

O/other and the Creation of the Self in E.M. Forster's *Howards End*

Elif Derya Şenduran

Middle East Technical University

Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the symbiotic relationship between the Lacanian Other and the imaginary other in E.M. Forster's *Howards End* by using Lacanian and Braidotti's epistemology. In doing so, it explores the binary oppositions, such as rational/irrational, wo/man, culture/nature, mechanic/chaotic, inside/outside, other/nonother by referring to Lacanian topology of Moebius band. The loop of the band suggests the binary patterns are never oppositions but reversed images of one another in the novel. The two families, the Schlegels, and the Wilcoxes act on this trajectory of the Moebius band structure so their images are reversed due to a twist, trauma, by which the linearity of the structure is broken because of the lack of a shared Other. This leads to the ambivalence of the characters in the novel. Paul's mission, which reincarnates as the authority or the Other, obstructs the continuity of his relationship with Helen. Helen's *sinthome*, in other words, art and literature, coheres the rising tension with "panic and emptiness" within her psychodynamics but the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels are never O/other for each other in the novel.

Keywords: *Howards End*, Lacanian epistemology, O/other, Moebius band, *sinthome*

This article explores the Lacanian notions of O/other regarding hierarchisation formed by cross binaries, rational/irrational, wo/man, culture/nature, mechanic/chaotic, inside/outside, which problematize the psychodynamics of the characters in E.M. Forster's *Howards End*. Nevertheless, the Schlegels, and their friend Leonard Bast sustain stability and produce meaning in their lives through art and literature, that become their *sinthome*, which produces meaning and bypasses the lack in their symbolic register in *Howards End*. The hierarchisation constituted by the cross binaries reverses the fixed images of the characters due to a traumatic moment or a pleasurable experience before a mirror, that in turn causes ambivalence in the characters in the course of events. Specifically this notion of rupture leads to Henry's ambivalence. This article also refers to the unilateral, non-spherical Moebius strip to structure the trajectory of the cross binaries, and the reversal of images. The twist in the Moebian shape problematizes the hierarchies in the novel because it is never concentric. Lacanian epistemology and Braidotti's notions of (hu)man, nonhuman others and naturalized, sexualized others (2013, 15) would further challenge the rational consciousness fuelled by modernity, and decipher the hierarchisation of the binary systems in the novel. The *sinthome*, that is to say art and literature, acts as the fourth ring of the Borromean knot¹ which is also structured in the shape of the Moebius band, that gathers together the symbolic, imaginary, and real registers of the characters to cohere their lives in the novel.

The alternative theoretical and philosophical approaches of otherness are “the otherness of race, nationality, class, and gender” (Miller 2003, 199) in *Howards End*. But as Miller points out these readings may also “in one way or another, by tolerance and sympathy, be reduced to the same [...] in spite of Forster's celebration of difference [,] [t]he nation-, class-, and gender-grounded other can be comprehended and so incorporated, at least in principle, into an ideal society that the Schlegel sisters “imagine as their utopian goal” (199) in the novel. Thus, while the Schlegels may be considered as nation grounded Other for Charles and Henry Wilcox, Helen Schlegel may be looked upon as gender grounded Other for Paul and his family. Leonard Bast, on the other hand, falls into the category of class grounded Other for Henry Wilcox. Leonard belongs to the working class, the group which stands in opposition to the bourgeois upper middle-class to which Henry Wilcox belongs. Henry seems to hegemonize the class, nation, and gender grounded Others in the novel. Widdowson puts forth Leonard Bast's class grounded otherness as follows: Leonard's son will be “liberal England's' heir untrammelled by the

¹ Tripartite knots of the symbolic, imaginary, and real registers.

drab reality of his father's life and class; Leonard himself would not fit into 'Howards End/England' but the child brought up in the right environment will" (104).

Said's notion of Orient in post-colonial theory, on the other hand, may reincarnate as the Other, used for "gendered, marginalised, and racialised 'Others'," such as "women, minorities, natives, gays" (Burney 2012, 63). In that sense, the Saidian Other, standing for women represents "helpless, mindless objects of desire and beauty, minorities as strange characters" or stereotypes (63). Likewise, Henry Wilcox categorises Helen according to his logocentric view and reads her as the stereotypical sexualised image of woman; Helen, sensing that, moves to Germany during her pregnancy. Helen's self-effacement to Germany is an act of locating herself "to silence, and non-speech. The speech of the other will then swallow" her "up, will speak *for*" (Makward 1980, 96) her: Henry's trap to hunt Helen "[a]fter her books" (Forster 1998, 201) in *Howards End* speaks for Helen as, "hopelessly irrational, disorganised" only desired by "the masculine Other" (Baym 1984, 158). "Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour," otherness, on the other hand, is defined as "its negative and specular counterpart. In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others'" (Braidotti 2013, 15). Others, for Stuart Christie, in *Howards End* are "counter-metropolitan discourses that at once conflate, even as [it] would distinguish, the metropole and the imperial Other, and a peculiar anomie upon the modernising impulse of the imperial mission" (2005, 155).

