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Editors' Preface

The present issue of the *Language and Literary Studies of Warsaw* closes the first decade of our activity. It has been a very productive decade, the first of many to come, as we all hope. We look back at ten volumes of one hundred and twenty-two greatly varied articles in linguistics as well as literary and cultural studies, by almost one hundred authors, somewhat surprised by the sheer size of our achievement. However, it is certainly not the end but only the beginning of a new and great adventure as we enter the 2020s.

We wanted to celebrate our anniversary with a special issue and discussed several options in the early winter of 2020. As two of the editors are active members of the International E.M. Forster Society, one of the options was to join the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the death of the novelist and, at the same time, mark the tenth anniversary of the Society. What we had in mind back then was a section dedicated to Forster, a selection of papers, which would act as an addition to the celebrations planned for June 2020 at Cambridge.

The pandemic changed these plans. Consequently, we decided to join forces with the IEMFS and dedicate the whole issue to Forster, giving an opportunity to all those who wanted to celebrate the anniversary with a publication. It was an experiment for us as we have never before published an issue dedicated to a single author. It was also a major effort to complete the edition on time but it felt good to invest our time and labour in such an undertaking, which will make us remember 2020 as a year of fruitful work rather than a year of uncertainty and fear.

The results of this experiment are now ready to be shared with readers. The volume includes both the works of seasoned and eminent scholars who have studied Forster and his oeuvre for many years, and young academics who have just started their careers. Altogether, there are over twenty authors from three continents featured here. We believe that this combination, as well as the variety of discussed topics and applied methodologies,

makes our issue a valuable work: a representative overview of Forster studies fifty years after his death.

The issue includes fifteen papers – divided into the four sections *Biography*, *The Novels*, *Short Stories*, and *Encounters with Forster* – two conference reports, and four reviews of publications celebrating the anniversary. One of the reports deserves a few more words of an introduction as it is something of a novelty: a report from a conference that did not take place. It is our attempt to commemorate the efforts of the organising committee of the “Re-Orientating E.M. Forster: Texts, Contexts, Receptions” conference. Perhaps one day it will be possible for the conference to happen, perhaps in a different shape and place, yet at the moment we can only invite you to read about that long-planned event, as well as to read those of the included articles which were originally to be presented at Cambridge.

This issue of our journal is complete but it is by no means the end of the work for the International E.M. Forster Society. We close this issue with the call for papers for the conference “E.M. Forster – Shaping the Space of Culture”, which will be held on June 7th, 2021, on the 51st anniversary of Forster’s death. As the conference will be held “through the Machine” you are all invited to participate, but please note that there is not much time to submit your proposals.

We would like to finish this introduction by expressing our gratitude to all the authors who trusted us with their work. We would also like to thank our still more numerous reviewers who took it upon themselves to help us choose only the best of the received submissions and did it with impressive efficiency during the summer and the early autumn. This volume is noticeably larger than its predecessors; we hope that the trend will continue and our journal will attract new authors to submit their work for the forthcoming issues. The editorial board invites papers on various linguistic, literary, and culture-related subjects for the 2021 issue, which certainly will differ greatly from this one. Last but not least, we would like to thank the authorities of the Warsaw School of Applied Linguistics whose unwavering support over the last decade has helped us prepare this issue and, as we all hope, many more issues to come.

Krzysztof Fordoński

Anna Kwiatkowska

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Adaptation, Inspiration, Dialogue: E.M. Forster and His Oeuvre in Contemporary Culture

Krzysztof Fordoński

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Abstract

The article aims at charting the position of Edward Morgan Forster and his works in contemporary English language culture. It presents various forms of adaptations of or responses to the works of Forster, concentrating on those which have been created since the writer's death in 1970. The discussed material consists of approximately one hundred instances of various works of art related in a number of ways to Forster's oeuvre and biography: adaptations, works inspired by Forster's oeuvre or biography, and, finally, works which enter into a dialogue with Forster and his views. Radio plays, operas, plays, movies, musicals, comic books, concept albums, etc. have been included as well. The paper also touches upon Forster's reception among scholars and in political journalism. The paper is supplemented with lists of various adaptations.

Keywords: E.M. Forster, culture, literature, opera, musical, television, film, theatre, adaptation, adaptation studies

The works of E.M. Forster have played an important role in the English-speaking world and beyond it¹ ever since his position was first generally recognised after the publication of *Howards End* in 1910.² Forster's presence was originally felt the most clearly through his literary works, namely novels and short stories. Yet, with the passage of time, he began to exert influence also as a reviewer, an essayist, and a radio broadcaster. Artists – at first fellow novelists but gradually also playwrights, composers, graphic artists, and others – found in Forster's oeuvre and life a greatly various source of creative inspiration which continues to be fruitful fifty years after the writer's death. Some adapt the original material to other media – the theatre, TV, movies, operas, musicals, etc. – others prefer to respond in fully original works to what Forster has to say or to his life experiences. The inheritance of Forster, if I may allude to one of the works I intend to present further on, has been divided among many and returned surprisingly hefty profits.

The aim of this paper is to present the picture as broadly as possible, including all the instances – almost one hundred of them – where Forster's influence can be traced in a period of over a century with the main focus on the last fifty years. The purpose is to chart a largely unknown territory, although the degree of this ignorance varies greatly as the growing popularity of adaptation studies means that also adaptations of Forster (predominantly the movies though) have already been the subject of numerous scholarly studies. A rather unfortunate side-effect of this approach is that such a presentation must be rather general, leaving room for more detailed and specific analyses of selected spheres of influence or selected works of art to be carried out at a later date.

The scope of the presentation below is inversely proportional to the already existing academic response. Consequently, two sections which have so far been the subject of the most active scholarly attention – literature and the movies – are sketched quite briefly, directing the reader to the existing body of scholarship, wherever it is available, and concentrating on those instances which might have been overlooked or are very recent. The presentation in other sections will be more detailed, although here the scarcity of scholarly attention often combines with the scarcity of available material that could be analysed.

¹ The international reception of Forster's oeuvre will be the topic of the paper: Krzysztof Fordoński, "From the English of E.M. Forster – An Overview of a Century of Forsterian Translations" (in progress).

² Soon after Forster's death David Lodge placed him among the top three English writers of the 20th century, below Lawrence but above Virginia Woolf (Lodge 1973, 473). Lodge uses the term "native English," excluding thus from his top three the Irishman Joyce, the American James, and the Pole Conrad.

The outcome of Forsterian influences can be divided into three categories – adaptation, inspiration, and dialogue. As for adaptation, I see it as the most direct and clearly visible presence of Forster’s source material in the works of other artists. It is represented mostly through a variety of renderings of Forsterian plots and storylines, most often into other media ranging from literary fiction (including comic books) and the theatre, through radio-plays, movies, opera, musical, as well as other musical forms. When it comes to inspiration, it is more subtle, and takes place when other artists resort to motifs, places, and characters which bring to mind the works of Forster. It is the most often visible in the works of other writers. Ultimately, dialogue takes place when authors approach Forster’s works in a creative way, responding to the ideas of the writer rather than adapting them. Dialogue can take place in works of art but also in political or academic writing.

Boundaries between these three categories are rather blurry and in numerous cases two or even all three of them may overlap. Adaptation or influence is hardly ever possible without at least some element of dialogue with the source material. Consequently, the following paper, which aims at a presentation of Forster’s presence in the contemporary world of English-language culture, will be structured according to the genres and media in which this presence can be detected. The sequence of the following sections is chronological, based on the earliest instances within a given sphere.

We begin with literature and Virginia Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* (1915), proceed to radio adaptations (Forster made his first radio appearance in 1927 and his short story was read on the air for the first time in 1931, but the first radio play was produced only in 1942), theatre adaptations (the first of which was staged in February 1950), TV productions (which started in 1958), movies (beginning with David Lean’s *A Passage to India* from 1984) followed for convenience by shorts (the earliest dates back to 1998), followed in turn by musical adaptations (operas from 1992, although the first performance of *Billy Budd* was broadcasted in 1952, two musicals since 2012, and two concept albums since 2016), finishing with very brief notes on journalistic and academic response first to Forster’s original works and then to their adaptations.

A remark must be made at this point that this division, handy as it may be, is often quite artificial, especially when it comes to the early period of adaptations, as they used to be repeatedly recycled in various media. Santha Rama Rau’s stage adaptation of *A Passage to India* from 1960 can serve as a perfect example of such a case. It was first staged in Oxford (and almost immediately transferred to the West End) and soon premiered on Broadway as well. It was then adapted for TV by John Maynard and broadcasted by the BBC in 1965. In

December 1968, the BBC Radio 4 broadcasted the adaptation of Maynard again, this time as a radio-play. Surprisingly enough, Zia Mohyeddin played Dr Aziz in each of these four instances. Rau's play was ultimately used as the original basis for the script of David Lean's movie released in 1984, although only some material from the play was included in the final version of the script written by Lean himself. The fortunes of Elizabeth Hart's adaptation of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* were largely similar – it was staged in 1963, adapted for two TV movies, one in 1963 and another in 1966, and, finally, a radio-play in 1968.

The present paper is supplemented with lists of all known works in all the groups mentioned above arranged chronologically. It must be noted, however, that although the material presented here is the result of years of meticulous research in various sources, these lists must still be treated as work in progress due to the elusive character of the majority of the artistic endeavours they include. Stage adaptations leave little trace once they go off stage, only very few plays adapted from novels are ever published (four in our case), radio-plays and TV adaptations disappear almost without a trace after they are broadcasted (only five of the former and three of the latter are available commercially), shorts are most often available during film festivals, and only a fraction of their number ends up in generally accessible services such as YouTube or Vimeo, or is released commercially. All the published literary works discussed in the paper have been included in the reference section along with scholarly studies.³ The choice of the latter is intended rather to present the most recent publications than to offer a complete overview of the existing body of scholarship as this would not be possible bearing in mind the number and variety of the discussed works.

Literature

Interactions with Forster and his oeuvre form a sizeable part of the list of important works of English literature of the 20th and the early 21st century. They are greatly varied in the directness and degree to which these influences can be traced. Their list begins with

³ For the sake of clarity neither the present text nor the bibliography section include references to information taken from the Internet Movie Database (movies, TV programmes, and recorded opera performances), The Playwrights Database Doollee (plays and theatrical adaptations), BBC Genome Project (radio broadcasts and adaptations), and the online bookstore Amazon.

The Voyage Out (1915), the first novel of Virginia Woolf, inspired by *A Room with a View*, and ends (at least at the moment) with *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith (2005) and *Stranger's Child* by Alan Hollinghurst (2011) (Puschmann-Nalenz 2021).

Among the writers influenced by Forster one can certainly point out his personal acquaintance D.H. Lawrence – his *Women in Love* (1920) has been compared to *Howards End* (Mensch 2005/2006) and the influence of *Maurice* upon *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) discussed in detail (Delaveny 1971; King 1982). Among those less known novels we might include here *The Enchanted April* by Forster's one time employer Elizabeth von Arnim (1922), *The Hotel* by Elizabeth Bowen (1927) (Ridge 2017), *A Treasonable Growth* by Ronald Blythe (1960), *The Italian Lesson* by Janice Elliott (1985), or *The Closed Circle* by Jonathan Coe (2004). Somewhat outside the established body of literary works there are the numerous fanfictional sequels of *Maurice* (Monk 2020). The New York based publishing house Farrar, Straus & Giroux plans to publish in June 2021 *Alec*, a sequel to *Maurice*, a debut novel written by William di Canzio.

The Italian Lesson, probably the least known of the above, is a skilful retelling of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* with elements of *A Room with a View* (e.g. the action takes place in Fiesole and Florence, rather than San Gimignano, Monteriggioni, or Montepulciano which Forster blended together to create his Monteriano) and Forster's own biography. It is set in the 1970s in Italy torn by extreme left-wing terrorism. Elliott employs elements of Forster's plots, characters, and locations, but she tells a very different story with a far larger number of greatly varied characters. In some way her novel predates Smith's *On Beauty* published twenty years later which transferred *Howards End* to a new location in the US East Coast, expanding the range of problems discussed in the novel to include the race issue.

Jonathan Coe begins *The Closed Circle* with a letter from Claire to her sister Miriam, in the manner of *Howards End*, but as we soon learn the story of Claire is meant rather as a variation on the plot of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Claire also abandons her child (following a divorce, not the death of her husband) and leaves for Italy where she has a love affair with a dashing Italian. The affair, however, fizzles out and Claire returns to England only to start another affair, this time with a modern counterpart of Henry Wilcox. Several other characters or locations may also remind an inquisitive reader of their counterparts from *Howards End* or *The Longest Journey* while the whole book is clearly intended as a "condition of England" novel, painting a panorama of the country in the early years of Tony Blair's Labour government.

Alan Hollinghurst is a particular example of the influence as each and every one of his novels resonates with Forsterian echoes. His *The Swimming-Pool Library* (Sroczyński 2016; Yebra 2017; Medalie 2020) teaming with allusions to Forster's biography and works, *The Spell* echoing *Howards End* with its concern with country and city life (Topolovská 2018), as well *Stranger's Child*, the first chapter of which is a delicate parody of Forster's literary style and characters (Sroczyński 2013; Puschmann-Nalenz 2021) have been scholars' favourites so far. The connection is visible even before the publication of his debut novel as Hollinghurst wrote his MLitt thesis about Forster, Firbank, and L.P. Hartley (Giudicelli 2017).

All the works referred to above can be placed somewhere between inspiration and dialogue. A work of literature which may be without a doubt classified as an adaptation to another literary medium is the graphic novel (or, less loftily, a comic). So far only *The Machine Stops* has been adapted in this way. The first version is the work of the writer Michael Lent and artist Mark Rene, it was published by Alterna Comics in 2014. The second version is a free adaptation by Jesse Hamm, Mark Rodgers, and Caitlin Like, entitled *The Blessed Machine*, and it greatly expands the plot of the short story. It was published by Cave Pictures Publishing in 2019 in six comic books but it is available only in a digital form.

The life of Forster has inspired three types of literary responses – memoirs in which the writer plays a leading role, biographies, and works of fiction based on his life. The first group was opened in 1970 with the posthumously published memoir of J.R. Ackerley, *E.M. Forster: A Portrait*. In 1993, J.H. Stape published a collection of “interviews and recollections” of Forster, a perfect starting point for anyone interested in the writer's personal life and relations. In more recent times two more memoirs were published. *Connecting with E.M. Forster: A Memoir* from 2012, written by Tim Leggatt offers an insight in the final years of the life of Forster, documenting a friendship which began when Leggatt was a student at Cambridge, and continued for over a decade. The book is particularly interesting as it is largely based on previously unpublished correspondence with Forster. In 2014, the novelist Ronald Blythe, mentioned already in this section, published a memoir entitled *The Time by the Sea: Aldeburgh 1955–1958* in which he returned to the years spent in Aldeburgh in the company of Forster, Britten, and other men of culture of the time (Blythe 2014b).

Four biographies of Forster have been published so far. The first of them is the classic work of P.N. Furbank published in 1977, *E.M. Forster: A Life*, based in part on conversations with the writer in the 1960s. It was quickly followed in 1978 by the far more relaxed

and personal *E.M. Forster* by Francis King. Nicola Beauman published her insightful *Morgan: A Biography of E.M. Forster*⁴ in 1993, while Wendy Moffat followed in 2010 with her quite controversial *E.M. Forster. A New Life*.⁵

The events which led (at least according to Nicola Beauman who was the first to suggest the connection) to the creation of *Maurice* were dramatized in Stephen Wakeham's radio play *A Dose of Fame*, broadcasted by the BBC Radio 4 in 2009. It was the first literary work of which Forster was the main hero. The South African novelist Damon Galgut concentrated in his 2014 novel *Arctic Summer* on Forster's Indian adventures, his friendship with Ross Masood, and the two voyages to the subcontinent (Cruz-Rus 2017; Booth 2020). The awarded play *A Kind of Marriage* from 2015 by Charles Leipart, which deals with Forster's relationship with Bob Buckingham and Bob's marriage to May, has so far been only presented as a rehearsed reading at the Donmar rehearsal space, London, in 2017. It is available as an extract in the *Qu*, published in January 2018. The novel *The Ballad of Syd & Morgan* by Haydn Middleton, published also in 2018, deals with a purely fictitious encounter of Forster and Syd Barrett, a member of the Pink Floyd, in 1968. Most recently, *Nonsense and Beauty* by Scott C. Sickles, another play about Forster's relationship with the Buckinghams had its official premiere at the Repertory Theatre of St Louis, Missouri, in March 2019.

The list should also include Bethan Roberts' novel *My Policeman*, published in 2012, inspired as the author claims in her blog by the biography of E.M. Forster (Roberts n.d.). As Richard Canning wrote in his review for *The Independent*:

My Policeman was initially billed by its publisher as a novel inspired by E.M. Forster's relationship with a married constable, Bob Buckingham. Now it appears shorn of any reference to the author of *A Passage to India*, and it soon becomes clear why. Roberts's account of a polysexual ménage à trois has not simply been transposed to Brighton, but reimagined as a very different story. (Canning 2012, n.p.)

The novel consequently falls into the category of dialogue as it tells a story only some elements of which may remind one of the muddled relationship of Bob and May

⁴ It was republished in 1994 by Alfred A. Kopf of New York as *E.M. Forster: A Biography*.

⁵ It was republished in 2011 by Picador in the US as *Great Unrecorded History: A New Life of E.M. Forster*.

Buckingham, and Forster. Some elements, however, seem to be taken from the equally muddled biography of J.R. Ackerley.

Literature is by far the most varied in its approaches to Forster's oeuvre and life as a source of inspiration. Direct adaptation is hardly possible within the same medium and any indirect way of approaching Forster leads inevitably towards what I called inspiration or dialogue. Perhaps it is an inspired dialogue with the novelist that produces the best literary results.

The radio

Forster's collaboration with the BBC started in 1927 and continued through the early 1960s. He prepared and delivered radio talks or broadcasts (Heath 2008; Lago, Hughes, MacLeod Walls 2008), gave interviews, helped with adaptations of his works, reviewed books and read the reviews on the air, they were all later published in *The Listener*, weekly magazine published by the BBC (Lago 1990). His distinctive voice was well recognizable to all the British listeners with an interest in art and culture. His works were also often present on the air, ranging from short stories or excerpts read by the author himself or by an actor, to complex radio plays such as the adaptation of *Howards End* in thirteen episodes prepared by Lance Sieveking in 1963.

Forster himself made four readings of his own texts – three short stories and the “Entrance to an Unwritten Novel,” which most probably was the first chapter of *Arctic Summer* that he had read previously at Aldeburgh. At least fifteen shorter texts have been read by single actors – ten short stories and five excerpts from the novels. In addition to these broadcasts five novels were abridged and presented in instalments; however, still each read by a single actor. Although technically speaking, all of them qualify as adaptations, at the very least from written text to sound, I would like to concentrate here⁶ on the most complex form of adaptation: radio plays.

