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Perspectives on the Problem of Poverty in Forster's *Howards End* and Orwell's

Down and Out in Paris and London

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Abstract

Key words

1. Introduction

Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that influences society and individuals alike. It can be defined as an economic deprivation which impacts person's psychology, physiology and access to resources, security and power. Society of 21st century is so diverse and multi-faceted that the standard definition of financial means and lifestyle connected with poverty and class are no longer valid. Thanks to widespread changes in technology and communications, poverty as a topic has been more present in the media. Financial crashes, rising food and housing prices, riots, union strikes and general discussions about homeless people and unemployment are our daily news. An emerging problem or a challenge is how it is presented to people.

Literature has been a prominent beacon of different representations of poverty. It has also been used to serve different agendas for their authors. From sentimentalism, to jarring realism and naturalism, poverty had (and still has) an appeal to different authors based on how they themselves viewed poverty and poor people. Stereotypes, prejudice but also their dismantling is present in different eras.

This thesis will focus on the beginning of twentieth century, namely on the novels *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) by George Orwell and *Howards End* (1910) by E.M. Forster to showcase two different approaches to representations of poverty. Orwell and Forster were contemporaries who wrote their novels almost twenty years apart and a comparison will shed light not only on their *oeuvres* but also on their attitude toward this topic.

In the analysis of these works, it will be revealed how they present poverty and poor people to their reader; which class of people they focus on and how they represent their lifestyles. Further analysis of these works will show how their representations of poverty may

affect their readership and how they use certain stereotypes to appeal to some preconceived ideas their readers may have. Brief overview of Orwell's and Forster's lives will demonstrate their own experience with poverty and how it affected the way they approached it in their works. Analysis of *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *Howards End* will be based on three configurations proposed by Barbara Korte for the emerging field of Poverty Studies which will contribute to a coherent and structural analysis.

2. Definition of class, representation of poverty and methodology in Poverty Studies

Poverty is a sensitive topic for society. It is a reality in which millions of people live, but unlike race and gender, it is also nearly invisible to millions of people. Poverty is a social condition which people try to escape and, again unlike race and gender, there is no one who proudly proclaims themselves poor and seeks validation for their status. Society's complex attitude towards this topic is fuelled by experience, representations and their own ideologies.

One cannot talk about poverty without mentioning class. The relationship between poverty and class is symbiotic yet at times remains unstable. Scholars have been fascinated by class and poverty, but also with challenges and questions associated with them (e.g. exploitation, politics, economics, sociology...). Throughout history, there have been certain periods where poverty has been the main focus in literature and scientific discussion – American *Great Depression*, Victorian novels (to name a few) – but there has been a lack of deep research into how these discussions and representations have impacted societal views and experience with poverty.

At the beginning of twentieth century, drastic changes in political climate affected people's social and economic realities and thus influenced the literature of the time. Modernists were reacting to consequences of political acts and reform bills which enabled

widespread literacy and thriving publishing industry. The “poor masses” were now financially stable enough to engage with culture, they could move to new places and be closer to the middle-classes with their lifestyle choices. Later, the interwar years were economically and socially difficult for a handful of countries according to statistics of that period. *Great Depression* only greatly affected the United States and Germany. The UK and France were hit with high unemployment and economic failure in some industries while in others they thrived. In the UK, industries that were hit hardest were those depending on export trades: coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding, mechanical engineering, cotton, wool. The employment dropped by 26 percent between 1929 and 1932 (Richardson 9). Other industries, like electrical engineering, motor vehicle repairs and publishing, were experiencing growth in numbers of employment. But it was not easy to shift people from one industry to the other and expect the unemployment problem to disappear. Hard times affected manual workers, older men and the unskilled labour. In 1932, almost three million workers were out of a job and change was not seen until economic recovery in 1937 (Constantine 7).

France was similarly affected by world market with high unemployment and deep resistance to modernising their banking system. Those were some of the reasons France did not recover until 1939, but they managed to keep themselves afloat with gold reserves and rigid political policies (Jackson 10). France was experiencing problems since 1926 (when the franc devalued) with its agricultural productivity decreasing (rural exodus of almost a million people), textile production declining, and industrial and commercial concerns employing no workers. Since young generation of French men mostly died in the war, the government decided to allow foreign workforce to enter France. When financial situation stabilised, an increase of nationalism emerged. Foreign workers were urged to leave but even French citizens did not benefit from this – there was no systematic unemployment insurance (Cohen 84). Literature of the time “dealt with the concrete, not the abstract, the particular not the

general.” (Day 14). Modernists rejected the new social order with segregation of cultures – keeping high culture from the unappreciative “masses”:

“The modernist focus on the self, its ‘incalculable chaos of impressions, its random progress of thoughts and feelings, the strange workings of its nerves, the whisper of its blood and the entreaty of its bone’ is at the expense of the lower-class other and reinforces their oppression.” (Day 158-159)

Similar ideas are reflected in Forster’s novels, one of which will be analysed in detail. On the other hand, the interwar writers, especially in the United States and the UK, focused on the problems of unemployment and class struggle. Revival of realism and love of facts was pronounced in literature of the time, especially in Orwell’s writing.

Definition of class is another complex issue. Everyone has their own interpretation of what class is and who the members are. The word ‘class’ has roots from Latin ‘classis’ and its broad meaning is division of people based on income. “The appearance of the word ‘class’, in other words, is linked to fundamental changes in the economy and to their effect on social relations.” (Day 6) Closely defining class has never been easy. In fact, the way we view class today (with its economic and social implications) has been a recent development, namely the terms were established in 1840s but the problem remains in finding a concrete and widely established definition. The problem Raymond Williams acknowledges is that the nature of class, unlike gender and race, is not fixed, it is “made rather than merely inherited” (65).

Despite these problems, Pierre Bourdieu tries to define class or ‘social space’ as he calls it as:

“(…) the idea of social space yields a relational view of class in which each position derives its meaning from its relations to others – distance, proximity, above, below, between and so on – within the totality, with these distances and relations translating into real social distances and relations.” (qtd in Atkinson 47)

He also takes into consideration three dimensions: capital, horizontal axis and time. With these, he expands his view of 'social space':

“The social space (...) is constructed in such a way as to reveal the maximum differences and similarities between people. This is because those in neighbouring positions within it, by virtue of their capital possession, share similar 'conditions of existence' and conditionings which, in turn, produce within them similar habitus.” (qtd in Atkinson 48)

People with similar hold of capital (economic, cultural, etc.) will have similar lifestyles and they will define their position on social ladder in relation to how they see others. Other scholars have formulated class based on values, ideals and identity, i.e. class consciousness which allow prediction of behaviours and lifestyles of different class members. Eric Schocket doesn't agree: “Class is a 'rhetorical abstraction' that can be used neither to predict behaviour of wage earners nor to describe the politics of the labour movement.” (15). Others, like Ulrich Beck, even disregard class as a sociological concept because it has been replaced by new processes in society, like “individualization” (qtd in Atkinson 18). According to him:

“People with the same income level, or put in the old-fashioned way, within the same 'class', can or even must choose between different lifestyles, subcultures, social ties and identities. From knowing one's 'class' position one can no longer determine one's personal outlook, relations, family position, social and political ideas or identity.” (qtd in Atkinson 19)

But how to view class then? It is an abstract concept which has a significant impact on realities of wider society and people's lifestyles, like many other abstractions people take as reifications do. The way people position themselves in terms of class is not only rooted in financial means, but also in real or perceived social status, lifestyle and education. External

factors also influence class - namely politics. Mobility is a significant factor which further muddles any concrete attempts to define class. "Class is totalizing, but it is simultaneously unstable. It does not describe entities and moments; it describes processes that are open to change." (Schocket x) Schocket tries to remove ascribed value to class and rightly interprets class as a "process that may depend on but can never be reduced to social systems of differentiation and the ideological appurtenances of cultural representation." (14). One cannot completely dismiss how this process is realised and presented in various media. Class, like every other abstraction, has significant influence on people's minds. While it is an abstraction, it has concrete physical consequences. Those physical consequences are sometimes realised in representations.

