

Howards End

Not Canceled, but Postponed

E. M. Forster anticipated James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* in giving his novel a title that unsuspecting saboteurs love to supplement with an inappropriately interpolated apostrophe. In the novel, Dolly helps explain the title by exploiting the pregnant ambiguity afforded by the apostrophe's absence. Nevertheless, those on whom this apt omission is lost are legion, with guilt extending even to Trimark Home Video. Likewise, a hunger for definite articles has long resulted in similar vandalism against titles such as *Winterreise* and *Götterdämmerung*. It comes as no surprise, then, that the film to which *Howards End* lost the Academy Award for best picture is so often referred to as *The Unforgiven*. (Coincidentally, Ludwig Wittgenstein died at his doctor's Cambridge home: Storeys End.)

Howards End employs a structural organizing device that involves events that recur so as to form rhymes. Selected components of these rhymes will be sporadically noted throughout this essay and a more detailed inventory will be offered at the end. Such rhyming events are also to be found in *The World According to Garp* and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. Also, like other plurifilmic topics already noted, this pattern will itself become a theme that will echo and re-echo throughout these essays.

The film begins where it will end, in Ruth's meadow. Anthony Hopkins is given top billing, which helps facilitate a teasing strategy that occurs throughout most of the first act. His introduction is protracted and anticipation is repeatedly frustrated as his Henry is shown only momentarily or from a distance, or only heard offscreen. He remains mostly in the background while Ruth is alive. After she dies, he seems to exert his will, but the will that gets exerted is not his, but Ruth's.

In an allegorical representation of England's class structure, the title sequence ends with a presentation of Howards End as a polarized house with the aristocracy at one end and the help at the other. Paul and Helen leave the house and find love under a chestnut tree that will gather meaning with time.

A rare process shot shows Wickham place backed up against St. James Place, where the Wilcoxes will soon be staying. In the novel, Helen says that Tibby "starts a new mortal disease every month." Whatever it is, Meg seems to be catching it. This scene provides one of the best opportunities to appreciate the stunning resolution of the 70 mm print, which to these eyes appeared more detailed and less grainy than Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*, a film not merely exhibited but also shot in the larger format.

Back at Howards End another Hopkins tease involves offscreen dialogue followed by a brief long shot in which he speaks one word. As Henry and Charles prepare to drive off, Miss Avery and Ruth sit like threshold guardians on either side of the door through which Margaret will first enter the house. Helen's abortive attempt to blame the moon begins to suggest that she and her sister will exemplify the sort of dichotomy to be found in *Sense and Sensibility*.

At Hilton station, as Charles approaches on the left, the train on the left taking Henry to London passes the train arriving with Aunt Juley. Charles and Aunt Juley immediately get their

wires crossed in a version of the old *Rockford Files* joke: Someone would ask Jim Rockford, "Are you Mr. Rockford?" He would reply, "My *father* is Mr. Rockford. I'm Jim." Aunt Juley tells Charles that the Schlegel's interest in literature and art is due to their German father. Apparently, to be purely British is to be Philistine, and proud of it. Aunt Juley, in spite of her later protests, has a certain affinity with the Wilcoxes. Paul returns too late. Those who blink might miss the brief visual allusion to the calisthenics engaged in by Evie in the novel.

Everything up to the title card reading "A FEW MONTHS LATER" may be regarded as prologue, comparable in length to that of *Raising Arizona*. The first act opens with the chance encounter between Helen and Len that determines the entire remainder of the plot. This represents the only necessarily improbable, poetically synchronicous, Dickensian coincidence in the film. Hereafter, the story unfolds relatively naturally.

The character played by the uncredited Simon Callow asks of Beethoven's fifth symphony, "What does it mean?" This is a valid question, if properly stated. Unfortunately, he offers a pedantic prescription of what it should and must mean. Note the relish with which Callow sings the word *perils*. Helen leaves with the umbrella that clearly hangs from the seat in front of Leonard. Given that he would never dream of troubling others unnecessarily, his quest to recover it testifies to his inability to afford its loss. As he follows her, the source of the music transitions from the diegetic piano to a nondiegetic orchestra. This music will eventually acquire a subjective meaning based on the events with which it is associated here.

The same rain that falls on Helen and Len falls also on Charles and Dolly as they emerge from their wedding (see Matt 5:45). The long shot of Paul in the street from Meg's vantage point is the last that will be seen of him for almost exactly two hours. Meg's lips do not seem to match the soundtrack when she speaks of the "library" window. An explanation will suggest itself when Forster's novel is considered below.

Graphic and musical cadences coincide when the umbrella is dropped into the stand. Helen asks the default question: "Is Tibby ill?" When Len enters the Schlegel home, he gives his last name as Bast, which is the name of an Egyptian feline goddess. Alas, Len cannot be counted on to land on his feet. He is obviously impressed with Helen's house as she exerts her prerogative of arbitrary, personal, proprietary interpretation by invoking her "trio of elephants." Henry is again seen from a distance.

Len returns home, where Jacky, and his relationship to her, are introduced via dense, economical exposition. Character and class are rapidly and efficiently delineated via furnishings, accents and the speculation about holes in Len's socks. In his struggle for respectability, Len corrects Jacky's English and practices self-cultivation by reading and attending lectures. He stretches his meager income by eating little. He also refuses free food, possibly to avoid obligation. However, like Jack Sprat, his wife compensates. Jacky's reaction emphasizes that the words *lady* and *woman* were not synonymous. The proximity of the train reveals that Len lives not only on "the other side of tracks," but just barely. The visual component of Len's literary daydream would often provoke an audible reaction from the theater audience.

