



# **Social Fragmentation in Modernist English Literature: E.M. Forster, "Howards End" - Virginia Woolf, "Between the Acts"**

*Jan H. Hauptmann*

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Essay from the year 2006 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1,7, Queen's University Belfast, 6 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: This essay will focus on two modernist works by Virginia WOOLF and E. M. FORSTER, which might in fact be regarded as very different concerning their subject matter and style. When FORSTER completed his fourth published novel Howards End in 1910, Europe was on the edge of the First World War, while WOOLF's novel Between the Acts – finished in November 1942 – was created under the impacts of fascism, the frightening force of the Second World War, and the Blitz in Great Britain. Despite a relatively long time span between these works, the novels are dealing with similar modernist aspects insofar as they are both considering the changes of a society under the influence of modern life, resulting in a social fragmentation caused by political developments within Europe.

This paper will at first reveal the indications of social fragmentations worked into the novels and, secondly, find out if FORSTER and WOOLF are actually providing a solution to the upcoming problems within their artwork.

The political tensions in FORSTER's Howards End predominantly arise between the characters of the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, two middle class families with completely different social backgrounds. As the director of a rubber company with African holdings, Henry Wilcox is the epitome of British industrialism and imperialism, while the Schlegel sisters (Margaret and Helen) are representing quite the opposite.

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