Our focus here is how representations of poverty in literature impact target audiences, how they are expressed and how authors exhibit their personal ideas or prejudice through their work. It is important to note that when we talk about class and poverty, we cannot judge them according to our standards and perceptions of what constitutes class because social reality has changed. We must be aware of perceived notions of financial means and values we ascribe to class and their members.

While class and poverty go sometimes hand in hand – most widely perceived as poor are working classes - poverty can be present in every class, but the way each class interacts with poverty is drastically different. Being poor is not merely a lack of means, it is also influenced by environment, psychology and physiology. Poverty affects people of different social or ethnic backgrounds uniquely. The differences are stark from country to country or even from city to city.

Newly emerging approach in literary studies tries to assess and analyse poverty as economic deprivation and the representations of it. Writers have a significant role – their

works present situations, ideals and observations and the reader might interpret those ideals in different ways, creating their own values and observations. According to Frederic Jameson, all interpretation is under influence of many things - from the author's attitude and writing to external factors - but all interpretation in the end is political (4-5). Literature doesn't exist without an underlying plethora of structural, experiential, historic, social or political symbols, references and interpretations. Our goal is to establish a coherent methodology of interpretation to approach interpretations that interest us. In the end, as Jameson points out, even through mediation one sometimes makes convenient connections to access interpretations that might serve their theory (24-30). We as critics influence our own interpretations. Since our main discussion is representations of poverty, Crassons elaborates it in context of literature:

“(…) literary texts place the signs of poverty before readers; and they demand that readers both interpret these signs and assess their ethical implications, in the same way that an almsgiver would evaluate the signs of need in the body and speech of the poor themselves.” (qtd. in Korte and Zipp 3)

An emerging problem should be addressed: who represents poverty? “People who do not suffer from poverty, (...) know about poverty through representations.” (Christ 36) Most authors who tackle poverty are middle-class and their readership is middle-class. If the poor try to speak about their experience, they do so once they have escaped their circumstances and moved closer to the audiences who are likely to read about their experience (middle-class). “Representation of poverty itself always involves a hierarchical relationship between those being represented and those doing the representing that is based in material inequality.” (Christ 37) Despite that, there are ways to overcome this obstacle by pointing out how the

writer deals with his representations and what his own experience with poverty is, which can add a new outlook on how his readership might interpret his text.

Poverty Studies have a new role in analysing these signs in terms of language, form and focalisation. Barbara Korte proposed a figurations approach to Poverty Studies which helps immensely with the development of the new studies. Critics approach a literary work (novel, play, poem, memoir, etc.) by looking at how characters and milieus are presented, whether as individuals or generalised community, what is the nature, cause and consequence of their deprivation, but also how poverty intersects with gender, age, ethnicity and class.

Another important aspect of research is agency and focalisation – whether the narrative is subjective self-narrative (homodiegetic) or objective third-person (heterodiegetic), whether there is one or multiple perspectives and whether there is an established way of seeing (i.e. “gazing at the poor”) or the author is breaking the established stereotypes. With focalisation comes the issue of voice: are the poor merely spoken about or are they given a voice of their own. Underlining these research questions are audience’s ideas and potential responses.

This thesis will apply at large Korte’s figurations in analysing Orwell’s and Forster’s novels and try to bring to light their perspectives and representations of poverty.

3. George Orwell: literary activism and middle-class guilt

George Orwell is best known for his political works describing totalitarian regimes and is often regarded as a political socialist author. More and more his earlier works are being discovered as a fascinating new look at Orwell’s *oeuvre*. Something can be said about Orwell’s work at large: he noticed a problem and wanted to bring awareness to his middle-

class readers who had the means and will for social change. His first four novels unravel problems and actualities of poverty: *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), *Burmese Days* (1934), *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936). Orwell's first published novel *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) is seemingly more political than other three and has more obvious autobiographical content. In such cases, a closer look at author's life is needed, although not indicative of the final message of his novel. In Orwell's case, life and literary work are closely linked:

“In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer.” (Elephant 16)

Orwell reflects on his work and writing in his personal essay *Why I Write*. He comes to a conclusion that he could not have written any other books but those which reflect his time and problems he wanted to raise awareness about. His novels deal with injustice, poverty, exploitation, politics and society in general. These were the things he had close contact with: his experience in Burma and several years of struggling as a writer in Paris and London. He couldn't write about things he wasn't closely experiencing but he could transpose those experiences into an acceptable literary mode. When he extrapolates four reasons why writers write, one of them is “political purpose”. “To alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after” (Elephant 16) and one could argue it is the chief reason for the existence of *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

George Orwell was born as Eric Blair in a “lower upper-middle class” family in England. Since he was a boy, he was aware of class and prejudice associated with being a member of a lower class. His memories of attending St. Cyprian are documented in his essay *Such, Such Were the Joys*. He came there on a scholarship because his parents couldn't

otherwise afford to send him to such an expensive school. Soon he learned that the headmaster didn't particularly care for anyone who didn't meet the standards of his school – those who weren't rich and affluent. Rich boys were given greater privileges and were never beaten for their wrongdoings. His schooling taught him to fear poverty, have contempt for foreigners and the working class, and installed a belief that money and privilege were the only things that mattered (Essays 407). For young boys who were inexperienced in life and its realities, these were the truths which Orwell carried to his early adolescence.

He became aware of the hypocrisy and imperial exploitation during his service in Burma, which also helped him uncover the injustice of class system and prejudice in England. He was aware of that subconsciously but it took him a long time to process the biases in which he grew up as a member of a privileged class. According to Gordon Beadle, Orwell became extremely aware of the suffering the poor experienced at the hands of authorities and it prompted him to find a way to change the public opinion which was hostile and indifferent to the inhumane conditions the poor and the working class lived in (191-192). He became distrustful of the position he was in as a middle-class man and he learned to despise his own class of people. He was also stricken with guilt because he was a member of the exploiting class and he wanted to help those he felt were superior to him in their conduct and life struggles:

“I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants... Once I had been among them and accepted by them, I should have touched bottom and - this is what I felt: I was aware even then that it was irrational - part of my guilt would drop from me.” (Beadle 189)

It was not only guilt that prompted him to write about working classes and poverty. He was reading Jack London, Charles Dickens, Samuel Butler, George Gissing, and Mark Rutherford

since he was a child. All these authors wrote about poverty and it was precisely that which interested him. The biggest impact on Orwell which can be seen in *Down and Out in Paris and London* is Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (1903). Later, when he came from Burma, he followed Jack London's footsteps and started his "expeditions" into the lowest classes of people in London. He dressed in rags, slept in dirty and unsafe places and mixed with people of different occupations. "The artist must immerse himself into the arena of the homeless and poor if he is to be able to stand for them and oppose the tyrannical." (Bush 336)

Orwell was aware that through his literary work he had an opportunity to shed some light on the underclass and the oppressed – that his middle-class readers needed to become familiar with case studies (i.e. living and breathing people) to change their mind and not retain generalised overview of poverty in England. Because he was a man of his time, it was imperative that he find similar leanings in politics and found it in socialism. According to Richard White:

"The goal of socialism is to remove the unjustifiable inequalities, including the vast inequalities of wealth that typically exist in a capitalist society, and to create a world in which it would be possible for everyone to have the best life that it is possible for human beings to have." (76)

For Orwell it was a perfect political agenda he could stand behind because in its core it spelled everything that he wanted and believed was good for society. He focused on the basic decency of the working classes and wanted to mend the economic gulf between the poor and the rich. His ultimate goal was to appeal to moral consciousness of his readers, to try and make a change in society, to make the educated and literate see that the poor should not be feared. This is evident in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Orwell's aim in this novel is to

present the reader with an accurate, almost documentary rendition of slums in Paris and London and the people who inhabit them.