The most significant deficiency of the laserdisc is probably the wow that occurs in the audio track at 26 minutes 12 seconds elapsed time on side one. The DVD released February 2005 corrects this but adds other audio glitches, including a bit of distortion at a point about 40 seconds further on in the film, but with an identical displayed elapsed time of 00:26:12. This coincidence may reflect something essential in the history of the film's video mastering process. Also, there is a dropout at 1:07:21 when Henry says, "30 feet." And, at 1:09:07, when Charles

says, "I am warning you, Evie," his first two words are completely omitted, this possibly being the point where the laser refocuses while switching between layers.

Meg enters to visit Ruth and is skillfully reflected in the mirror on either side of the mantle clock. Even when filming in aristocratic homes that cannot be altered as extensively as a studio set, Cinematographer Tony Pierce-Roberts and his crew do an excellent job of hiding lights, booms and cables even in rooms containing prominent mirrors. This skill will be demonstrated again in *The Remains of the Day*. A minor continuity error may be noticed in the orientation of the wedding portrait when the camera is repositioned. Meg's characterization of Helen and Paul as "types" will prove ironic. Tibby's inconsequence is emphasized by the fact that even Ruth refers to the Schlegels as, "You poor, poor girls." Ruth's pony has, alas, gone the way of Victorian England.

At luncheon, reference is made to the sword, which has already been visible in the background during earlier scenes. It is unlikely that an author would go to the trouble of mentioning something so particular if it were not going to have future significance. Chekhov said, "if there's a gun on the mantel in the first act, it had better go off in the third." Annie is not condemned to anonymity, but is acknowledged and humanized. They never discuss at Howards End, no doubt because all is settled regarding, as Henry will describe it, "who is who and what is what." Margaret is slower than Ruth to recognize their special relationship. Ruth broods about her house, the problem being that of finding a proper heir.

As the scientific approach to Christmas shopping is pursued, Ruth directs Margaret to put her own name at top of the shopping list above Ruth's own family. Margaret proposes that Henry be next to her. Ruth smiles approvingly. Meg is starting to get with the program and not merely following Ruth's lead. Meg's later acceptance of Henry's marriage proposal is thus telegraphed, even if she herself is not fully conscious of the implications.

With most of the shopping done, Margaret's name remains at the top of the list. She is still number one, but also the last to realize her destiny. Ruth often speaks to Margaret in elliptical statements, as when she says, "Couldn't you get it renewed?" and then, "We had to do it before." Margaret is still not completely on Ruth's wavelength. She cannot read between the lines and fill in the blanks to resolve the indicatives. Their relationship is such that Meg is told of Ruth's operation even before Ruth's family. Like Callow's lecturer, Ruth delightfully sings her line "There's a chestnut tree at Howards End . . ." She sets the metaphysical agenda when she says, "not in this world." She feels deeply the message of the chiming clock: *tempus fugit*.

The scene in the railway station offers the greatest exposure of Henry thus far, yet he is still partially shielded by overlapping dialogue. Meg and Henry, in German and English, respectively, are given the honor of delivering the film's motto, which does not appear in the novel: "Not canceled, but postponed." The scene thus summarizes the plot: Howards End is the intended destination and Henry is the instrument of postponement. As Meg is left alone at the station, note the stumbling extra in the foreground. That this was not reshot may be an example of the famous Merchant-Ivory parsimony, though the realistic spontaneity is not unwelcome.

In the hospital, Ruth's meadow has become "our" meadow. Margaret says, "The day you are strong enough I shall hold you to your promise." This is the strongest Ruth will ever be again. Her promise will be postponed, but she, via Henry's conscience, will be held to it. Ruth passes the torch to Meg via a floral metaphor.

The first time that the shot of the undulating building is seen, one is prompted to think, "Either Tony Pierce-Roberts is shooting through a window with a moving camera or I need a

checkup.” Again Hopkins is seen only briefly and says little. A suite of shots featuring floral imagery reflects a passage in the novel that is cited below.

As the Wilcoxes try to deal with Ruth’s note, Evie says that her mother, “would never leave anything to an *outsider*.” She is right, of course, but fails to allow for the broad sense in which the term may be defined. Henry agrees, but remains passive as Evie acts. Charles and Dolly are not totally without scruples. Evie’s glare is defensive, but also expresses disappointment in the others for leaving it to her to act.

Blood may be thicker than water, but other things are thicker still. Ruth’s brood consists of epigones in spite of biological propinquity (*stemmata quid faciunt?*). It is written in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, “He felt that he was hardly of the one blood with them but stood to them rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother.” Prior to the publication of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, with its special transgenealogical relationship between Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, E. M. Forster produced *Howards End*. There is a suggestion that Penelope unconsciously recognizes Odysseus in the person of the beggar, causing her to dream. Ruth seems to recognize, somewhat before Margaret, some occult affinity between them. There is perhaps a similar recognition between Meg and Henry as well as between Helen and Len. Ultimately, Ruth’s bequest is her assertion that the “poor, poor girls” deserve not just “another” house, but a special one.

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The second act may be defined, albeit arbitrarily, by the absence of a Mrs. Wilcox. Len has grown a mustache since he was last seen, suggesting the passing of time. It will be another five minutes before it is explained just how much time has elapsed. He looks to the stars, beyond mundane, earthly concerns to what he considers “important.” His pen-balancing stunt efficiently endears him to the audience. His astronomical preoccupation is reconfirmed by the chart he consults even while on the job. When he brings his book back out of hiding and opens it, shadows of foliage fall on his desk, signaling the start of his second daydream. The shot of Len walking through the flowers is much lighter and less saturated on laserdisc than in the theater, lessening the visual impact. In this respect, the DVD issues February 2005 is thankfully more like the film. The DVD may offer a superior image, but, as noted above, its overall audio quality is not necessarily better than that of the laserdisc. Also, the DVD divides the film into only 24 chapters, down from 59 on the laserdisc.