Radio is a very specific medium since it is highly intimate and of all those discussed further it is the closest to private reading. It also comes with a number of

⁶ This is only a brief presentation of a part of the materials from the work in progress: Fordoński, Krzysztof “Forster on the Air: TV and Radio Adaptations of the Works of E.M. Forster.” The first version was presented during the IEMFS conference in Ludwigsburg in 2018. Recording of the presentation is available at the IEMFS website and the original paper at academia.edu.

constraints – a typical radio station broadcasts news “every hour on the hour,” leaving no more than about 50 minutes for a programme. However, there is no need to fill all this time with a single programme, while it is possible to divide longer programmes into episodes. The intimacy, but also practical constraints such as the size of the studio, means that the number of voices that can be heard in a single programme should be limited. These conditions resulted, especially in the early decades, in a selection of Forster’s texts for adaptation remarkably different from that in any other medium because of the significant presence of short stories. Four out of five plays produced in the 1940s were adaptations of short stories, and one, *Mr. and Mrs. Abbey’s Difficulties*, is an adaptation of a biographical essay about the life of John Keats. The presence of adaptations of short stories, a rarity in other spheres (except for the ubiquitous *The Machine Stops*) continued also later on.

The most eminent people responsible for the early adaptations produced between 1942 and 1947 were Leonard Cottrell (who left the BBC to become a writer specializing in Ancient Egypt) and Douglas Cleverdon (the producer of Dylan Thomas’ radio drama *Under Milk Wood* in 1952), both of whom worked for the BBC Home Service. The BBC Third Programme, which took over as the cultural and intellectual programme of the corporation in September 1946, “the youngest and maybe the trickiest cherub of the air” as Forster called it in the fifth anniversary talk (Lago et al. 2008, 410), proved far less enthusiastic about Forster’s short stories and the collaboration on adaptations ended quite abruptly. Peter Fifield’s comments on Forster’s position in the Third shed light at this turn of events:

his short story “The Machine Stops” passed through the hands of a reader in the Drama Scripts Department [of the Third Programme in March 1951] [...] The very story that engages so perceptively with technology within domestic and public spheres was dubbed ‘rather Wells in barley water’. In 1953 [...] his story “The Curate’s Friend” was reviewed by script reader Mollie Greenhalgh. Her report of 23 September listed the requirements for radio drama and found Forster’s story wanting in every category: ‘Construction: Conventional. Dialogue: Quite unreal. Characterisation: Never escapes from literary. Remarks: A piece of whimsy which cannot stand dramatisation, especially of the elementary kind’. (Fifield 2016, 72–73)

The year 1948 saw the monopoly of the BBC on radio adaptations of Forster broken for the first time as radio plays began to appear on the US radio stations as well. The first American adaptation was also the first radio adaptation of a Forster’s novel. The National Broadcasting Corporation broadcasted an hour-long adaptation of *A Passage to India* by

George Lefferts, as a part of the series *NBC University Theatre*, with a commentary by Forster himself. The CBS Radio broadcasted *The Celestial Omnibus* adapted by Richard Chappick in 1957 as a part of the *CBS Radio Workshop*, a short lived programme series dedicated to adaptations of science-fiction literature. Fifty years later, in 2007, the WCPN 90.3 FM station located in Cleveland, Ohio broadcasted the radio play *The Machine Stops* originally written for the stage by Eric Coble which had its theatre premiere in 2004.

The collaboration with the BBC was revived in 1955 by the pioneer radio and TV producer Lance Sieveking for the BBC Home Service. Sieveking produced three radio-plays *Between Two Worlds: A Passage to India* (1955), *Howards End* in thirteen episodes (1964), and *A Room with a View* (1967). Two more radio plays were broadcasted in 1968 but they were both re-adaptations of the plays written by Rau and Hart. They were followed by fifteen years of relative silence (except for several re-broadcasts) which was broken by Penny Leicester's adaptation of *The Eternal Moment*, broadcasted in June 1983 by the BBC Radio 4 which has since broadcasted new radio plays based on all Forster's novels with the notable exception of *The Longest Journey*. The most recent of them was *A Passage to India* adapted by the playwright Tanika Gupta in 2019.

The radio plays (and other radio adaptations) along with his talks kept Forster popular and accessible in a period when he no longer published fiction. In a way the dramatizations paved the way for the next stage of his "adapted" career – the theatre. Once the theatre plays started to appear on the stage, the television and then the radio again gave them access to an audience that no theatre in Britain could offer.

The theatre

Forster's own attempts at writing for the stage were, to say the least, less than successful. His only completed play, *The Heart of Bosnia* written in 1911, was neither staged nor published, other attempts such as a play about St Bridget were abandoned (Furbank 1981, 1, 200–202). He was somewhat more successful with the two pageant plays he wrote in the mid-1930s, since they were staged and published, but they have never been revived since (Fordoński 2011). And yet Forster has been constantly present on various stages in the English-speaking world for precisely seventy years. By the end of 2020 twenty-three plays have been staged or been in production. *A Room with a View* has been adapted 6 times, *Howards End* 5 times (including Lopez's *The Inheritance*), *The Machine Stops* 4 times, *A Passage to India* and *Maurice* 3 times each, and *Where Angels Fear to Tread* once.

Four adaptations were prepared and staged in Forster's lifetime. The writer himself approved of the proposals and collaborated with the playwrights⁷ and he was present at their premieres (King 1988, 105; Furbank 1981, 2, 307–308). The first play was *A Room with a View* – written by Stephen Tait and Kenneth Allot, staged in 1950 and soon published. The second play was much more successful both artistically and commercially. Santha Rama Rau's 1960 *A Passage to India: A Play* (Carmagnani 2018) was staged both in the West End and on Broadway, in both locations enjoying runs exceeding 200 performances each (King 1988, 105). Forster was satisfied with the result, he called the play "excellent and sensitive dramatic version" (Stape 1993, 138). The play also brought him an unexpected and quite sizeable income – on 30 April 1961 Forster wrote to Tim Leggatt, "My wealth is enormous, part of the comfort in the present illness is having no worry about finances. Coming on to the stage has done it" (Leggatt 2012, 74).

Two more plays soon followed – *Where Angels Fear to Tread: A Play in Two Acts* by Elisabeth Hart in 1963 (Cel-Mare (Avram) 2021) and *Howards End* by Lance Sieveking and Richard Cotterell, in 1967 (an adaptation of the radio play prepared by Sieveking in 1964). Neither was, apparently, as successful as Rau's *Passage*, however, they were both soon re-adapted for TV. The premiere of *A Room with a View* also by Sieveking and Cotterell (presumably a stage adaptation of the 1967 radio play by Sieveking) in 1975 was the last in over twenty years. It was probably a combination of two factors – on the one hand, most Forster's novels had been staged by then, on the other hand, the tastes of theatre-goers started to change and the Forsterian stage adaptations seemed more and more old fashioned.

The revival was quite obviously brought about by the popularity of Lean's and then Merchant and Ivory's movies at the turn of the 1990s culminating in 1992 with the Oscar (among many other awards) winning *Howards End*. Perhaps it was not merely a coincidence that another decade of adaptations opened with a new stage production of *Howards End* by Roger Parsley in 1996. By 2006 eight more plays were written and seven of them staged. Two of them, Roger Parsley's and Andy Graham's *Maurice* (1998) and Martin Sherman's *A Passage to India* (2002) deserve at least a few more words. The former proved successful enough to enjoy several revivals, most recently in February 2020 at the Corpus Playroom, Cambridge. The latter was successful enough to be

⁷ This is amply confirmed by Mary Lago's *Calendar of the Letters of E.M. Forster* where numerous letters written by Forster to the playwrights are listed e.g. 68 letters to Elizabeth Hart (Lago 1985, 102–103).

published by Methuen as last such adaptation to date, it was recently revived at the Tower Theatre, London also in February 2020. The decade ended in 2006 with the premiere of Christina Calvit's adaptation of *A Room with a View* at the Lifeline Theatre, Chicago.

The current period of Forster's stage career started in 2016, once again after a decade of relative silence, with yet another adaptation of *A Room with a View*, this time the work of Simon Reade. It was quickly followed by *The Machine Stops* by Neil Duffield (2016), the premiere of Simon Dormandy's new version of *A Passage to India* (written in 1997) which took place in January 2018, and later on new adaptations of *The Machine Stops* (2018), *A Room with a View* (2019), and *Howards End* (2019). Dormandy is also the author of *The Point of It*, a play based on three Forster's short stories, which premiered at the GBS Theatre (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art) in June 2019. A new adaptation of *Maurice* by Scott Parker was supposed to premiere at the Writers Theatre, Chicago, in May 2020 but the event was postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Certainly, the most important of the dramatic works inspired by Forster is *The Inheritance* (based on *Howards End*) by Matthew Lopez. The play was staged at the Old Vic (March 28, 2018, directed by Stephen Daldry) and transferred first to the West End Noel Coward Theatre, and then in November 2019 to the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on Broadway. The New York run ended early due to Covid-19 restrictions but the play was soon published by Faber and Faber. The play received rave reviews in the British press, Matt Trueman, the reviewer of *Variety*, wrote:

The Inheritance not only picks up the mantle [of *Angels in America*], it might just measure up. Like *Angels in America*, *The Inheritance*, [...] is a vast, imperfect and unwieldy masterpiece that unpicks queer politics and neoliberal economics anew. In addressing the debt gay men owe to their forebears, it dares to ask whether the past hasn't also sold the present up short. (Trueman 2018, n.p.)

Dominic Cavendish of *The Telegraph* called it "perhaps the most important American play of the century so far" (Cavendish 2019, n.p.).

The most recent adaptation which deserves a mention was prepared at the Riverside Theatre, Coleraine, Northern Ireland by Zoe Seaton for Big Telly company in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and, consequently, it could not be staged in a conventional way. The adaptation of *The Machine Stops* was made available to viewers on the 6th and the 7th June 2020, on the 50th anniversary of Forster's death, as a "Zoom play" performed

by locked-down cast and with access codes distributed in lieu of tickets. Consequently, it could be enjoyed by the audience in the privacy of their cells, i.e. homes, enforced by lockdown all over the globe in a poignant commentary to how contemporary and real Forster's fantastic vision has become within a mere century.

The TV

Oddly enough, majority of the TV adaptations⁸ of Forster's works was created in his lifetime. It was, perhaps, caused by Forster's reluctance (to say the least) towards movies while he saw television as an evolved version of the radio which he enthusiastically supported from its very beginning. Between 1958 and 2017 nine TV movies, one mini-series, and one documentary with dramatized scenes from a novel were produced. As it has already been mentioned, the early TV productions were seldom original works. They were quite likely to be re-adaptations of earlier adaptations, originally prepared for the stage or written as radio plays.

Although Forster had collaborated with the BBC since 1927, it was the recently launched TV station the ITV, the second British TV broadcaster, which produced the first TV adaptation of his work. *A Room with a View*, written and directed by Robert Tronson (later known as the director of the series *All Creatures Great and Small*), was broadcasted on 2 July 1958 as the ITV Play of the Week.

In 1959, Forster (who had already been the guest of a similar programme called *BBC Monitor* produced and broadcasted by the BBC Television in December 1958) was, as he put it in a letter to Leggatt, "televised" again, this time for the American CBS series of programmes *Camera Three*. The episode entitled *E.M. Forster and The Longest Journey* consisted of a dramatized scene from the novel (the only such attempt so far) and an interview with Forster. It was broadcasted on 24 May 1959.

The BBC Television quickly picked up the adaptation of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* prepared for the stage in 1963 by Elizabeth Hart. The first movie was directed by Glen Byam Shaw and was broadcasted on 29 October 1963. It was a shortened adaptation, only 45 minutes long. A much more complete (120 minutes) and lavish TV version

⁸ I use this umbrella term on purpose. In the early days they can be qualified as television plays or television drama and were performed live, gradually they were replaced by recorded television movies.

directed by Naomi Kapon (1921–1987, later famous for the TV series *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 1970) was broadcasted as the BBC Play of the Month on 15 February 1966.

Yet another TV re-adaptation of a play based on Forster's work, *A Passage to India* was broadcasted on 16 November 1965, directed by the Indian-British Waris Hussein and adapted for TV by John Maynard. The cast included Zia Mohyeddin and Dame Sybil Thorndike. Santha Rama Rau wrote in 1986:

Forster readily gave permission to the BBC though he knew the program would be recorded on film – or videotape. I think this was partly because he felt that the TV version would be, in essence, a film of the play, and, broadly speaking, he was right. A few scenes were included – the meeting of Mrs Moore and Aziz in the mosque, the train journey to Marabar Hills and so on – where the TV cameras gave us a wider scope than the stage allowed but largely the TV adaptation stayed very close to the play. Another factor that made the TV arrangement attractive was that Sybil Thorndike, whom he greatly admired, was to play Mrs Moore. (Stape 1993: 149)

The year 1966 saw two more TV adaptations of Forster's works. The second of them (after *Where Angels Fear to Tread* mentioned above) was *The Machine Stops* broadcasted as the opening episode in the 2nd season of the BBC TV science fiction series *Out of the Unknown*. It was directed by Philip Saville (1930–2016, *Metroland*, 1997) with the screenplay by Kenneth Cavander and Clive Donner (1926–2010, the director of *The Caretaker*, 1963). The film won the main prize at the 1967 Trieste international science fiction film festival.

The TV adaptation of *Howards End* produced in 1970 and directed by Donald McWhinnie (*Wings*, 1978; *Love in Cold Climate*, 1980) started a series of adaptations written by McWhinnie's wife, playwright and director herself, Pauline Macaulay. Two more of her adaptations were *A Room with a View* (1973), also directed by McWhinnie, and *The Obelisk* (1977) directed by Giles Forster. The 1977 adaptation was the last in thirty years, till 2007 when the ITV once more produced and broadcasted an adaptation of *A Room with a View* (Fryer 2017), this time directed by Nicholas Renton with the screenplay of Andrew Davies (famous for the scripts of the first two *Bridget Jones's Diary* movies).

In 1995, Forster, played by William Osborne, appeared as a character in the TV movie *The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones – Treasure of the Peacock's Eye* (directed by Carl Schultz and written by Jule Selbo) produced by the US station TV Family Channel. In a brief scene set immediately after the Great War, Forster, as a specialist in the history of

Alexandria (*Alexandria: A History and a Guide* is mentioned in the dialogue), gives advice to young Indiana Jones who is looking for a diamond, once the property of Alexander the Great. Another real life character in the movie is the famous anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski.

Another decade passed after Renton and Davies' *A Room with a View* till *Howards End*, the first TV series based on Forster's novel, was broadcasted in 2017 by the BBC One and in 2018 by Starz in the US. The director was Hettie MacDonald (most recently in charge of *Normal People*) and the screenplay was written by Kenneth Lonergan (Oscar for *Manchester by the Sea* in 2016). The highly acclaimed TV series raised hopes that other Forster's novels would follow suit. In November 2017, Salman Rushdie mentioned in a private conversation an abandoned project of another such TV series, based on *A Passage to India*, for the script of which he would be responsible. The project, however, has not moved beyond the stage of introductory talks. In 2019, Francis Lee (the director of *God's Own Country*) reported that he had been provisionally attached to direct a planned TV adaptation of *Maurice*, but he was ultimately vetoed. No further details of the project have been known since.

The TV adaptations of Forster's works further established the writer's popularity. He was either extremely lucky with the selection of people in charge of these projects or he was always considered important enough for the best candidates to be assigned to their production. It is a pity, however, that except for the two adaptations produced in the 21st century, only one of the earlier TV movies, the 1966 *The Machine Stops*, is officially available.

Movies

Movie adaptations of Forster's novels are quite probably the best known and the most often discussed in scholarly studies of all the adaptations presented in this article. However, very few people in the audiences were aware of the fact that Forster himself neither liked nor appreciated the cinema as an art, and it was a conscious decision not to accept any offers from film-makers which were especially numerous after the success of Rau's stage adaptation in 1960 (Stape 1993, 131). Forster rejected such an offer even when Satyajit Ray was proposed as the prospective director (Stape 1993, 149).

After a period of a relative lull in the interest in Forster of the late 1970s, the movies introduced his works to new audiences, paving the way for a renewed interest among playwrights and composers, which soon followed. Five movies were released within

mere eight years: *A Passage to India* (dir. David Lean, 1984) (Levin 1986; Lindley 1992), *A Room with a View* (dir. James Ivory, 1985) (Fryer 2017), *Maurice* (dir. James Ivory, 1987) (Goscilo 1989), *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (dir. Charles Sturridge, 1991) (Lauri-Lucente 2015), and *Howards End* (dir. James Ivory, 1992) (Outka 2003; McCullough 2018). The interested readers will find ample amount of information about these movies – a decent introduction to the movies and additional sources may be found in Landy (2007), Ingersoll (2012)⁹, or Moczko (2014).

Hanif Kureishi's film *My Beautiful Launderette* (directed by Stephen Frears, 1985) responds to Forster's *A Passage to India* both directly and indirectly through the lens of Lean's movie (Fernandez Carbajal 2017). Similarities are, indeed, hard to miss as e.g. Kureishi's story features two main characters – one English and one Indian – who meet in circumstances which seem to say “No, not yet ... No, not there” (Forster 1978, 312) but to whom Kureishi is able to offer a happy ending. In 2019, Kureishi wrote a play based on the 1985 screenplay. It premiered on 20 September at the Curve theatre in Leicester with original music composed by Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe of the Pet Shop Boys.

Merchant and Ivory's movie *A Room with a View* is alluded to in Gilbert Adair's novella *Love and Death on Long Island* when the main hero, a middle-aged writer, the author of five novels, happens to stop by a cinema where he sees stills from “an adaptation of a novel by Forster” (Adair 1990, 20) and reminisces about his own meeting with Forster at Cambridge in the 1950s. It is obvious from the description that the movie is *A Room with a View* but the title is not mentioned. In the 1997 film adaptation, written and directed by Richard Kwietniowski, the allusion was slightly altered and *A Room with a View* was replaced with a fictitious adaptation of *Eternal Moment* with “the” missing from the original title of Forster's short story on the poster, designed very much in style of Merchant and Ivory movies, which is shown on the screen. The novella and the movie mention Forster but the plot follows that of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912).

The Longest Journey remains the only one novel which has not been shown on any screen so far (except for a dramatized scene in a TV programme in 1959). A project of such a movie by the producer and director of numerous documentaries, Adrian Munsey, was first revealed in January 2015 (Maughan 2015). Some more details were revealed in November 2016 when Munsey joined forces with two other producers and hired Angus Fletcher (Professor of English and Cinema as well as the author of the screenplay for

⁹ It may be advisable, however, to supplement reading the book with a review such as Monk (2017).

a still unreleased biopic *Middle Earth* about J.R.R. Tolkien) to adapt the novel for the screen (Tartaglione 2016). The movie is still listed as “in production” by the IMDB, no further information has been made public since.