3.1. *Down and Out in Paris and London*

3.1.1. Configuration of lifeworlds

Down and Out in London and Paris is rich with descriptions of poverty and people dealing (or not) with their situation. Orwell meticulously pinpoints the difficulties and complexity of poverty in his time:

“You have thought so much about poverty – it is the thing you have feared all your life, the thing you knew would happen to you sooner or later; and it is all so utterly and prosaically different. You thought it would be quite simple; it is extraordinarily complicated. You thought it would be terrible; it is merely squalid and boring. It is the peculiar lowness of poverty that you discover first; the shifts that it puts you to, the complicated meanness, the crust-wiping.” (Down and Out 7)

The hardships of poverty is something that everybody wants to escape. Lowness Orwell writes about is rooted in helplessness. It is what everybody fears; so they establish ways to feel better about themselves and their position in life.

The reader follows short accounts of people who meet the protagonist on his journey through Paris. They are mostly working class and peculiar in their personalities. He chooses the ones he thinks are interesting and spends more time on describing his “adventures” with them while the rest are blending together. In Paris, he focuses on the people who inhabit hotel in Rue Du Coq d’Or - from students to struggling artists and ordinary workers. Each of them has a different story and personality, but they have several things in common: they are lonely,

hard-working, and often drunk. Orwell's underclass people from the beginning of his novel are surrounded by filth, noise and violence:

“Quarrels, and the desolate cries of street hawkers, and the shouts of children chasing orange-peel over the cobbles, and at night loud singing and the sour reek of the refuse-carts, made up the atmosphere of the street. (...) On Saturday nights about a third of the male population of the quarter was drunk.” (Down and Out 1-2)

On the one hand, Orwell tries to give them individuality, make them likeable even, but effects of poverty have slowly taken their toll on people's bodies and minds. In the beginning, the reader may view their eccentricity as something fun and exotic. But very soon, it becomes terrifying. Financial deprivation completely changes a person's perspective and behaviour. Suddenly, normal codes of conduct and relationships shift:

“There were eccentric characters in the hotel. The Paris slums are a gathering-place for eccentric people – people who have fallen into solitary, half-mad groovers of life and given up trying to be normal or decent. Poverty frees them from ordinary standards of behaviour, just as money frees people from work. Some of the lodgers in our hotel lived lives that were curious beyond words.” (Down and Out 4)

Out of them, he pays close attention to Charlie who serves him as a typical representation of “eccentric characters” in Paris slums. Charlie lived in an affluent family but ran away and now lives in a constant state of intoxication entertaining people around him with stories about himself. One of his popular anecdotes is raping a young prostitute. Orwell's poor characters are frequently protagonists in dangerous schemes and gruesome scenes but Orwell never tries to apologise for their behaviour. He is here to present to the reader what poor people do in their desperation and to show that both humorous and vile events are part of poor person's life.

The narrator in *Down and Out* carefully describes his own trouble with money and how inexperienced he is with a low income. It dwindles faster than he can keep track of it. People he meets swindle him out of his money but despite that he keeps a positive attitude towards everyone. Another eccentric character is Boris; a Russian emigrant and former soldier who can't escape the glories of his previous life and his only ambition is to become a *maître d'hotel*. "He was a big, soldierly man of about thirty-five, and had been good-looking, but since his illness he had grown immensely fat from lying in bed." (Down and Out 21) Boris, like many characters in Paris chapters, suffers from a game leg and is unable to find steady job. Diseases and disabilities are common for most poor people in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, caused by unhealthy diet, lack of hygiene and inability to access adequate healthcare. Descriptions of bodily deformations are more prominent in London chapters where disabilities are often the cause of the tramps' destitution.

Boris and the narrator try to find work in one of Paris' numerous hotels. At every opportunity, they are cheated or turned away. People are generally dismissive of them because they either lack experience or, in Boris' case, are disabled (and there is no shortage of able-bodied and experienced men who are willing to work). Once they find a job, their situation changes marginally for the better. They work in cramped and overheated spaces, in filthy kitchens and often can only spare several hours of sleep before their new workday begins.

The lives of the poor, according to Orwell, are simple and unchanging. If they have enough money for food, rent and occasional drink, they have succeeded in their station in life. Between working and sleeping, they have hardly enough time to think, let alone do anything substantial to remove themselves from their lifestyle. Any trips or outings are limited to their neighbourhood and they only meet new people at work or in their local bistro:

“Work in the hotel taught me the true value of sleep, just as being hungry had taught me the true value of food. Sleep had ceased to be a mere physical necessity; it was something voluptuous, a debauch more than a relief.” (Down and Out 96)

In between his descriptions of poor people’s lives and working conditions, Orwell subtly inserts declarations how hard-working and proud people are of their jobs:

“What keeps a hotel going is the fact that the employees take a genuine pride in their work, beastly and silly though it is. If a man idles, the others soon find him out, and conspire against him to get him sacked.” (Down and Out 79)

This perceived sense of community (which Orwell mentions at several points in his novel) is at odds with constructed hierarchies within certain establishments. People try to present themselves as better than they are, going to the extent to maintain false hierarchies. The reason for doing so is establishing a sense of power and order. They know they will never escape from this vicious cycle of exploitation so they will find something they can control to make themselves feel better. So, even if they were among the destitute, they were better than others. Furthermore, those who were in the same class had their own way of differentiating those who were better and those who were worse.

The hierarchy At Hotel X is greatly established among the employed, which was closely connected to their salaries. The manager had the most power and was the most feared man in the hotel. Under him was *maître d’hotel* who served the most affluent customers and ordered the waiters around. He was the most generously paid employee and received extra benefits. After the head waiter came the head cook who ate at a separate table from other cooks. After him was a *chef du personnel* who did no manual work and he could sack *plongeurs* and some waiters. Under him were other cooks, then the waiters, then the

laundresses and sewing-women. Under them were apprentice waiters, *plongeurs*, chambermaids and *cafetiers* who were “despised by everyone” (Down and Out 74).

These imagined hierarchies give people the right to abuse their position and others whom they perceive as being of lower station. The narrator, who worked as a *plongeur*, is often yelled at by other members of staff and he retaliates in equal measure. If the hierarchies of the working people had some logic in them (their worth connected to their salaries and type of work they did), then the hierarchies of tramps did not. They are essentially in the same position, but they value themselves and others by what they do as tramps, only to alienate themselves from each other and association with this lowly position.

The first “Charlie chapter” further investigates the need for downtrodden individuals to feel at least some semblance of power and control. It gives a detailed recollection of Charlie visiting a “well-to-do” brothel because he feels he needs to treat himself to some “luxury”. He abuses and rapes a young prostitute, then humiliates her in his rendition of the episode to other patrons of the bistro but he tries to justify himself and his actions. By depicting men like Charlie and giving them more space in his novel, Orwell is showing a destructive side of poverty. Men like Charlie, who didn’t develop moral consciousness or whose upbringing was terrible, often seek release from their own helplessness in these encounters. Their need to establish their masculinity and worth is often turned to abuse of alcohol or other people.

Orwell is slowly adjusting the reader to the realities of streets in London by describing his experience first in Paris. For British middle-class readers (who were Orwell’s target audience) Paris is a removed reality, a city outside of their comfortable British borders and the described poverty can be easily dismissed as another country’s problem. According to Beadle, “it was easier to be *déclassé* outside his own country, and because he was fresher and the

Parisian life had an exotic tinge despite the patina of antique filth.”(78) Orwell balances this with London chapters. He doesn't want his readers to think that “this happens to other people in other countries”, he wants to emphasise that poverty is present everywhere, even in their backyards. There is a difference in London and Paris chapters. Namely, they deal with different aspects of poverty; in Paris that is hard work for working classes and in London it's tramping and unemployment. In both cities, Orwell focuses on individual stories to humanise them.

