, that remains below the threshold of aesthetic romance. Are Forster, Woolf, and their Bloomsbury colleagues to blame for inventing the mythologies that have become cynical features of contemporary capitalism's false

consciousness? Not quite, I think, though closer attention to their fantasies of creative vocations as an "adventure" might, to echo Williams, explain how we got from the hopefully planted seed to the fashionably distorted tree, or how capitalism came to appropriate the discourses of its critique without fully negating their utopian promise.

Tracing such a genealogy is beyond the scope of this essay, but we can use the literary resources of Forster's seminal novel to learn something beyond ideology critique—and beyond what Amanda Anderson calls "bleak liberalism"—about the prehistory of creative economy discourse in the bohemian fictions of the modernist era.[58] Rather than dismissing or damning Margaret's ambivalent heroism, we'd do better to appreciate it—as she appreciated Henry's—by enticing its utopian impulses into speaking to possibilities in our own present.[59] Margaret's adventurous work, along with that of her modernist coworkers, takes her and them—and with them, us—beyond the insularity of what Brouillette rightly diagnoses as the neoliberal subject's hermetic "self-exploration" in order to envision a more progressive and inclusive organization of economic, familial, and sexual formations. That promise is constitutive of the creative sector today, with many companies branding themselves as liberalized and queered kinship and familial structures seeking boldly to dismantle midcentury models of paternalist (Wilcoxian) capitalism and nuclear family heteronorms.[60] The integration of bohemian, artistic and queer subcultures into capitalist workplaces and consumerist markets is widely (and rightly) celebrated as the left's triumph in the 20th and 21st century's cultural wars.[61] But Forster—being the tortured liberal that he was—already sensed a problem that we're yet to solve. Such triumph comes as a cost when its condition of success is so stringently tied to the bourgeois aspirations of material wealth, private property, and domestic security. We are still stuck in the discursive space of Forster's strained pastoral, struggling to find the tropes, forms, and languages for a world of work that is creative and humanizing but not glibly extractive of aesthetic education and creative imagination. In the meantime, one first step toward finding those new languages is understanding the full import and promise of the stories about work's adventure that we have always been telling.

Notes

[1] For Fredric Jameson, this constitutively absent workforce is what qualifies the novel as incipiently modernist. He argues that because the majority of economic production takes place outside of national space, its absence is felt as a spatial infinity or Kantian sublime in the novel's modes of description. See Fredric Jameson, "Modernism and Imperialism" in *The Modernist Papers* (London: Verso, 2016), 152–69.

[2] Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1911), 65.

[3] See Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 79–80.

[4] See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), 49–55. Hobsbawm notes that the women-dominated tertiary sector grew in both absolute and relative terms in the years leading up to World War I, a tendency that would be partially reversed by the placing of the economy on a war footing post-1914.

[5] Virginia Woolf expressed this contradiction with typical perspicacity in *Three Guineas* (1938): "If we encourage the daughters to enter the professions without making any conditions as to the way in which the professions are to be practiced shall we not be doing our best to stereotype the old tune which human nature, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is now grinding out with such disastrous unanimity?" See Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 140.

[6] It's crucial, in this regard, that Margaret does not become an artist, writer, artisan or craftsperson—and, concomitantly, that *Howards End* is not a female *künstlerroman*—all of which would be to restrict her activity to extant divisions of gendered labor. Instead, my account of Margaret's creativity can be thought of as building upon and critiquing what Hadjiafxendi and Zakreski have helpfully described as a feminine discourse of "industrious amateurism," which had the advantage of situating women as at once inherently creative while removed from the degradations of the (male) marketplace (9). Unlike the modes of industrious amateurism which precede her, however, Margaret's activity critiques both of these terms, as well as extends creativity's vocational jurisdiction, thereby arriving at a new model of

professional work. For an account of women's relation to arts industries and creative labor in the period directly leading up to *Howards End*, see *Crafting the Woman Professional in the Long Nineteenth Century: Artistry and Industry in Britain*, ed. Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Patricia Zakreski (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

[7] In this sense, my reading of Margaret qualitatively distinguishes her from the majority of so-called "new woman" heroines, who attempt to reconcile personal and vocational aspirations via workplace plots. At the same time, however, I don't wish to perpetuate a reading of new woman novels as slavishly mimetic or realist. As Ann Ardis has powerfully reminded us, new woman fiction "imagine[d] worlds quite different from the bourgeois patriarchy in which unmarried women are deemed odd and superfluous 'side character[s] in modern life'." See Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 3.