In 2019, Odyssey Television produced a documentary entitled *E.M. Forster: His Longest Journey* produced and directed by Adrian Munsey and Vance Goodwin, including interviews with Forster’s biographers Nicola Beauman and Wendy Moffat, as well as a number of other scholars. It seems that this is what the original project of adaptation finally boiled down to. The collection of King’s College Archive Centre (Cambridge University) includes a screenplay based on Forster’s short story *Other Kingdom* written in 1993 by Michael Burge, probably one of many attempted in the wake of the successes of Lean and Merchant and Ivory. Perhaps Fletcher’s screenplay rather than released will also be discovered in an archive one day.

Short films

Short films, also known now as shorts and once also as short subjects, can be defined as motion pictures that have a running time of 40 minutes or less, including all credits. In literary terms they are the movie equivalent of a short story and, perhaps unsurprisingly, all six shorts¹⁰ based on Forster’s work are adaptations of short stories – five of *The Machine Stops* and one of *The Obelisk*. The first of them (and probably the most successful) was *Plug* (1998) directed by Meher Gourjian (now specialist in special effects e.g. for the *Harry Potter* series). *Desire* (2000), the only short based on *The Obelisk*, was the work of Jorge Torregrossa (now a successful TV director in his native Spain) who both directed it and wrote the script.

The four more recent adaptations of *The Machine Stops* were all produced when their directors and screenwriters were students, usually as term projects. The 2009 version was the work of twin brothers Adam and Nathan Freise, produced at School of Visual Arts, NYC; the 2010 version was the work of Jesse McNeely and Chantelle Sousa at the University of Nevada, Reno. The 2011 version was produced by Alex Vaughan (director and screenwriter) and Agnes Calka (screenplay), shot on campus at North Lake College

¹⁰ It is possible to find at least three more – ranging from 35 seconds to 2 minutes – on YouTube, all inspired by *The Machine Stops*. They are, however, spoofs (term used by one of their authors) rather than serious shorts.

in Irving, Texas, and it received Judges' Choice and Audience's Choice Awards at the NLC Video Festival 2011. The 2014 (the date of upload to YouTube, no further information is available) version was directed by Alex LaRoza.

The opera

Forster's passion for music started in his early childhood and continued until his old age. In his younger days he was a fairly skilful pianist and all his life he remained a music lover, attending concerts and opera performances (Fillion 2010, 1–23), which would feature prominently in his fiction (Fordoński 2010). Forster's name has been known to opera lovers since 1951 when, with Eric Crozier, he completed the libretto for Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd*.

It is impossible to discuss here all the numerous stage adaptations of *Billy Budd* (see: Rochlitz 2012). It does make sense perhaps to mention that as many as eight of these performances were televised by various TV stations and, with the arrival of generally accessible recording technologies, distributed on cassettes or DVDs. The first TV transmission took place as early as 1952 when the first episode of the *NBC Television Opera Theatre* presented on October 19th the performance directed by Kirk Browning with Theodore Uppman as Billy Budd. The BBC broadcasted their version on December 11th, 1966, with Peter Pears as Captain Vere. Later versions appeared in 1988 (production from the National English Opera recorded for the BBC), 1998 (production from the Metropolitan Opera), 2001 (German production), 2010 (production from Glyndebourne Festival), 2017 (production from Teatro Real Madrid), and most recently a production of Den Norske Opera & Ballett, Oslo in 2019.

The first opera based on Forster's novel was *A Room with a View* composed by Robert Nelson with the libretto written by Buck Ross. The original opera was first performed in 1992 but it was revised for a new performance in 2004 at the Moores Opera House (University of Houston) in Houston, Texas, and this version is available on DVD. The second opera, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, the work of Mark Lanz Weiser (music) and Roger Bruyatte (libretto), was first performed in 1999 at the Peabody Institute of the John Hopkins University (Baltimore, Maryland) but the professional premiere took place only on 7th February 2015 at the California Theatre, San Jose, California.

This premiere may be seen as a part of the rediscovery of the operatic quality of Forster's writing which began in 2014 since when a new opera has appeared almost

every year. The first was *The Machine Stops* by John Lake (music) and Cecile Goding (libretto), stage reading of selections was performed on 17th June 2014 at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, and a recording from this reading is available on YouTube. The opera has since remained a work in progress, its premiere is currently scheduled for July 25th, 2021 at Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, Coralville, Iowa, US. It was followed in January 2016 by another take on *The Machine Stops*, this time composed by Stephen Webb, Robert Taylor, and Patrick McGraw, with the libretto written by Michael Albano, staged at the University of Toronto MacMillan Theatre.

The semi-professional Surrey Opera staged in September 2017 at the Harlequin Theatre, Redhill¹¹ *The Life to Come*, written by the young composer Louis Mander and the seasoned writer and actor (but an unexperienced librettist) Stephen Fry. In an interview to the local newspaper Fry explained his choice of source material as follows:

The Life to Come struck me as a possibility, partly because it answers some of the clichéd requirements for what makes good opera – thwarted passion and a terrible death at the end – but also because I liked the fact that it dealt with sexual and political issues in a way that’s personal, passionate and sad but on the edge of satire. (White 2017, n.p.)

The most recent opera based on the fiction of Forster, *Howards End. America* premiered in February 2019 at the Z Space, San Francisco, California. This chamber opera is the work of Allen Shearer (music) and Claudia Stevens (libretto), it was the eighth opera they wrote together (Stevens 2017). In some ways it may be compared to two of the earlier discussed takes on *Howards End*, *The Inheritance* and *On Beauty* as it also transfers the location from Edwardian England at the beginning of the 20th century to the US (as both Smith and Lopez did) in the 1950s and introduces along with the theme of social injustice the topic of racial inequality as Smith also does in her novel.

It is quite clear from the above description that the Forsterian operas are quite ephemeral undertakings. They are usually staged at universities or local theatres, only one of them has been revived so far. They are also most often the works of young and relatively unexperienced composers and librettists (except for Shearer and Stevens); perhaps their chance for a revival and a wider appreciation will come when their authors are better known.

¹¹ Further performances took place at Croydon, Brighton, and Oslo (White 2017).

Musicals

Apart from more or less serious operas Forster has also been the inspiration behind two musicals. The first of them, *A Room with a View*, opened on 2 March 2012 at the Old Globe Theatre in London, to “reviews that ranged from very enthusiastic to scathing, with most mingling praise and reservations” (Berson 2014, n.p.) such as the review in *Variety* which concluded: “*A Room With a View* is beautiful, but this first production does itself in by its refusal to raise the stakes and treat traditional authority’s power as something to be taken, and confronted, for real” (Verini 2012, n.p.). The libretto was written by the novelist and comedian Marc Acito and lyrics and score by Jeffrey Stock. It was revived in an improved version in Seattle at the 5th Avenue Theater in March 2014 but apparently failed to transfer to Broadway as it was initially planned. Kit Goldstein Grant was somewhat luckier with her *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. The musical had its premiere at the Off-Broadway Players Theatre in New York in September 2017.

Other Musical Inspirations

The best known Forster’s short story *The Machine Stops* (1909) inspired also three more musical works – they are a song and two concept albums. The song “The Machine Stops” was released in 1983 by the English jazz-funk band Level 42 on their fourth album *Standing in the Light*. In 2016, the space rock band Hawkwind published under the Cherry Red label the concept album *The Machine Stops*, the twenty-ninth in their career which had started in 1969. The album consists of 14 songs which in an hour retell in a poetic way the plot of the short story. The second concept album *The Machine Stops* is the debut work of the Italian guitarist Tommaso Gambini and it was released in March 2020 by the Workin’ Label. The album features a suite of seven original smooth jazz compositions of Gambini with spoken excerpts from the short story. The suite was first presented at the Torino Jazz Festival in May 2020.

Politics

Forster’s political views, his belief in democracy and liberalism, rooted in the 19th but put to the test in the 20th century might have been perceived as outdated at the moment of his death but surprisingly enough prove current again and again. His belief in the

value of friendship above political views that he stood by all his life (Fordoński 2017b) is just as valid today as it was when he first presented his creed in “What I Believe” in 1938. Perhaps Forster is not an authority that politicians like to quote or refer to in their speeches and yet he is present in political debates as these two examples may prove.

The Indian poet and scholar Maaz Bin Bilal referred to Forster’s *The Longest Journey* in his paper on Indian universities facing a political crisis in the mid-2010s (Bilal 2017). Pankaj Mishra stirred a much broader debate with his article published on January 17, 2019, in the *New York Times* entitled “The Malign Incompetence of the British Ruling Class.” Mishra attempted to explain the political disaster of Brexit with certain British national characteristics, using E.M. Forster essay “Notes on the English Character” (Fordoński 2016) as his source. In Mishra’s opinion: “The malign incompetence of the Brexiteers was precisely prefigured during Britain’s exit from India in 1947, most strikingly in the lack of orderly preparation for it” because they were “privately educated men, callow beneficiaries of the country’s elitist public school system” as described by Forster in his essay (Mishra 2019, n.p.).

Scholarship

Last but not least we must refer to the creative influence of Forster upon the academy. Although Forster was not an academic himself, regardless of his experience as a lecturer and the long-term connection with Cambridge, his *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) remains an important reading not only among Forsterian scholars. The works of Forster have been the subject of literary research for over a century. The first book dedicated to his works, *The Writings of E.M. Forster* by Rose Macaulay was published in 1938. The annotated bibliography of writings about Forster published by Frederick P.W. McDowell in 1976 includes 1913 texts (McDowell 1976), although the editor was rather liberal in his selection and many, especially the early texts included do not qualify as scholarly or academic works.

It is difficult to estimate how many books, chapters, articles, and papers dealing with Forster and his works have appeared since 1976. From the year 2000 to 2017 there were at least fifty such books, including previously unpublished material by Forster himself such as his diaries and letters (Fordoński 2017a). The most current overview of Forsterian scholarship may be found in the “Introduction: Forster and After” by Elsa Cavalié and Laurent Mellet in the collection of essays *Only Connect: E.M. Forster’s Legacies in*

British Fiction they edited in 2017. Two scholarly associations have been founded to promote the works of Forster – the International E.M. Forster Society IEMFS (June 2010) and Association for Forsterian Research AFAR (December 2015).

Conclusions

The interest in Forster shifts and changes over time as new aspects of his work resound more with contemporary issues. The genres and media also change – this process is obviously influenced by their availability and accessibility although Forster’s dislike of cinema also played a significant part. When we set apart the novels, in which case the writers’ personal fascinations are the most significant factor, we can clearly see “tides” of Forster’s popularity. The first one started slowly in the 1940s with the radio-plays, strengthened in the 1950s with the stage adaptations, and reached its climax in the 1960s when TV adaptations began. Following the death of the writer the tide turned and in the 1970s we see the total of only four (three TV and one stage) adaptations. Naturally, Forster remained a part of the literary canon, his works were included in reading lists while the existing adaptations continued to be staged and broadcasted.

The tide started to swell again in the early 1980s when the rights to movie adaptations became available. It started in earnest in 1984 with Lean’s *A Passage to India* and within a decade four more movies were produced, and the first opera was staged. The theatre was slow to pick up, the first adaptation appeared only in 1996, but once the interest in Forster was renewed, we saw a new play almost every year until 2006 when the “saturation point” had long been reached (partly as majority of possible adaptations was already available) and another decade of “low tide” began.

The most recent “high tide” has started in the mid-2010s, more precisely in the years 2014–2016 – when the first comic book, the first concept album, three operas, and two plays appeared within three years. This new wave of interest, largely fuelled by the “discovery” (inverted commas are necessary here as the short story was included in obligatory reading lists in British schools which makes it rather difficult to miss) of *The Machine Stops* (last six years saw ten various adaptations of the short story) and the “re-discovery” of *Howards End* (four adaptations), includes also other works of Forster, some never adapted before as “The Life to Come” or “The Point of It.” If the trend holds as it did before, with the appearance of streaming platforms and their insatiable thirst for new adaptable source materials, we can expect another decade filled with Forsterian adaptations.

The popularity of Forster and his importance within the English-speaking culture seem only to strengthen with the passage of time. It can be compared to that of Jane Austen, Forster's favourite novelist and also a writer with a fairly modest oeuvre but dozens of adaptations, rather than to that of any of his contemporaries. The English – first readers and then writers, composers, directors, screenwriters, playwrights, librettists – started to appreciate Forster very soon, even if his critical attitude might not have been to everybody's liking. They read him today with still greater attention as the safe and seemingly unchanging world, not unlike that which is the setting of his works, disappears, replaced by a world in which nothing is certain.

The works inspired by Forster or merely adapted from his works vary greatly in their artistic merit and recognition; some of them are award-winning novels and block-buster movies, many others are, or perhaps were, ephemeral, known to a very small circle of aficionados. They are all, however, a testimony to the fact that Forster still has something important to say to us. Something that must not only be listened to but requires a response, and provokes still new questions.

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Online Resources

Amazon.com and amazon.co.uk

BBC Genome Project <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/>

Internet Movie Database www.imdb.com

The Playwrights Database Doollee www.doollee.com

Lists of adaptations

Comics

2014 – *The Machine Stops* – Michael Lent, Marc Rene.

2019 – *The Blessed Machine* – Jesse Hamm, Mark Rodgers, Caitlin Like.

Concept albums

2016 – *The Machine Stops* – Hawkwind, Cherry Red Record, available on YouTube.

2020 – *The Machine Stops* – Tommaso Gambini, Workin' Label, available on YouTube.

Movies

1984 – *A Passage to India* – director: David Lean, screenplay: David Lean and Santha Rama Rau, producer: John Brabourne, Richard Goodwin.

1987 – *Maurice* – director: James Ivory, screenplay: Kit Hesketh-Harvey and James Ivory, producer: Ismail Merchant.

1987 – *A Room with a View* – director: James Ivory, screenplay: Ruth Praver Jhabvala, producer: Ismail Merchant.

1991 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* – director: Charles Sturridge, screenplay: Tim Sullivan, Derek Granger and Charles Sturridge, producer: Derek Granger.

1992 – *Howards End* – director: James Ivory, screenplay: Ruth Praver Jhabvala, producer: Ismail Merchant.

Musicals

2012 – *A Room with a View* – Marc Acito (book), Jeffrey Stock (music and lyrics), staged at the Old Globe, London, premiere 2 March 2012.

2017 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* – Kit Goldstein Grant (book, music and lyrics), staged at The Players Theatre, New York, September 2017. Complete demo recording available on Soundcloud.

Novels

1915 – *The Voyage Out* – Virginia Woolf.

1920 – *Women in Love* – David Herbert Lawrence.

1922 – *The Enchanted April* – Elizabeth von Arnim.

1927 – *The Hotel* – Elizabeth Bowen.

1928 – *Lady Chatterley's Lover* – David Herbert Lawrence.

1960 – *A Treasonable Growth* – Ronald Blythe.

- 1985 – *The Italian Lesson* – Janice Elliott.
 1988 – *The Swimming Pool Library* – Alan Hollinghurst.
 1998 – *The Spell* – Alan Hollinghurst.
 2004 – *The Closed Circle* – Jonathan Coe.
 2005 – *On Beauty* – Zadie Smith.
 2011 – *The Stranger’s Child* – Alan Hollinghurst.
 2012 – *My Policeman* – Bethan Roberts.
 2014 – *Arctic Summer* – Damon Galgut.
 2018 – *The Ballad of Syd & Morgan* – Haydn Middleton.
 2021 – *Alec* – William di Canzio.

Opera

- 1992 – *A Room with a View* – Robert Nelson (music), Buck Ross (libretto), (revised 2004). Recording from the Moores Opera Center, Houston released on DVD by Newport Classic in 2006.
 1999 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* – Mark Lanz Weiser (music), Roger Bruyatte (libretto), professional premiere at the California Theatre, San Jose, California, 7th February 2015. Available on YouTube.
 2014 – *The Machine Stops* – John Lake (music), Cecile Goding (libretto), stage reading of selections 17th June 2014, University of Iowa, Iowa City, available on YouTube. Work in progress, premiere scheduled for July 25th, 2021 at Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, Coralville, Iowa, US.
 2016 – *The Machine Stops* – Stephen Webb, Robert Taylor, Patrick McGraw (music), Michael Albano (libretto), staged at the University of Toronto MacMillan Theatre, January 2016.
 2017 – *The Life to Come* – Louis Mander (music), Stephen Fry (libretto), premiere at the Harlequin Theatre, Redhill (Surrey Opera), 28th September 2017.
 2019 – *Howards End, America* – Claudia Stevens (libretto), Allen Shearer (music), premiere at Z Space, San Francisco, California in February 2019.

Opera – Screen Adaptations of *Billy Budd*

- 1952 – dir. Kirk Browning, conductor Peter Hermann Adler. NBC Television Opera Theatre (season 4 episode 1) with Theodore Uppman as Billy Budd. Available on YouTube.
 1966 – dir. Basil Coleman, conductor Charles Mackerras. The BBC production was broadcasted on December 11th, with Peter Pears as Captain Vere. Released by Decca

in the DVD set *Britten: Composer, Conductor, Pianist – The Historic BBC Films* in 2010. Available on YouTube.

1988 – dir. Barrie Gavin, conductor David Atherton. Production from the English National Opera filmed by the BBC, released on DVD.

1998 – dir. Brian Large, conductor Steuart Bedford. Production from the Metropolitan Opera, released on DVD.

2001 – dir. Claus Viller, conductor Donald Runnicles. German production for Kultur, released on DVD.

2010 – dir. François Roussillon, stage dir. Michael Grandage, conductor Mark Elder. Production from Glyndebourne Festival, released on DVD.

2017 – dir. Jérémie Cuvillier, stage dir. Deborah Warner, conductor Ivor Bolton. Production from Teatro Real Madrid, released on DVD.

2019 – dir. Friedrich Gatz, stage dir. Annilese Miskimmon, conductor Mark Wigglesworth. Production of Den Norske Opera & Ballett, Oslo in co-production with Teatr Wielki Opera Narodowa, Warsaw, released on DVD.

Plays

1950 – *A Room with a View* – Stephen Tait and Kenneth Allot, staged (The Arts Theatre, Cambridge) and published (London: Edward Arnold, 1951).

1960 – *A Passage to India: A Play* – Santha Rama Rau, staged (Comedy Theatre, London) and published (London: Edward Arnold).

1963 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread: A Play in Two Acts* – Elisabeth Hart, staged (The New Arts Theatre, London) and published (London: S. French).

1967 – *Howards End* – Lance Sieveking and Richard Cotterell, staged at the Golder's Green Hippodrome, London.

1975 – *A Room with a View* – Lance Sieveking and Richard Cotterell, staged by the Prospect Theatre Company at the Albery Theatre.

1996 – *Howards End* – Roger Parsley, premiere at the Bloomsbury Theatre, London.

1998 – *Maurice* – Roger Parsley and Andy Graham, premiere at the Bloomsbury Theatre, London.

1999 – *Maurice* – Michael D. Jackson, premiere at Studio Theatre, Sacramento.

2002 – *A Passage to India* – Martin Sherman, staged (Richmond Theatre Surrey) and published (London: Methuen).

2002 – *Howards End* – Marcus Goodwin, premiere at the Seattle Center House Theatre, Seattle, USA.