London chapters focus on deep poverty; the kind where you have no independent income, no permanent accommodation and no family outside of who you meet on the streets. It is a world where every man stands for himself. Orwell applies the same principle he did in Paris chapters: offering a variety of characters (the good and the bad), explaining their situations and positioning them in their destitute environment. London chapters are much more detailed with naturalistic descriptions of people's bodies, clothes and accommodation. The passages describing bathrooms and lavatory facilities in casual wards are especially striking:

“They were all kinds and ages, the youngest a fresh-faced boy of sixteen, the oldest a doubled-up, toothless mummy of seventy five. Some were hardened tramps, recognizable by their sticks and billies and dust-darkened faces; some were factory hands out of work, some agricultural labourers, one a clerk in collar and tie, two certainly imbeciles. Seen in the mass, lounging there, they were a disgusting sight; nothing villainous or dangerous, but a graceless, mangy crew, nearly all ragged and palpably underfed. They were friendly, however, and asked no questions.” (Down and Out 152)

Men populating streets of London have different problems than working people in Paris. Dirt and disease are the two things that plague them. They have even less access to food and medical care, so their bodies and minds suffer even greatly. Orwell describes their physical maladies and diseases throughout the London chapters, for it is mostly the physical deformities that keep them from finding work and escaping the life on the streets. Most tramps are men and Orwell explains that women can always attach themselves to some man, even as poor as they are, and they will never go for a man who is poorer than themselves. That brings another set of problems – forced celibacy, homosexuality and rape. Sexual impulse for Orwell is a fundamental impulse and contributes greatly to physical and spiritual decay. Furthermore, tramps are dependent on other people, to provide them with food and accommodation and this humiliation makes them act out in ways nobody can expect. Because of this and many other reasons, they are despised more than working classes.

There are signs of communal spirit, though, even if they must fight for the same resources. In some of the better lodging-houses, the narrator happily mentions that “there was a general sharing of food” (Down and Out 142) - advocating for the generous attitude even among those who have nothing of their own. Orwell also makes some tramps more appealing to his sensitive readers. He juxtaposes a typical tramp (Paddy) to special cases (Bozo). Paddy is uneducated but good-natured Irish man who lost his job and ended up as a tramp. Even though he’s ashamed of it, he can’t find a way out of his situation. He is underfed, almost malnourished and his only direction in life is to go to casual wards and collect cigarette ends on the street. Orwell ends his brief description of Paddy by saying that “(...) one would have known him for a tramp a hundred yards away” (Down and Out 159).

His companion, but his complete opposite when it comes to personality and general view of life, is Bozo. Unlike Paddy, Bozo has a way of making money on the street because

he is a pavement artist. Tramps who can provide a service or a product in exchange for money are more acceptable to the upper classes than those who “only loiter on the street corner” (Down and Out 217). Bozo takes his trade very seriously. He buys his own chinks and frequently changes his pictures according to current events. His right leg is deformed from a work accident and his condition is getting worse – his leg must be amputated. Despite the narrator claiming “there was (...) no future for him but beggary and a death in the workhouse” (Down and Out 177), Bozo doesn’t feel self-pity nor shame for coming down in life. He develops a realistic philosophy about poverty and loves to practice his knowledge of astronomy, claiming it is the education and his attitude that sets him free. He considers himself above the other beggars who are “an abject lot” and don’t find any interest other than surviving another day and feeling sorry for themselves. “He might be ragged and cold, or even starving, but so long as he could read, think and watch for meteors, he was, as he said, free in his own mind.” (Down and Out 179)

Down and Out in Paris and London presents the nuance of poverty; how different people react to their situation, how different incomes affect their behaviour and mood, and how prejudice and bias exist in every social group. Orwell doesn’t shy away from accurate descriptions of people’s lives and surroundings, but at the same time tries to show that filth and moral degradation the middle-class often associate with them, are only products of their circumstance. There are people among them who are hardworking, clever, optimistic and interesting, but there are also drunkards, abusive men and thieves. Any generalisations about a specific community are a disservice to that community.

3.1.2. Configuration through form and style

No text exists on its own. Words selected, the tone in which it was written and the perspective that was chosen to tell a story influence the reader’s experience. It can also help

the author to get his core message across - implicitly or explicitly. It was pointed out before that Orwell wants to present problems and reality of poverty in lower classes to his middle-class readers. It is not a problem reserved for the poor but a widespread social problem that influences them as well and needs to be solved.

Like his predecessors, Orwell adopted a specific style of writing to support his goals: an objective account of poor people and their lives, to render their troubles and individual personalities as best as he could. He opted for a first-person point of view, making the story more intimate and resounding to the reader, as if one was speaking to a friend with first-hand experience. Orwell manipulates the reader's feelings and attitudes by combining individualisation and generalisations. Some of his characters are described as "perfect specimens" or "typical for their group of people" and others (who are more present in his story such as Charlie, Boris and Bozo) are "peculiar", "interesting" and "extraordinary". Although most of Orwell's characters have horrible habits, often lie and steal due to their circumstances, intermittently Orwell will describe an honest, hard-working soul who loves their job and excels at it (like Mario or even Bozo). In this way, the reader feels that Orwell's story is objective and truthful.

There are other ways Orwell tries to persuade his reader; he uses simple, almost journalistic, writing that is packed with realistic and naturalistic descriptions of people and places. Sometimes his descriptions slide to the edge of grotesque but he reels that with short and powerful commentary like "probably it seems different when one is doing it voluntarily and is not underfed at the start" (*Down and Out* 16). Focus on details such as money calculations is another method which guides the reader into believing Orwell's "authenticity". One can easily calculate how much to budget if one finds himself in a similar situation.

Yet, he manages to remain captivating in his descriptions. Not too dry as journalism can sometimes be, but filled with associations that include all senses for an immersive experience of the reader. The spaces in which the poor live are dirty, loud and foul-smelling. Grime, sweat and pungent smells can be felt in every sentence Orwell writes. Furthermore, his selection of scenes spark in the reader feelings of empathy and horror at the conditions in which the poor live. London chapters and descriptions of tramps are especially striking. “It was an unspeakably repellent sound; a foul bubbling and retching, as though the man’s bowels were being churned up within him.” (Down and Out 139) Orwell uses powerful and palpable vocabulary to paint his experience. But his protagonist doesn’t merely render what he sees, hears and smells; he gives room to other characters to tell their story. Two “Charlie chapters” are an example of this, but also the protagonist’s conversations with Boris and others he meets in Paris and London. Orwell wants the reader to see the troubles from multiple people; even though his protagonist is middle-class man suddenly fallen into poverty, there are others who are longer in this than he is, and they have identical experience.

He also “betrays” his authenticity by including two separate political chapters in the novel. After he gets out of Paris, he digs deep into the analysis of social station of the *plongeur* and “fear of the mob” he suspects is at the core of capitalistic exploitation. Later, he does the same with examining the role of tramps in London. He wants to dismantle people’s attitudes and biases about working classes and tramps they had before reading his novel. These passages are not merely objective and journalistic as they were up to that point; they are saturated with his passion and need to point out what exactly is wrong in the world. They tell the reader that there was a purpose behind the novel, not simply an observation of people. If the previous pages didn’t succeed in implicit rendition of his goal, he allowed more room to present the reader explicitly what his goals are and what he expects the reader would take from his novel.

3.1.3. Configuration through agencies of articulation

In *Down and Out in Paris and London* Orwell doesn't shy away from explicitly stating his ideas, values and solutions to problems he encountered. He carefully articulates his stance on the status of the working class and the value of their work, and proposes how to improve lives of the marginalised (tramps). By picking men like Bozo and Boris in his story, Orwell tries to show that it was merely circumstances that led them to the life they lived and that it could happen to anyone. In the same vein, he tries to stress the follies of better-off people who try to help and shows that pity doesn't solve their problems, it merely alienates them further from their "benefactors".

In his embedded essays, he first focuses specifically on *plongeurs*. For him, *plongeur* is one of a thousand similar jobs which serve no purpose but to make the worker feel like he's contributing to something (even if the work is hard and done in harsh conditions). They are slaves trapped by a routine and they are not granted time to think about their position in life. Orwell accuses the educated and the rich who allow for the slavery of *plongeurs* to continue – they are removed from the *plongeur's* life, see it as a disagreeable job none of them would want to work and label it as a necessary job. *Plongeurs* work for the luxury of the rich which for Orwell is not necessary. Entrapping people to work hard jobs for the benefit of the few for Orwell is a serious nonsense and waste of life.