Tibby is surprised when Annie announces, “a woman and not a lady.” He initially appears content to continue reading his paper, but soon follows his sisters. The woman in question turns out to be Jacky, who had been surprised when Len referred to Margaret “a lady.” The “woman” now confronts the “lady.” Note Meg’s expression when Helen uses the word *corrupted*.

Audiences usually enjoy a good laugh when Len is announced by Annie. He again declines the offer of food. Note how he first places his hat on the table and then thinks better of it. He is desperate to avoid offense. Also note Meg’s glance toward Helen. Like Ruth, Len speaks cryptically to Meg. She is still not quite in tune with these special people. Len now provides temporal orientation when he says that he and Helen met “more than a year ago.” Meg merely leans her head incredulously at Len’s explanation. Helen is less diplomatic and questions him. Tibby joins in until more is brought to light than Meg would care to hear. Len is mortified. The pole star, and the enduring, permanent, still center that it represents, eludes him. The scene ends

with Annie snuffing out the candle. This is juxtaposed with Len stroking the sword, the instrument that will be associated with him being snuffed out.

Helen and Meg spontaneously recite the same phrase from the book that Len has been reading. At this point the sisters are in perfect accord. This serves to highlight their later divergence. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: A History of Father and Son* (1859) was the first major novel by George Meredith (1828-1909). Its protagonist, like Len, seeks knowledge and freedom. "Nature Speaks" is chapter 42 of 45, so Helen is properly seen reading from the back of the book. Meredith received part of his education in Germany. The Schlegels are half German.

Len is again embarrassed when he is asked about his people. He says that they came from Shropshire, to which he will return when he and Jacky are brought by Helen to Evie's wedding reception at Oniton Grange. He tries to be a romantic by brute force, but cannot help being a realist. Thus he denies that the dawn was wonderful.

As the sisters stroll down the street after the adjournment of their "club," ambient music is heard that will soon be reiterated. Henry interrupts the sisters' conversation before Meg can specify what it is that matters to her most. He approaches voluntarily, apparently already, though perhaps unconsciously, driven by conscience. He nevertheless bristles at the mention of Howards End. The two times that Henry says the word *clerk*, it seems that post-synchronized looping has replaced what may have been the word *friend* on the direct sound of the production track. As Henry explains his advice, note Helen's right arm reaching for her sister. Throughout the scene, Helen thinks and reacts even when not speaking. At this point, Meg still defers to Henry about the boot man. When he leaves, Helen comments sarcastically about his behavior. He then draws angrily on his cigar, possibly misunderstanding his own behavior.

As the sisters advise Len, the bell announcing the arrival of Henry and Evie is heard in the background. Helen, perhaps unconsciously already making a connection with Len, looks after him as he leaves. Referring to Len, Meg speaks of wanting to "help him, not only in a practical way." This relates to the passage in the novel that is cited below when Meg does not want to be repaid "with anything tangible." Having already asserted that Helen and Paul are "types," perhaps Meg feels that, as she will later say of madness, the word *type* applies "when I say it but not when you say it." Meg argues with Henry only up to a point and then lets him have the last word.

At Simpson's, the same tango is heard as when Henry met the sisters in the street at night. Note the formality of the handshake between "Miss Schlegel" and "Miss Wilcox." After initially choosing fish pie (the symbolism of fish is dealt with elsewhere in these essays), Meg then defers to Henry, saying, "go for something for me." Note how Henry glances at Evie after she steps on his line.

A fade-out/snap-back editing pattern is employed in this scene and will recur. Henry uses the word *Levant* in its geographical sense. Its homograph is a verb meaning to decamp, a word Henry will later use, or to run away, which he will do after releasing Meg from her engagement. Recalling Meg's reaction when Helen says, "corrupted," note how Percy and Evie react when Meg says, "shockingly cynical." The plates of Percy and Evie are absent in the shots from their point of view. When Meg mentions Howards End, Evie's reaction is underscored by the expressionistic music cue.

After Meg receives Henry's letter in Devon, Aunt Juley, with Tibby present, refers to "you girls." Pursuing the matter of the letter, Meg goes "up to town." In his Ducie street house (one can almost hear Bette Davis exclaim, "What a dump!"), Henry stalks his prey. His questioning is tentative, but in order to prevent the action from proceeding too quickly, it is

momentarily interrupted and retarded by talk of the ceiling. When Henry brings the conversation back on track, Meg, with defensive body language, drops her arm. She then apparently accepts what is apparently a proposal, having already prepared, with Ruth's approval, a place for Henry next to her on the Christmas shopping list.

Charles demonstrates a certain ironic affinity with Aunt Juley when he refers to "those Schlegel girls." He also accidentally acknowledges an abstract, mystical concept of genealogy ("Taking your mother's place. The idea!").

A great pivot in the plot occurs when Henry elects, perhaps unthinkingly, to comment evaluatively about Len's former place of business. Though seemingly accidental, Henry's "Not a bad business" can be taken as an *obiter dicta* shed of psychological and dramatic necessity. After his "advice" about the poor, Helen can initially do nothing but glare magnificently and then inhale.

In Henry's office, Charles denigrates Howards End as a rationalization to discourage Meg and perhaps also to minimize the sting should it be lost.