- 2003 – *A Room with a View* – Roger Parsley, premiere at the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich.
- 2004 – *The Machine Stops* – Eric Coble, premiere at Hiram College (Hiram, Ohio).
- 2006 – *A Room with a View* – Christina Calvit, premiere at Lifeline Theatre, Chicago.
- 2016 – *A Room with a View* – Simon Reade, premiere at Festival Theatre, Chichester, later staged at the Theatre Royal, Bath.
- 2016 – *The Machine Stops* – Neil Duffield, premiere at the Theatre Royal, York, directed by Juliet Forster.
- 2018 – *A Passage to India* – Simon Dormandy, premiere at the Royal and Derngate Theatre, Northampton, January 16th, 2018 (Written in 1997).
- 2016 – *A Room with a View* – Simon Reade, premiere at Festival Theatre, Chichester, later staged at the Theatre Royal, Bath.
- 2016 – *The Machine Stops* – Neil Duffield, premiere at the Theatre Royal, York, directed by Juliet Forster.
- 2019 – *A Room with a View* – Kate McAll, staged at the James Bridges Theater, UCLA in March 2019.
- 2019 – *Howards End* – Douglas Post, premiere at the Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, Theatre Wit, Chicago.
- 2019 – *The Point of It* – Simon Dormandy, based on short stories “The Point of It,” “The Story of a Panic,” and “The Other Boat,” premiere at the GBS Theatre (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art), 28 June 2019.
- 2020 – *The Machine Stops* – Zoe Seaton, staged by the Riverside Theatre, Coleraine, Northern Ireland – online play available on 6th and 7th June on Zoom.
- 2021 – *Maurice* – Scott Parker, directed by David Cromer for the Writers Theatre, Chicago, USA. Originally announced in May 2020, date of premiere unknown.

Plays inspired by Forster’s life

- 2009 – *A Dose of Fame* – Stephen Wakelam, radio play, broadcasted by BBC Radio 4.
- 2015 – *A Kind of Marriage* – Charles Leipart, presented as a rehearsed reading at the Donmar rehearsal space, London, in 2017, extract published in the *Qu*, in January 2018.
- 2019 – *Nonsense and Beauty* – Scott C. Sickles, premiere at the Repertory Theatre of St Louis, Missouri, in March 2019.

Radio Plays¹²

- 1942 – *The Celestial Omnibus* – Leonard Cottrell, BBC Home Service.
- 1945 – *The Eternal Moment* – Alec Macdonald, BBC Home Service.
- 1946 – *Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties* – Douglas Cleverdon, adapted from the essay by E.M. Forster, BBC Home Service.
- 1947 – *Two Fantasies* – Leonard Cottrell, (short stories *Co-ordination* and *Other Kingdom*, adapted as plays), BBC Third Programme.
- 1947 – *The Story of the Siren* – Leonard Cottrell, BBC Third Programme.
- 1948 – *A Passage to India* – George Lefferts, NBC, NBC University Theatre. Available on YouTube.
- 1955 – *Between Two Worlds: A Passage to India* – Lance Sieveking, BBC Home Service.
- 1957 – *The Celestial Omnibus* – Richard Chappick, CBS, the *CBS Radio Workshop* episode 81, broadcasted on 18 August. Published on CD in 2017. Available on YouTube.
- 1964 – *Howards End* – Lance Sieveking, (13 episodes), BBC Home Service.
- 1967 – *A Room with a View* – Lance Sieveking, BBC Home Service.
- 1968 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* – Cynthia Puge (an adaptation of the play by Elizabeth Hart), BBC Radio 4.
- 1968 – *A Passage to India* – John Maynard (an adaptation of the play by Santha Rama Rau), BBC Radio 4.
- 1983 – *The Eternal Moment* – Penny Leicester, BBC Radio 4.
- 1985 – *Howards End* – Jeffrey Segal, (four parts), BBC Radio 4.
- 1995 – *A Room with a View* – David Wade, BBC Radio 4. BBC CD. Available on YouTube.
- 2001 – *The Machine Stops* – Gregory Norminton, BBC Radio 4. Available on YouTube.
- 2003 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* – Penny Leicester, BBC Radio 4. BBC CD.
- 2007 – *Maurice* – Philip Osment, BBC Radio 4. BBC CD.
- 2007 – *The Machine Stops* – Eric Coble, (an adaptation of the play which premiered in 2004), WCPN 90.3 FM in Cleveland, Ohio. Available on YouTube.
- 2009 – *Howards End* – Amanda Dalton, BBC Radio 4. BBC CD.
- 2019 – *A Passage to India* – Tanika Gupta, BBC Radio 4. BBC CD.

¹²The list below does not include novels and short stories read on the air by the author or actors, only dramatizations. Radio-plays marked with “BBC CD” were published in the CD collection *E.M. Forster: A BBC Radio Collection*, London: BBC Studios Distribution Ltd. 2019.

Short films

- 1998 – *Plug* – director: Meher Gourjian, screenplay (based on the short story *The Machine*): Meher Gourjian and Jamie Waese. 11 minutes. Available on YouTube.
- 1999 – *Desire* – director: Jorge Torregrossa, screenplay (based on the short story *The Obelisk*): Jorge Torregrossa.
- 2009 – *The Machine Stops* – director: Adam Freise, Nathan Freise, screenplay: Adam Freise, Nathan Freise. School of Visual Arts, NYC. 11 minutes. Available on YouTube and Vimeo.
- 2010 – *The Machine Stops* – screenplay: Jesse McNeely, Chantelle Sousa, producer: Digital Media Studio at the University of Nevada, Reno. 20 minutes. Available on YouTube.
- 2011 – *The Machine Stops* – director: Alex Vaughan, screenplay: Alex Vaughan and Agnes Calka, producer: Gerson Cobaxin. 10 minutes, shot on campus at North Lake College in Irving, Texas. Available on YouTube.
- 2014 – *The Machine Stops* – director: Alex LaRoza. 11 minutes. Available on YouTube.

TV Adaptations

- 1958 – *A Room with a View* – director: Robert Tronson, screenplay: Robert Tronson, producer: Granada Television, (ITV Play of the Week Season 3 Episode 43).
- 1959 – *E.M. Forster and The Longest Journey* – with a dramatized scene from the novel and an interview with Forster. Producer: CBS (US), (*Camera Three* Season 4 Episode 38).
- 1963 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* – director: Glen Byam Shaw, screenplay: Elisabeth Hart, producer: BBC. 45 minutes.
- 1965 – *A Passage to India* – director: Waris Hussein, screenplay: Santha Rama Rau, adapted for TV by John Maynard, producer: BBC, (BBC Play of the Month Season 1 Episode 2). Available on YouTube.
- 1966 – *Where Angels Fear to Tread* – director: Naomi Kapon, screenplay: Elisabeth Hart, producer: Cedric Messina, producer: BBC, (BBC Play of the Month Season 1 Episode 5), 120 minutes.
- 1966 – *The Machine Stops* – director: Philip Saville, screenplay: Kenneth Cavander and Clive Donner, producer: BBC, (*Out of the Unknown* Season 2 Episode 1). Released on DVD in 2014 in the box-set *Out of the Unknown* by the BBC.
- 1970 – *Howards End* – director: Donald McWhinnie, screenplay: Pauline Macaulay, producer BBC, (BBC Play of the Month Season 5 Episode 7).
- 1973 – *A Room with a View* – director: Donald McWhinnie, screenplay: Pauline Macaulay, producer: BBC, (BBC Play of the Month Season 8 Episode 7).

1977 – *The Obelisk* – director: Giles Forster, screenplay: Pauline Macaulay, producer: BBC (BBC Premier Season 1 Episode 4).

2007 – *A Room with a View* – director: Nicholas Renton, screenplay: Andrew Davies, producer IWC Media for the ITV, released on DVD in 2008 (PBS in the US) and 2009 (ITV in the UK).

2017 – *Howards End* – director: Hettie MacDonald, screenplay: Kenneth Lonergan, producer: Laura Hastings-Smith for BBC One / Starz, released on DVD in 2018 by Lionsgate Home Entertainment.

Biography

E.M. Forster in Africa

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Abstract

The paper presents a less known episode of E.M. Forster life – his African voyage in 1929. The paper retraces Forster’s trip through references in his published and private non-fiction writings, essays and letters, as well as its influence on his late short story “The Life to Come.”

Keywords: Forster, Africa, travel writing, colonialism

From his early attempts, foreign travels played an important part in Forster’s writing, whether fictional or not – essays and papers he wrote for newspapers or magazines, the latter mostly after the publication of *A Passage to India*. As a theme running through his work, travelling has enabled Forster to develop several elements at the root of his humanism as well as shedding light on what is for him the best and most enjoyable in life. In its most superficial form, tourism, it enables the Forsterian characters to marvel at the sight of Nature, in the best of romantic tradition, or at the works of Art as illustrations of the century-old human genius, in the best of classical tradition. It also gives the novelist the opportunity to express his satirical skill in comical scenes based on cultural misunderstandings and ignorance. Underlying such literary uses of the theme, travelling, also in the best tradition of the Grand Tour, plays a more important part in Forster’s vision, since

the fundamental gist of the experience is to make his characters more fully human and mature, more understanding of themselves and others, more tolerant and open to life.

If travelling played such an important part in Forster's literary world, it also played an important part in his own life and development.¹ This biographical perspective is central to the understanding of his art, as, beyond the personal, it also feeds the literary life of a very humane writer. After India and war-time Egypt, many of these travels brought him to various European countries, while more exotic destinations seemed to have disappeared from his mental horizon.

So, interestingly enough when, in the late 1920s, his friend George Barger and his wife Florence, Forster's *confidante* for years, offered him to accompany them on a long tour in sub-Saharan Africa, the rather jaded Forster accepted willingly. George Barger, a chemist, was going to take part in a lecture-tour to last for several months in various African countries. It seemed a good idea to make most of this expedition by getting the three good friends together. On Forster's side, the tour is well documented thanks to the writer's "Africa Journal" now in King's College Archives (published in 2011) and a sizeable number of letters to several people including Joe Ackerley and Forster's mother now respectively at the Humanities Research Centre at Austin, Texas² and at King's.

So far Forster's experience of Africa had been limited to Egypt, which, beside the part it played in his personal life, was at the source of two works, important in different ways. Apparently, *Alexandria, a History and a Guide* is still highly considered as a guide-book while the memoir "On the Condition of Egypt" is a valuable historic document to this day.³

Now a whole new world opened to him and it is interesting to see what fruit this experience bore in the end. If the diary and the letters make very lively reading, in literary terms the result was much more limited and rather belated. "Luncheon at Pretoria" appeared in *The Abinger Chronicle* in January 1940, and – in my view – the posthumous short story, "The Life to Come" was inspired by the conditions of the black population

¹ "This £ 8000 has been the salvation of my life. Thanks to it I was able to go to Cambridge [...] After Cambridge I was able to travel for a couple of years, and travelling encouraged me to write" (Forster 2000, 289).

² Ackerley had secretly sold Forster's letters to the H.R.C. in the early sixties. The Center became known as the Harry Ransom Center in 1985.

³ Cf. Forster 1920.

in the South African mines.⁴ However small this output may seem, it still reveals the same constants in Forster's creative process and writing throughout his work as has been demonstrated.⁵

The cruise started in June 1929. To the writer it was to reveal a native culture so far unknown to him and to revive his bitter denunciation of the evils of colonialism on a much larger scale and in a different context than what he had witnessed in India or even in Egypt, at a time when the British Empire was still a force to be reckoned with.

The friends left Tilbury on June 26, calling in Tenerife, Ascension and St Helena, before reaching Cape Town on July 17. Then the travellers went North inland, to the Transvaal and Rhodesia. By mid-August they reached Mombasa via Zanzibar. On their way to Nairobi they visited the wildlife reserve at Athi. They saw the Rift Valley and the Victoria Nyanza before entering Uganda and visiting Kampala and Entebbe. On their return to Nairobi they took the famous Kenyan train back to Mombasa and they boarded their steamer for Aden and Egypt where their ways parted – Forster visiting some wartime friends before reaching Marseille where he was to meet Syed Ross Masood – and thence to St Rémy de Provence to see the Maurons. He was back in England on October 4. Obviously, the three-month tour had been placed under the sign of discovery as well as long-lasting and steadfast friendships.

Reading and comparing the documents now available enable us to highlight how Forster, now fifty, continued to react to culturally exotic places both in his daily life and his thought. Intact are his taste for natural, picturesque sights, for History and human nature, his satirical touch for comic situations, and also his social, political, even philosophical preoccupations as perceptible in his more recent writings. Such reading also enables us to see what he considered as private and what he was willing to share with his readers in his fictional or essay writing. The published part of this travel writing may appear somewhat paradoxical since what is highlighted is both the comical, perhaps even the ridiculous aspect of travelling incidents, as in "Luncheon at Pretoria," and the tragic impact of colonialism in "The Life to Come." The private documents offer a much

⁴ I do not share Oliver Stallybrass's view who, basing his estimation on a letter to Siegfried Sassoon, dates the composition of the short story as 1922/23 (See "Introduction" to Forster 1972). A first version already staging Vithobai the native chief and Paul Pinmay may date from these years, but the two typed, and hand-corrected, versions that have survived are of a later date. Several details in the story indicate in my view that its "definitive" version is posterior to the African tour.

⁵ See Hanquart 1986, 383.

wider span of colours and emotions, and a greater thematic variety. So much so that one may wonder why the author decided to restrict the vision of the man to such an extent.

It may be somewhat surprising to see a trivial comic incident brought to the front of Forster's reminiscence of his African trip. Why, ten years later, did he deem it worthy of a newspaper article?⁶ But this may precisely be due to the superficial and mundane character of the episode clashing with the semi-official capacity of the occasion. Forster's humour and self-irony is at work, debunking the pretence of the British colonial middle class. The whole paper is based on the trivial accident of the black servant of the rich Pretoria hostess upsetting a plateful of food on Forster's smartest suit during a fairly formal lunch. The comic banality of the scene is enhanced by the fact that at the time Forster was well-known for his usually inelegant attire.⁷ The semi-official capacity of the luncheon guests is also deflated, as the focus is moved on the menial person in the room, the boy serving at the table, who normally should hardly be noticed. The boy thus becomes the master of ceremonies since his clumsiness compromises his own masters' organised social life and that of their prestigious guests. The way Forster stages his part in the comic episode wilfully stresses the ridicule of his own character:

Our hostess lent me her husband's sky-blue Japanese dressing gown. Though not of the best period it was a sumptuous garment, and clad in it I hopped like a tropical bird, now taking a sip of coffee in the dining room, now putting in some work at the pantry sink. (Forster 1972, 326)

Pretoria and the purpose of the visit are only evoked in a short sentence without any further comment: "Pleasant it was to walk by her side into Union Buildings, and in my blue serge suit too" (Forster 1972, 326). Beside this brief mention linking the visiting to the incident, the historical and touristic interests of the place only appear as a mere evocation of the excursion from Johannesburg:

We were to drive over and see the sights, and, after lunch attend an official reception at Union Buildings. [...] Pretoria turned out to be a dear little place, with a touch of

⁶ Forster must have considered it important enough since it was also published in *Two Cheers for Democracy* in 1951.

⁷ Such reputation apparently led his friends to say that he could have passed for "the man who comes to wind up the clocks."

two civilisations upon it. Down below were the straight lines of quiet modest Dutch houses, and the statue of Oom Paul at the railway station. Up on the hill was a fine imperial effort: Union Buildings, with its pavilions, its long terraces, its two domes. An agreeable morning was spent, the sights were indicated and viewed with complaisance, and then it was time for lunch. (Forster 1972, 324)

Why this very bland style? Does it express the traveller's indifference to the newly discovered sights, to the monuments seen for the first time? This comes in sharp contrast with the "Africa Journal" and an unpublished letter to Ackerley. There the emphasis on the themes is reversed. The lunch incident is mentioned in a phrase in the former and not mentioned at all in the latter thus excluding any touch of the comic in the telling. What prevails is the visitor's aesthetic reaction to the sights and the affective reaction to what they imply or say for South Africa's past and present.

Diary August 3:

Pretoria: a good day and most definite the most [?] for I saw Kruger's statue and the Union buildings, and had an enormous dish of chicken emptied over me while lunching with a banker's wife. First city I've seen in S.A. and Stellenbosch has been the first town. Except for the domes it's a stunning success and think of it with Copenhagen Rathaus as great modern buildings. (Forster 2011, 36)

Letter to Ackerley, August 7:

I was moved – tears coming – by the nobility of the Union Buildings at Pretoria: such a splendid gesture. English and Dutch participating, and such an empty gesture, for beneath and beyond both English and Dutch are these millions of blacks whom one never speaks to and whose existence one assumes as one does electric bells.⁸ That was why I nearly cried at Pretoria. It is Valhalla, and the dwarfs haven't been paid. You cannot imagine what things really are like out here. India gives no idea. In the Transvaal and Orange Free State it is now illegal for black and white to marry, or even to live together: the government aims at the complete separation of the two races.⁹

⁸ Like, f.i., the clumsy boy serving at table.

⁹ In the whole of South Africa, the *apartheid* (separateness) legislation was passed in 1948 by the Nationalist Party.

Compared with the published paper, this moving letter may appear to hold promises of more interesting literary development in terms of Forster's humanism. But nothing came of it. Which is both surprising and disappointing, given the writer's usual stand against racism and given the date of the paper in *The Abinger Chronicle*, a time when he was denouncing Nazism and its racial policies elsewhere.

If one now considers the other work which, according to me, owes something to the African tour, we are now looking at a work of fiction. *The Life to Come* was only published posthumously in 1972 but the manuscript shows that it had been written much earlier and amended several times. It does not deal with racism strictly speaking but more generally with the evils of colonisation, and there one can find many of the emotions and feelings inspired by what Forster had witnessed during his stay in the African countries he visited.

First of all, the theme of the natives' innocence, regarded as amorality, even immorality by Western standards, which is at the heart of the short story's plot and enables Forster's mischievous variations on the gist of the word «love», already stands out in in his letter to Ackerley dated July 13 from St Helena:

A loveable loving population, everyone says so, all hues from coffee to ink, and as gentle as their climate. I had expected scum as one does at a port of call but their only fault, says the resident dentist, is immorality. They do all the tempting, and many a Union Castle passenger has been led into sin and increasing the population. [...] Have seldom seen such a touching island – all this volcanic sternness and the live things perched about it, longing for kindness and company, some day we will go and give it them.

The story's plot then tackles the destructive part played by colonisation, corrupting the natives' surroundings, exploiting and enslaving them in the mines. Then the role of Christianity in its development with the intervention of missionaries destroying their ancestral society and their personalities to leave only impotence and despair. All this emerges from the travel writings since in South Africa Forster had also seen more sordid aspects than the sights of Pretoria. He had visited "District 6," a township in Cape Town as well as three others near Kimberley before seeing the quarters in which the De Beers Company lodged its miners.