[8] As numerous readers have noted, one of Bloomsbury's defining characteristics was their challenging of the boundaries separating art, work, and home. See *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*, ed. Victoria Rosner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 57–89 and 162–79.

[9] E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 286.

[10] Malcolm Page, *Howards End: The Critics Debate* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 55.

[11] In this sense, we can think of this final scene as registering Forster's buried wish to break out of the marriage plot. He designated that plot device an unsatisfactory closural mechanism for modern fiction (and modern women) in his lectures at the Working Men's club just three years earlier. See E. M. Forster, "Pessimism in Literature," in *Albergo Empedocle and Other Writings*, ed. George H. Thomson (New York: Liveright, 1971), 135–36.

[12] See Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E.M. Forster* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966). Stone's is perhaps the strongest indictment of this failure: "The malignancy inherent in spiritual-aesthetic withdrawal is a subject Forster knows well, and has warned about in his essays. But in fictionalizing the problem, he has presented a moral failure as a triumph—and, in the name of much that is beautiful and fine, has

become the partisan of much that is sick and corrupt. The forces of value do not 'connect,' but pursue each other in a lonely and circular futility. And the circle is especially vicious because Forster seems to see only its 'proportion' and not its 'emptiness'" (266). Curiously, Stone also sensed a utopian dialectic in the novel's closure, in which "we watch Margaret merge with Ruth Wilcox and then try to connect with Henry, only to emerge from these alliances a new creature—detached, autonomous, preserving 'proportion' like an egg for the future to hatch" (275). Further into that future than Stone was, I am asking fellow readers to consider what kinds of lively historical offspring might have been inside the egg.

[13] See Nicholas Daly, *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David Trotter, *The English Novel in History, 1895–1920* (London: Routledge, 1993) and *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[14] Imperial adventure novels such as Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* were also fantasies of alternative (in a perverse sense, *queered*) kinship structures—misogynist and homosocial ones that excluded women. "I am going to tell the strangest story that I remember," Allan Quartermain informs us, "which "may seem a queer thing to say, especially considering that there is no woman in it . . . not a *petticoat* in the whole history" (emphasis in original). See H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 6. In this sense, Forster's turn to kinship as the primary prize inherent in adventure is only another immanent turn of the generic screw of the era's frontier romance. One thinks of Woolf's attack on Kipling's fiction in *A Room of One's Own*, which seemed to designate a misogynist queerness as its primary characteristic: "a purely masculine orgy of Men who are alone with their Work." See Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 77.

[15] Although at other moments Margaret does perform a minimum quantity of household administration and affective labor and stands in a kind of pseudoparental relationship to her younger siblings, I think it is important to note how stringently Forster distinguishes Margaret's activity from the work and values of traditional, domestic femininity embodied by Ruth. She is certainly not, as Woolf would have said, an Angel in the House.

[16] In this sense, my reading echoes the novel's own commentary on romance in the modern period: "Life is indeed dangerous, but not in the way morality would have us believe. It is indeed unmanageable, but the essence of it is not a battle. It is unmanageable because it is a romance, and its essence is romantic beauty" (Forster, *Howards End*, 91). A year after *Howards End* was published, Forster spoke of the endurance of romance in modernity in terms of the capacity for a certain psychic and libidinal alertness: "Modern civilization does not lead us away from Romance, but it does try to lead us past it, and we have to keep awake. We must insist on going to look round the corner now and then, even if other people think us a little queer, for as likely as not something beautiful lies round the corner" (Forster, "Pessimism in Literature," *Albergo Empedocle*, 175).

[17] Thus, despite his excellent work on modernism and fantasies of cognitive work, David Trotter elsewhere argues that the general tendency of Woolf's and Dorothy Richardson's characters is to exist "apart from work and community" in a rarefied "individual consciousness" of their own, thus "obscuring their Edwardian predecessors" (Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, 47).

[18] Lionel Trilling, *E. M. Forster* (London: Hogarth Press, 1944), 124.

