

Yeji Oh

Seoul National University

E-mail: kwyeaji@snu.ac.kr

So Green and Deserted: Spatial Experiences in *Howards End* and *Women in Love*

In this paper, I would like to compare the characters' spatial experiences between *Howards End* of E.M. Forster and *Women in Love* of D.H. Lawrence. The two works share some characteristics; the two sisters' marriage plot and the characters' spatial experiences—moving from/to the city and to/from the countryside, domestic and foreign countries—play an essential role in understanding the novels. With Michel de Certeau's definition of space as a lack of univocality and place as “an indication of stability” (117), looking at how the characters in the novels perceive, imagine, and experience spaces, we can find and create new spatial meaning within already existing places. In the novels, the relationship between space and marriage narrative leads to characters' settlement problems; in particular, where (want) to live is an essential question throughout these works.

In the case of *Howards End*, the narrative rushes from where to live to answer the question of who will inherit the house called Howards End. Ahead of the loss of Wickham Place, the home for the half-German Schlegel family, Margaret suddenly chooses to marry Henry Wilcox. *Howards End* addresses “only connect” and finding a place to connect the dichotomous concepts and norms, such as the feminine and the masculine, the past and the present, and the empire and the colonial problems. Given that Margaret does not have to get married since she has achieved financial independence, Forster strategically twists the marriage narrative to

make Margaret a legitimate heiress of Howards End.

Two novels reveal the characters' limitations by intersecting the characters' spatial experiences with their reading of the spaces while actively using the spatial experience to solve the problems caused by their own limitations. Given that vision is the essential sense of bourgeois' spatial representation (Williams 120-22), it is interesting that the two artists highlight the other sense than vision in their characters' spatial experience. As for Foster, walking through imperial space in London, Margaret recognizes an invisible colony with a sense of spirit. Still, she fails to connect her ordinary life to the invisible colonies since she disregards solving her ethical guilt. However, by her walking through Howards End with a sense of spirit, she can connect the invisible and visible worlds; by her sensing the nature of the garden that refuses to be commercialized into a beautiful but artificial one, she can create a new meaning of rural nature.

While Forster reveals the significance of the house as a patriarchal place in the marriage narrative without romance, Lawrence delves more into the relationship between the past and the present by treating the house as a symbol of the past. In *Women in Love*, the issues of marriage and settlement are dealt with only in the latter part of the novel (*WL* 352). The settlement problem is closely related to Birkin's attitude to the past with his experience of spaces. Although the Shortlands of the Criches is the same kind of house based on the sharing fact—Howards End and Shortlands are replicas of the country house and they represent and stand for their owners who are the new ruling class; industrial magnates, as a matter of Birkin's spatial experiences, Breadalby is important to be examined.

Breadalby is a utopian space escaping from the negative aspects of urban civilization and industrial society. The house has not been immersed into the local community; In Breadalby, the lives of a coal mining village could not be sensed. Breadalby is described as an English drawing of the old school (*WL* 82). This picturesque view of Breadalby is described as "gr

een” and “deserted” in Birkin’s eyes (*WL* 97). “deserted” is similar to the word “forsaken,” used to describe Breadalby seen through the eyes of the narrator (*WL* 82). “Green and deserted” is an oxymoron often found in work, and it can reveal the problems behind the picturesque Breadalby. The meaning of the mansion is added up with positive words such as “lovely”, “sure”, “formed”, and “final”, eventually reaching “all the things of the past” (*WL* 97). This process of signification is to affirm the characteristics of the country-house as a stable place of the past. However, this beauty of a static house is being felt as “a snare” and “a delusion”, “a horrible, dead prison”, “an intolerable confinement, the peace” (*WL* 97). Notably, the positive word is paired with the word how and the negative word matrix is paired with the word what. How imposes a more dynamic and physical meaning than what. This shows that although Birkin is fascinated by this place’s stable and final meaning, he is more drawn to the unstable but free space.

Howards End is an alternative space escaping from the creeping modernity of London; it somehow romanticizes the English pastoral countryside just by making a mere connection of the class; it seems that the epistemological world of the upper middle class could not be expanded to the real suburban area. On the other hand, Lawrence opens Breadalby to the nature of Beldover. Birkin refuses Hermione’s offer to come for a walk (*WL* 87) in the garden can be understood that its garden is a space fulfilling the cognitive satisfaction of the upper class and evoking visual pleasure only; walking in the garden is not of a sense of body but visually consuming space. After the fight with Hermione, however, he, barely conscious, wandered to the wild valley-side in a sort of darkness (*WL* 106). His wandering in the darkness is a state without consciousness, and visual recognition is entirely impossible; It signifies an ontological recovery that focuses on the present self, feeling a sense of liberation from the civilization with his ambivalent emotions. Through this scene of opening up the picturesque garden of Breadalby and feeling Beldover's meaningless nature, Lawrence places nature next to the country-h

ouse, where anything really is possible.

Works cited

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.

Foucault, Michel, and Jay Miskowiec. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 22-27.

Lawrence, David Herbert. *Women in Love*. Cambridge UP, 1987.

Lefèbvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.