Letter to Ackerley, August 7:

I saw (it's always 'see') a great deal of native life in the slums and compounds of Johannesburg. [...] The mine compounds are even more attractive. All the miners live in

dormitories, by tribes, and grinning at them was pleasant and easy. They are well fed, and happy, and their bathing-halls would have ravished you, and incidentally caused them not to smell [...] Do read a story (called Ula Masonga) in William Plomer's *I Speak of Africa*.¹⁰ It isn't bad; but the life in the gold mines is better now than he describes: the owners find it pays to treat the chaps well.

Previously, he had been horrified by the enormous diamond mine which symbolised the whole region and Western imbecile cupidity in his eyes.

Diary July 29 and 30:

Kimberley or the kingdom of the Antichrist [...] great Kimberley mine «the biggest» hole in the world. Women, fair women, particularly prostitutes have dug it – 2000 feet to where the grey-green shaft of the water lies, and that goes down another 1000. Hell is not even alive.

Letter to his mother, July 29:

It was most impressive to see the whole countryside turned upside down for the sake of diamonds, barbed wire everywhere, black convicts working, police, rubbish heaps like mountains, holes in the ground 3000 feet deep; one of them, the Kimberley mine proper, it's the biggest hole in the world – acres wide and narrowing pit after pit, the lowest pit being full of water. They have stopped working it as the edges keep falling in. It is the most imbecile industry in the world I suppose. (Lago and Furbank 1985, 851)

This, apparently, led him to sell his diamond shares on his return (Furbank 1978, 161).

Despite his horrified reaction, he was disappointed not to have been down the diamond mine. So, he was later thrilled to be allowed down one of the gold mines:

Letter to Ackerley, August 7:

I have been down a gold mine (3000 feet) but it's the compounds that are really worth seeing: every race of the south and east run grinning at you and playing upon musical instruments to you.

¹⁰ Plomer 1927, n.p.

However, after going to Rhodesia, Kenya, and Uganda throughout August and arriving in Zanzibar, his point of view somewhat changed, and the diversity of the experiences led him to more pessimistic conclusions. These are staged in the short story as it draws to its end and Vithobai's awareness of his own debasement through his religious conversion and of his failure towards his own people, leading to his final despair, murder, and suicide. This tragic ending echoes the letter to Ackerley on September 9:

The expedition's been much what I expected – interesting, distressing and elderly. I went right into Africa and saw the Nile coming out of the Victoria Nyanza. This was beautiful, but here too was all the horrors of the European impact: corrugated iron, filthy clothes. Most of the African peoples seem heart-broken, they wander about as if their lives were lost; trade and Christianity together have done them in.¹¹ Zanzibar, Aden and the northern parts have been saved by Islam.

Beside these thoughts and feelings which reverberated years later in his works, Forster's travel impressions sustain his correspondence throughout. There are private jokes among friends, some of a more or less homosexual nature. But more interesting in literary terms in the journal and letters are the references to aesthetic emotions generated by natural sights or human activities.

Like several of his characters Forster had a taste for sunsets.¹² His description of one of them off the African coast between Tenerife and Ascension shows that despite the years he had not lost any of his enthusiasm or sense of observation:

Tropic sunset then developed, eastern sea salmon and purple, western sky pale apple green and Cambridge blue in patches on orange and grey. Why 'tropic'? Because of the sharp mosaics of the western bank. This made the difference between it and the wildest sunset of the north. After darkness cloudiness. Sky will clear and cloud in half an hour in these latitudes because of heat of water – 82° – which evaporates at the least change. Sky chief interest. Sea a bore. No fish or birds.¹³ (Forster 2011, 27–28)

¹¹ Cf. Forster 1972, 74–5.

¹² See Forster 1977, 12, 71 f. I.

¹³ The sources of the White Nile were discovered in 1858.

Nor does he lack irony though, in his Coleridgean depiction of the sources of the Nile, thus showing both his emotion and his refusal to be too much moved by such a symbolic sight for an Englishman born in 1879, that is two decades only after their discovery by Burton and Speke, a sight ranking high too in the list of international tourism.

Letter to Ackerley, August 7:

This tour is a success. I have been intensely interested and seen many remarkable things. I don't know about these Falls. They are almost too sight-see-ish and grand: a river several times the size of the Thames falls into a chasm deeper than St Paul's, and what with the spray and the double circular rainbows and lying on one's stomach on shiny rocks over bottomless cauldrons – well, words fail, and I think that when they do one isn't greatly moved.

At the end of August, Uganda and Kampala in particular offered a slightly different point of view in terms of native culture. His visit to Kabaka, the king of Buganda, was a great opportunity, and his court which slightly amused him, before going to see the tombs of the royal ancestors. It seems rather a pity that such material did not get further development.

Diary August 27:

Kampala a foolish but unusual town, fatuously compared to Rome because two of its hills support cathedrals, palace of Kabaka¹⁴ on another, got permission from Ass. Prov. Commissioner to go (in car for prestige business). [...] the gentle earnest officials – Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Parliament itself – were pleased to see us. Parliament even applauding. The king's sister also greeted us, tall and elegant in a dark mauve dress and picture hat;¹⁵ [...] Eschewing the cathedrals, we went to the tombs of Mtesa and Mwanga¹⁶ a solemn lofty hut supported by pillars and aisled. Proof enough of what has perished. Entrance hut also fine. This – and Zanzibar – are the only architecture of Africa that I've seen. Pillars coloured red and white and dark blue, an old woman at each side, a gay and ugly child too who took my hand, a stuffed cheetah at the entrance. (Forster 2011, 42–43)

¹⁴ Daudi Cwa II (1896–1939) Kabaka of the Buganda (1897–1939)

¹⁵ In Buganda culture Kabaka's sister holds a particularly honorific position.

¹⁶ Mtesa was the Kabaka when Stanley arrived in 1874. His son, Mwanga succeeded him in 1884.

The previous port of call, on August 20, had been Zanzibar, which is usually mentioned with flattering notations. Another luncheon party took place there that may seem more memorable and picturesque than the Pretoria occurrence; it did not find its way in any publication, however.

Diary, August 20:

Happy all day; landed at Zanzibar [...] We stopped at the Summer Palace. New but poetic, overhanging the beach and drank milk of special coconut. [...] Through heat and high green clove trees via Bu-Bu-Bu to Dongo. The Sultan arrives and gives us dullish food except for the turtle soup but under a long booth of bamboo and palm made for the occasion and overhung by nutmeg trees and tiny oranges. Birds flew into the high decayed stump of coconut and chattered during the speech, one of the servants had fallen backwards into the curry or something, gang of retainers looked on from under the trees. After lunch the Sultan showed the more important ladies how cloves dry. Marvellous vegetation, the real tropic at last, huge super-banana leaves, good drive back, got hold of Allen¹⁷ and bought two mats in the bazaar. (Forster 2011, 38)

It seems to me that all the episodes of the African expedition that Forster wished to keep in his memory, either in the diary or the letters sent to friends and family, without reviving them in his published writing – such as sunsets, remarkably beautiful or ugly landscapes, pleasant or distressing human experiences – all have in common belonging to the exotic or more or less sentimental note. They are all sketches that in a few words, sometimes even telegraphic phrases, manage to create a landscape with its particular atmosphere and light, testimonies to Forster's eye for the meaningful detail as to the permanence of his literary skill.

The mature writer's choice to keep private the episodes of a fundamentally affective nature and only transpose into his published work those capable of creating a more or less profound social reflection in his reader reveal his own thoughtful development. Both the apparent off-handedness of "Luncheon at Pretoria" and the grave tone of "The Life to Come" in their different ways, have the same purport, to denounce a deeply unfair interracial situation to which the traveller wanted to bear witness. And what he underlines then is also what he will repeatedly denounce during the dark years of the two following decades.

¹⁷ Unidentified.

However, the bitter awareness of the poisoning effects of colonialism on human relationships which many times marred Forster's enjoyment during the African tour, did not prevent him from appreciating the joys of travelling to foreign places in the years to come. His correspondence and his essays show his never-ending ability to marvel at the beauty of landscapes, or situations and people that he met. Europe in the thirties, with his visit to Romania, India at the dawn of independence, the U.S. just after WW2, Austria in the fifties, or the Bayreuth festivals of the sixties have a positive echo in his essays and letters (Hanquart-Turner 1979). Travelling to more or less exotic places brought out his *joie de vivre* throughout his long life. As he confided to the audience of his "Three Countries" conference in 1962.¹⁸

I like to see the face of the world and to think about it. I enjoy travelling and am indeed a confirmed globe-trotter, though a trotter upon a rather quiet world, none of my travels having been adventurous. (Forster 1983, 289)

In the light of his African writings, one begs leave to differ.

¹⁸ "Three Countries that Influenced me" (England, Italy and India), one of his last conferences, given in Rome in the Summer of 1962.

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Reading Forster's Will

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Abstract

Despite the extensive scholarship about Forster's life and work, his will has largely been overlooked. This article aims to fill this gap and presents a reading of his will which treats it not simply as a functional legal document but as a biographical, sociological and, arguably, a literary text. In doing so it demonstrates the importance for Forster of inheritance as a complex ethical practice. In particular it focuses on how the bequests and extensive individual legacies in the will convey the same political beliefs and personal values which are found in his novels, and are similarly open to contested and contradictory interpretations. In this way and in reading the will against *Maurice*, it is argued that Forster's will is an overlooked posthumous publication.

Keywords: E.M. Forster, inheritance, wills

¹ A longer version of this article appears in Monk (2013).

Introduction

Forster's life and work have been the subject of extensive analysis and critique. Yet, while both his fiction and non-fiction (including his letters and diaries) have been examined from a variety of perspectives, one text has been overlooked: his will. This is in some ways surprising as inheritance mattered considerably to Forster, as a biographical fact² and, most evidently, in *The Longest Journey* and *Howards End*, as a literary convention and ethical practice. Indeed Martin notes that "Forster's abiding love was for that kind of inheritance that could not stand up in a court of law" (1997, 271). That Forster's novels were written before liberalising reforms that protected illegitimate children and dependents partly explains this observation, but he was also interested in spiritual inheritance – as responses to Mrs Wilcox's famous "treacherous and absurd" will makes clear (Forster 2000, 85).

However in the context of his own will, authorship is complicated here, for while expressed in the first person, the "ventriloquist" (Frank 2010, 55) role of lawyers negates the extent to which a will can be said to provide access to the "authentic voice of a testator" (Lafler 1997, 158). Yet despite these considerations, the central premise here is that Forster's will is not simply a formal legal document enabling the transmission of property but, rather, a highly reflective text, within which he expressed his desires, aspirations and values. As a uniquely personal text, it provides insight into the relationship between his more public expressions and his private life. In doing so it brings literary and biographical scholarship into conversation with the particular challenges posed by wills. While revealing no new facts about Forster, the key argument is that Forster's will was written with the same degree of care and consideration as his novels, short stories and other non-fiction and, thus, is deserving of the same attention.

² On the impact of the legacy from his aunt, see Forster (1956, 289); on conflicts about family properties, see Furbank (1977, 202, 290).

Reading the will

Forster's will was executed on 25th June 1965 and a codicil was added on 7th March 1967. There may have been an earlier will but there is no firm evidence of this.³ While he was 86 when he executed the will and died a few years later, on 7th June 1970, it is in no sense a 'death-bed-will'. Furbank notes that after a number of strokes in 1964, Forster was, "beginning, quietly, to strip himself of possessions, pressing friends to accept books and pieces of furniture" (1977, 318). Together with the codicil, while frail, this suggests that he had time for reflection.

The will is written in a manner that conforms to the stable, ritualised genre of conventional legal drafting (Sneddon 2011). The will raises no legal questions; what he intended to transfer and to whom is beyond doubt. The codicil reveals no change of mind; it simply added a survivorship clause (which in the event was not engaged) and noted (unnecessarily) that one of the pecuniary legacies had lapsed as the beneficiary had predeceased him. It is not possible to identify who drafted the will, but it is likely to have been a solicitor at the firm of Godden Holme and Co. Based in Belgravia in London, this was the firm that applied for probate and had been the lawyers for Forster's family for many generations.⁴

The grant of probate was issued on 6th November 1970. This provides information about the size of the estate: £68, 298: 11: 0 gross; a considerable amount, equivalent now to well over £1million. But this is not an accurate picture of how rich he was. Biographies of Forster indicate that he made extensive gifts during his life;⁵ just as his heroine Margaret advocates in *Howards End*. As Furbank notes: "with age his passion for giving grew.

³ Wilkinson states that "he did not even make a will until he was well into his eighties" (1993, 177). But Stape notes that in 1925 Forster decided to cut out Siegfried Sasson from his will and appoint J R Ackerley and Florence Berger as co-literary executors, above (1993, 89). Moreover, King refers to Ackerley receiving £500 (1978, 104); whereas the will refers to £100 and Moffat refers to a gift to Massoud's children who are not in the will (2010, 322). To add to the confusion, Forster refers to arrangements in his will in a letter to Christopher Isherwood dated 15 October 1952 (Zeikowitz 2008, 152–3).

⁴ This is evidenced by a deposit to the National Archives made by the firm in 1979 of extensive papers relating to the Thorntons, the maternal family of Forster's father: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/records.aspx?cat=088-iv104&cid=0#0>.

⁵ King notes that Forster would write out a cheque to a friend "in order that he should do what was best for himself, not what pleased him most" (1978, 106). See also ANL Munby "Forster's Library" in Stape (1993, 155).

He was continually finding occasions to help friends and protégés, and made several large public benefactions” (1977, 316).

Philanthropy, personal generosity, tax avoidance and protection of privacy all provide plausible explanations for Forster’s life-time gifts. These gifts and motivations complicate readings of the will. Naming someone in a will attests to the symbolic nature of inclusion in a will; that it is not simply a means to transfer wealth but a public as much as a private act of recognition; and all the more so in the case of a public figure. At the same time, a relatively small gift in a will to someone who has received considerable life-time gifts could serve to obscure the importance of the relationship. His testamentary legacies can, consequently, be read as both ‘poetic’ and strategic.

Property and Place

Forster did not own a home at his death, as Finch notes, he “had a complex history of home-making, often embracing transitory and part-time modes of living” (2011, 14). But two places are referred to in his will: Piney Copse and King’s College, Cambridge. Both, in various ways, feature significantly in his fiction and non-fiction and their inclusion in his will contribute to and complicate an understanding both of his relationship with them and the concept of ‘home’.

Piney Copse

Piney Copse is a small (4.42 acres) wood in Surrey. Forster purchased it in 1926 for £450 because it was adjacent to West Hackhurst – the home he shared with his mother from 1925 until her death in 1946. His father had designed the house in the 1870s for his aunt, Laura Forster, who subsequently bequeathed her interest in it to Forster on her death in 1924. Furbank notes that in buying the wood Forster “had shown himself independent, not a mere humble continuer of his aunt’s traditions” and that “he felt proud of his wood: even secretly patriotic, as though by means of it he were helping to maintain England” (1977, 202, 199). While Forster owned the freehold of the wood, the house had been built on land purchased under a lease from the neighbouring aristocratic family the Farrers. And Forster only left the house after a bitter and prolonged legal conflict (Furbank 1977, 200–204, 264–268).

Forster's ownership of Piney Copse was intimately linked to West Hackhurst – a 'family home'. But there is a poetic quality to the fact that the only freehold property referred to in his will is a wood, which, at the time of his death, was unconnected to any property. For the mythological 'greenwood' is a recurring theme in his work (Ellem 1976; Nadel 2007; Finch 2011).

In an essay entitled, "My Wood, or the Effects of Property upon Character," published in the *New Leader*, the official journal of the Independent Labour Party, he ruminates that perhaps:

I shall wall in and fence out until I really taste the sweets of property. Enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudo-creative, intensely selfish, I shall weave upon my forehead the quadruple crown of possession. (Finch 2011, 207)

Finch argues that for Forster, "the small – Piney Copse [...] is connected to matters of right and wrong in human conduct: to serious ethical questions." (2011, 208). How he disposed of Piney Copse in his will, a matter overlooked by Finch, can, consequently, provide some insight into how Forster resolved his dilemma of "torn between the commitment that led him to write for a socialist newspaper and the desire to cling onto gentry status in an English county setting" (Finch 2011, 127).

Forster bequeathed the wood to the National Trust, the current owners (National Trust 2011, 42), together with a gift of £100 (clause 6 [a]). In the event of the National Trust not accepting it, the will provided that it should be offered to whoever owned West Hackhurst for the sum of £450, "being the price which I gave for it" (clause 6 [b]).

The National Trust was the ideal beneficiary for Forster; enabling him to express both a progressive commitment to public ownership and free access to the land, alongside a nostalgic desire to protect the countryside against his perception of the damaging effects of modernity. And the alternative provision can be read as a principled refusal to profit from land ownership, even posthumously.

However, these public readings belie more mundane facts. Lord Farrer had made it a condition of his extending the lease over West Hackhurst for the lifetime of Forster's mother that Piney Copse would be sold to him. Reluctant to agree to this, Forster offered to undertake to bequest the wood to the National Trust in his will. Furbank notes that this was "a cunning stratagem" for as a committee member of the trust Lord Farrer could hardly disagree to the offer (Furbank 1977, 202).

King's College, Cambridge

On leaving West Hackhurst in 1946 Forster moved to King's College, Cambridge. This was to be a home for the rest of his life and it is the address stated in the will. After a life interest in the income, Forster bequeathed to King's the entire residue of his estate (clause 11).

Similar to the gift to the National Trust this philanthropic act combines heritage with a commitment to free thinking. But it can also be read as an act of gratitude, for the College provided his "liberation in youth" and "final spiritual and physical home" (Finch 2011, 303). Bristow notes that:

There is no doubt that his fraternal Cambridge peers provided an intellectual environment in which F was soon able to define his identity as a homosexual writer, one keen to imagine loving relationships that resisted the cultural imperatives to become a conventional married man. (1997, 115)

Cambridge was in this way as much a 'familial' home as Surrey and his legacy to King's can be read as an acknowledgement of this.

The two references to place in Forster's will serve to confirm a widely held public image of him: an Edwardian nostalgic who lived with his mother in Surrey and later an elderly man who lived cloistered at King's. For example, Scott comments that Forster's life "makes dreary reading [...] walled by his sexual inversion into an existence of much loneliness and misery [...] spent most of his 1911/2 years basically marking time" (1984, 9). When *The Times* reported on the contents of the will, an eventuality Forster would have predicted, his gifts to the National Trust and King's attracted the most attention; indeed the latter was the headline news on the front page. By way of contrast, his life-time gift to the Homosexual Law Reform Society remained hidden from public gaze (Wilkinson 1993, 177). In other words, his will ensured that his public image remained intact. Yet alongside Surrey and Cambridge, a third important place for Forster was London.

For most of his life Forster rented a flat in Bloomsbury, which was indeed the scene of sexual encounters for him and for others. And Forster's own work acknowledged the limits of both the romantic idealism of 'the wood' and expresses ambivalence about the apostolic brotherhood of Cambridge.

There is no reason why 'London' should be present in his will; there is no suggestion of intentional subterfuge (and can partly be explained by shifting socio-economic patterns of property rental in the capital). But its absence indicates how wills – like other

texts – produce partial images. Moreover, that ‘place’ functions in a will as it does in literature as “*both* a record of *and* a production or invention of the human experience of place” (Finch 2011, 402).