[19] See Andrew Ross, *No-Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003). For a fantastic recent genealogy of the keywords of the new capitalism in the style of Raymond Williams, see John Patrick Leary, *Keywords: The New Language of Capitalism* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2018). For an in-depth account of the legitimating discourses of what they call—in a neo-Fosterian idiom!—"connexionist" capitalism, see Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2005).

[20] Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 54.

[21] Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013), 223.

[22] Curiously, however, wartime economies didn't spell the end of fantasies of women's work conceived as an adventure; on the contrary, they in a sense narrowed the symbolic gap between the

experience of work and the historically sedimented generic content of imperial romance. That is, in the hands of "munitionette" writers of the first and second world wars, working on the floor of an explosives factory while bombs dropped from above could be conceived as a heroic adventure along the lines seen at the imperial frontier or the warfront. See *Women and Work Culture: Britain c.1850–1950*, ed. Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016), 177–212.

[23] Raymond Williams, "The Bloomsbury Fraction," in *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, 1980), 153, 166.

[24] See Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[25] E. M. Forster, "The *Raison d'Être* of Criticism in the Arts," in *Two Cheers for Democracy* (New York: Harcourt, 1938), 107.

[26] Forster's unsolved antithesis is indeed the undialecticisable contradiction of professional ideology under increasingly bureaucratic modes of training, evaluation and expertise, an ideology of charismatic individualism anathema to the modes of rationalization and standardization that are increasingly the professions' every day. See Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 206. For a recent account of literary criticism's embroilment in this antithesis, see Joseph North, *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). North asks, in a question apposite to Margaret's de-institutionalised aesthetic activity: "How does one pursue the tenuous task of cultivating an appreciation for the aesthetic without lapsing into mere impressionism? How does one pursue this task with a rigor sufficient to qualify one's work as disciplinary in the scientific terms recognized by the modern university?" (217).

[27] Quite apart from the abundance of music and musicians in his novels, musical categories such as "rhythm" are also central to Forster's account of literary aesthetics in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927).

[28] As the closest approximation of a real human being who can perform such a feat, Forster points to Virginia Woolf, who "believed in reading a book twice. The first time [she was an archangel:] she abandoned herself to the author unreservedly. The second time [she was Mephistopheles:] she treated him with

severity and allowed him to get away with nothing he could not justify" ("The *Raison d'Etre*," 119). It is telling for the argument I am making that only a queer, female member of Forster's Bloomsbury clique could come close to performing his "super-rational" cultural criticism.

[29] It is hard not to believe that Forster had this episode in mind all those years later when he wrote "The *Raison d'Etre* of Criticism," in which he discusses passages from Whitman and Proust that involve impressionistic responses to music, describing "the state into which the hearer was thrown as he sat on his chair at the concert." He describes this as a "criticism which has no interpretive value, yet it should not be condemned offhand" (110).

[30] The Schlegels' namesake references the Romantic conception of a classical education that from the nineteenth century onward would become the mark of professional education in distinction to more technical, utilitarian modes of training. Larson notes how "a classical education functioned as a gate-keeping mechanism for the most prestigious professional roles" (*The Rise of Professionalism*, 89). Leonard's inability to become culturally literate, then, marks him as an aspirant who belongs to the white-collar section of the lower middleclass, performing standardized cognitive functions without any workplace autonomy or creativity. In Margaret's hands, however, the aesthetic skills nourished by classical *bildung* become not only a marker of status but a direct source of productivity, even of heroism. Likewise, André Gorz writes about our own neoliberal moment, in a passage that could equally apply to Margaret's aesthetic romance, of how "post-Fordist workers have to come into the production process with all the cultural baggage they have acquired through games, team sports, campaigns, arguments, musical and theatrical activities etc." See André Gorz, *The Immaterial: Knowledge, Value and Capital*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Seagull Books, 2010), 10.

[31] Lois Cucullu's otherwise excellent reading is foremost in my mind here. While her synchronic interpretation of *Howards End* as "a new *spatial* compound of property and cultural value" is convincing, it doesn't address the diachronic actions of Margaret's aesthetic heroism that I am unpacking here, and thus sidelines her to the figure of a "family nanny." See Lois Cucullu, *Expert Modernists, Matricide, and Modern Culture: Woolf, Forster, Joyce* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 113.

