

not merely in the minds of brilliant study-room philosophers, but under the pressing circumstances of political events and amidst the clashes of archetypal institutions: church, state, courts, feudal and town interests.

The villains of Bishirjian's book are the Sophists, the Gnostics and those among the Moderns who reject the classical tradition, from Machiavelli to Marx and beyond. The last name mentioned in the book is, I think, B. F. Skinner, whose inclusion is in itself a sign of the book's wide-ranging scope, as is, on the "other side," the inclusion of Michael Polanyi. Clearly, Bishirjian knows that political science does not stop at the official labels.

One must observe, however, that political thought is not fully accounted for when it is limited to the polarity of two "teams": the gnostics-utopians-relativists, on one side, the classicists, etc., on the other. Politics and the reflection on politics are more than the apocalyptic confrontation of millenarians and realists; or, if we insist on confrontation, the antagonists may be arranged according to many patterns, not simply in the camps of saints and of satans. This critique goes beyond the book under discussion, it is addressed to conservative thought on politics. The shock of modernity which has transformed politics into a permanent ideological confrontation has turned conservative thinking itself into a reflex of self-defense. Particularly in the United States, where (old) catholic and (new) right-wing political theories are veiled with *pudeur* as unmentionably undemocratic, conservatives have been left only one exit to sanity: Hellas and the neo-Hellenes, of whom the Straussians are the most prominent, but which is also the Voegelinian preference. While these neo-classical schools of thought are generally brilliant and profound, they are often dangerously narrow, and relate to politics as stylized forms in art to living creation. The concrete gets somehow lost when we put ourselves under a virtual obligation to check the political realities of the day against Greek paradigms. This is not to mention the perils of looking anxiously around for a classical approval when action would be called for.

Bishirjian's book is the best summing up of political theory as we have come to know and study the latter during the last thirty or forty years of American conservatism, itself perhaps the only valid political school among the competing ones on this soil. This does not mean that *another* book might not be written, under the same title, a parallel or companion volume, discussing other names, other theories, other norms, just as central to Western thought as the one traced by Bishirjian.

Reviewed by THOMAS MOLNAR

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### *Late-Flowering*

**E. M. Forster: A Life**, by P. N. Furbank,  
*New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,*  
1978. 2 vols. in 1 (xxi, 260, 359 pp.).  
\$19.95.

ROGER FRY'S PORTRAIT of Edward Morgan Forster at 33 serves as dust-jacket for this impressive double-barrelled biography. The portrait hung in Forster's mother's drawing room till one day a clergyman regarded it, then said to Mrs. Forster, "I hope your son isn't queer?" In no time, a new home was found for the picture.

Keeping his homosexuality from his mother was but one of several reasons for E. M. Forster's early sexual diffidence. Well into his forties he remained tormented—even his novel *Maurice*, kept back for posthumous publication, dealt with a purely imaginative "affair"—and tormented because of a salient quality in his makeup: considerateness for others. When he began to be lionized as the author of *Howards End* (1910), he marked down in his diary this fact about himself: "However gross my desires, I find I shall never satisfy them for the fear of annoying others. I am glad to come across this much good in me." Not till 1917, when working as a "searcher" in Alexandria (interviewing wounded soldiers for information about the

missing-in-action), did he take a step he never thought he would take and commence a physical affair with a young Egyptian bus conductor. He was 38; the affair was brief and Forster remained the young man's benefactor in later tragic circumstances. Meanwhile, at age 42—when a second “physical” opportunity arrived—Forster succumbed, only to turn violently remorseful, thinking he'd left the court of an Indian prince open to scandal. He was employed as secretary by this Maharaja. Confessing to him, “he broke down,” with quite an odd consequence, as his biographer P. N. Furbank shows. “The Maharaja nearly broke down too, crying ‘Oh devil! Don't do that Morgan—the only way with a thing like this is to take it laughing.’” A stern moralist, the prince was nevertheless tolerant; from then on, Forster would consider the man almost literally a saint.

Forster had two great Indian friends, the second a Moslem, Syed Ross Masood. In one capping phrase Forster said of him, “Masood gives up duties for friends—which is civilisation.” The statement applies to both these paragons who so much influenced him. The Maharaja had set aside his own duties in condoling with Forster—but obviously out of knowledge of the struggle his friend had been under. My purpose in commencing with all this refractory homosexuality is to give Mr. Furbank credit for having caught such *resistance* to lust and promiscuity, which went to form a pattern in Forster's early life. Drama is secured for the whole first volume, and for the early portions of the second, because of Forster's own heeding of the demands of “civilisation”—which made him put the sensibilities of other people first, though this cost him dearly.