Friendship

Forster's will above all else attests to the extent to which “the central preoccupation of his life, it was plain to see, was friendship” (Furbank 1977, 295, see also Bharucha 1995; Fordoński 2017). It can even be linked to the explicit rejection of religion in his funeral wishes. For he observed, in his inimitable fashion – at once cosy and caustic – that: “It can't be nice to believe in God. It would be horrible to think that there was anyone who was closer to one than one's friends” (quoted in Stone 1966, 61).

His executor and the recipient of all his personal chattels and a life interest in the income from the residue of his estate was Walter (,Jack' or ,Sebastian') Sprott, a confidante and close friend for over almost 50 years. A young lover of the economist Keynes, it was said of Sprott that “he demanded to be adopted by someone” (Moffatt 2010, 201). In the context of inheritance this terminology is significant; for adoption is one of the legal mechanisms which gay testators have been advised to consider in places where no other form of explicit legal recognition of relationships exists (Johanson and Bay 1989). The key place of Sprott in Forster's will would, without the benefit of his biographies, lead a reader to possibly identify him as Forster's ‘partner’. Yet they were never lovers, ‘just’ friends; outside of the familial, conjugal model, even one extended by the recognition of same-sex relationships.

Forster considered the status of friendship, almost 60 years prior to writing his will, in *The Longest Journey*: “if we are friends it must be in our spare time [...] he wished there was a society, a kind of friendship office, where the marriage of true minds could be registered” (2006, 64). Alan Bray's towering study identifies wills as long providing a legal mechanism for this task (2003, 111, 114, 281) and Forster's own will demonstrates the legal space they offer for the public recognition of friendship.

In the context of Sprott there are clearly practical concerns too as Forster chose him to manage his affairs.⁶ But in his legacies to other friends – between £50 to

⁶ See Zeikowitz (2008, 152–153) for a letter that reveals a private arrangement between Forster, Isherwood and Sprott concerning the income from the US royalties for *Maurice*. See Bray on the traditional connection between ‘Sworn Brothers’ and executors (2003, 114).

£500 – the symbolic, poetic act of naming by inclusion in the will is more explicit, for here the purpose is arguably recognition more than enrichment or recompense.

Alongside Sprott, Forster's two other closest friends – and homosexual confidantes – were the writers William Plomer and Joe Ackerley. Both were bequeathed £100 (cl. 10, 11). The three created a close-knit alliance and Forster's correspondence with them ended up "weaving a pattern of remarkable complexity" (Moffat 2010, 317).

Another key friend acknowledged was Philip Nicholas Furbank (£100, cl. 16). Chosen by Forster to be his official biographer, he was also entrusted with his unpublished erotic short stories (Moffatt 2010, 319). He also bequeathed £500 to his friend and French translator Charles Mauron (cl. 6) and £100 to Eric Fletcher, a King's undergraduate in 1945. Sprott, Ackerley and Furbank had all been to Cambridge and the centrality of 'Kingsmen' in his will attests again to the central role it played in his life. But Forster's will presents, and it is suggested consciously, a picture of a life that moved beyond this privileged circle.

Social Class

While Forster's public commitment to friendship can be read as challenging conventional boundaries of kinship by going beyond conjugality and blood ties, his will can also be read as troubling the boundaries of social class. And in doing so it mirrors the explicit engagement with class in his fiction.

Forster bequeathed £100 to Reginald Palmer (clause 18) and £50 to Charles Lovatt (clause 14). Both were working-class men who were occasional sexual companions of Forster. Palmer, a bus driver from Weybridge who met Forster while in his twenties, was married and Moffat comments that Forster "managed the delicate feat of remaining her husband's lover without her knowledge for the rest of her life" (Moffatt, 2010, 217; cf Stape 1993, 88). According to Forster their friendship, "was a prank [...] I can think of nothing which has lasted so long and borne such odd fruit" (Moffatt 2010, 302). Lovatt is described by Moffat as an "acquiescent lover from the slums of Nottingham who [...] was genuinely fond of [Forster], and happy to be companionable" (2010, 208). Forster met Lovatt through Sprott (after meeting him in a public toilet Lovatt had followed him home and "never left") (Moffatt 2010, 201). It was with Sprott's knowledge and agreement that he was an occasional weekend sexual companion of Forster in London. Forster recorded in his diary that "reliability was his chief virtue" and called their relationship "an elderly man's love" (Moffatt 2010, 209). Kermode comments that it was part

of Foster's character that: "he enjoyed the companionship, sometimes sexual, of men whose appeal sometimes depended on their being alien to his class, men who he certainly could not entertain at his college" (2010, 114).

In Kermode's account, and in all the biographies other than Moffatt's, these men are unnamed. By including Palmer and Lovatt in his will, Forster does far more than transfer money (something he could easily have done – and did so – in his life, or indeed have requested Sprott to do so after his death). For inclusion in the will renders them visible. Not, as Kermode notes, entertained at his College, but in his will listed as equals alongside relatives and friends from his own class. Echoing themes in *Maurice*, their inclusion can be read as a public acknowledgement of the importance of sex, an embracement of the physical, and a rejection of a romanticized exclusively platonic ideal of friendship (Martin 1983). It is important to emphasise that this 'heroic' reading does not in any way suggest that Forster transcended class. Indeed one of his sexual partners – not loyal and not remembered – accused Forster and Ackerley as behaving like pimps to him and his like; and Moffat notes that there was "some truth to this charge" (Moffat 2010, 219). Undoubtedly these friendships were complicated by and experienced through class but as Heaphy has argued more generally, intimate relationships cannot be reduced to or explained solely by it (2011).

While discretion might explain the invisibility of Palmer and Lovatt from the biographies,⁷ the same reason cannot explain the silence about two other working-class beneficiaries. William Burrell was bequeathed £50 (clause 19). In Beauman's biography he does not appear in the index, but he does appear in a photograph, which is annotated "Morgan and Benjamin Britten with Billy Burrell, an Aldeburgh fisherman" (1993, 356); but he is omitted from the index to pictures where only Britten is mentioned. Yet it is Burrell and not Britten who is mentioned in Forster's will. Moffat records that Forster stayed with Burrell and his wife while writing the libretto for the opera *Billy Budd* (2010, 297–99) but does not record the bequest in the will. An acknowledgement of gratitude, it also coheres with Forster's commitment to the possibility of (and desire for) friendships across the class divide.

Moffat does, however, record the bequest of £100 to "his bedmaker, who cleaned his rooms in Kings" (2010, 322). However, the bedmaker remains unnamed. From reading the will alongside all the biographies the only unidentifiable beneficiary is an Alice

⁷ For example Furbank makes no mention of Palmer and Lovett is only mentioned in a footnote and described simply as the friend of Sprott (1977, 283n1)

Buckett from Halstead who was bequeathed £100 (clause 9). It is possible that she is the bedmaker referred to by Moffat. A town called Halstead exists just over 10 miles from Cambridge.

The inability to be certain about this; the fact that she is not named by Moffat and the absence of any references to either a bedmaker or to Alice Buckett in the other biographies, create a powerful silence. In a ground-breaking study of Virginia Woolf and her servants, Light records the intimate nature of the relationship between servants and their employers and notes the silence in the archives about these working-class lives; wills, however, are one place where they are mentioned (2007, 304; cf Lafler 1997; Whittle 2005).

If the aim of this article was to ‘save’ Forster it would be tempting to read his gift to Alice Buckett as a socialist, feminist act: rendering visible female domestic labour and as an acknowledgement of the inevitability of care. But such a ‘heroic’ reading is precisely that. Domestic labour was as ‘invisible’ to Forster as it was to most people of his background. Furbank records that he “was used to maids,” and staying with a friend without servants “would think it odd” that she would “busy herself with housework instead of talking to him” (1977, 320). Moreover, bequests to servants can also be interpreted as an acknowledgement of discretion as much as labour; as Light notes, gossip is “the one weapon all servants have had through the ages” (2007, 295).

Historical research indicates that bequests to servants in earlier periods were not unusual (Willan 1980). Further evidence of this is provided by numerous nineteenth-century cases in which the clarity of general bequests to servants is disputed.⁸ By the 1950s, live-in domestic service, “largely disappeared from the vast majority of middle class households” (Light 2007, 313) and with it, perhaps, the custom of such legacies. The newspaper headline, “Bequests to Servants,” on the publication in 1954 of the will of Viscount Simon (a distinguished Lord Chancellor) suggests that it was, by then, at least noteworthy.⁹ Consequently, it is possible to read Forster’s modest bequest in 1965, as so much of his life, as traditional, pragmatic or progressive.

⁸ See, for example, *Chilcot v Bromley* (1806) 12 Ves 114; *Herbert v Reid* (1810) 16 Ves 481; *Howard v Wilson* (1832) 4 Hag Ecc 107.

⁹ *The Glasgow Herald* 17 February 1954. He bequeathed £500 each to his cook and housemaid.

'Family' and 'Marriage'

Forster's friendship networks could be described as 'familial'. But in more conventional terms two other groups of individuals included in his will can also collectively be described as Forster's 'family': the Whichelos and the Buckingham's.

Whichelo was his mother's maiden name and the will includes four bequests to first cousins (Laura King, née Whichelo, and Gerald and Philip Whichelo – clauses 17, 2, 3) and one to the widow of a first cousin (Florence Whichelo, clause 1). These are the people – bar the widow of the cousin – who would have been entitled to his entire estate had Forster died intestate. However, his will did not include all his first cousins¹⁰ nor were those included treated equally (Philip and Florence were each left £1000 and both Laura and Gerald the sum of £100). Their inclusion in the will represents an acknowledgement of his biological family but these discriminations suggest that it was one motivated not simply by obligation or convention but by personal considerations of affection and perception of need.

In the will these are the only beneficiaries, together with a god-child discussed below, where Forster's relationship to them is stated in the will; for example, "To my first cousin Gerald Wichelo" (clause 2). The practical and legal argument for such descriptions is that they avoid the possibility of disputes over identification. But the absence of descriptions for the other beneficiaries, the unusual surname, and the fact that the addresses of these beneficiaries are all stated suggest that the reasons are more complex; that the descriptions 'cousin' and 'god-child' do not just identify the person but legitimise or provide a rationalisation of the gift. Moreover, perhaps Forster did not wish, or saw no need, to label the nature of the other relationships. However, descriptions such as, "my friend [...]," noted in studies of wills from earlier periods, become less common when lawyers begin to write wills. Forster must have clearly explained his relationship to those identified to his lawyers, as evidenced in the will, but what passed between them in connection with his relationship with the other beneficiaries can only be guessed at.

There are bequests to four Buckingham's in the will. To Robert Buckingham and to his wife May Buckingham he bequeathed £1000 each (clauses 4, 5), to their daughter-in-law Sylvia Buckingham, described in the will as "the widow of my godson Robert Morgan Buckingham," the sum of £2000 (clause 15), and to Edward Buckingham, Robert's brother, the sum of £100 (clause 7).

¹⁰ See family trees in Beauman (1993) and Furbank (1977).

There is nothing in the will which identifies the – now well documented – intimate relationship between Bob (Robert) Buckingham and Forster. Indeed the posthumous picture coheres with the family’s own narrative of him as “a kindly grandfather figure” (Moffatt 2010, 322).

While prominent in the will, his larger gifts to them in his life time (he gave them £10,000 in 1964 and paid a monthly allowance to his god-son’s widow after his death in 1962 (Furbank 1977, 316)), his bequest to Bob being made alongside those to his wife, daughter-in-law and brother, and by the omission of explanations, Forster was able to ensure that his will – a public document – presented a narrative that while not in any way dishonest, like so much of his fiction, left clues for alternative meanings only to be understood by a select readership.

Progeny

Martin observes that a key theme that Forster returned to in his novels was, “the problem of continuity without direct physical begetting” (1997, 255). His novels resolve this problem with spiritual heirs taking the place of genetic ones and with informal adoptions; alternative genealogies that operate outside of those based on codified law, marriage and the traditional family. As Martin notes: “For Forster, begetting removed conception from the body to the mind and proposed a kind of elective inheritance” (1997, 273). Both this concern with continuity and creative forms of resolution are evident in his will.

The bequest to the widow of his god-son has been noted above. Forster also gave his god-son the antique nursery table of his great aunt Marianne Thornton; according to May Buckingham, “The continuity pleased him however vague it may seem to others” (Das and Beer 1979, 183). But it can also be perceived in the legacies of £100 each to Ralph Meredith and Mrs Sidney Stewart (cl 12, 13). The will informs us that they are the son and daughter of “the late Professor Meredith.” Known as “HOM,” Meredith was Forster’s first love, and Moffat and others have suggested the model for Clive in *Maurice* (Moffat 2010, 44, 65, 115). Forster and Meredith drifted apart many decades before Forster wrote his will and there is no indication from the numerous biographies of Forster that he was close to his children; indeed of the 19 legacies they are the only ones where no address is provided. Their presence in the will perhaps served to acknowledge – almost ‘memorialise’ – the significance of the relationship with their father. In other words, it is through the offspring of the father, through the next generation, that he embeds his past relationship.

Many of Forster's contemporaries had, inevitably, pre-deceased him. But his bequests to friends from younger generations, Furbank and Fletcher, and the larger legacy of £1000 to his cousin Philip Whichelo (26 years younger than Forster, he was a set designer and painter of male nudes) can be read not simply as acknowledgments of individual connections but to a certain extent as constructing an alternative to inter-generational genealogies based on children. This interpretation is perhaps clearer still in the context of the gift to King's College. For in this gift Forster positions himself as both the heir to a tradition and shared values and in a relationship with future generations. In this way, the gift presents a form of solution to his concern expressed in *The Longest Journey*, about the fragility and absence of public records of friendship and the fact that, unlike familial relations, they "die out in a generation" (quoted in Martin 1997, 264). *The Longest Journey* was dedicated to the fraternity of Apostles and in a sense through his gift in his will he asserts the extent to which the fraternity represents "a begotten progeny" (Summers 1983, 72).

In developing a concept of "queer temporality," Freeman draws attention to the dominance of 'reprofuturity' or 'straight time'; a world in which "the child is redeemer" (2010, 19, 21) and in which the accumulated cultural and legal ways in which generations are recorded construct genealogies by which groups "make legible not only themselves but also history" (2010, 21). Forster's will, like his novels, attests to a desire to record an alternative history, genealogy and temporality. But it can also be read as highly traditional. Halberstam describes "queer time" as "the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance and child rearing" and refers to wills as a key tool of "middle class logic" (2005, 2, 5). From this perspective, Forster's very attempts at control-after-death, and his concern for continuation, can be read as evidence of his inherent conservatism. As always, Forster's outsider comments are made from within.

It is possible to read these bequests as acknowledgments of distinct roles: god-father, father's lover, an elder cousin. A concept that encapsulates all these roles and provides an analytical tool for reading these bequests is the avuncular. Sedgwick argues that the avuncular "demonstrates the possibility of non-conformity as an essential fact of social life," and exhorts the reader to "Forget the name of the Father. Think of your uncles and your aunts" (1994, 59). Forster implicitly recognised this. In a letter to a friend who had requested him to be the god-father of his son, Forster commented that: "God fathers and god mothers are to tell you about the things that they have liked in life, being alive is so great, that no person can understand it all" (Forster 1983, 110).

Drawing on Sedgwick's analysis, Counter identifies how the avuncular testator played a key role in French nineteenth-century literature: how the ability of the unencumbered uncle to favour "the erotic over the procreative," "election over blood heirs," and "a narrative, and a discourse that he has not, in a sense, been born into" enabled him to function as a provocative metaphor for democratic, liberal values (2010, 102). Whether or not influenced by these novels, Forster's will shares many of the characteristics of these literary avuncular testators.

Against Maurice

Forster's will was reported on the front page of *The Times* four days after the grant of probate on Tuesday 10th November 1970. The short notice included the following statement: "His effects included a manuscript of a novel, *Maurice*, which he did not want published until after his death". The novel is not referred to explicitly in the will but the residue is defined as including copyrights and royalties of books "unpublished at the date of my death" (clause 7). *The Times* was clearly reporting information derived from an undisclosed source. But it is fitting that the novel should have been referred to in the context of his will (and not his obituary¹¹). For in many respects *Maurice* was his most significant public legacy. Indeed, it arguably overshadowed everything else to the extent that it is *Maurice*, written in 1913/14, and not his will, that is read as his 'last word'; a reading lent weight by the inclusion of the Terminal Note written in 1960. While the autobiographical voice is clear in all his novels, the "personal nature" of *Maurice* has provoked harsh criticisms (Scott 1984; Gillie 1983; Kermodé 2010).

In response to such claims Da Silva observes that the "mature demands of great literature" are placed in opposition to the "immature pleasures of homosexuality" (1998, 237). The negative readings of *Maurice* have reinforced the image of Forster as a pre-gay liberation lonely homosexual who lived with only his romantic yearnings for company. His death, just three years after the decriminalisation of homosexual acts by the Sexual Offences Act 1967 – too late – and his very decision to postpone the publication of *Maurice*, merely served to reinforce the image of a man haunted by Wilde.

However, Plomer, who helped Forster gather material to be made available to his biographer recalled that "he wanted it made clear that H[omosexuality] 'had worked'"

¹¹ His obituary in *The Times*, written by William Plomer and published four months earlier, makes no mention of it, despite the fact that its existence was well known to him.

(Moffatt 2010, 316). And the argument here is that it is his will, and not *Maurice*, that provides the clues as to the means by which he considered it 'worked'. *Maurice* narrates Forster's move from idealising platonic friendship (in Cambridge), to an embracement of physicality (in the Greenwood) (Martin 1983). And both, as explored above, are evident in his will. But the will goes beyond this and provides a more reflective, more lived and often more ambivalent view.

Most significantly the will goes beyond the utopian exclusive conjugal couple. Forster himself, critically reflecting on *Maurice*, considered the idea of the rescuer from "otherwhere," providing salvation to be "a fake" notion (Moffatt 2010, 304). And his life, as reflected in the complex kinship network painted in his will, speaks of the sustainability of non-monogamous relationships, bisexuality, a ménage à trois, quasi-adoptions, and friendships across ages and class and both equal to and more significant than biological relations.

If Sprott, Forster's executor and main beneficiary, had also been his lover, they would now have been able to enter a civil partnership and he would be recognised and provided for under the laws of intestacy. But the will refuses and unsettles this legal liberal resolution. By presenting a life lived outside of both the romantic and political ideal of the conjugal couple, Forster's will can be read as questioning a type of marriage.