The Lacanian O/other in *Howards End*

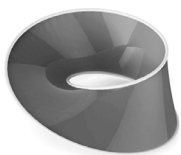
Exploring the Lacanian notions of the Other, and the Other's symbiotic relation to imaginary other with respect to the characters in *Howards End* can decipher the polysemy between the self and the Other from a post-structuralist framework of analysis by referring to Moebius band structure. The novel, despite its pervasive cross binaries, epitomises the impasse of the twentieth century related to the human relationships with its motto "only connect." The binary oppositions, regarding "Nietzsche's pervasive strategy of inter-substituting opposites" (Spivak 1997, xxviii), mostly prevail in the struggles among the characters triggered by the notion of modernity, that also enable the globalisation, and the cosmopolitanism of London. As Nietzsche demonstrates, "the two terms of an opposition are merely accomplices of each other" (xxviii). The binary divisions put Forster's humanism at stake because the centrifugal forces of humanism marginalize the naturalized,

sexualized others. For example, women start to go beyond the clichés due to the cross binaries fuelled by humanism. As a result, the Victorian image of the Angel in the House turns into fluid images of women who move beyond clichés. Women's identity markers are rearranged through suffragette movements, property rights and new lifestyles in the novel. For instance, Henry submits to the voice of Ruth Wilcox, who is the embodiment of superego for Henry and her sons after Charles murders Leonard: ultimately Henry obeys Ruth's will by letting Margaret inherit Howards End in the novel. Despite Henry's patriarchal stance, which protects the rights of his elder son Charles Wilcox, Leonard's death as Lacanian real reshapes the cross binaries like the trajectory of Moebius band. The Schlegel sisters, Paul, Charles, Henry interact for each other's wrongdoings and their images are reversed non-spherically. This indicates that the binaries are never polar opposites.

The social positioning of Henry as the embodiment of paternal metaphor for his family is a repercussion of Margaret and Helen's suffrage emerging from Ruth's unconscious. As long as Ruth is in Howards End, she is the imaginary mOther, "primary caretaker" (Fink 1997, 232), not only for her family but also for her visitors, including the Schlegel sisters. Thus, Ruth's presence marks the house as the dominant signifier for the imaginary register. Her absence marks Henry's presence as the dominant signifier for the symbolic register. The reversal of the inside/outside becomes intricate because the characters' intra-subjectivity, which is the internalised images of others (Leaden *iff*, 2017), affects their intersubjectivity, which includes the Other to regulate their social relationships. Their images in the mirror, reflect the traumatic moment when Charles attacks Leonard with an illusionary attempt to protect Helen. Their inside/outside, in other words, the interiority of their consciousness and the exteriority of their unconscious (language) interact and trigger their partnership on wrongdoing.

The non-human others (Braidotti 2013, 2), on the other hand, including the wych-elm tree, the motor-cars or fast trains, also constitute an interplay among Ruth, Helen, Margaret Charles and Henry, and challenge the state of being accomplices or cross binaries nature/culture, mechanic/chaotic, wo/man. The non-spherical, unilateral structure of Moebius band problematises these cross binaries with its twist so topologically both a traumatic phenomenon and an experience in the mirror reverse the linearity

of the character's social positionings 180° (Steinhaus 1969, 357), within the internalised or constructed images of the characters. What their inside hides becomes their outside ("Moebius Strip") and inside/outside binary becomes "accomplices of each other" (Spivak 1997, xxviii). That is to say, the ambivalence between their



consciousness and unconscious results in the eradication of intersubjectivity among Helen, Paul, Henry Wilcox due to the lack of a shared Other in the novel.

The Lacanian epistemology, on the other hand, with its focus on language, which is the Lacanian big Other, functions as the signifying chain of the Wilcoxes, or the English upper middle classes in the novel. The Wilcoxes, the Schlegels, and Leonard Bast are influenced by the Other's law of language. In this course of argument, the explanations of the key terms would highlight their relation to each other:

Lacanian Other is no way the complement or negation of the subject. Although the subject may take actual persons, beginning with the father, as incarnations of the Other, the Other functions only in the symbolic register, only in the context of the language, authority, law, transgression, and sanction. All this makes it impossible for the Other to have an Other of its own. (Lacan 1977, 25)

The Lacanian big Other, in this case is never a notion to "be assimilated through identification" (Evans 2006, 136). The Other is also "the symbolic order" mediating the relation to other subject (136). "Language exists in the order of the symbolic," which refers to "the connection between the signifier and the signified" (Herndl 1991, 400), that are founded arbitrarily. The symbolic register, including signified, signifier, signifying chain is "triadic," whereas imaginary register, including image and signified, is dyadic. The imaginary is the relation of the subject to his/her mirror image, but that image is never the subject because images have a visual relation to the signified (400). The real, on the other hand, is what is impossible to verbalize (Evans 2006, 161).