The incidents just recounted, taking place in Alexandria and India, come from the early pages of volume two, where are recorded the two most “public” enterprises Forster undertook. When it came to public probity, Forster had no weak spot. Setting apart his creative achievement, the scale on which he operated might be deemed inconsequentially small: but his altruism was never fatuous, and meanwhile he realized how “faked” most

large-scale versions of altruism can become. Once when he was master of ceremonies at a music concert for convalescent troops, he was able to quiet the men's catcalls, and to surprise out of them something that had been unsuspected—their affinity for good music. He recorded his triumph to a friend:

It was great fun quieting them down, and trying to talk sense about music instead of that damned superior art patronage; and I believe I was able to . . . because I loved them. . . . I can't help swanking over this concert. I felt that I had been burrowing under rubbish and touched something that was alive. . . . It is useless trying to touch something you don't want to touch: that is why all attempts to “improve” people are vain.

The whole first volume of Furbank's biography records “searchings under” of this sort, which bore fruit during Forster's early years, so that his friends—most of whom considered him dreamy, vapid—were invariably surprised by the vigor and clarity of his pre-war novels. He himself meanwhile, with the completion of each of these, felt dried-up, unsure that he would write again—and altogether unavid of fame. When in 1910 he found himself a celebrity he confided a remonstrance to his diary: “A good remedy is to look at the carpet while people are praising you . . . and to meditate on New Zealand, which lies right through it. . . .”

That is, by visualizing the other side of the globe, one might keep perspective on one's achievements. He also knew how subterranean an artist's resources were, and how “of this inward spring one must not talk, for it threatens to depart if one will not leave it in mystery.” These words he chanced upon in a letter of Matthew Arnold's. They lighted up for him “his own deepest purposes,” says Furbank, at a time when he was “circulating unobtrusively in his own suburban and Cambridge circle. Yet, at the same time, he had given up none of his demand for ‘greatness’ in life. . . .” This demand was realized in the vital “connections” achieved by his heroines in *Howards End*, a book that

had for its climactic sentence, "The inner life had paid."

What was oddly dramatic was to discover in the Arnold letter that warning about guarding one's talent. Perhaps the profoundest ethical insight of his lifetime came to Forster similarly, by way of Keats. He was reading Keats' letters in 1905, and he wrote, "[Keats] has seized upon the supreme fact of human nature, the very small amount of good in it, and the supreme importance of that little." Recall the phrase he would utter later—"I am glad to come across this much good in me." That sentence resolved a sexual ordeal for him. The drama lies in the absorption of strength, the discovery of purpose, from the dead. An unrivalled literature like England's could confer such legacies, as Forster said in another context late in 1945 (airborne over Egypt on a flight to India—thinking of the imperial heritage): "Few people alive can have such culture—practically all the Englishman's tradition."

An inner life, tense with epiphanic experience, characterized Forster's days till they'd run half their course. For what occurred after that, the autobiography of Evelyn Waugh's father offers a neat analogue. Waugh said of this book that it lost its appeal "only in its latter half, when his life became uniformly uneventful." The paradox with Forster is that his own life turns uninteresting at just the point when its events become external, which means in great part when his sexual longings became fulfilled. Through no fault of Furbank's (who had to record all this), and hardly because of any begrudgement a reader might hold toward a 45-year-old beginning to cohabit with another man, a uniform dullness descends upon the daily round of the now uninhibited Forster. This is not to say his old ideals are compromised—far from it: Forster's loyalties remain steadfast—they only make for unengaging reading, and the narrative simply sags.

"Late-Flowering Lust"—to name a wry poem of John Betjeman's—leaves all sense of drama aside as it dominates the second half of Forster's life (during which time he wrote no more novels). This half-life commences right

after *A Passage to India* (1924), with the acquisition of a country house and (more importantly) a London flat. To the house in Surrey Forster removed his mother; the flat then became his entrée to "the higher Bohemia." Forster's key acquaintance through this period was the brilliant and volatile J. R. Ackerley, editor of the *Listener*. (Through his influence Forster became a cultural commentator for the B.B.C.; he would also serve as an officer for P.E.N. and as president of the National Council for Civil Liberties.) Ackerley's militant pursuit of lovers generated a new ambience; he and Forster confided in each other, and Forster was soon to find the sexual companion he longed for, who happened to be a married constable. An extraordinary bit of drama almost gets lost in the shuffle in Furbank's late recount. One of Ackerley's lovers was an army deserter, who was arrested in 1945. By a colossal irony, it was Forster's constable-lover who made the arrest. A really odd picture this places before the mind's eye: one literary man robbed of his paramour by the dutiful helpmeet of the other literary gent. As Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary after a morose encounter with Forster, "The middle age of buggers is not to be contemplated without horror."