[32] *A Passage to India* can be read as an imperial inversion of the aesthetic romance unravelling here, in which cultural appreciation sours into squalid tourism and narrative bathos in the antfigures of the Marabar caves. The caves, we might say, do not appreciate. They are sites of value's absolute negation. See Brian May, "Romancing the Stump: Modernism and Colonialism in Forster's *A Passage to India*" in *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish literature, 1899–1939*, ed. Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 136–61.

[33] The tonal expenditure of this passage is redolent to what John Xiros Cooper has pithily described as Bloomsbury's adoption of "the oblique or even the knowingly naïve or literal perspective," one which "could do the work of refutation without the earnest expenditure of a great deal of puffing force" See John Xiros Cooper, *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 248. Bloomsbury's demurral from protestant, industrial, and masculine work ethics was perhaps framed most lucidly (if acerbically) by their detractors. It was thus Wyndham Lewis, referring more specifically to the Omega Workshops, who complained of the "family party of strayed and Dissenting Aesthetes [who] were compelled to call in as much modern talent as they could find, to do the rough and masculine work without which they knew their efforts would not rise above the level of a pleasant tea party, or command more attention" (quoted in Marcus, 162). See Laura Marcus, "Bloomsbury Aesthetics," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*, ed. Victoria Rosner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 162–79.

[34] In this, Forster goes one step further than Conrad in disenchanting imperial adventure: he doesn't even let his hero out of the office. The one time we do learn about Henry's work abroad is when it boomerangs back on him as his sordid sexual misadventure with Jacky, an irony that desublimates the sexual fantasies of the imperial quest.

[35] Henry James, *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 11.

[36] See Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[37] Even Helen, whose more Bovaristic impressionist investments lead to a near fatal erotic attraction with Leonard, is rescued from the worst kinds of social-symbolic punishment—a rescue itself bound up, as we shall see, with the impression's appreciation into something new.

[38] As Matz puts it, the impressionist writer "singles out someone whose social role makes that person a likely source of material vitality. For the 'strength' necessary to launch the impression into its series of successive states, the Impressionist writer turns to women and the lower classes, engineering the impression's mediation through their greater apparent sensuous or nonintellectual receptivity" (*Literary Impressionism*, 9). The placing of "strength" between quotations, here, signals a canny acknowledgement that having an impression about something counts for no strength at all—unless, that is, it can be written as the alternative heroism of a new style of adventure. In this sense, I am supplementing Matz's account of the identarian politics and psychodynamics undergirding impressionist perception with a further account of the genres that could supercharge such perception into a principle of narrative change, into a *plot*.

[39] We might historicize this shift with Bloomsbury as one from impressionism to postimpressionism, since much of what was at stake in the second moniker (beyond any set of stylistic traits) was the recuperation of the aesthetic as a democratized sphere of social praxis. As Laura Marcus has explained, in his 1920 retrospect to *Vision and Design*, Roger Fry suggested that the uproar over postimpressionism had been its attack on the usual function of cultural capital, in which a "considerable mass of education" was necessary to admire art, whereas "to admire a Matisse required only a certain sensibility" (*The Cambridge Companion*, 166). Woolf echoed this "model of intuitive response," as Marcus paraphrases it, in her biography of Fry: "Everyone argued. Anyone's sensation—his cook's, his housemaid's—was worth having. Learning did not matter; it was the reality that was all important" (166). As Marcus also points out, such a democratic philosophy is somewhat problematic coming from a highly educated (if not always formally trained) rentier class (167). But Woolf's insistence on *reality*, which I take to mean a broad social praxis, is suggestive of the group's aggressive generalization of aesthetic competencies beyond Art.

[40] Benjamin Bateman, "Beyond Interpellation: Forster, Connection, and the Queer Invitation," *Twentieth Century Literature* 57, no. 2 (2011): 180–98, 182.

[41] Ruth's function is not dissimilar to the kind of "fairy-Godmother" figures analyzed in Bruce Robbins account of fictions of the welfare state, her role being to catalyze the vocational ascendancy of another character. See Bruce Robbins, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007)

[42] Robert K. Martin, "'It Must Have Been the Umbrella': Forster's Queer Begetting", in *Queer Forster*, ed. Robert K. Martin and George Piggford (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 255–73.

[43] There are many things to say about the underappreciated fact that the narrator of *Howards End* is a woman. Suffice to say here that it challenges the idea that the narrative voice is in any straightforward or unmediated way a reflection of Forster's own views on feminism, culture, and industry, even as the plot comes to solve many of the occupational deadlocks associated with his own professional career.