Thus, it is essential to point that the Lacanian big Other is never a negation to subjectivity unlike the Saidian Other. Rather like Oedipal Law and its focus on kinship, its signifying chain either produces meaning for the characters or unfunctions for some of them in the novel. For instance, Henry Wilcox's signifying chain estranges Helen from Margaret, her sister, when she marries Henry. Henry Wilcox's cross binary of wo/man hegemonizes Helen's ambivalence, as Helen reveals in her letter to her sister: "He says the most horrid things about women's suffrage so nicely, and when I said I believed in equality he just folded his arms and gave me such a setting down as I've never had. Meg, shall we ever learn to talk less? I never felt so ashamed of myself in my life" (6-7). Henry enunciates the most fearsome signifiers for what Helen believes in, which means that he fixes dreadful words for the voice of women, forming the cross binary of wo/man. His context of language functions in relation to the hierarchisation of the binary. Helen, on

the other hand, is surprised by the gaze of the Other reincarnating as Henry, realising that he is also a subject, so she is reduced to shame (Evans 2006, 73).

Braidotti's notions of (hu)man/nonhuman others would bring out a different vantage point to the interpretation of the novel. Her sexualised, naturalized others (2013, 27) challenge Henry and Charles Wilcox's fixed powerful images in *Howards End*. Henry's hard-headed prejudices and his indifference to Helen and Leonard constitute an opposition to Charles and Henry's keenness on technology, and motoring. Charles and Henry prefer to expand their business without bothering about Helen and Bast. Helen's impressions on Henry's reaction to suffrage movement mark the symbiotic relation between the law of the father and Helen's imaginary other Paul. The sanctions on Helen's imaginary other eradicates a possible intersubjectivity between the two.

Non-Linear Intersubjectivity and Reversal of Images

Helen Schlegel's letters to her sister Margaret about Helen's encounter with the Wilcoxes in *Howards End* start the non-linear intersubjectivity between the two families because of the late arrival of one of the letters in the novel. The two families became acquainted "at a Continental hotel" (13). During Helen's visit to the Wilcoxes', the late arrival of Helen's telegram about the end of her love for Paul leads to misunderstandings. Then, the binary divisions, such as rational/irrational, wo/man, lead to the wrongdoing of the characters, and to the reversal of their images due to their non-linear intersubjectivity with the other.

In the beginning of the novel, Helen takes Paul Wilcox, the younger son of the family as her imaginary other in Lacanian terms. As the letter to her sister indicates, she also takes the Wilcox family as her imaginary family. Helen reveals the details of what has happened in *Howards End* to her sister Margaret after Mrs Munt and Helen return to their home, Wickham Place. According to Helen's narration of events, the non-linear intersubjectivity occurs between Helen and the Wilcoxes when Paul Wilcox and his family's image threaten Helen's narcissistic mirroring. Paul's anxious attitude damages Helen's narcissistic mirroring soon after his declaration of love. The next day, he defines himself through his mission, rejecting to give recognition for Helen:

"I said to him [Paul] after breakfast [...]" [...] 'We rather lost our heads,' and he looked better at once, though frightfully ashamed. He began a speech about having no money to marry on, but it hurt him to make it, and I—stopped him. Then he said, 'I must beg your

pardon over this, Miss Schlegel; I can't think what came over me last night.' And I said, 'Nor what over me; never mind.' And then we parted—at least, until I remembered that I had written straight off to tell you the night before, and that frightened him again. (21)

Paul is overcome with fear of Helen's letter to her relatives about their affair because he feels ashamed of it. He senses the gaze of Helen's family or he senses being seen by the Other. Paul feels "panic and emptiness" because he is afraid of being seen by the Other or by Helen's family. This reverses Paul's image in Helen's eye so she is alienated from her imaginary family.

She observes the change in his behaviour, and her narcissistic self-injury is a result of her "dependence on totalising image" (Sarup 1992, 102), that further deepens when her Aunt Juley arrives having learnt about their affair. Besides, her aunt knows the teleological drive behind Paul's alteration, as his brother Charles has revealed it to her during their drive to Howards End in his motor:

My niece has been very foolish, and I shall give her a good scolding and take her back to London with me.' 'He [Paul] has to make his way out in Nigeria. He couldn't think of marrying for years and when he does it must be a woman who can stand the climate, and is in other ways—Why hasn't he told us? Of course he's ashamed. (17)

According to Charles, Paul should marry someone who could stand Nigerian climate. This implication relates to the notion of primogeniture which imbues feudal patriarchal settling because it favours the first son as the only heir to the father (Jamoussi 2011, 4, 18). Charles locates "identity bearing words" or "master signifiers" (Bracher 1993, 24) for Paul within an imperialist colonial assertion. Charles recognises his brother in that identity and refuses to recognise his affair with Helen. Furthermore, Charles criticizes Helen for spreading the news about the affair. The Wilcoxes are generally intimate with Helen, but they fail to see her subjectivity because she acts according to how they behave. Due to her narcissistic mirroring, she perceives the family as worthy of sharing her privacy, perhaps with the expectation to increase her feelings of security. Specifically, the Wilcoxes and Helen's intra-subjectivity first creates an "illusionary reciprocity" (Evans 2006, 49), which later turns into non-linear intersubjectivity between the two families when Aunt Juley arrives at Howards End. The Wilcoxes start an asymmetrical relation with the Schlegels, concerning their commitment to the imperial mission. The asymmetry starts with the intrusion of the mission as the embodiment of the authority of the Other.