Henry and Dolly are frustrated in their attempt to gain entry to Howards End for want of a key and motor off to recover it. Left alone, Meg communes with the house accompanied by the same music heard while Ruth strolls around the house during the titles. This implies that the two women have a similar relationship to the house.

In *Sleeping Beauty*, the hedge parts for the right youth. The sword in the stone (or tree or scabbard, as the case may be) yields not to the strongest, but to the chosen one. Similar to Arthur, Siegmund is chosen to extract Nothung. To enter Howards End, a key is necessary only for the unworthy. Meg, the legitimate heir, needs no such help. The door opens for her effortlessly. This is the great realization of Mahayana Buddhism: There is nothing to do and no place to go. You are there. Just realize it (see also Luke 17:21). The issue of who gets the keys to the future of Britain is raised in Joyce's *Ulysses*, and his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* mentions "the power of the keys."

Meg's exploration of the house is interrupted when she reaches the room in which she was betrayed. She asks, "Who's there?" recalling the first line of *Hamlet*. Miss Avery enters like the ghost of Hamlet's father. She is also like the milk woman in the opening chapter of *Ulysses*, about whom it is written, "Old and secret she had entered from a morning world, maybe a messenger. . . . A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal To serve or to upbraid, whether he could not tell." Miss Avery's appearance is surprising to those who forget that she is featured in the prologue. She says to Meg, "I took you for Ruth Wilcox," recognizing the qualities shared by Ruth and Meg, and that the torch has been passed between them.

Meg recognizes the pig's teeth because Ruth has told her about them, but they come as a surprise to Henry because he is out of the loop. Regarding Meg's encounter with Miss Avery, Dolly asks, "Did you take her for a spook?" In Aunt Juley's words, "the warning is all the other way" because it is Miss Avery who takes Meg for the ghost of Ruth Wilcox. *Charley's Aunt*, to which Dolly refers, is a farcical 1892 play by Brandon Thomas in which a man disguises himself as a woman. Dolly says of Meg's furniture that Miss Avery might "simply adopt it for Howards End." The audience is clearly invited to adopt Howards End as a symbol of England. The appropriation of physical objects to serve as symbols will be discussed in subsequent essays. Foreshadowing involving the sword continues, as the little woodwind figures on the soundtrack sound like those in the first movement of the first symphony of Alexander Glazunov.

Though not initially obvious, Helen is to be seen at the counter in the background as Len enters the bank. As Helen approaches him, she adopts the same upward-looking posture as in the

scene where she called him a “noodle.” Len echoes Henry in saying that Helen is not at fault for his unemployment.

Artistic sensibility is considered strange by the Wilcoxes. Therefore, rather than express his own opinion about his paintings, Henry says, “I’m *told* some of these are rather good.” Meg, who earlier said that England had no true mythology, calls, “Saxon or Celt?” This merely hints at England’s complex cultural history, which also includes conquests by the Romans and Normans. It is also a reminder of class consciousness and of concerns about possible future inheritors of England.

Following Evie’s wedding, a guest, Lady Edser, is reported to have compared the affair to a “Durbar,” which is a grand Indian reception, possibly analogous to the wealth-flaunting *potlatch* of northwest coast native Americans. When Meg goes to “deal” with “those people,” Len and Jacky look offscreen, anticipating Helen’s entrance. Meg’s question shows that Tibby’s illness remains the default presumption. Helen, with admirable alacrity, makes the most of each consonant when saying, “The Basts!”

As Helen sees to acquiring some food for her “protégés,” Len, typically, says, “Sorry. Excuse me.” Dramatic necessity again asserts itself and dictates that Helen and Len leave Jacky behind so that she can encounter Henry. Jacky comically eats dessert with a large serving spoon. Her drunkenness causes the audience to anticipate disaster, but this is a red herring. Disaster comes, but of a different sort.

After Henry and Jacky are reunited, Crispin Bonham Carter (Helena’s cousin) is seen briefly as Albert Fussell. Like Tibby, Dolly does not seem to count as the last of the guests depart. Meg cries, Len retrieves Jacky, and Meg then confronts Henry. When Henry hides his face, the effect is somewhat like when Gil Carter reads a letter near the end of *The Ox-Bow Incident* with his face obscured by Art Craft’s hat. In *The African Queen*, the nature of Rosie’s relationship with Mr. Alnut is signaled by the word *dear*. Meg’s forgiveness is telegraphed with the same word. The fade-out/snap-back editing pattern recurs. The two instances of this device perhaps mark critical thresholds in Meg’s relationship with Henry. The first coincides with the formation of that relationship, while this second marks a significant change, though not a permanent dissolution. Henry avails himself of some of the catharsis that he requires, though to a large degree his guilt endures until the epilogue. He shouts, “Burton,” Richard Burton having been the idol of Anthony Hopkins. Meg proves to be left-handed. The symbolic significance of chirality will be considered in the essay devoted to *Heavenly Creatures*.

Len throws the letter from Meg into the fire at Helen’s request. Meg could not always fathom Ruth’s elliptical statements, but Helen seems able to infer Len’s meaning when he speaks of Jacky having to “fend for herself.” This is followed by a shot that allows a moment for consideration of Jacky. In the boat with Len, Helen observes that books are “more real than anything.” They will prove to be the last real things that Len ever experiences.

Following a discrete withdrawal, an establishing shot of Oxford introduces Helen’s visit to her brother. She is smoking a cigarette, which she has done before. But this cigarette, following hard upon her scene with Len despite the obvious passage of time, is suggestive of what went on after they were left on the river bank. Jacky had looked foolish eating with a large serving spoon. Helen now does the same. Len returns Tibby’s check and cannot get rehired.