[44] In that sense, this episode seems to embody another choice Schlegel motto: "There are moments when the inner life actually 'pays,' when years of self-scrutiny, conducted for no ulterior motive, are *suddenly* of practical use" (*Howards End*, 167, emphasis added). The sudden temporality of this passage might be thought of as using the chronotopes of romance described seminally by Frye and Bakhtin in order to break out of the developmental, normative time schemas of nineteenth-century realism.

[45] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-century Art Forms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985) Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991)

[46] I feel compelled to add that I still read this anthropological reversal as subtended by an essentially racist binary opposition of center and periphery, civilization and barbarism.

[47] If this sounds somewhat of a stretch, let me suggest that all I am doing here is rendering emphatic a narratological logic or connection between Forster's ideas about aesthetics and work,

on the one hand, and his values regarding kinship and domesticity, on the other, that has certainly been evoked in the language of critics preceding me: "In the last chapter of *Howards End*, Forster, a prophet far ahead of his time, projects an *impressionistic vision* of a radically different, more elastic middle-class family structure that presaged, in 1910, many of the characteristics now common to middle-class family" (emphasis added). See Jeane N. Olson, "E. M. Forster's Prophetic Vision of the Modern Family in *Howards End*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 35, no. 3 (1993): 347–62, 348.

[48] Miss Avery represents an alternative, unfulfilled line of inheritance for *Howards End*, having turned down Ruth's brother's proposal of marriage when the house formerly belonged to him. Her *gratis* domestic work to actually arrange the objects of the house (totally unsolicited, and, therefore, mystified) here stands as a reminder of the class hierarchy and exclusion necessary *within* the community of women for Margaret's aesthetic romance to take place at all.

[49] If we were to read Margaret and Helen's aesthetic work along these lines of appreciative consumption it would fall closer to what Alice Wood has described as the aspirational lower-middleclass domestic politics of interwar publications such as *Good Housekeeping* and *Modern Home*. See Alice Wood, "Housekeeping, Citizenship, and Nationhood in *Good Housekeeping* and *Modern Home*," in *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1918–1939: The Interwar Period*, ed. Catherine Clay et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 210–24. More germane here is what Morag Shiach has helpfully described as "the aestheticization of a wide range of domestic objects" that was key to Bloomsbury's queered domestic subculture, including their blending of artistic work and queered homes. See Morag Shiach, "Domestic Bloomsbury," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*, ed. Victoria Rosner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 57–70, 64.

[50] There is, again, something curiously presentist about the fact that the narrative moment which translates aesthetic into economic regimes of appreciation is written as pseudomagical wish-fulfillment centering on property value. One of the unsolved theoretical problems in accounts of the creative class today is whether creativity in fact produces economic value at all. While libertarian (and economically interested) proponents of creative

labor such as Richard Florida insist that the creative moment *is* the moment of value-added, leftist sociologists such as Andrew Ross point to the fact that much of this added value arises from the supplementary effects of gentrification and property market inflation that attend the material expansion of creative industries. See Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). From a socio-cultural perspective, however, what seems crucial is not any empirical test of added value but rather understanding the circulation of confidence narratives or discourses of legitimation that construct believable fictions of creativity as economic value. I am reading *Howards End* as one such narrative. One can't help thinking, here, of Forster's poaching of the epigraph to *Lord Jim*: "My conviction," says the mystic, "gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it": just as the sisters believe here in one another's forms of feeling (*Howards End*, 106).

[51] Of course, the propertied pastoral also appears here precisely as a neoaristocratic counterdiscourse to the law of exchange, creating a space free of commodity fetishism and alienation. But precisely *as a pastoral*, it is also a space free of labor and its aspirations. That contradiction explains why Margaret's "work" and her "triumph" appear as such fraught and melancholy signifiers in that final chapter. Forster wants to break out of very symbolic confine in which he has been forced to immure his ideal cultural-worker without submitting her to the iconic "red rust" of industrial modernity fast encroaching upon the Purbeck Downs.