This authority of the Other ails Helen's ego in a non-linear fashion because Paul claims that he has no money to get married, remembering his imperial mission in Nigeria. The late arrival of Helen's telegram and the untimely spontaneous imaginary attraction between Helen and Paul delineate the non-linearity of time. Helen's feeling of "panic and emptiness" (27) is a psychological reaction to non-linear intersubjectivity and her reaction is "repetitive compulsion" (Evans 2006, 151). Helen continuously looks for what one can never achieve. Her repressed feelings return whilst she listens to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* with her family. In each case, Helen goes away in disappointment. The Other intrudes in Helen's dyadic relationships with Paul: [Paul] had been talking of his approaching exile in Nigeria, and he should have continued to talk of it, and allowed their guest to recover. But the heave of her bosom flattered him [...] Deep down in him something whispered, "This girl would let you kiss her; you might not have such a chance again." (20)

Paul's inner speech delineates how the "imperial Other" (Christie 2005, 155) conditions the "negation of his subjectivity" (Braidotti 2013, 15) in his symbolic register. Paul is Helen's imaginary other but Paul's imperial Other does not function for Helen and obstructs her dyadic relationship with Paul. The intrusion of the Other reverses Paul's image for Helen. Helen is, and Paul soon will be, exiled from their "homeland" (Burney 2012, 187) in relation to this "imperial Other." Being the daughter of a German father and an English mother, Helen belongs to more than one history and more than one group. The Schlegel family's search for a home is the metonymic extension of being an outsider, that creates an otherness in their relationship with the Wilcoxes. Yet, both Helen and Paul, sense the same notion of exile. Their likeness leads them to have an imaginary relationship but Helen realises that Paul is not his imaginary other.

Except for Mrs Wilcox, the affair between Paul and Helen takes place in the imaginary register, nurturing thoughts without intrusion of the Other. Mrs Wilcox becomes the embodiment of the imaginary mOther, that is "the primary caretaker" (Fink 1997, 232) for Helen. Ruth acts almost like a feminist defending Helen's rights when she reverses the images of Paul and Helen's relationship:

When Charles and Aunt Juley drove up, calling each other names, Mrs. Wilcox stepped in from the garden and made everything less terrible [...] [Charles] called, "are you aware that Paul has been playing the fool again?" "It's all right, dear. They have broken off the engagement." "Engagement—!" "They do not love any longer, if you prefer it put that way," said Mrs Wilcox, stooping down to smell a rose. (19)

The reversal of the embodiment of the imaginary other takes place when Mrs Wilcox announces an engagement between Paul and Helen in order to carry the relationship to a formal status. In so doing, Ruth takes Helen into her signification system. She gives full recognition to Helen in such a way that Charles and Paul are surprised. For Helen, on the other hand, the reversal of the embodiment of imaginary other occurs when Paul is panic-stricken:

When I saw all the others so placid, and Paul mad with terror in case I said the wrong thing, I felt for a moment that the whole Wilcox family was a fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs, and that if it fell I should find nothing behind it but panic and emptiness. (21)

Helen is alienated from her imaginary family due to Paul's fearful speech, that constitutes a mobean like curve on the linearity of their intersubjectivity.

Formerly, Helen's search of wholeness paves her way to the imaginary identification with the Wilcox family: "Mrs. Wilcox, if quieter than in Germany, is sweeter than ever, and I never saw anything like her steady unselfishness, and the best of it is that the others do not take advantage of her. They are the very happiest, jolliest family that you can imagine" (6). Ruth, in Lacanian sense, introduces the shared Other, which is Paul and Helen's "engagement." Ruth transfers the duality which is the imaginary status of the affair to her cultural codes by adding Helen to her signifying chain as her would-be-daughter-in-law.

Helen and Paul's relation connects the imaginary other and the self like "the go-between" (336). Both momentarily develop passions for each other, within identificatory fusions, without considering the conventions. Their bodily images increase their intimacy for an instance. The abstraction of their love comes to the fore because both feel secure under the wych-elm tree which is an appropriate location for love. Yet, later, Paul is unable to locate Helen in his psychodynamics as he is eager to exist without taking Helen as his partner to Nigeria, where he will be in exile in a different symbolic order other than England. Consequently, unable to come to terms with what is to come next, Paul is anxious the next day. He cannot transgress his egotistical boundaries so he boosts the image of his "preverbal bodily identity" (Bracher 1993, 31) and he does it by positioning Helen as his imaginary other.

On the other hand, Margaret's perception of the affair draws the attention to the material reality that enhances speed to end up love relationships without tragic

consequences: “[i]magine the tragedy last June, if Helen and Paul Wilcox had been poor people, and couldn’t invoke railways and motorcars to part them” (46). Her view foregrounds “the birth of a consumer society” (McGuigan 2006, 94) with excessive fondness on goods, more comfortable households, fast travelling, private automobiles. The nonhuman others, which are the technological enhancements, prevent a possible tragedy between Paul and Helen. The mechanic/chaotic binary is blurred because the affair would become a tragedy causing chaos if Helen and Paul did not travel to distant places by motorcars and trains after their short affair. Thus, Margaret’s view suggests that the material reality, represented as technology, is also the Other that reincarnates as the embodiment of a certain authority for both the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, however, it acts without a centre blurring the difference between mechanic/chaotic.