Forster's public affiliations before and during the second war could sometimes appear equally passive. He beat down catcalls (as we saw) of disaffected men in 1917; but on a 1935 occasion the catcalls won out. Katherine Anne Porter, hearing him speak on liberty at a writer's congress in Paris—and watching him ridiculed by militant communists in the audience—was moved to record how "Mr. Forster and all his kind were already as extinct as the dodo." Hers was a somewhat premature judgment. Forster proved able later on to take direct stands, as when he resigned from P.E.N. over an issue of blatant commercialism; and resigned from N.C.C.L. because of its infiltration by communists. But somehow the initials themselves rob whatever attitudes Forster might strike of anything savoring of drama. Dealing with unions and congresses and councils has very little to do with the human heart, and it was in

transactions of the heart that Forster throve. In the really formative years of his experience, it wasn't B.B.C. and N.C.C.L. that kept appearing in Forster's diaries and letters. The memorable initials, going back to his India years, were the letters H.H. (standing for His Highness the Maharaja of Dewas). Here was a man, not an organization, served and revered by Forster; a man like those dead Englishmen Keats and Arnold who could reveal stunning insights sufficient to nourish the spirit. It may on reflection seem queerly relevant that the honorific abbreviation which meant so much, H.H., can do double duty where it counts most for Forster, for those little initials also represent the "human heart."

Reviewed by JOHN RUSSELL

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### *A Soviet Citizen Dissents*

**To Build a Castle—My Life as a Dissenter**, by Vladimir Bukovsky, translated by Michael Scammell, *New York: The Viking Press, 1979. 438 pp. \$17.50.*

THIS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL recollection of Vladimir Bukovsky's descents into the inferno of Soviet prisons, labor camps, and psychiatric hospitals is a bittersweet work: it tells (sometimes interminably) of the unsuccessful attempts of a Soviet citizen to reform the Soviet system through his conscientious objections, and it ends with his expulsion from the Soviet Union. Mr. Bukovsky, now thirty-six and a student at Cambridge University, was born, raised, and imprisoned in the Soviet Union. He was expelled from that country (without losing his citizenship) in December, 1976, when he and his family were flown to Switzerland and exchanged for the Chilean communist leader, Luis Corvalan Lepe. Because expulsion was not what Bukovsky wanted, the story is one of failure—but it is a brilliant, heart-rending

failure whose images of the indomitable human spirit resisting the forces of official oppression are themselves inspiring.

#### I

HAVING GROWN UP in modest Moscow circumstances, Bukovsky underwent the usual compulsory education and became a member of the standard Communist youth group, the Young Pioneers. He found these predetermined roles desperately constricting, plunging him "into irreversible gloom." His school subjects "were so saturated with ideology that nothing else was left" of them; without disputing the ideology itself, such saturation "simply made every subject deadly dull." The same held true of his youth group activities. As this characterization suggests, the Soviet educational process is one in which "the natural attributes of a normal child . . . are rooted out at all costs." Not only the subjects but also the children are made dull: individual investigation and excitement in one's studies are not valued in Soviet education. "This refusal to recognize their individuality evokes a desperate resistance from young people." From some of them, perhaps; most, however, yield to the demands of the regime. "Everyone raises his hand at meetings, votes at elections, and, most important of all, does not protest."

Bukovsky nevertheless protested. For example, when his humiliating criticism of a classmate for failure to live up to the classmate's namesake, Lenin, reduced the classmate to tears, Bukovsky promptly resolved that he "couldn't and wouldn't play [the] idiotic role" assigned him by Soviet society. Rather than be a part of it, he resigned at the age of ten from the Young Pioneers. At fourteen, while the elite among his peers were rushing to join the League of Communist Youth ("Komsomol"), he again proved to be a nay-sayer, refusing membership in the organization. And his disillusionment turned to despair as later events reinforced his doubts about the benevolent Soviet state: Stalin's death let surface the revelation of his megalomaniacal imprisonments, tortures, and executions; Lenin's