He knows his audience is similar to the people he openly accuses of contributing to the state of the poor, but he doesn't outright use the pronoun "you" which might be interpreted as an attack. He approaches the reader as a friend in these embedded essays; telling him "look at these other people who exploit the poor" and tries to appeal to their sense of empathy and critical thinking. "For what do the majority of educated people know about poverty?"(Down

and Out 128) asks Orwell. Most people will never know the reality of deep poverty and it is Orwell's mission to make them familiar with the situation.

Similarly, his essay on the Monster Tramp is articulated with the assumption that people are not familiar with life of the tramp thus producing irrational fear in the upper classes; so he will disclose his solutions to the problem. Orwell tries to dispel most common beliefs people have about tramps – that they are dangerous, lazy, love to beg and avoid work at all costs. Tramps live the way they live because of rules and laws others have imposed on them: casual wards only admit people for one night so that is why they have to move around and policemen chase them away if they see them sitting on the street. Like *plongeurs*, the life of a tramp is without purpose. Their enforced idleness and walking routine from one casual ward to another does not benefit anyone. Even the system (i.e. government) loses both money and lives. Orwell does not delude himself that a social action will completely eradicate tramp problem, but he is willing to suggest ways to improve their condition: improving casual wards and finding them work they can benefit from (e.g. running a farm or a garden in workhouses and consuming the produce). If this happens, tramps might be more respected and they will turn into self-respected people, with hope for the future.

Orwell positions himself as an authority, someone who has experienced poverty and has the right to propose solutions to those less experienced:

“Poverty is what I am writing about, and I had my first contact with poverty in this slum. The slum, with its dirt and its queer lives, was first an object-lesson in poverty, and then the background of my own experiences. It is for that reason that I try to give some idea of what life was like there.” (Down and Out 4)

Several times in the narrative, he points out that he has a limited experience of poverty. He was living in Paris for several months working in hotels and he lived as a tramp for a month

before he found a stable job. It is quite different when a person is trapped in poverty for years, rather than several uncomfortable months. Orwell's biographers state (and he himself in *Why I Write*) that *Down and Out in Paris in London* has autobiographical elements; Orwell did struggle as a writer and worked in hotels, but his novel is not a chronological rendition of his life experience. Some of it is possibly exaggerated to serve his agenda, and some things were conveniently left out. Namely, he had close relatives who could help him in Paris – his aunt Nellie. But Orwell doesn't mention her in his novel.

Orwell reveals a lot about himself and his background in the novel. "My new clothes had put me instantly into a new world. Everyone's demeanour seemed to have changed abruptly." (*Down and Out* 137) He was born in a "lower upper-middle class" family in England and this fact plays a significant role in interpreting the novel further. He is a middle-class man and he can't fully escape from his position no matter how ripped or dirty his clothes are. He received good education and linguistic pronunciation that will always slightly remove him from the people he walked among in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. He had a limited experience of the poor life and he could never fully understand the psychological and physical damage poverty does to someone in ten or twenty years. David Morgan Zehr points out that this attitude reveals Orwell's romanticization of lower classes. Because their lifestyles are mostly unchanging, they remain in Orwell's vision "the innocence of the past, a timeless world uncontaminated by the technological and moral changes of the twentieth century" (32) and "it was the ordinary, non-intellectual Englishman who conveyed the cultural vitality, native resiliency, and traditional moral sense that he identified with England's heritage and peculiar cultural sensibility." (39-40)

In Orwell's defence, it is hard for anyone who hasn't had an immediate experience of a certain situation not to partly romanticise it. Even if they did – humans experience similar

situations differently and react to them differently - which is precisely what Orwell shows in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. If there ever was an underlying romanticisation, it came in his later novels when he was removed from his destitute days in Paris and London and could look at that experience from a distance.

His own prejudices are shown while he simultaneously tries to subvert other prejudices. Antisemitism is the most obvious – likening Jews to cunning and greedy caricatures repeatedly. Another is sexism and racism – every woman he describes is always fat, silly, rude, dull or exploiting men; Armenians are scheming thieves who should not be trusted, Indians and Far Eastern people are “black wretches” and so on. It seems that he contradicted himself in his “objective observation”. The reader is left at the end with an ambiguous review of the protagonist’s experiences:

“My story ends here. It is a fairly trivial story, and I can only hope that it has been interesting in the same way as a travel diary is interesting. I can at least say, here is the world that awaits you if you are ever penniless. (...) At present I do not feel that I have seen more than the fringe of poverty.” (Down and Out 87)

Likening his novel to a travel diary, Orwell puts himself in a position of a voyeur or a tourist. Does he sympathise with the poor he described? There is no doubt, but he treats his adventures like a safari where he will spend some time observing “animals” and then bring home pictures to show his family and friends. As a middle-class man, is he then suitable spokesman for the poor? Shouldn’t the poor speak for themselves? According to Birte Christ this isn’t an easy solution. Oftentimes the only people who can speak for the poor and help in spreading their “message” are people with much more time and means on their disposal – the middle-class. Education has an important part in effectively transposing issues to other people through literature. Even when there are poor people who try to convey their position and

“lifestyle” to other people, they are often held back by trying to get money in any way they can, so they can fall into traps of what is easy to sell, not what is the truth (36-41). Barbara Korte also poses the question if it’s necessary for the author to be poor himself to render authentic work about poverty but seems more partial to the idea that it is important which imaginaries reach which audiences (80-81). The value of literature is in persuasive creativity – making the reader believe in your words and world described.

Orwell aligned himself with socialism, but he was never a member of any socialist group or party; he believed in the merits of socialism on a theoretical level. In his writing he tried to find his own ideal of socialism but he was first and foremost a moralist. Like his literary influencer Dickens, he chose to appeal to middle classes’ sense of morality to bring about societal changes. “I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing.” (Why I Write 18) Craig L. Carr believes this shows a naïve side of Orwell, where every moralist thinks that people care about things they care about (18) and continues:

“Central to the usual moralist complaint is the belief that the world can, and should, be a better place. What is needed is a dose of real moral integrity, though how this is to be achieved is rarely explained.” (Carr 31)

Orwell tried hard to give a perspective to and from the poor. By choosing different characters as representatives of the poor he wanted to give another perspective about life and money troubles other than his own. Despite some of his short-comings Orwell fulfilled the purpose he wanted – he reached his audience’s moral conscience.

4. E.M. Forster: middle-class as 'the heart of England'

Edward Morgan Forster spent most of his life close to his mother devoted to literary work. Even after he stopped writing novels, he was still immersed in the intellectual literary production – he wrote essays, reviews, short stories and lectures. He is known as an Edwardian writer, for most of his novels abundantly discuss England and English character in various situations, which was unlike his contemporaries (V. Woolf, H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence) who delved deeply into modernism with their style and themes. In his later novels (especially in *A Passage to India* (1924)) he treads this new literary path in his style and criticism of industrial progress and “creeping London”, with brief introspections and reflections of inner worlds of his characters.

Similarly to George Orwell, Forster wrote his novels partially autobiographically. If Orwell encountered problems and wanted to discuss them with his readers in his novels, Forster took impressions and experiences from his life and frequently imbedded them into his novels. In *Howards End* (1910), the house Howards End was modelled after his fond memories of Rooksnest, a place where he grew up and spent his earlier childhood. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908), some events were inspired by his travels through Italy and Greece. But if there is one thing where Orwell and Forster disagree on, it is their opinion on middle-classes and the problem of poverty.

As discussed before, Orwell rejected any connections with his middle-class background. Meanwhile, Forster indulged greatly in his position as a middle-class man and all the advantages it provided. He managed to travel extensively, live in comfortable houses for most of his life, but also teach and write as he pleased. In *Notes on the English Character* (1920) he extensively described the virtues and wrongdoings of the middle-class which is “the heart of England” and it is their duty to solve its problems and make it prosper.