Non-spherical Moebius strip, on the other hand, with its unilateral surface, designates a figuration of Helen and Paul as imaginary others with the “interdependency of the image” (Sarup 1992, 102). One cannot pass to the other side without the twist. Non-spherical shape of the band suggests that there are no cross binaries such as rational Henry and irrational Helen. The influence of the outside, the *extimité* in Lacanian terms, reverses their pleasurable mirror images for one another. Both Helen and Paul yearn for “the feeling of an imaginary wholeness”² (Birlık 2019, 540) with an ideal ego. However, Helen appears as “a sexualised other” (Braidotti 2013, 27) for the Wilcoxes, except for, Ruth Wilcox who reverses Helen’s image in her family once more when she announces their “engagement” (19) to calm down the agitation felt by Helen. Ruth voices Helen’s position for the Wilcoxes by giving her symbolic gratification which is almost a feminist approach to Helen.

Leonard Bast and Helen Schlegel

Helen identifies herself with Leonard when he becomes a victim to Henry Wilcox’s selfish “security and freedom” (Shirkhani 2008, 197) that keeps his own secure image to himself by being indifferent to “Leonard’s security” (197). Shirkhani points out how Leonard suffers from “latent disease” and how “he is kept from what he most desires in life-to write books, immerse himself in literature, and converse with people adept at such activities” (197). Helen’s identificatory fusion with Leonard leads to her transformation. Henry’s ill-advice for Leonard’s job leads to his unemployment. Through

² The translation of this quotation is mine.

Leonard Bast's misfortunes, Helen learns to recognise her "original desire, unconstituted and confused [...] through its inversion of the other" (Bracher 1993, 33), Leonard Bast. Then she cries out for Henry Wilcox's indifference towards the Basts by bringing them to the ceremony during Evie's wedding day with an "experience of jubilation" (33): "I found them starving!" "Who? Why have you come?" "The Basts." "Oh, Helen!" moaned Margaret. "Whatever have you done now?" "[Leonard] has lost his place. He has been turned out of his bank. Yes, he's done for. We upper classes have ruined him, and I suppose you'll tell me it's the battle of life" (161).

Helen defies Henry Wilcox's indifference by building a sense of identity from her perception of bodily unity in an other. This other is Leonard, so Helen's attainment of a definitive desire with specific aim and object is achieved only by perceiving that desire outside herself, in the Basts. By taking sides with Leonard, Helen tries to transgress Henry Wilcox's sanction based on hierarchies in social relations. However, after her affair with Leonard and her pregnancy, she senses her image is reversed for the Wilcox family whose enunciations constitute the signifying chain in London. Therefore, she moves to Germany to constitute another signification system for herself: "I cannot fit in with England as I know it. I have done something that the English never pardon. It would not be right for them to pardon it. So I must live where I am not known" (208). However, the unfunctioning symbolic order in London for Helen soon starts to function via Ruth Wilcox's unconscious, that prepares *Howards End* as "home" for Helen and Leonard's child.

The Sense of Wholeness

Margaret takes Ruth Wilcox as her imaginary other in their relationship and they achieve intersubjectivity because Ruth and Margaret succeed to remain in their symbolic register by both being submissive to their family order and giving symbolic gratification to each other. Both Margaret and Helen grasp each other's subjectivity to build up an absolute Other in their context of language. Ruth is the embodiment of the mOther not only for her family but also for the Schlegels as she stands for an "unassimilable uniqueness" (Evans 2006, 136) for Margaret. The pattern of their intersubjective relations and the annoyances, on the other hand, rotate the positions of Ruth and Margaret as they cannot visit *Howards End* although both would like to. Ruth Wilcox invites Margaret to *Howards End*, her country house as a sign of her symbolic gratification for her. She desires a home for Margaret. Ruth is angry with Margaret, and her anger is a "philanthropic activity"

(Lacan 2006, 87) when she refuses her invitation: “‘Later on I should love it,’ she continued, ‘but it’s hardly the weather for such an expedition, and we ought to start when we’re fresh. Isn’t the house shut up, too?’ ‘Might I come some other day?’” (63). She received no answer.

Ruth’s silence is a punctuation, a duration for Margaret to notate her position as a “caretaker” for the Schlegel sisters, by finding a home for them. Ruth regulates the subjectivity of the people around her via the objects which helps to constitute a whole structure that halts social disintegration with the Schlegels. Ruth tries to fill in the gaps in her family symbolic chain, such as Henry’s unfaithfulness to her and Paul’s short interest in Helen, with “an imaginary substitute” (Evans 2006, 202). In doing so, she, in fact, reconstitutes “enlightenment and its legacy of the Cartesian subject [...] as citizen, rights-holder, property-owner” (Braidotti 2013, 1) by adding Helen and Margaret to that community. Ruth transgresses the norm and the anti-humanist cross binary of wo/man, with her humanitarianism for the Schlegel sisters. Although Ruth withers away, not showing the house to Margaret, both have already constituted a relation based on recognition. Therefore, their connection remains endless as it leads Margaret to move to *Howards End* with Helen and her child from Leonard in the end.