Moreover, the plethora of connections in his will can be read not simply as a call for liberal permissiveness. For, more troubling yet, it might cohere with what Lane reads in his darker posthumous short stories to be an attribution of: "a non-redemptive dimension to human sexuality and social interaction, in which desire gleefully emerges from the manifest failure of ordinary connection" (1997, 189). These readings attest to Trilling's observation in 1967, all the more pertinent now *after* the realisation of extensive reforms, that: "while liberal readers can go a long way with Forster, they can seldom go all the way [...] they suspect that Forster is not quite playing their game, they feel that he is challenging them as well as what they dislike" (1967, 14). Forster's will consequently is an important historical text that complicates the binary of pre- and post-liberation gay history, and provides an empirical source that complements critiques of marriage (and civil partnerships). But one can read too much, or simply what one desires, into a will. And as Heaphy notes, "narratives about lesbian and gay reflexivity sometimes confuse analysis with prescription and actualities with potentialities" (2008, n.p.).

Forster's will, with its emphasis on the recording of relationships, reflects perhaps not so much a commitment to autonomy or self-consciously radical lifestyles but, what Smart refers to as "connectedness." Not to be confused with Forster's normative plea

to ‘only-connect’, the concept provides an explicit counter-balance to the ‘individualization’ thesis by drawing attention to “an awareness of connection, relationship, reciprocal emotion, entwinement, memory” (2007, 189).

Conclusion

E.M. Forster – a very rich, distinguished author, public intellectual, and recipient of the Companion of Honour and the Order of Merit – was no everyman. His public status had a clear impact on his posthumous deliberations and in many respects his will is impeccably respectable. Indeed, his generous charitable bequests and the ways in which the will can be read as simultaneously acknowledging and masking his motives and relationships arguably demonstrates a sophisticated awareness and negotiation of a public and private readership. That it gave rise to no public rebukes or critical responses attests to this, and, together with the publication of *Maurice*, partly explains why later scholarship has overlooked his will. But perhaps the main reason for the silence is the fact that it was written not by him; for the words are not his but those of a lawyer who drafted it in a strictly conventional, impersonal fashion. In other words, the legal format renders it purely functional.

It is important to acknowledge that the detailed reading here of Forster’s will – legitimising its place within scholarship about Forster – is enabled by the extensive secondary literature about him and informed by his interest in inheritance evidenced in his novels.

But the reading presented here attests to the possibility of the conventional will providing a form of autobiographical self-representation (Horton 2012), and, as such, a text “that performs values, ethics of care” and is “intimately tied to philosophical endeavours” (Mathien and Wright 2006, 14). While this legitimises a deeper reading of wills it also serves to add to the inherent methodological challenges identified here in the reading of wills; for all life writing is simultaneously a form of self-definition and self-deception (Mathien and Wright 2006, 6).

While it is argued here that Forster used his will to express ideas and feelings, the aim has not been to offer one explanation, which is to say, a reading that purports to reveal the authentic ‘truth’ about Forster’s intent. The claims made by the literary critic Barthes in his influential article “The Death of the Author” are pertinent here (but not for the obvious ironic reasons necessitated in a Reading of a Will). Rather, that ‘findings’

and attempts at meaning-making through testaments are contingent on the perspective and lens through which one reads (Watkins 2012). Far less has the reading here been an attempt to resolve the passionate debates about Forster's inherent values or politics. Rather, to indicate both the ways in which his will, too, can be interpreted in contradictory ways. For it is the very fact that Forster, still, elicits strong reactions and disputes, or as Bredbeck notes, "has long haunted criticism as a figure torn between conflicted modes of existence" (1997, 55), that is perhaps one of his most compelling legacies.

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The Novels

“Facing the Sunshine”: Nature and (Social) Environment in E.M. Forster’s *A Room with a View*

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Abstract

The relationship between nature and humans has been widely explored in literature. Spirituality, through which both human individuals and nature are connected, is the core concept in British and American transcendentalism, whose ideas permeate E.M. Forster’s novel *A Room with a View* (1908). Forster’s stance on nature and its role in the life of humans is striking in this narrative and enables multiple interpretations that are relevant today when eco-awareness is one of humanity’s key goals. This article examines the intricate relationship between nature and humans that Forster establishes via both the narrative structure and the characters, and argues that it is through the depictions of nature and the environment that the author celebrates individualism and diversity. Yet it is also with the help of overt comparisons and parallelism of environmental fluctuations with the events that happen in the lives of the main characters that Forster introduces a unique ecological philosophy, underlining the inseparability of humans from nature and vice versa, thus expressing both humility and rapture with regard to the created symbiosis, its beauty and inscrutability.

Keywords: nature, environment, transcendentalism, individualism, diversity, E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View*

Introduction

The relationship between nature and humans has been widely explored in literature. Spirituality, through which both human individuals and nature are connected, is the core concept of transcendentalism, whose ideas entwine with those expressed by E.M. Forster in *A Room with a View* (1908). Forster's view on nature and its role in the life of humans is striking in this narrative and enables multiple interpretations that are relevant especially today when eco-awareness finally turns into one of humanity's key goals. This article examines the intricate relationship between nature and humans that Forster establishes via both the narrative structure and the characters, and argues that it is through the depictions of nature and the environment that the author celebrates individualism and diversity. Yet it is also with the help of overt comparisons and parallelisms of environmental fluctuations with the events that happen in the lives of the main characters that Forster introduces a unique ecological philosophy, underlining the inseparability of humans from nature and vice versa, thus expressing both humility and rapture towards the created symbiosis, its beauty and inscrutability.

Social Environment and Nature

Numerous scholars study Forster's works in light of postcolonial theory, queer theory, and eco-criticism. Perhaps the most recent prominent examples here include Robert K. Martin and George Piggford's 1997 edited collection *Queer Forster*, Elsa Cavalie and Laurent Mellet's 2017 edited collection *Only Connect: E.M. Forster's Legacies in British Fiction*, Francesca Pierini's "Such is the Working of the Southern Mind: A Postcolonial Reading of E.M. Forster's Italian Narratives" (2017–18), as well as Krzysztof Fordoński's essays on Forster, including "E.M. Forster and the English Ways of Ex(Sup)ressing Emotions" (2016). These scholarly works explore the complexity of Forster's oeuvre and his contribution to literary studies in general and queer studies, English studies, and postcolonial studies in particular. I, in turn, want to contribute to the existing research by examining Forster's contribution to the formation of the meaning of the environment and propose a reading one of his works – the novel *A Room with a View* (1908) – as a work of eco-fiction. Interpreting *A Room with a View* as an example of eco-fiction, I rely on Mike Vasey's definition of the term as

stories set in fictional landscapes that capture the essence of natural ecosystems [...]. [They] can build around human relationships to these ecosystems or leave out humans altogether. The story itself, however, takes the reader into the natural world and brings it alive [...]. Ideally the landscape and ecosystems – whether fantasy or real – should be as ‘realistic’ as possible and plot constraints should accord with ecological principles. (qtd. in Dwyer 2010, 3)

But I also consider Patrick D. Murphy’s ideas on “nature oriented literature” and “environmental literature” and the power of such writings “to propel people back into the rest of nature with new perspectives and frames of reference” (qtd. in Dwyer 2010, 4).

From his first novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) to the posthumously-published *Maurice* (1971), Forster’s aim was always to reflect the most profound social, cultural, and political tensions in his works. The concept of the environment thus was never foreign to him, yet the meaning in which Forster used it should be deprived of any ambiguity. Forster discussed social and political environments within which such issues as class difference, intolerance, and many others were engendered. Nevertheless, as a close reading of *A Room with a View* reveals, the writer was also interested in the ecological environment and the role and place of nature in the human world. In this novel, Forster demonstrates how humans and nature co-exist constructing a unified ecosystem. The transformations in the characters’ lives are tightly connected to the alternation of seasons, whereas the actions of the characters always mirror weather changes. The multiple social pressures that the characters experience throughout the novel are introduced to reveal the only true way of living, i.e., being honest to oneself and accepting nature as an integral part of one’s being.

Through the novel’s rather uncomplicated plot, Forster explores the social issues that were current during the Edwardian era; yet, as this article argues, one of the ways in which Forster explores these issues is an investigation of nature. The novel abounds in the images of nature that are used to describe surroundings, moods of the characters, as well as the problems and inner struggles that they experience. Forster’s social critique of gender and class boundaries that many English people faced at the beginning of the twentieth century becomes successful and particularly vivid thanks, also, to the numerous references to the images of nature.

One of the earlier scenes in Florence is described as follows:

Evening approached while they chatted; the air became brighter; the colours on the trees and hills were purified, and the Arno lost its muddy solidity and began to twinkle.

There were a few streaks of bluish-green among the clouds, a few patches of watery light upon the earth, and then the dripping façade of San Miniato shone brilliantly in the declining sun. (Forster 2012, 39)

Forster's close attention to details is striking; the changes that happen to the place as the day comes to its end are described in a purely artistic manner, reviving the images of colorful paintings. The accuracy of an artist in depicting nature is noticeable throughout the whole novel, as the descriptions like the one above are the rule rather than an exception for *A Room with a View*. John Colmer calls *A Room with a View* "Forster's *sunniest* novel" (1975, 43; emphasis added). The epithet used by the scholar aptly reflects the dominant role that nature plays in the narrative. The "interplay between character and environment" that characterizes the novel from the beginning to its end helps "oppos[e]" not only the two geographical spaces of England and Italy but also the rights of individual freedoms and the wrongs of social oppression (Edwards 2002, 42, 47).

Mr. Emerson, the father of George, whose name clearly alludes to the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, accentuates the power of nature and the connection of every individual to it, stating that "[w]e know that we come from the winds, and that we shall return to them" (Forster 2012, 28). Forster's goal to demonstrate the unity of nature and human beings is, however, achieved not only through the recognition of the physical bond that exists between the two, for humans are part of the natural world, but also through the establishment of a spiritual bond. The latter is done through the descriptions of weather fluctuations and alternations of seasons. To specify, Forster seems to insist that human nature in its pure form can be compared to spring, i.e., it is fresh, ageless, promising, and beautiful. That is the reason for the multiple references to spring in the novel. For example, the British clergyman Mr. Eager wonders: "Do you suppose there's any difference between spring in nature and spring in man? But there we go, praising the one and condemning the other as improper, ashamed that the same laws work eternally through both" (66). Later, as Lucy finds herself in the pleasant company of an Italian driver, "[f]or the first time she felt the influence of spring" (69), which here stands both for a specific season as the characters are surrounded by blue violets but also for the inner peace and satisfaction, for "[i]n the company of this common man the world was beautiful and direct" (69). It also, quite evidently, stands for an awakening of the senses, for the atmosphere of spring encourages and inspires George to kiss Lucy.

After George kisses Lucy – the action witnessed by Lucy's cousin – Forster intensifies the conflict that is about to happen not only through the development of the plot but also

through the descriptions of nature that here serve as a peculiar narrative tool. Thus the reader is informed of the cold that the characters feel which signifies “the swift approach of bad weather” (71). The coming “storm” (74) is forecast due to the emergence of “all these clouds, all this immense electrical display” (72). Lucy’s sad mood is echoed by the gloomy atmosphere created by the stormy weather, and the talk between Lucy and her cousin is preceded by a longer description of the setting:

The rain was streaming down the black windows, and the great room felt damp and chilly. One candle burned trembling on the chest of drawers close to Miss Bartlett’s toque, which cast monstrous and fantastic shadows on the bolted door. A tram roared by in the dark, and Lucy felt unaccountably sad, though she had long since dried her eyes. She lifted them to the ceiling, where the griffins and bassoons were colourless and vague, the very ghosts of joy. (76)

Through the rain, Forster depicts the inner concerns experienced by the characters. Lucy is not aware of her feelings for George, she has not realized them yet, and she is scared of them, therefore, her torment mainly comes from scarce self-knowledge, from not knowing her desires and not knowing how to articulate them, accept them, and act upon them in spite of social conventions. By fully concurring to the denial of her own feelings, Lucy gets in a muddle mostly by herself. Charlotte is concerned for Lucy and adopts the categories that are available to her; therefore, she thinks that all men are dishonest, mostly because she has not experienced relationships. Charlotte wants Lucy to be happy, only it will take her time to realize what this means. Once she understands, after she listens to George’s declaration of love to Lucy, she will realize something new, and she will “push” Lucy towards George by making Lucy’s last encounter with old Mr. Emerson possible. Curiously, in *The Shaping of the Double Vision: The Symbolic Systems of the Italian Novels of Edward Morgan Forster*, Fordoński views references to nature like the one to the rain as a form of “symbolism” that helps “create a music-like effect” – the so-called “rhythms”:

Any object [...], animal [...], plant [...], or natural phenomenon (rainstorm, light, darkness) may be used to form such rhythms thus attaining the symbolic quality by its place within the structure of the text rather than by some inherent qualities which could be defined as ‘symbolic’. (2005, 12)

Nature – and various natural events, including the rain described in this scene – becomes both a place to situate the characters and an instrument through which to define the characters' actions, behaviors, and feelings.

Even Cecil, a rather tedious character in the novel, admits that we should appreciate nature and upon the return to England meditates upon the grandiosity of the environment: "Nature – simplest of topics, he thought – lay around them. He praised the pine-woods, the deep lakes of bracken, the crimson leaves that spotted the hurt-bushes, the serviceable beauty of the turnpike road" (104). Cecil confesses that he likes both the urbanism of London and the rural beauty of its suburbia and adds: "After all, I do believe that birds and trees and the sky are the most wonderful things in life, and that the people who live amongst them must be the best" (104). It is striking that Lucy phrases her opinion about nature in exactly the same words: "Nature – simplest of topics, she thought – was around them" (110). Forster uses Cecil and Lucy's remarks on nature to trace a deep divide between the two characters. Lucy is sincere in her appreciation of nature; Cecil is, as usual, trying to overcome his snobbishness with very poor results. He is trying to convince himself of the fact that Lucy does not live among ignorant people, who have seen too much of nature and too little of the urban world. He is trying to get close to Lucy, to come across as someone who is capable of appreciating simple values. Forster is making the point that there are people (like Cecil) so affected by posturing and social conventions that they cannot genuinely or directly appreciate what nature has to offer. The author draws the connections between Lucy and nature, on the one hand, and Cecil and nature, on the other. While the two characters are very different, the idea of the human being part of nature – irrespective of his/her behavior and actions – is indubitable to Forster.

The three seasons are distinctly present in the novel only to reinforce the changes in the lives of the main characters, and especially Lucy. The focus on the three (and not four) seasons is a telling choice: Forster follows the pattern of Greek (Mediterranean) year with three seasons only, treating autumn and winter as one season. *A Room with a View* starts in spring and the plot develops through summer and autumn. Along with the references to spring that were mentioned earlier, Forster provides his readers with multiple introductions to new seasons. First, "It was a Saturday afternoon, gay and brilliant after abundant rains, and the spirit of youth dwelt in it, though the season was now autumn. All that was gracious triumphed" (129). Second, "She [Lucy] obeyed, but loitered disconsolately at the landing window. It faced north, so there was little view, and no view of the sky. Now, as in the winter, the pine trees hung close to her eyes. One

connected the landing window with depression” (142). Third, “But Lucy had developed since the spring” (169). And finally:

But, once in the open air, she paused. Some emotion – pity, terror, love, but the emotion was strong – seized her, and she was aware of autumn. Summer was ending, and the evening brought her odours of decay, the more pathetic because they were reminiscent of spring. That something or other mattered intellectually? A leaf, violently agitated, danced past her, while other leaves lay motionless. That the earth was hastening to re-enter darkness, and the shadows of those trees to creep over Windy Corner? (176)

The cyclicity that Forster reminds his readers about reinforces the complexity of human nature and the beauty that each individual bears in him/herself.

The appeal to appreciate nature is heard multiple times in the novel. From “Listen to the wind among the pines! Yours is a glorious country” (132) to the claims concerning “the wonder of the water” (136) and Lucy’s “salut[ing] the dear view and the dear garden in the foreground, and above them, scarce conceivable elsewhere, the dear sun” (156) to George’s meditations on “kindness” and “light” (158) and the appeal “Choose a place where you won’t do harm – yes, choose a place where you won’t do very much harm, and stand in it for all you are worth, facing the sunshine” (159). Forster’s novel largely foregrounds the fact that underappreciating nature is a terrible sin. Moreover, the writer draws parallels between humanity’s careless attitude to nature (and, generally, the idea of taking the healthy environment for granted) and the existing social problems, among them are gender and class inequalities.

E.M. Forster’s Eco-Philosophy

What fascinates the reader the most is, indeed, not Forster’s peculiar way of describing nature but rather his application of the images of nature in the discussions of the social environment. Judith Scherer Herz notices that the theme of love is central in Forster’s writing:

Love is clearly the key word for Forster. More than any other, it binds together his writing, makes it a body, filled with a vital substance, both passionate and spiritual. Love is theory, love is practice, and sometimes in the fiction, it is difficult to distinguish

between them. Love creates, love, indeed, is the beloved republic, but even as abstraction, as idea, is [*sic*] speaks of the experience of touch, the contradictions of desire, the need to connect. (1978, 254; emphasis in original)

Yet while love in *A Room with a View* is an important concept through which one can examine the relationship between different characters, it is also through the theme of love that Forster conveys his views on the social and natural environments. To borrow from Jeffrey Heath, “One of Forster’s principal touchstones is the everyday world, experienced directly and with love. This world includes nature and its daily cycles (the roaring Arno and the untempered sun), as well as the ordinary domain of furniture, bones, [etc.]” (1994, 404–05). Love to oneself and to one’s surroundings that includes both people and places is but the key philosophy entwined in *A Room with a View*. In my ecocritical reading of the novel, however, I define this philosophy as *eco-philosophy*, for I see intricate and tight connections between Forster’s treatment of the social environment and the natural environment. Essentially, the social is part of the natural; various social issues that are foregrounded in the novel, including inequality, are, in principle, the result of humanity’s careless attitude to nature. Not noticing and appreciating nature as a unique and vital part of our (social and natural) environment is the result of an anthropocentric existence – the kind of existence that Forster is aware of (for the human does matter) but heavily condemns (for the centrality of the human undermines the significance of nature, as well as leads to an establishment of a hierarchy within the human world as such, making some humans, or human traits, more valuable and acceptable than other). Energetically exploring the so-called nature-culture divide, *A Room with a View* refutes the “hierarchy of culture over nature” (Giblett 2014, 21). Forster makes the point that humans must accept, respect, and appreciate their most natural and less contrived aspects. Forster’s eco-philosophy thus suggests that the social can be approached through the natural.