“The middle class, because it enjoyed particular advantages of mobility, was the destined carrier of the torch and with certain modifications of character would discharge that duty well. (...) The middle class is 'the heart of England'. Its values and mores had become the national characteristics that made England most recognisable abroad.” (Lago 6)

Forster wrote extensively about middle-class characters, revealing his Edwardian sensibilities and fears about the future of English society and high culture. He was also deeply concerned with how the public will perceive him and his work, mostly because of his sexuality and it is one of the reasons critics believe he stopped writing novels after 1920s. Oscar Wilde’s trial was still fresh in people’s minds and Forster did not want to jeopardize his established reputation as a famous novelist and prominent literary figure. While he developed his thought on the English class system, it is more troublesome to analyse what his thoughts were on the problem of poverty.

In *Howards End* he tries to tackle the emerging technological changes that will inevitably influence the middle-class – their attitudes, values, habits and relationships. How can the “heart of England” survive the turn up of modernism and who will perish in the process? *Howards End* is almost universally understood as a novel about England’s condition and who shall inherit it, but Forster introduces a topic and characters which his other Edwardian contemporaries didn’t extensively write about. He touches upon the underclass experience and while he famously says: “We do not concern with the poor”; he does concern himself with the poor, however briefly. Leonard Bast and his wife are examples of how easily the middle-class can slip off the ladder into the undesiring status during the changing times, but they are also examples of how the middle-class (and Forster himself) viewed the poor or those on the precipice of poverty. *Howards End* might be a “condition of England” novel

which focuses mostly on the upper classes and the exploration of connections between them, but it doesn't ignore the fact that the lower classes have a (albeit limited) say in where England is going - in social terms as well as economic, political and cultural. Further analysis of *Howards End* will show Forster's attitude to poverty and those fallen from privilege.

4.1. *Howards End*

4.1.1. Configuration of lifeworlds

Forster is a man of his time and, like his Edwardian contemporaries, is concerned about how the changing social and economic relationships will affect England. The poor should not have a say in this development:

“We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet. This story deals with gentleness, or with those who are obliged to pretend that they are gentleness.” (*Howards End* 58)

Despite not concerning himself with the very poor, Forster introduces several characters who are on the verge of poverty. He also, through characters like Margaret, shows his stance on the value of money and what to do with poor people. Forster is interested in the intricate relationships between members of the middle-class who are on different sides of this social and economic category. The Wilcoxes are the business middle-class, the Schlegels are the intellectual middle-class and the Bastons are the lower middle-class. Working classes are mentioned sporadically, as farmers in *Howards End* or chauffeurs for the Wilcoxes. In *Howards End*, poverty is only present in lower-middle class. “Had he lived some centuries ago, in the brightly coloured civilizations of the past, he would have had a definite status, his rank and his income would have corresponded.” (*Howards End* 58) Leonard's class is a

peculiar problem. He is a clerk, his job and education moving him a step above the working class, but his salary doesn't allow him to enter "polite society". He acquired some level of education and culture but could not afford, like the upper classes, to idle in their studies and take up unusual subjects that interested him. His station would be best described as lower middle-class - a position, according to Rita Felski, nobody wants to be in:

"Being lower-middle- class is a singularly boring identity (...) The lower middle class often feels itself to be culturally superior to the working class, however, while lacking the cultural capital and the earning power of the professional-managerial class. (...) the lower middle class is driven by the fear of shame, tortured by a constant struggle to keep up appearances on a low income. One manifestation of this status anxiety is a craven respect for high culture accompanied by almost complete ignorance of its content." (34-35)

From the very beginning, Leonard struggles to reconcile his status in society and his ambitions. He is on the very "verge of gentility" because he is a clerk in a successful business and is not fit for any other job. He earns just enough to rent a small cellar where he lives with his wife. Leonard also thinks that learning about art and culture will let him remove himself from the poor life he lives, and that discussing literature with men and women of letters will allow him to achieve more. But his understanding of books and art is based on what he learned by himself – he didn't attend university which might have taught him to go beyond superficial discussions and truly understand authors and artists he admired. He sees in the Schlegel siblings everything he wants to be. He doesn't aspire for great wealth, like the Wilcoxes, but to get a deeper sense of art:

"Her speeches fluttered away from the young man like birds. If only he could talk like this, he would have caught the world. Oh, to acquire culture! Oh, to pronounce foreign

names correctly! Oh, to be well-informed, discoursing at ease on every subject that a lady started! But it would take one years.” (Howards End 52)

The narrator ironically says “it would take him years” because Leonard did not have the same start in life as the Schlegels. He doesn’t have the comfort of independent income which allows him to read books and go to discussion groups or to attend university. His self-education is enough for who he is and his needs. Forster doesn’t allow him to hope for more. Leonard Bast found himself in between his ambitions and his abilities. Forster introduces him when he meets the Schlegel sisters in Queen’s Hall listening to an opera. When Helen takes his umbrella by mistake, he is immediately concerned about that trivial theft and cannot talk to his companions about the cultural event he was a part of and which he wanted to discuss more. He is portrayed as a naïve and foolish man, because he tries hard to be knowledgeable but is often caught fretting about trivialities and obsessing over Schlegels’ perception of him. Leonard is invisible, a common man who has nothing to distinguish himself from the masses but his cultural ambitions. Forster describes his physical appearance as “young man, colourless, toneless, who had already the mournful eyes above a drooping moustache that are so common in London, and that haunt some streets of the city like accusing presences” (Howards End 122). Despite this, Forster doesn’t allow him to become a complete stereotype. While he is a good man who will protect his wife, he also shows a sense of dignity and cunningness once he loses his job and threatens his family to send him money. Like Orwell, Forster shows that desperation brings out the worst in people, but Leonard also remained loyal to his wife (to a degree) and true to himself when he refused Helen’s money to help him.

It is not Leonard who is typified and scorned, but his wife. Jacky has no ambitions of her own. She is described as common, ugly and unintelligent woman who worked as a prostitute and had managed to trap Leonard into marrying her out of some duty. Leonard

breaks an old photograph of hers in which she looks young and pretty, but when she enters their home she is far from the admirable woman on the photograph – “Jacky was past her prime, whatever that prime may have been.” (Howards End 63). Everyone despises her and thinks she is silly and stupid. She is always viewed through other character’s eyes and never given her own point of view.

Forster gives a lot of attention to pointing out the stark differences between his characters. There is an alienation and disconnection he hints at which is coming from his Edwardian sensibility and observation that society is becoming more disconnected with the hold of corporate economy which insists on raising capital. The result was that “individuals participated in the social process largely as owners of commodities, the less they owned, the less social reality they appeared to have.” (Harris Stoll 25) People increasingly became more concerned about material things and money, and less about ideas and “personal relationships”. Forster writes in *What I Believe* that for him the only thing that matters is “tolerance, good temper and sympathy” which can only be expressed in and through personal relationships (Two Cheers 65). While Margaret is the closest character to transpose Forster’s personal beliefs, he frequently puts her into positions where she contradicts herself. Margaret often expresses that she values connection and “personal relationships” but she is mostly concerned about property. She regards houses more favourably than she does humans.