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If, as suggested above, the second act were defined by the absence of a Mrs. Wilcox, then act three would begin as Meg marries Henry. Like Meg, Tibby is left-handed. When Henry shows his new wife the plans for his next house, he seems to express compassion for his servants, wanting to give them the benefit of central heating *instead* of what the architect wants. Meg speaks of a *poste restante* address. This French term is the equivalent of general delivery, meaning that mail is to be left at the post office until claimed by the addressee.

As the postcards from Helen continue to stream in, it is shown that Meg has managed to bring Annie with her to Ducie street. Paying by the word, Helen composes her telegrams with parsimonious concision, prepositions being the first casualties in phrases such as “[in] care [of] my bank,” at least from the perspective of American usage. Again, Aunt Juley does not count Tibby when saying to Meg, “If only you had a companion.” Later, however, she expresses concern about Tibby’s mackerel.

Meg follows Henry’s advice and lures Helen to Howards End. Being “musical, literary, artistic” is symptomatic of being “highly strung.” Meg keeps quiet and does not challenge Henry, but is clearly uncomfortable. Meg ushers Helen inside via the “Schlegel door.” She insists that this is “not our house.” Miss Avery, who earlier implicitly acknowledged Meg’s legitimacy as Ruth’s heir, knows better. Meg is afraid that Miss Avery might be “touched,” which very well may be true in the mystical, shamanic sense.

It is as if it were being asked, “How can Len be defeated? Let us count the ways.” Henry feigns ignorance of what association Helen has with Howards End, though he knows full well that Helen’s books are there, as will be her sister that night. As when Helen uses the word *corrupted*, Meg’s eyes widen when Henry invokes “the memory of my dear wife.” It is from this point in the novel that its motto “Only connect” is derived. It seems as though a slap may be pending. Even without one, Henry’s behavior seems like a kind of last straw for Meg.

At Oxford, Charles implies that wealth makes unnecessary education and what he earlier calls “artistic beastliness.” He does manage to extract Len’s name from Tibby. After Len learns of Howards End, Charles and Henry interact with appalling formality.

An example is offered of what Beethoven’s fifth symphony has come to mean for Len. The music is “made to fit the insistent rhythm of the train,” to borrow a line from Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Jacky mentions Len’s pain, providing Charles with at least a modicum of plausible deniability. Len then sets out on his way to Howards End. Ismail Merchant is so famous for his parsimony, one could imagine filming being scheduled to coincide with an annual outing of the vintage train in order to avoid the cost of bringing out of storage specially. Charles avoids hitting Len on the road, but may as well have gotten it over with sooner than later. In his third daydream, Len is again seen without a mustache. This time, he is not narrating from a book of fiction but is recalling an actual episode from his personal experience. His first fantasy is isolated and has little practical result. The second inspires an actual physical excursion during which he loses his way. This time, he has a real, concrete goal and he reaches his intended destination.

Len deferentially wipes his feet before entering Howards End. As he does, he is in the shadows. The man who claimed that “books aren’t real” ironically follows the example of the composer Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-1888), who pulled a bookcase over on himself and was killed by the Talmud. This also corresponds to the visions that Len attributes to Jacky in which he is “crushed and killed in a gruesome accident.” (Also, Len’s suspected heart disease may have been obliquely foreshadowed by the digitalis in Aunt Juley’s painting.) For a moment, in spite of Henry’s look of incredulity, it seems that Charles, the privileged rich kid, might come away

unscathed. He is diplomatically told that the police will only be “*requesting* your presence at the inquest, *sir*.” He ends the scene with a rather irresolute expression. A moment is then allowed to consider the women.

Ironically echoing Meg’s note to Helen (“We found the woman drunk on the lawn.”), Henry assumes a posture reminiscent of *The Dying Gaul*, a statue that is subsequently found in the same filmmakers’ *The Golden Bowl*. Recalling the end of *Ulysses*, Henry, for some of his responses, can only say, “Yes.” Meg needs Henry’s keys no more than she did earlier. Meg’s “ancestral voices” are calling her back to Germany. When Henry again hides his face, a reverse-angle countershot robs him of his privacy. In his final appearance, Charles approaches in slow motion, which postpones exposure of the handcuffs and the realization of his fate. This is foreseen when Len says, “Murder will out.” Ironically, Charles strove to protect the family from a scandal caused by Helen, but is himself now the source of scandal. His train excursion is the equivalent of going “up the river.”

A title card announces the epilogue and separates it from the rest of the film. Paul’s appearance after an absence of just over two hours causes surprise. One can imagine Anna Russell asking, “Do you remember Paul?” Dolly looks at Meg as if to blame her. Meg now looks domestic and matriarchal, not the liberated Blue Stocking she once was. Charles has suggested changing his family name, but he need not bother. A rose is a rose. Meg momentarily stands in shadow but emerges. The formula “not canceled, but postponed” also applies to Len. For him, the postponement is all the way to the next generation. His son will inherit Howards End. Nothing is revealed of Jacky’s fate.

As will be further explored in the *Heavenly Creatures* essay, that which is ignored becomes a compulsion. Henry says, “Didn’t do wrong, did I?” His conscience would not have let him even if he had tried. It may be argued that he proposes to Margaret only because Ruth’s letter is burned and that “scruples” make him unable to thwart Ruth’s will. He cannot fight destiny, however much he may rationalize his actions. His bequest to Meg is the fulfillment of a distorted wish that he cannot acknowledge. Though reluctant to admit it, Henry somehow recognizes, like Miss Avery, that Meg belongs in Ruth’s role. Closure is achieved as the film ends in “our meadow” where it began.