[52] In *A Room of One's Own*, for instance, adventure might be the satirical butt of male heroics, the "purely masculine orgy . . . [of] Men who are alone with their Work," but it also nominates the apocryphal example of women's prose by Mary Carmichael ("Life's Adventure"), which gathers Woolf's all-female audience around a fictional scene of queered, workplace romance ("Chloe liked Olivia. They shared a laboratory together [and] were engaged in mincing liver, which is, it seems, a cure for pernicious anemia") (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, 269). While this might be the scene of queer female desire, its realization is ironically undercut by the medical production of sexual purity that is the remedial and normative object of the women's labor as they stoically mince the body's self-purifying

organ to produce a cure for bad blood. They're in the wrong profession, Woolf seems to be quipping: they need to get creative!

[53] In this sense, a generic account of creative modernist adventure would provide a focused literary lens for thinking through Bloomsbury's mediation of amateurism and professionalism, dilettantism and commercialism, that has been lucidly explored in relation to Woolf by Evelyn Chan. Chan reads Woolf's creatives such as Briscoe and La Trobe in the same way that I read Margaret, as "attempts to solve the contradictions which underlie the concept of 'professionalism,' which [Woolf] never managed to resolve entirely in her own career as a writer." See Evelyn Tsz Yan Chan, *Virginia Woolf and the Professions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 96.

[54] In Jameson's terms, this would be the incipiently postmodern moment in which "aesthetic production . . . has become integrated into commodity production generally." *Postmodernism*, 4.

[55] Elizabeth Bowen, *To the North* (New York: Knopf, 1950), 153.

[56] And it's not only ethnographic and sociological accounts of contemporary labor that have registered the disenchantment of modernist-era workplace aspirations. Post-Fordist adaptations of Forster have also diagnosed the cooption of aesthetic romance by creative capitalism. Consider Zadie Smith's 2004 reworking of *Howards End*, *On Beauty*, in which the music loving Levi Belsey works in thinly disguised Virgin Megastore that brands itself as a "family rather than a hierarchy," a "community [of] shared ideas, values, interests and goals" run by a "mythical British guy who . . . was like a graffiti artist." See Zadie Smith, *On Beauty* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 180. Here, work brands itself as a racially and sexually inclusive kin-unit, one with artistic sensibilities at its core, but only, it turns out, so that disciplinary and managerial procedures can work more effectively as forms of soft power. More broadly, Smith's novel reads the contradiction dramatized by Helen and Tibby, between pure appreciation and practiced expertise, as the central vocational contradiction of cultural work in the US Academy, now dramatized by Harold Belsey's theory-driven mania and Monty Kipp's connoisseurial appreciation. Smith's novel, then, registers the waning of aesthetic appreciation as a utopian possibility as it becomes integrated into cultural status economies. Even at its decisive plot climax, where Harold's

late appreciation of Rembrandt becomes analogous with his love for his wife, the only question seems to be whether or not to reboot a tired, monogamous marriage.

[57] In the interests of brevity, I am eliding an analytic distinction, here, since Brouillette's account is of the commercial expropriation of a reified and decontextualized figure of "the Artist." What this essay has been tracking is the rise of an economic conception of feminine/queer artistic sensibility, something closer to an idealized bohemian cultural critic. That both of these origin myths of the creative economy exist in tandem suggests that its field of discursive legitimation might be more internally heterogenous than we have so far accounted for.

[58] See Amanda Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[59] In this, I am fully in support of Joseph North's recent polemic calling for a return to aesthetic appreciation—as a form of alternative world-making—within the discipline of literary criticism.

[60] At the same time, proponents of the creative class have reduced radical subcultures to population algorithms, such that creative gurus like Florida will talk of a city's "Creativity Index," its "Bohemian Index," and its "Gay Index," designed, as Brouillette points out, "to quantify the relationship between an urban location's level of lifestyle diversity and its success in attracting creative professionals" (*Literature and the Creative Economy*, 22). It's hard not to see such measures as a form of epistemological reification and social impoverishment.

[61] As Cooper pithily puts it: "Today we are all citizens of the Bloomsbury nation" (*Modernism and the Culture of Market Society*, 248). It's also worth noting in this regard the longer history of Bloomsbury's canonization maps pretty neatly onto the rise of what Boltanski and Chiapello describe as the "artistic critique" and the "feminist critique" of Taylorist capitalism, with a long slump in the 1940s and 50s before picking up again in the 60s. See Regina Marler, "Bloomsbury's Afterlife," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*, ed. Victoria Rosner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 215.