Nature/Culture

Nature/culture accomplices turn over their logocentric aspects and reconstitute themselves in Ruth Wilcox’s folkloric narration which endorses the given and constructed features of the duality, fused and intertwined in her unconsciousness. Margaret can sense the subtleties of Ruth’s consciousness about the wych-elm tree in *Howards End* when she compares it with Henry’s ignorance about the diachronicity of Ruth’s signification:

“The wych-elm I remember. Helen spoke of it as a very splendid tree.” “It is the finest wych-elm in Hertfordshire. Did your sister tell you about the teeth?” “No.” “Oh, it might interest you. There are pigs’ teeth stuck into the trunk, about four feet from the ground. The country people put them in long ago, and they think that if they chew a piece of the bark, it will cure the toothache. The teeth are almost grown over now, and no one comes to the tree.” “I should. I love folklore and all festering superstitions.” “Do you think that the tree really did cure toothache, if one believed in it?” “Of course it did. It would cure anything—once.” (54)

Ruth Wilcox's folkloric and superstitious narration about the wych-elm tree disavows the Western "binary opposition between the given and the constructed," between nature and culture. Her narration is the "voice of nature: 'gentle voice', maternal voice" (Derrida 1997, 200). Besides, Ruth's speech indicates that she is ahead of her time so she goes beyond cultural clichés by refuting the superiority of one binary over the other since she actually reinforces "a non-dualistic understanding of nature culture interaction" (Braidotti 2013, 3). The folkloric image of the tree, in other words, functions as a cure and its effect on Ruth is not only physiological but also psychological. The folkloric, superstitious image of the tree operates "the self-organizing (auto-poietic) force" (3) of country people.

However, the folklore of the tree has remained unknown for Henry for years. Probably he has been indifferent to it as he has been busy to "concentrate" on his business rather than "connect" with his environment. His motoring down to visit Charles only adds speed to his travel and blurs the categories between accomplices of nature and culture: As Henry states "I shouldn't want that fine wych-elm spoilt. It hangs – Margaret, we must go and see the old place some time. It's pretty in its way. We'll motor down and have lunch with Charles" (136). It is the technological comfort of the motor that organises Henry's wish to see the wych-elm. Within his motoring comfort, the wych-elm becomes the embodiment of the naturalized other for Henry Wilcox.

Interestingly, although the cultural function of the wych-elm tree promoted by Margaret has no signification for Henry's consciousness, he still demands that it should not be "spoilt." His proposal to see Howards End also reveals his misrecognition of the tree because his dependency on the totalising image of that space is different from Ruth's. Margaret starts to clarify Ruth's unconscious to Henry by enunciating "the pig's teeth" on the tree: "You want to see the house, though?" "Very much – I've heard so much about it, one way or the other. Aren't there pigs' teeth in the wych-elm?" "*Pigs' teeth?*" "And you chew the bark for toothache." "What a rum notion! Of course not!" "Perhaps I have confused it with some other tree. There are still a great number of sacred trees in England, it seems" (136). Thus, the wych-elm tree, like Leonard and Helen, becomes marginalized by Henry, as Henry totally rejects its other implications, told indirectly by his wife Ruth, enforcing "his structural ignorance" and "humanistic arrogance" (Braidotti 2013, 28) upon Margaret.

Nature/culture binary starts to act on the same trajectory. The curved line of the non-spherical Moebius band problematises nature/culture relation for Henry because he cannot rationalise the folkloric notion and its connection to the tree. For Ruth, there is no hierarchy between nature and culture because they stand for the metonymic extension of

a holistic view. As the non-spherical shape of the band suggests nature and culture can never be polar-opposites. Topologically, the trajectory of their relationality can be interpreted as the reversed images of one another with a split and the twist is the rupture, which unfolds Ruth's unconscious in Margaret's dialogue with Henry in *Howards End*. Margaret's speech raises Henry's consciousness for the tree in the Lacanian Moebian shape: "Another touch, and the account of her day is finished. They entered the garden for a minute, and to Mr. Wilcox's surprise she was right. Teeth, pigs' teeth, could be seen in the bark of the wych-elm tree – just the white tips of them showing. "Extraordinary!" he cried. "Who told you?" "I heard of it one winter in London," was her answer, for she, too, avoided" (148). As Mack-Canty puts forth in nature/culture dichotomy,

[m]en were identified with disembodied characteristics such as order, freedom, light, and reason, which were seen as better than, and in opposition to, women's allegedly more 'natural' and/or embodied characteristics such as disorder, physical necessity, darkness, and passion [...] The subtext is the association of women with nature, as women's embodiment generally, given its reproductive capacity, is harder to deny than men's. (Mack-Canty 2004, 155)

Mack-Canty's definition foregrounds the polarities in human nature within wo/man cross binary whereas Ruth Wilcox's love of "folklore and all festering superstitions" in nature (54) points to the fusion of the two notions rather than the differences between them. Regarding Mack-Canty's view, Ruth's unconscious incorporates the non-hierarchised status of nature/culture into wo/man. In other words, Ruth believes in equality of wo/man. What is more, Ruth's wych-elm embodies human artefacts, which may also be associated with the poly-centredness of nature, that is intruded by Henry's material reality of motoring down. His material reality emerges from the "great impersonal forces" (138) deciding on the rich and poor. Whereas Ruth's psychic reality constitutes a collective unconscious among Helen, Margaret and herself through their interest in "the finest wych-elm in Hertfordshire" (54). There is nothing dark about their common interest, but its healing effect satisfies humans' physical needs, thus, the border between Henry and the wych-elm is blurred when he motors down to see the tree.