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As reported at the outset, many elements in this film occur in pairs that constitute formal rhymes. Through repetition, these repetenda (repeated elements) assert themselves, draw attention, and invite the attachment of importance to similarities and affinities among the characters and situations. Naturally, events do not always repeat exactly. Mark Twain observes, “History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” An idea cannot be fixed absolutely because mental states are transitory and differ with each occasion. Even an *idée fixe* must allow for nuanced reiteration. Scansion could conceivably reveal rhythmic parallelism in the form of an expanding and self-repeating spiral of action. An attempt has been made to order the following list chronologically with respect to the first member of each set.

- Percy Grainger’s “Bridal Lullaby” is heard during the titles and again when Meg first explores Howards End. His “Mock Morris” is then heard during the credits at the end.
- Helen and Paul kiss under the chestnut tree at Howards End. Helen and Leonard later kiss under a tree on a river.

- Helen says of the Wilcoxes, “They think me a noodle, and say so.” She later calls Len a “noodle.”
- Aunt Juley refers to “You Schlegel girls” and Charles to “those Schlegel girls.”
- Aunt Juley says to Meg, “if I may interfere,” and then says to Charles, “I come in no spirit of interference.”
- Helen watches Paul descend stairs at Howards End. She later follows Len down the stairs at Wickham Place.
- Aunt Juley tells Charles, “The warning is all the other way.” Meg later admits to Henry, “Well, our human nature appears the other way round.”
- Twice a title card signals the passage of time.
- Leonard deferentially steps *into* the gutter as he pursues Helen, who has his umbrella. He later deferentially steps *out* of the gutter as he sets out to find Helen, who, unbeknownst to him, is carrying his child.
- Twice newlyweds are seen departing after their wedding, first Charles and Dolly, then Percy and Evie.
- When Charles leaves after his wedding, he expresses concern to his brother about his hat, which he presumably reclaims. When Colonel Fussell leaves after Evie’s wedding, he is afraid that he has forgotten his hat, which is returned to him by Albert. Charles and Fussell both then become passengers driven away by someone else. These events are also related to Henry being handed his cane by Evie just before he is driven to the station by Charles in the prologue.
- Tibby asks, “Who could find no flat?” Meg answers, “Tibby, the Wilcoxes.” Later, Tibby says, “I don’t understand. Whose house is this?” Meg answers, “Mr. Wilcox’s, Tibby.”
- Helen and Margaret each ask, “Is Tibby ill?”
- Len is impressed as he inspects the interior of the Schlegel home. Meg is similarly impressed with Henry’s London house, Howards End and Oniton Grange.
- Tibby says to Helen, “‘Only the score’? What an insidious ‘only.’” Later, a female luncheon guest seems to say, “But, and this is a tremendous but,” though the last part is subtitled as “the tremendous part.” (In fact, the corresponding line in the novel is: “But—but—such a tremendous but!”)
- Len repeatedly declines offered food. On two such occasions, Helen follows him down the stairs at Wickham Place.
- When Meg first meets Len, she says, “We are so very sorry to have put you to this inconvenience.” When they next meet “more than a year” later, he says, “And I beg to tender my apologies, and hers too, for any inconvenience we may have caused you.”
- Meg says to Len, “I hope you will come another day.” When invited to Howards End by Ruth, Meg says, “Well, might I come some other day?”
- Meg refers to herself and Helen as “screaming women” and later scolds Helen for her “screaming.”
- Jacky has saved Len “a bit of tongue and jelly.” Meg asks Ruth if she will “have another jelly.”
- Twice an insert shows Meg’s card from the holder’s point of view, first Len’s (twice in one scene) and then Ruth’s. These are the only two characters not to survive the film. Also, the length of Len’s thumbnail at least matches if not exceeds that of Ruth’s.
- Jacky finds it unusual that Len refers to Margaret as a “Lady.” Tibby finds it unusual that Annie refers to Jacky as “a woman and not a lady.”