The stark differences between classes become prominent with Leonard’s interactions with the Schlegel sisters and their discussions about money. Leonard is not a person to the upper classes; he is a cause. They can buy and sell shares and make money (Howards End 252), while Leonard can’t even take another job to support his family after he loses the one he had. Leonard by the end of the novel finally comes to an epiphany about himself and his position in life:

“If rich people fail at one profession, they can try another. (...) I could do one particular branch of insurance in one particular office well enough to command a salary, but that’s all. Poetry is nothing, Miss Schlegel. (...) There always will be rich and poor.” (225-226)

He realises that only money can help him get out of his destitution, not education nor learning about books. He is not like Mr Wilcox or Schlegel sisters, he is a part of his own class who need work and then they can aspire for discussions about poetry. The middle-class women have no experience of poverty and no understanding of Leonard’s life and make their own conclusions about him:

“He is married to a wife whom he doesn’t seem to care for much. He likes books, and what one may roughly call adventure, and if he had a chance – but he is so poor. He lives a life where all the money is apt to go on nonsense and clothes. One is so afraid that circumstances will be too strong for him and that he will sink.” (Howards End 139)

Margaret and Helen happily entertain themselves with Leonard’s stories about midnight walks and his attempts at poetry, but they cannot completely connect with him as a person. Or in Margaret’s case do not want to. Helen wants to help the Bastis once they’re out of luck, but soon forgets about them while she is busy solving her own problems. She is mostly concerned about alleviating her own “liberal guilt” by giving him money and “feel finished” after she ruins Leonard’s livelihood with unsolicited advice. Margaret sees him as a type, not a person worth connecting to, even as she constantly exclaims that “personal relations are everything”. “She knew this type very well – the vague aspirations, the mental dishonesty, the familiarity with the outsides of books. She knew the very tones in which he would address her.” (Howards End 123) She often falls back into her prejudice and sense of proportion, and

dismisses him – for all her talk about helping the poor she sides with the rich (Born 150). Margaret is hypocritical in her own way; she loves her financial independence and only deals with Leonard when it suits her. Once Henry's secret is revealed, she doesn't want anything to do with the Basts, because they represent to her the horrors of deteriorating London slums which she wants to escape (Born 153). She can't accept that connection.

Throughout the novel, the questions of money, poverty and finances are frequently brought up. People have different ideas about what it means to be poor and which amounts of money categorise them “below the line”. Leonard is the only one who experienced poverty – having no food, furniture or house of his own - he has to rely on others to help him. Henry Wilcox jokingly claims that six thousand pounds a year make him a poor man, thus showing his ignorance and privilege. His son, Charles Wilcox, is anxious about his family's fortune when Margaret marries his father, thinking they will have to provide for her family as well. In fact, his father has doubled his money after a successful stock exchange and trade overseas, and he buys numerous properties in and out of London, so his fears are irrational. He is far from Leonard's level of misfortune and financial status. He has only known comfort and luxury, but Leonard's life to him is incomprehensible and terrifying.

These different attitudes reflect the general opinion about the changing affairs in England: the rise of capital and business middle-class which Forster feared, exploitation of unprivileged classes and the precarious position of intellectuals who had to decide with whom they will side – the rich or the poor.

4.1.2. Configuration through form and style

For his novel, Forster employed an omniscient narrator who helps him set the tone and attitude towards representation of poverty. He makes small remarks throughout the novel about different characters and events, but he is especially critical when it comes to the Basts.

“But he was inferior to the rich people, there is not the least doubt about it.” (Howards End 58) The narrator’s role is to appear trustworthy with comments to the reader such as “take my word for it” or talking directly to them “it is only you and I”. He is also a charming and witty observer of the affairs of middle-class and appeals to the reader’s sensibilities, subtly convincing him of his “objective” opinion. The narrator may be perceived as an extension of the author and reader can take his words at face-value, taking his observations as truthful. Narrator doesn’t stop at Bastis with his commentary; they are directed at everyone.

Thus, the narrator appears as a reliable source in interpreting character’s motives and personalities. From the beginning to the end his attitude towards Leonard is decidedly dismissive. Most prominent evidence of that is in the last chapters: “Leonard – he would figure at length in a newspaper report, but that evening he did not count for much.” (Howards End 303) As critical, elitist and satirical as he is of underclass characters, he never goes into caricature. Forster’s descriptions of Leonard and focalisation make him sympathetic, playing on types, but giving Leonard individualisation. Descriptions of his home and Jacky’s appearance are somewhat realistic, reminiscent of Masterman’s and Jack London’s descriptions of slums and poor people (Born 148) which were familiar to Forster’s readers.

Unlike Orwell, he doesn’t want to shock his readers or immerse them into the lives of his poor characters, but simply give a limited perspective from a member of the lower class which served him as a cautionary tale about the dangers of capitalism and modernism. His style of writing is literary, overly descriptive in the Edwardian manner. The only poetic element in rendering Leonard and Jacky is the insistence on smell or odours of the abyss that follow them with every interaction with the upper classes. With this combination of realism and sensationalism, he leaves to the reader to decide on either dismissal or empathy for the underclass based on their sensibilities.

Forster wants to persuade the reader about truthfulness of his observations in another way. His descriptions of London, the traffic and the houses are saturated with Edwardian criticism of the emerging lifestyle of “telegrams and anger”, while he’s overly sentimental about rural England. The countryside is exceptionally clean and mesmerising:

“If one wanted to show a foreigner England, perhaps the wisest course would be to take him to the final section of the Purbeck hills, and stand him on their summit (...) How many villages appear in this view! How many castles! How many churches, vanquished or triumphant! How many ships, railways and roads! What incredible variety of men working beneath that lucent sky to what final end!” (Howards End 170-171)

Forster favours the countryside - even the men working on farms are more favourable than city-dwellers, being “England’s hope”. But they are not granted a perspective and appear sparsely in the novel, only Miss Avery and her niece are representatives of the working class. They are also dismissed by other characters, but their gentle and unassuming nature made them appealing to the readers with their quirks and shrewd judgement.

Poor characters are not Forster’s concern in his novel, so he doesn’t give them as much space to articulate themselves like his middle-class characters do. He only talks about them through others, and most importantly through his seemingly unbiased narrator.

4.1.3. Configuration through agencies of articulation

It is evident that *Howards End* is a novel about the English middle-class. Critics have mused about Forster’s thinly veiled question in the novel: “Who shall inherit England?” But to do that he had to explore all levels of the English class system to give an answer, yet he has only explored the middle-class. The Wilcoxes live lavishly and buy multiple properties but their professions and lifestyles keep them rooted to business middle-class which Forster saw

as a threat. They are practical, ambitious, but most of all keep up appearances and are not concerned too much about maintaining relationships with people who aren't beneficial to them. Although Forster connects the intellectuals and businessmen by marriage (Margaret and Henry), thus enforcing a belief that culture can't live without capital, it is Helen's baby (which is a connection between intellectuals and working classes) that is the future of England. Their alliance is "both natural and necessary" (Harris Stoll 38). The brief appearances of working-classes serve to expose middle-class' feelings about those less educated and with lower income.

Forster is preoccupied with middle classes because he believes the England's future depends on them. As much as they are a "dominant force" (Notes 1), they have their faults as well. Englishmen, according to Forster, are incomplete people – cold, unemotional and slow. (Notes 5-6) They only think about consequences and causes in their dealing with the world, which enabled imperialism embodied in Henry Wilcox (Shirkhani 200). He spent four novels analysing this. In *Howards End* Forster expertly executed the spectrum of the middle-class and their ideologies. He speaks from his narrator and Margaret because they reflect a lot of his personal beliefs. "Only connect", a mantra so often spoken from Margaret's lips is similar to what Forster wrote in *What I Believe*:

"One must be fond of people and trust them if one is not to make a mess of life, and it is therefore essential that they should not let one down. (...) But reliability is not a matter of contract – that is the main difference between the world of personal relationships and the world of business relationships. It is a matter for the heart, which signs no documents." (Two Cheers 66)

Margaret and Helen often fail in this manner. Their interactions with others reveal they are uninterested in making a lasting connection. They only want to satisfy their needs for

discussion. It is evident with their treatment of Leonard – reducing him to a cause to their discussion group and to Henry Wilcox. They crave “personal relationships” but they have to make an effort and accept those who are different from them. Yet they don’t even succeed to connect with the Wilcoxes, with whom they are connected by marriage and property. By the end of the novel, they live alone in Howards End.