Braidotti moves one step further than Mack-Canty, and claims that:

[I]ike other emancipatory philosophies and political practices the feminist struggle for women's rights in Europe has built on secular foundations [...] As the secular

and rebellious daughters of Enlightenment, European feminists were raised in rational argumentation and detached self-irony. The feminist belief system is accordingly civic” opposing “authoritarianism and orthodoxy. (32)

Ruth and Margaret’s collective unconscious enlightens Henry on the non-hierarchised status of both nature/culture and wo/man, as both binaries intertwine each other when Henry motors down to see the tree and its details that he has never paid attention to.

One can also say that the functioning of the Lacanian Other appears to be “out-dated” (Braidotti 2013, 189) in the novel because of the subversion of subjectivity through “advanced capitalism” (189). This subversion breaks away Henry’s attachment to the feudal cultural practice of primogeniture and brings together the fertility of women and cultivation of nature in *Howards End*. Thus, “the Humanist principle” is reversed with the reversed images of Charles and Henry from rational to a-rational, and it reconstitutes the Schlegel sisters’ image through Ruth Wilcox’s unconscious which is holistically based on the idea of a woman being “the measure of all things female” (de Beauvoir qtd. in Braidotti 2013, 21).

Ruth’s closeness to nature and her care for Helen come to the fore once more during her visit to Margaret as the narrating voice indicates: “Clever talk alarmed her, and withered her delicate imaginings; it was the social; counterpart of a motorcar, all jerks, and she was a wisp of hay, a flower” (56). Ruth is a “flower” in her “delicate imagining” and her subtlety is vulnerable to motor cars and clever talk. “Twice she deplored the weather, twice criticized the train service on the Great Northern Railway [...] when she inquired whether there was any news of Helen, her hostess was too much occupied in placing Rothenstein to answer. The question was repeated: “I hope that your sister is safe in Germany by now” (56). Unlike Henry, who is indifferent to Margaret’s sister, Ruth cares for Helen’s security and wellbeing, thus, it is obvious that she prefers to connect rather than speed up with fast vehicles to concentrate fully on her interests. Henry is close to fast trains and vehicles regarding Braidotti’s “ethics of interaction with both human and non-human others” that blur the boundaries of binary divisions, whereas Ruth is close to flowers and trees and interacts with them. Both, Ruth’s relation to nature and Henry’s relation to technology are not man made. Their interaction with nature and technology is a “collectively distributed consciousness,” and their bonds to the nonhuman others manifest a “nonsynthetic understanding of the relational bond that connects” (Braidotti 2013, 164) the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels in Ruth’s house *Howards End*. Specifically, they selforganize “structure of life” (Braidotti 2013, 59).

As nature/culture duality is in the imaginary order in Lacanian epistemology, the triadic scheme of nature, culture, and society takes the duality out of the imaginary and places it in the symbolic order with the power of language and society as the embodiment of the Other for the two families. In Ruth's narration, the society is the country people, who chew the bark and narrate the folklore. Ruth's narration to Margaret, and Margaret's narration to Henry circulates and interacts the triadic relation of Ruth's symbolic register.

The Other also reincarnates in English culture which includes the patriarchal authority of Henry for the Schlegels. Henry Wilcox perceives Helen and Leonard as irrational. But soon realizes the invalidity of his hierarchies.

***Sinthome* as the Fourth Term: Creation of the Self through Art**

In order to escape the hierarchisations of cross binaries, that put the Borromean knot of symbolic, imaginary, and real registers in tension, the Schlegel sisters not only attend suffragette campaigns but also socially cultivate their minds with art and literature. Art and literature mediate among the Schlegel's social and empirical reality and cultural past. What is more, in the novel, art and literature cohere the psychodynamics of the Schlegels and Leonard Bast.

Lacan refers to art as *sinthome*, a fourth term which holds the imaginary, the symbolic and the real registers of the subjectivity together. In the novel, Helen experience both pleasure and pain (panic and emptiness) which is *jouissance* as she listens to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* with her family for the second time. Her *jouissance* is transformed by way of meaning (Lacan 2016, 214) so the music becomes Helen's *sinthome* which bypasses Henry's symbolic register that never functions for her and Leonard. Art and literature also bridge the Schlegels' ontic status and their intellectual psychic space, which creates a home rule for them in Howards End. Through their femininity they foreground art and literature, and for Helen specifically art becomes her *sinthome* to go beyond meaning and to sustain equilibrium in a cosmopolitan society.

Margaret reveals to Leonard how Helen links various art forms while they are chatting about art in general. The dialogue also elucidates how art becomes a mediator to connect people from different walks of life: "Helen's one aim is to translate tunes into the language of painting, and pictures into the language of music' [...] 'Now, this very symphony that we've just been having—she won't let it alone. She labels it with meanings from start to finish; turns it into literature.'" (31) Margaret states how Helen relates

her imaginary register to her symbolic register through art to produce meaning. Likewise, Helen's adherence to art and literature delineate how Helen bypasses Paul and Henry's functionless Other with *jouissance* by creating a psychic space for Henry and the goblins in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* through associations. Helen recognises the repetition of "panic and emptiness" and Paul's fear to take responsibility for their intimacy while listening to Beethoven's *Fifth* with the intrusion of goblins, which are the metaphoric extension of "cowardice and unbelief" as "a Wagnerian leitmotiv" (Westburg 1965, 365).