- Len has three “bluebells” daydreams.
- Meg describes Helen and Paul as “types,” but later denies that Len is “a type.”
- Meg speaks of discussion to both Ruth and Henry.
- Twice, at the end of a meal in the Schlegel home, Margaret diffuses an awkward situation, first by saying, “Shall we go up for coffee?” and later by saying, “We are going to go upstairs for coffee.”
- Twice Ruth speaks to Meg in an indefinite manner, first saying, “Couldn’t you get it renewed?” and then, “We had to do it before.” Later, Margaret has similar trouble resolving the ambiguity when Len says, “Well, that was how it happened, you see.”
- Both Ruth and Meg prominently remove their hats in some distress.
- “I still haven’t told my family yet,” says Ruth to Margaret about the former’s operation. Henry later says to Margaret, “I dare not tell him,” referring to Charles and “the verdict of the inquest” and its consequences.
- Ruth and Aunt Juley are each seen in a sickbed.
- Twice an exterior view is seen through a window as the camera descends.
- Reading Ruth’s note, Henry says, “Miss Schlegel (Margaret)” Proposing to Margaret, Henry says, “Miss Schlegel, Margaret,”
- Of the note from Mrs. Wilcox (Ruth), Evie says, “Mother never wrote that.” Of the note from the soon-to-be Mrs. Wilcox (Margaret), Helen says, “This isn’t Margaret.” Later, Meg says of messages from Helen, “These postcards and telegrams don’t seem to have come from her. They’re . . . That’s not her.”
- At Howards End, a servant wanting to clear the table is told by Henry, “Not now, please. Later.” At Oxford, a servant wanting to clear the table is told by Tibby, “Not now. Later.”
- When Charles says, “I deny it is my mother’s handwriting,” Dolly reminds him (incorrectly, at least with respect to what is revealed to the audience), “You just said it was.” When Margaret says, “I deny it’s madness,” Henry reminds her, “You said yourself.”
- Letters from Mrs. Wilcox (Ruth) and from the soon-to-be Mrs. Wilcox (Margaret) are both thrown into a fire by someone other than the addressee: Ruth’s note to Henry is disposed of by Evie, while Meg’s letter to Helen is disposed of by Len.
- Twice the passage of time is denoted by the appearance of a mustache on a previously clean-shaven man, first Leonard and then Paul.
- Twice Meg’s eyes widen in response to a key word, first *corrupted* and then *wife*.
- Meg looks incredulous as she listens to Len explain Jacky’s visit to Wickham Place in search of him. Henry looks incredulous as he listens to Charles tell of Len’s death.
- Twice Helen exhales nasally while looking in a book.
- A tango is heard at the start of the scene in which Meg and Helen meet Henry in the street at night. The same tango is heard when Meg meets Henry in Simpson’s.
- A least twice, the action at the end of one shot recurs at the start of the next, though it can be seen that the two do not overlap in time. Specifically, after speaking with the Schlegel sisters in the street during the evening, Henry rejoins his friends twice. Later, after Evie’s wedding reception, Colonel Fussell crosses the threshold twice on the way out to his car.
- Twice Henry draws angrily on his cigar, first after conversing with Meg and Helen in the street and then after telling Charles to evict Meg and Helen from Howards End.
- Len reacts to being warned by the Schlegel sisters about his company’s prospects by dropping his left arm. Meg later reacts to Henry’s impending proposal by dropping her left arm.

- Henry asks, “Are we intruding, Miss Schlegel?” and subsequently writes, “Dare I intrude on your holiday in Devon . . . ?” Charles later says, “I seem always to be intruding.”
- Len tells Helen that “things like that always get spoiled.” She says, “Things do, but people don’t.” She later says to him, “Everything’s got spoiled for you, hasn’t it?” She then tries to demonstrate with her subsequent kiss that “people don’t.”
- Twice Helen bends down to look into Len’s face, first at Wickham Place, both from the staircase and again from the ground floor, and then later in the bank.
- Twice Helen tells Len that he must do something “at least,” first to “search for another place” and then to “trust me that far.”
- Twice a scene is edited in a series of fade-out/burst-in segments, first at Simpson’s when Henry tells of his travels, then during Henry’s disclosure of his relationship with Jacky during those travels.
- Henry and Meg descend several staircases together. In Henry’s Ducie Street home, she leads the way most of the time. At Oniton Grange, Henry leads the way. They then descend a small set of steps together outside the home of Charles and Dolly.
- Henry tells Helen that she is not to blame for Len’s problem. Len later contradicts Helen when she says, “It’s our fault.”
- Henry tells Helen, “The poor are poor,” and then later speaks to Meg of “Who is who and what is what.”
- Twice Charles finds himself in Henry’s office being made uncomfortable by his father’s talk of Howards End in Margaret’s presence.
- Twice Henry, Margaret and a third person (first Dolly and then the doctor) arrive at Howards End by car. Margaret is then the only one in the car to enter the house (first alone and then with Helen) while the others drive off. Miss Avery walks in on her each time.
- In the wine cellar, Meg asks Henry if he is talking about money. He replies, “Yes, money, since you put it so frankly.” When she later asks if he had been Jacky’s lover, he replies, “Since you put it with your usual delicacy, yes, I was.”
- Twice the Bastards are referred to as “those people,” first by Henry at Evie’s wedding reception and then by both Tibby and Helen at Oxford.
- Twice Helen is sent from one of Henry’s houses (first Oniton and then Howards End) to stay at a hotel.
- Margaret exits screen right on three occasions: at Evie’s wedding reception after agreeing to speak to Henry about Len; after Henry releases her from her engagement; after overhearing Dolly say that Ruth wanted Meg to have Howards End. Each time, she is the last person left onscreen at the end of the shot.
- Twice Jacky says, “What ho, Len!” first as Len and Helen leave Evie’s wedding reception and then again on the morning of Len’s last day of life, when responds, “What ho, Jacky!”
- Jacky eats with a serving spoon at Evie’s wedding reception. Helen then eats with a serving spoon while visiting Tibby at Oxford.
- Henry and Meg are the only two people in a room and converse, while Charles overhears them from just outside the room. Then, with Henry and Meg possibly again being the only two people in a room (depending on Paul’s location, which is indeterminate), Dolly and Evie converse just outside the room and Meg overhears them from within.
- When Len describes Jacky as “extremely tired,” she corrects him, calling herself “hungry.” When Margaret describes Jacky as “a little overtired,” Henry corrects her, calling Jacky

“drunk.” Len complains to Helen of being “tired” in the boat. When Henry and Meg sit on the grass, he tells her that he is “extremely tired.”