When it comes to poverty, Forster has a new set of ideas he wants to tell his readers. Industrial progress in Forster’s time shrunk economic differences between classes, and high culture became accessible to the lower classes who (according to intellectuals) could not appreciate it to the fullest. Poverty is not what he is concerned about, even when he creates Leonard Bast. Leonard is the only one who speaks about his position and is granted perspective but is only a tool to reveal his ideas about distribution of money and the problem of poverty. This is exemplified at the discussion group Margaret and Helen attend where women debate on “How I ought to dispose of my money?”. Different solutions are brought up - from giving him tickets, paying rent, buying food - but no one mentions giving him money or offering a job which are the only logical and lasting solutions. Margaret finally gives her idea – to give each poor person a yearly income of three hundred pounds. “Money’s educational. It is far more educational than the things it buys” (Howards End 133) she claims to the outrage of her friends who believe it will only pauperize the poor and make them lazy. Forster seems to simultaneously gaze at the poor and give them a voice on this matter. But their voice is limited, because he focuses on a specific type of people who inhabited London at that time – the lower middle-class who wanted to prosper through education, political vote and clerical jobs (Harris Stoll 26). The dinner discussion further dehumanizes Leonard and looks at his situation jokingly. Discussions like these may have been familiar to his middle-class readers:

“You and I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence. It’s only when we see someone near us tottering that we realize all that an independent income means.” (Howards End 72)

Independent means also give people power to exploit others for their desires. Schlegels and Wilcoxes play with Leonard’s future. They are too immersed in their own privileged positions that they do not take into consideration consequences of their actions. Henry Wilcox gives bad advice and Leonard loses his job, but he doesn’t admit his failures, instead insisting that each man should be responsible for himself. He admonishes Helen and Margaret for troubling with Leonard and others like him:

“Don’t take up that sentimental attitude over the poor. (...) The poor are poor, and one’s sorry for them, but there it is. As civilization moves forward, the shoe is bound to pinch in places, and it’s absurd to pretend that anyone is responsible personally.” (Howards End 192)

He thinks he is removed from the lives of the poor, but he employs hundreds of men like Leonard in his company. He is a practical businessman and doesn’t concern himself about social problems, yet he is the one who exploits those he despises. Forster tries to expose the immoral side of the middle-classes; the side that only cares for themselves, to keep their appearances and dismiss others. But he is also contradictory in his intention. While he admonishes cruelty and selfishness, he is also abusing those he defends. If Forster’s narrator is an extension of Forster, then Forster dismisses Leonard as a man, claiming he “was not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable” (Howards End, 58). He is outright pronouncing that lack of money degrades you physically, mentally and spiritually, and you are inferior to everyone. Also, Forster further distances his middle-class characters and the Basts by implementing lines such as “risen out of abyss” or “smell of

the abyss”, as if there was something inherently loathsome about poverty and poor people that the upper classes could smell or sense on them.

Furthermore, Forster juxtaposes his characters through property which is at the heart of the novel, as Daniel Born points out, and reveals a lot of liberal guilt in the intellectual middle-class (155). He spends paragraphs describing rooms and furniture of Howards End but also Leonard’s “amorous and not unpleasant little hole when the curtains were drawn, and the light turned on, and the gas stove unlit” (Howards End 60).

What experience does Forster have with poverty? He was an independent man with a steady income and he wanted to show his readers that this was the only way you were free to develop your own political ideas, or acquire culture. His contradictions and descriptions reminiscent of Jack London and Masterman tell that his ideas were formed on stereotypes, on popular opinions, on discussion he could read in newspapers while his characterization and ideas about middle-class are almost clear-cut and product of his experience. For him the emerging business middle-class is destructive and rapidly expands, the intellectual middle-class only talks but doesn’t act and lower middle-classes are always struggling and can’t contribute to anything.

Forster could only encounter poverty while he worked at the Working Men’s College in London. Students who attended that college were from the working classes and, much like Leonard Bast, wanted to improve themselves through education. Other than that, he was working and mingling in affluent and intellectual circles such as the Bloomsbury Group. He was as removed from poverty as one of his status could be. He was a supporter of the Working Men’s College and any similar institution which wanted to educate unprivileged young men but it could only remain as an idea, not a real connection to what poverty was like.

In the end, the answer to the question “who shall inherit England?” is this: the middle-class. But they have to adjust to the new era of capitalism and increased social alienation which was already deeply felt in 1910 (when *Howards End* was written). Forster wants to diminish the influence of business middle-class, relying only on them providing housing, transportation and finances for the intellectuals who have the heavy burden of education and involving themselves into politics to merge culture and tradition. In this vision of England, the working classes only need to help intellectuals with providing people who will execute their ideas. Poverty has no place in this vision of England and is only a hindrance in projected progress.

5. Conclusion

George Orwell and E.M. Forster were men of their times. Each approached the problem of poverty in their own way, exhibiting their own sensibilities on the topic and revealing their opinions and ideas to their readers. They were both acting through clever literary devices to impress upon their readers their truths. Both are members of the middle-class, Forster luckier than Orwell and more inclined to protect his privileged position, and both knew their audiences.

Their agendas are different, but also reflective of the time in which their novels were written. E.M. Forster was a staunch supporter of the middle-class; not only has he explored their virtues and ideologies, but he has shown their fallacies and sins. His four pre-war novels are perfect examples. Poverty is not what he was concerned about because he believed that England relied on the middle classes’ productivity and creativity. He acknowledged the existence of the poor but didn’t advocate outright how to help them, for him it was merely a

condition that came out of rapid urbanisation, capitalist production and exploitation which were sweeping the nation in the Edwardian era.

In contrast to Forster, Orwell wanted to give everyone a chance to tell their story, he sought out the most pressing problems of his time and went to tell other people about it. Orwell's most important problem was reflective of the time when the novel was written (1930s) with *Great Depression* coming to England, and unemployment and exploitation of workers at its highest. He presented possible solutions to these problems, but also revealed hidden political and social injustices that were and still are kept in place by upper classes and government.

While Orwell wanted to be objective and give a full perspective of poor life through different characters, Forster relied on stereotypes and "gazing", providing only minimal input from his poor characters. Orwell didn't contain his poverty only in the working classes, he wrote about well-off characters who were down on their luck as well (his protagonist is one of them), while Forster only wrote about poverty in the middle-class. They are both persuasive in their writing, relying both on generalizations and individualization, putting in contrast good and bad sides of poverty but also people who react to poverty differently. With Orwell it is more obvious and extensive, but Forster made subtle comparisons between his middle-class characters, opening themes about prejudice and finances. Inspiration for their work were well-known authors and literature about poverty (Masterman, Jack London) which were available to them and whose existence they took in account while writing their own works – they knew their readership will know about them too.

It is evident that men from similar backgrounds will react and write about similar topics in different ways, each focusing on aspects that were more familiar to them and important for them to persuade their readers. One tries to dismantle preconceived ideas about

poverty and poor people, while the other only acknowledges its existence but doesn't provide anything more. With almost twenty years distance between the publications of their novels, we can see how attitude towards poverty and poor people changed as well. Some ways of describing the poor remained (focus on impoverished and sick bodies, smells and claustrophobic spaces) but they are now individuals, not a faceless mass of people.

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to analyse representations of poverty in George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* and E.M. Forster's *Howards End*. In the analysis of both novels, author utilises three configurations as proposed by Barbara Korte for the methodology in the emerging new literary field of Poverty Studies. The main focus is on signalling differences in using similar sources, models and stereotypes in producing representations of poverty in both novels. Both authors had a middle-class background and their attitude towards their education and experience has a significant impact on their work and it is revealed in their novels.

Autobiographical elements also play a part in rendering authenticity, with Orwell who had a direct experience of poverty and Forster who taught working-class men. Orwell largely described and evaluated lives of the working class and unemployed, while Forster focused on wealthy and intellectual middle-class, using lower middle-class to emphasize class differences and the importance of money. The thesis shows how authors used tone, style, perspective and other devices to support their realistic or pastoral attitudes towards poverty. Representations of poverty have largely affected the target readership – middle-class – and the authors are careful in rendering their representations and tone to appeal to the readers and fortify their ideas. The thesis concludes with a final comparison of the two novels.

Key words

George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Poverty Studies, E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, representations of poverty, modernism