McCulloch, on the other hand, associates "Beethoven's iconic four note rhythmic phrase of three shorter notes of equal length followed by one longer note: at the beginning of the symphony 'diddy dum'" (2018, 11) with "panic and emptiness". Beethoven associates the rhythm with "so knocks fate on the door" (25). Thus, Helen experiences *jouissance* which refers to both pleasure and pain while listening to Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* with recollections:

"[a]s the music started with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end. Others followed him. They were not aggressive creatures; it was that that made them so terrible to Helen. They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world [...] Helen could not contradict them, for, once at all events, she had felt the same, and had seen the reliable walls of youth collapse. Panic and emptiness! Panic and emptiness! The goblins were right." (26)

Helen's inner dialogue reveals how her feeling of "panic and emptiness" in *Howards End* metamorphoses into her associations of the goblins which for her are symbolic of cowardice in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. Then, her repression unfolds as she pushes out of the building. When she distances herself from her imaginary other, Paul, the tension is put on her psychodynamics. Yet, art as her *sinthome* helps her to go beyond meaning, produced previously through her interaction with Paul. The designation of "the *sinthome* as an 'event of the body'" (Lacan 2016, 185) also correlates Helen's acts of pushing "her way out during the applause" as she desires to be "alone" (Forster 1998, 27). As Fraulein Mosebach states, "[t]he music has evidently moved her deeply" (27). In the meantime, music becomes a mediator first between Leonard and Margaret and then between Helen and Leonard. The sisters give Leonard full symbolic gratification by befriending him regardless of his class.

The resonance continues in Helen and Leonard's hermeneutical attempt on Nietzschean notion of superman, imposing "upon becoming the character of being – that is

the supreme will to power” (Spivak 1997, xxxv). This notion constitutes Henry’s motto in Leonard’s inner speech: “Talk as one would, Mr. Wilcox was king of this world, the superman, with his own morality, whose head remained in the clouds” (171). His thoughts overlap with Helen’s interpretation: “No superman ever said ‘I want,’ because ‘I want’ must lead to the question, ‘Who am I?’ and so to Pity and to Justice. He only says ‘want.’ [...] ‘want Botticelli,’ if he’s Pierpont Morgan. Never the ‘I’; and if you could pierce through him, you’d find panic and emptiness in the middle” (168). Piercing through Nietzschean superman, Helen’s interiority of “panic and emptiness” resonates in the goblins, in Paul, in superman. These artistic associations of language form the basis for the creation of Helen’s self in the novel.

Conclusion

Helen and Leonard remain in the imaginary register with their *sinthome*, including their books, symphonies, philosophical and intellectual conversations. Their intellect is their rationality. Henry’s image as a man of financial calculations and measurement twists when Charles attacks Leonard. The unfunctioning symbolic chain starts to function for Helen then, with a reversal of fortune that resonated in “diddidy dum”, which is the fate knocking on Leonard’s door when he meets the Schlegels.

Henry and Charles’s disregard for Helen and Leonard results in the collapse of their patriarchal norms. However, Leonard’s murder never corresponds to the psychic reality seeking a teleological drive behind the appearance so Helen blames herself for it. The intra-subjectivity of Helen as a free spirit forces upon the nonlinear intersubjectivity between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. The speedy motors neither take the telegrams earlier nor help to communicate. The technology only helps Charles and Paul to concentrate on their business. The non-spherical, unilateral Moebius band figuration structures the trajectory of events in such a way that the images of the characters may be reversed at any time though Forster takes sides with Helen and Margaret at the end of the novel. The country house stands for Ruth’s unconscious that unfolds when Henry’s subjectivity dissociates after Charles’s arrest. Nevertheless, the Schlegels’ desire for a home is the desire of the mOther, Ruth.

The nature / culture binary remains different for each character and it is visible in the fact that they are never presented as opposites but rather as interwoven concepts since one leg of the binary can never be separate from the other. As far as Ruth’s approach to

nature and its fusion with culture is concerned, the wych-elm tree has a folkloric, healing, unifying effect without any hierarchization, independent of a centre, delineated in the figuration of the unilateral, non-spherical Moebius band.

In the novel, the Lacanian Other functions to some extent only for Henry and Charles Wilcox so they impose their exclusionary practices on Jacky, Leonard, and Helen Schlegel. However, the symbiotic relation between the Lacanian Other and the imaginary other never ends because there will always be reincarnations of the Lacanian Other to operate and function to centralize the power. Art and literature become a cord or *sinthome* for the Schlegels to regulate the dispersed images in characters' psychodynamics and create themselves artificially in the novel. Ruth's unconscious artfully creates an ontic space for both the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes in the end but the notions of O/other remain incompatible in the character's intersubjective and intrasubjective relations.

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