- Meg tells Henry that Jacky is “a little overtired.” Len complains to Helen of being “tired” in the boat. When Henry and Meg sit on the grass, he tells her that he is “extremely tired.”
- Margaret and Henry each say to the other, “Look at me.”
- Henry twice hides his face from Margaret with his contralateral hand.
- Twice Henry suggests that Meg should send a message to Helen, first a “note” and then a “telegram.”
- Margaret says of Henry, “His wife forgives him and his sister-in-law cannot bear to look upon his face.” She then tells Henry, “You have had a mistress. I forgave you. My sister has a lover, you drive her from the house!”
- Henry asks Charles, “And who is ‘we’? Pray, Charles, who is ‘we’?” He is later asked by Margaret, “‘Us’? Who is ‘us’?” The two cases are similar not just in the use of a personal pronoun but in its repetition.
- Charles shakes hands with his father the day before Len dies. He then shakes hands in slow motion and in handcuffs just before boarding a train to go off to prison for having killed Len.
- Additionally, the graphics on disc two of the 2005 DVD issue suggests a deleted shot of Leonard echoing his balancing of his pen on his nose by similarly balancing his hat.

The following terms may be helpful to those interested in the topic of rhyme: cadence, caesura, cancrine, canon, chiasmus, cockney rhyme, consonance, echo, elegant variation, epistrophe, epizeuxis, eye-rhyme, half-rhyme, holorhyme, homeoteleuton, internal rhyme, mosaic rhyme, orthotone, oxytone, palindrome, palilogy, paroxytone, polyptoton, Reimrede, rejet, retroencha, rhyme counterpoint, rimes équivoquées, rimes mêlées, sigmatism, slant rhyme, synthetic rhyme, syzygy, terza rima, triolet, zéjel.

As a postscript, a few sundry features of the source novel will be cited.

Howards End is in Hertfordshire, one hour north of London by train. Dolly says, “I say! Howards End-Howard’s Ended!” As with *Like Water for Chocolate*, the title is explained and exploited much more thoroughly in the novel than in the film. Dolly may be presumed to be a relative of Colonel Fussell, as they share the same surname. She is also referred to as Dorothea. Percy Cahill is Dolly’s uncle. Helen and Tibby were born at Wickham Place, but not Meg. To make room for the furniture from Wickham Place, Howards End’s furniture is moved to Oniton. Like Matt 5:45 cited above, the novel observes that “conqueror and conquered would alike be applauded by the angels of the utmost stars.” Forster refers to “the tenderness that kills the Monk and the Beast at a single blow.” A similar phrase used by Joyce will be discussed during the consideration of *Heavenly Creatures*. Joyce also comes to mind when mention is made of “the sailors of Ulysses” and of “tree stems,” a phrase that Joyce used as a pun on the name Tristan. “A funeral,” it is said, “is not death, any more than baptism is birth or marriage union.” Subsequent essays will address the issue of the authenticity of marriage within an Arthurian, courtly love context. When Len is obviously lying, “Helen didn’t see why he should get off. She had the cruelty of youth.” After Len’s nocturnal excursion, he is told, “You tried to get away from the fogs that are stifling us all-away past books and houses to the truth. You were looking for a real home.”

Some dialogue is discovered to have been originally spoken by a different character. For instance, the line “I wish you’d give us Howards End” comes after the marriage proposal and is

said by Helen. Helen's seducer must be "thrashed within an inch of his life." This phrase is spoken by Tibby about Paul in the film. It is Helen rather than Meg who tells Henry about hiring people because they are unemployed. The novel also contains the phrase "drawing-room window," which may be what was originally spoken during shooting and what would be found on the direct, synchronous sound element carrying the dialogue that was ultimately looped as "library window." It is further discovered that Henry's laugh in the film often economically summarizes portions of the novel's text.

Only a few of the film's rhyming elements are to be found in the novel. The phrase "Miss Schlegel – Margaret" is repeated, as is the phrase "panic and emptiness" as well as the questions "Who is we?" and "Who is us?" Additionally, Len and Meg both break framed photos and cut their fingers on broken glass. Both Henry and Helen say, "I'm ended."

The motto chosen for this essay does not occur in the novel and is thus credited to Ruth Praver Jhabvala. However, it is implied when Helen says that Henry and his ilk "believe that somehow good-it is always the sloppy 'somehow'-will be the outcome, and that in some mystical way the Mr. Basts of the future will benefit because the Mr. Basts of today are in pain." It is in just such a way that Mr. Basts's literal, biological descendant benefits by becoming the presumptive heir to Henry's property.

The "two great arches" of a train station "were fit portals for some eternal adventure." Ruth is said to go "heavenward" in a lift. *Howards End* was for her "the Holy of Holies." Of the rest of the Wilcoxes it is said, "To them *Howards End* was a house: they could not know that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir." When Ruth wants to give Meg something, Meg says, "If that is so, . . . you cannot pay me back with anything tangible." This emphasizes that *Howards End* is more than a physical gift. "Ruth knew no more of worldly wickedness and wisdom than did the flowers in her garden or the grass in her field." This comparison is implied in the film when Ruth is revealed strolling during the titles and by the botanical imagery linking the last scene in which she is alive to the first in which her death is acknowledged.

Henry "felt that his hands were on all the ropes of life, and that what he did not know could not be worth knowing." His eyes "had an agreeable menace in them." He gives Ruth's silver vinaigrette to Meg, who says, "It has made me like him very much." His "defences fell" when his eyes met Meg's. Henry "was thrilled to jealousy" by Len visiting the Schlegels. His "proposal was not to rank among the world's great love scenes." It is said of him, "Amabat, amare timebat" (he loved, and was afraid to love).

The final chapter begins, "Tom's father was cutting the big meadow. He passed again and again amid whirring blades and sweet odours of grass, encompassing with narrowing circles the sacred center of the field." This suggests the still point, *axis mundi*, around which rotates *samsara*, the vortex of secular misery. Like Ruth, Helen's child is born at *Howards End*. At the end, after Henry asks, "I didn't do wrong, did I?" Meg says, "You didn't, darling. Nothing has been done wrong."