An environmental/ecological approach to the human is particularly valuable in Forster’s explorations of such issues as identity, gender, and sexuality. *A Room with a View* is classified as one of Forster’s novels that “offer women and men suffering from the pathologies of middle-class Englishness a passage to nature, passion, and freedom” (Peppis 2007, 47). This escape to nature is not only a way to protest against, or temporarily forget about, the dominant patriarchal norms and expectations but also an opportunity to discover one’s own true self. Certainly, homosexuality is one such issue that Forster examines and legitimizes through nature. To specify,

Forster essentializes the “greenwood” as a homosexual version of what Harry Berger Jr. calls the “second world.” Modelled upon the material (“first”) world, yet employing the artistic imagination in order to improve upon it, Forster’s “second world” offers a critique of mainstream sexual practices and values read through the lens of ecocriticism. (Christie 2005, 2)

In that way, Forster demonstrates “how aesthetics can become a decisive force for or against environmental change” (Buell qtd. in Christie 2005, 2). For Forster, thus, as portrayed in *A Room with a View*, the human and nature do not simply exist in close proximity, they *are* an integrated whole. As Forster explores the characters’ struggles to withstand certain norms, define who they are, and identify their places in the social environment that they construct and inhabit, he uses Nature as a prism through which to define humanity. In her analysis of Forster’s oeuvre, Kelly Sultzbach makes a pivotal observation: “the ecocentric foundations of his [Forster’s] ideals productively complicate the very definition of what it means to be human” (2016, 25). To specify, “what it means to be human is only realized by confronting what it means to be a creature in a larger environmental habitat that informs so-called essential human qualities” (Sultzbach 2016, 25). Co-existence of humans with/within/in Nature is thus crucial to the very meaning of ‘being human’. This is what constructs Forster’s eco-philosophy as an ideology to understand and explicate the human, the (natural and social) environment, and the tight and complex relationship between the two.

Certainly, the novel’s understanding of the world is not purely positive, it is rather the *potential* for being positive, almost sublime, that Forster calls us to discover. This is most vividly done through the character of Lucy who, according to Lynne Walhout Hinojosa, “must find her true self by learning to read the depths of her soul and then must strive to make that true self a lived reality, shedding her false self” (2010, 73), the transformation that Michael L. Ross terms as “a lengthy and often backtracking journey away from ‘darkness’ and into the ‘light’” (1980, 155). This “journey” is evidently necessary not only for Lucy but for each and every character in the novel, and each of these transformations is marked by Forster by the descriptions of nature, which guides the readers through the changing world of the protagonists. Obviously, only a few of them are able to change: some remain blind to the possibility of change (Cecil), others are afraid to change (Charlotte). However, Forster does not attempt to envision an idyllic world, where a transformation is an easy process. On the contrary, he imagines both the success and the failure as integral parts of such a process. Herz has already noticed

that “[t]he descriptions of place are closely aligned to the development of the characters” (2007, 145), yet I would like to develop this observation further and argue that *A Room with a View* demonstrates that it is only when noticing and realizing natural changes within the ecological environment that humans are capable to fully cognize human nature as individual, changing, and sacred.

The oppression of human individuality that Forster argues strongly against is viewed as the darkest of human vices as can be observed in multiple scenes. Interpreting the title of the novel, Ross contends that “sight itself functions as a controlling metaphor,” and adds that “one major way in which Charlotte imposes her repressive will on Lucy is by blocking her field of vision” (157). Here the scholar refers to the example of the “naked human body” that is perceived by Charlotte as “something that must be clothed” (157). Yet this is the view that Forster does not support, as he arguably speaks through the character of Mr. Emerson for whom “[a] ‘renaissance’ [...] involves a return to the body a simple being or presence in the world outside of any typological interpretation, and the fullest living of the body in a life of love among other humans. For him [for Mr. Emerson], each human should be equally capable of living this way in freedom” (Hinojosa 2010, 82).

The divinity of nature is underlined in the talk between Mr. Beebe and Mr. Emerson, as the latter discusses the Garden of Eden. While the talk is largely devoted to the existing gender inequality, it also touches upon the role of nature in the issue, for Mr. Emerson claims that “[w]e shall enter it [the Garden of Eden] when we no longer despise our bodies” (131). Mr. Emerson continues: “I believed in a return to Nature once. But how can we return to Nature when we have never been with her? Today, I believe that we must discover Nature. After many conquests we shall attain simplicity. It is our heritage” (131). This observation underscores Forster’s belief in the divinity of every individual irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, and other possible characteristics that distinguish one human from another, accentuating diversity and individual uniqueness.

The scene when George, Fred, and Mr. Beebe swim naked in a pond and then happily run through the woods is symbolic in many ways, too. According to Colmer, it “acts as a baptism into brotherhood” (50), “serves its function of establishing the value of naturalness and spontaneous joy,” while “the essence of its eroticism is homosexual” (51). Forster doubtlessly raises the questions of gender and homosexuality in this episode, yet what is even more important is that he, indeed, foregrounds the pricelessness of being natural and true to one’s self. And while the novel “explores the importance of telling the truth in a variety of ways,” the central way is the one termed by Colmer as “Forster’s idea

of honesty” that “implies an antithesis between the self and society” (49). The generated “conflict between naturalness and conventionality” (44) that is typical not only of Lucy but also of all the other characters in the novel is the one that is to be solved by these characters both on individual and collective levels. And in this regard, the “isolation from one another” (Herz 1978, 258) that can be noticed in the relations between and actions of the characters should not be viewed as a disadvantage of the plot but rather as a way to achieve the transcendental unity between self and naturalness. An observation made by Hinojosa expands this theory:

In *A Room with a View*, Forster ridicules and makes fun of typological ethics while providing a new “aesthetic” moral view in which a renaissance or reuniting of one’s true self somehow naturally (yet vaguely) leads to a moral life of egalitarianism and love. To achieve this, all conventional and transcendental notions of characterization and morality have to be discarded. In this way, although Forster does not explore the consciousness and inner workings of his characters’ psyches as his modernist contemporaries did, his reworkings and inversion of the metaphysics and morality of Puritan typological hermeneutics points to a very modernist view of morality and the individual self. (2010, 84)

Through his eco-philosophy, Forster not only establishes environmental awareness that remains actual today, but he also foregrounds equality as the core principle of human existence. The author’s views on existentialism, environmentalism, feminism, and diversity that are deeply rooted in his worshiping of nature celebrate every human as a unique creation of nature.

Conclusion

The intricate relationship between humans and nature that is meticulously explored in *A Room with a View* is key to one’s understanding of Forster’s philosophy of gender, ecology, and equality. This purely environmental narrative tackles a wide array of problems that British society faced at the beginning of the twentieth century. Scrutinizing the issues of class and gender, Forster inevitably turns to the profound questions of identity, transformation, and even age. Heavily criticizing such a concept as norm, Forster invites the readers to consider human uniqueness and individuality. It is through his detailed

explorations of the role of nature in our lives that Forster succeeds to foreground the importance of establishing diversity as a guideline for the social order.

Forster's transcendental views on collaboration between and unification of humans and nature are hardly novel, yet the author's treatment of the problem deserves to be assessed as masterly. Attempting to demonstrate that just as nature has its cycles (every day is different from the previous one; spring, summer, and autumn are all beautiful but distinctly different seasons), so is every human unlike another one. Through his discussions of these similarities between organization of the natural and human worlds, Forster skillfully crafts his eco-philosophy, according to which, only when recognizing nature as a perpetually transforming, yet beautiful and sublime force, one will be able to recognize the true value of a human being.

Forster's views on nature as profoundly complex, majestic, but also caring and life-giving are particularly significant today, in the twenty-first century, when the problem of climate change that humanity faces forces us to revisit the concepts of nature and the environment, understand their cultural value that was widely established in literature by multiple authors, among them is Forster. The ideas of appreciation of nature and human responsibility for it foreground the issue of preservation – the important aspect that balances the existence of humanity within the natural world that has evidently been ignored for the time long enough to provoke anthropogenic climate change. Forster's *A Room with a View* is, in this regard, a manifesto for all of us as we tend to take nature and the comforts it provides us with for granted, forgetting about the fragility of the natural world and the environment.

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Posing as Pastoral: The Displacement of the “very poor” in *Howards End*

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Abstract

There is a yearning for the pastoral idyll that lies at the heart of *Howards End*, but Forster’s veneration for the rural is often complicated by its dependence on lower-class characters who do not feature prominently within the text. Instead, the author’s penchant for pastoral imagery is more commonly aligned with his upper-middle-class protagonists, who come to find peace and beauty among the natural surroundings of the English country-house. This paper seeks to examine the degree to which Forster might have been conscious of this displacement of the “very poor” within the novel, and to critically untangle his offhand-claim that he was “not concerned” with the lives or livelihood of such people who nevertheless contribute their labour in service of an idealized pastoral landscape he so passionately admires. In determining Forster’s intentions behind contrasting two so distinctly opposing socio-economic groups, we might also unearth some of the author’s more intricate anxieties about the Edwardian class system, and how the author might reconcile what many critics have labelled his ‘bourgeois-liberal guilt’ with his unmistakable admiration for a rural working-life so emblematic of the pastoral condition.

Keywords: Forster, *Howards End*, pastoral, poor, rural

For a novel so attuned to matters of money and wealth, readers and critics often come unstuck by an aloof narratorial aside found early in *Howards End*: “We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet” (Forster 2000, 38).¹ Although the bulk of the novel is indeed centred around the upper-middle-class Schlegels and the affluent, business-minded Wilcoxes, such absolutist hyperbole is compromised by Forster’s continued and transparent interest in Leonard Bast (a lower-middle-class clerk who comes to know the Schlegels) as well as his wife Jacky, and their eventual descent into “the abyss” of poverty (38). By the novel’s conclusion they have fallen into a state of destitution from which there is no return, and neither resemble the “gentlefolk, or those who are obliged to pretend they are gentlefolk” (38) for whom in his earlier statement the narrator proclaims such a marked interest. As a result, Forster’s sardonic remark parodies Wilcoxian indifference towards the poor whilst simultaneously promising to dissect the Edwardian social system that prevents Leonard from achieving some semblance of financial security and which keeps the “very poor” in their place.

Yet the “very poor” might also allude to the numerous characters and shadowy figures existing at the fringes of the plot who might stake a claim to poverty, as understood by the author at the time the novel was written. From Miss Avery (*Howards End*’s housekeeper) and Annie (the Schlegels’ maid at Wickham Place), to the oft-observed but unnamed servants, farmhands, woodcutters, and cab-drivers, there exists multiple individuals who act in continuing states of servitude to the prosperous Schlegels and Wilcoxes, and whom could not be said to quite bear strong enough a resemblance to the lower-middle-class Basts (at least not as they appear in the first half of the text). Whilst Forster cannot be said to fully explore the possibility of hardship befalling any of these minor characters to the same degree as Mr Bast, they do nevertheless exist as more than irrelevant and/or unimportant appendages to the plot, often pictured among rural settings and painted as contributing (or as even essential) to the idealized pastoral landscape coveted by the author. Whilst Forster posits the Basts in the tradition of Victorian fictions which sought to portray the working-poor amidst grimy and unsanitary urban conditions, and as deserving of charitable philanthropy that might only be provided by the generous middle-classes (as in novels such as Gaskell’s *North and South* and Dickens’ *Hard Times*),² minor

¹ All further references to the novel are listed in-text by page number only, and are taken from this edition.

² For further reading on how Dickens and Gaskell might be situated in the tradition of nineteenth-century British social reform writing, see Lenard 1999.

lower-class characters working at Howards End are instead often witnessed cutting fields and trees, passing beyond hedgerows and into the rain, and continuing to work outdoors and past sunset whilst the Wilcoxes retire indoors. As Lionel Trilling argued, Forster “put his faith in the men of the English countryside” (1959, 104) and posited the lower-classes as belonging to the natural environments they so often cultivate themselves.

Yet despite these characters’ ‘rightful’ spot amongst pastoral traditions Forster so clearly underscores as being established by their ancestors, they are often obscured by his veneration for – and identification with – the upper-middle classes (particularly the financially stable Margaret and Mrs Wilcox), who come to be most associated with the pastoral imagery found in the text. As a result, analyses of *Howards End* have largely failed to attribute the pastoral atmosphere as deriving (at least in part) from the actions of the farmhands and servants who tend to the property, mirroring how within the novel itself working-class characters aside from the Basts fade into the background, and continue to be ‘displaced’ within pastoral settings by those who reap the benefits of their labour.

It is thus within Forster’s idolization of the pastoral mode that we might come to recognize more fully his genuine attitudes towards the masses of “the very poor” whom the narrator candidly dismisses early in the text. Although they are usually depicted as in some kind of employ – and thus have not fallen into a state of complete financial destitution like the Basts – these marginal individuals’ jobs are by no means secure and were unlikely to have afforded them much leisure or freedom. As Helen C. Long asserts, by the Edwardian period “working people were worse off [than the late nineteenth-century], as prices had risen a little whilst wages had stayed the same” (1993, 6). Domestic workers and farmhands in 1910 thus undoubtedly belonged to the “lowest socio-economic group” of the era, whose plights would have been attributed to their “low level of wages” or “the uncertainty or irregularity of [such] employment” (Powell 1996, 13). Although Forster transfers such plights onto Leonard and Jacky within *Howards End* (and undoubtedly conflates to some degree the financial worries of the rural labouring-classes and the urban poor), this paper nevertheless claims that there exists within Forster’s narratorial statement an element of truth – namely, that there is little genuine concern for the fate of “very poor” who reside and work among the distinctly pastoral sites of country-cottages, open fields, and outside spaces. Whilst the author’s devotion to the preservation of the English countryside undoubtedly shines through, it is within such imagery that we might therefore begin to interrogate the extent to which the author consciously constructed his pastoral idyll as a precarious

site of struggle between these two opposing socio-economic groups; and examine why those who belong to the lower-strata of English life rarely emerge from this backdrop as three-dimensional individuals worthy of critical reflection.

Although *Howards End* is painted as more rural cottage retreat than country-house proper, Forster draws on the traditions and symbols of the country-house panegyric popularised by Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst"³ and expanded upon by novelists such as Jane Austen⁴ to underscore his predilection for the English countryside; as a result, the author's invocation of pastoral imagery often seems reserved exclusively for the upper-middle-class characters with whom *Howards End* is most concerned. In Helen's letters to Margaret that form the opening of the novel, for instance, her first impression of *Howards End* is also ours: she paints it as "old and little, and altogether delightful" in its lack of opulence, upending her expectations it would resemble the "expensive hotels" the sisters already associate with the Wilcoxes (3). She is also struck by the "big wych-elm [...] leaning a little over the house" and cannot help notice that "the air here is delicious" – containing a sweetness that emanates from "a great hedge of [dog-roses...] magnificently tall [and falling...] down in garlands" (3–4).

Whilst *Howards End* and the eponymous country-house of Jonson's poem are not exact replicas – the latter being far larger and grander in reality than Jonson described – the language and tone adopted by Forster does nevertheless recall the poet's adoration of a house which quietly evokes the beauty of its natural surroundings. Just as Penshurst is not "built to envious show / Of touch or marble" and sits "Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade" (Jonson 2006, 1–2/12), *Howards End* lies under the protective covering of an ancient tree and possesses a kind of beauty in its relative modesty. Helen's sensory perceptions of the titular property thus offer a picturesque view of England borne out of country-house traditions, where the pastoral mode is configured as "the intense reaction to beauty [...] innocence and purity [...] amid [the] peace [and] calm" (Segal 1981, 3) of the English countryside – in the same manner "the rustics" of Theocritus *Idylls*' were "characterized with – relative – naturalness" (Lyne 2009, xiii).

³ First published as part of his 1616 collection *The Forest*, Jonson's "To Penshurst" is widely regarded as one of the earliest examples of the country-house panegyric, although Amelilia Lanyer's "Description of Cookham" was published five years earlier. For a detailed deconstruction of each poem, see Pohl 2003, 224–232. For further details on the origins and traditions of country-house poetry, see McClung 1977.

⁴ To see how the country-house poem ("To Penshurst" in particular) would later go on to influence Austen's depiction of the country-house, see Graham 2002.

At *Howards End* Margaret too is overwhelmed by the sense of tranquillity she finds there. She is portrayed as savouring “one of those delicious gales of spring, in which leaves still in bud seem to rustle, swept over the land and then fell silent,” and she takes joy in “children playing uproariously in heaps of golden straw” (229). Forster’s imagery lunges at our senses, tempting us to taste, feel, see, and hear the beauty laid out before his heroine so it is unmistakably intertwined with the silence and peace that follows. Here the author amalgamates what Paul Alpers refers to as “the usual ideas of nostalgia and idyllic retreat” typical of the pastoral elegy (1997, 92); the natural world configured as offering both joy and stability in the evocation of its “delicious” surroundings. Although Evelyn Copley has detailed how “unlike Ruth Wilcox... Margaret is an urban figure” (Copley 2009, 262), the latter “does find the “peace of country entering into her” (269) by the novel’s close. In a similar vein to how Mrs Wilcox earlier admits that “*Howards End* [...] nearly [being] pulled down [...] would have killed [her]” (71), Margaret also finds that she has “grown quite fond of England” and that to leave it would entail “a real grief” (268). Here England and *Howards End* become synonymous, their loss akin to a family death, and in utilising pastoral conventions to describe the latter Forster appears to covet an old order that contains value in the peace and unassuming beauty of rural life.

As the original owner of *Howards End*, Mrs Wilcox’s affinity with the natural world – and by extension, pastoral life as envisioned by Forster – is captured early in the text, right from her first appearance when she comes “trailing noiselessly over the lawn [...] with] a wisp of hay in her hands” to resolve the chaotic scenes between Aunt Juley, Helen, and her sons Charles and Paul (19). Confronted with the “social counterpart of a motorcar” at Margaret’s luncheon party, she is again akin to “a wisp of hay [or] a flower” that “withers” (63) at the onslaught of frantic, cosmopolitan conversation; an uncompromising embodiment of the countryside that cannot withstand the alert, self-conscious intellectualism of London, just as “the roses and the gooseberries of the wayside gardens” of Hilton (the nearest town to *Howards End*) are “whitened” (16) and therefore tarnished by the dust from the Wilcoxes very own motorcar. Despite the luncheon’s failure Margaret is nevertheless “conscious of a personality that transcended their own and dwarfed their activities” (65), language that foreshadows Mrs Wilcox’s ‘transcendent’ death just a few pages onwards. Her funeral beside *Howards End* is embedded in the rural: it takes place amid “unspoilt country of field and farms” (75) where Henry quietly reflects how his wife “knew no more of worldly wickedness and wisdom than did the flowers in her garden, or the grass in her field” (76). In associating Ruth with the gentle, “unspoilt” innocence of the floral countryside, it is easy to discern

how Henry's affection for Mrs Wilcox parallels Forster's reverence for rural life, and so firm is the author's commitment to adjoining her with the natural beauty of Howards End, he even denies her a spiritual ascent to heaven:

Hour after hour the scene of the internment remained without an eye to witness it. Clouds drifted over from the west; or the church may have been a ship, high-prowed, steering with all its company towards infinity. Towards morning the air grew colder, the sky clearer, the surface of the earth hard and sparkling above the prostrate dead. (76)

The quasi-religious imagery of Mrs Wilcox's funeral initially connotes the possibility of resurrection or afterlife; being buried alone without "an eye to witness it" creates the spatial potential for a spiritual awakening, and the metaphorical depiction of the church as a "high-prowed ship" that might penetrate the "clouds drifting" above "towards infinity" clearly signals the possibility that such an afterlife exists for Ruth after her death. The subsequent sentence, however, reminds the reader that even if such a transcendent activity took place, Mrs Wilcox cannot escape the same earthly fate as others; bluntly characterised as little more than the "prostrate dead" she is reduced to a physical corpse, buried beneath the "hard" earth in a "cold" atmosphere – adjectives that might equally describe her remains.

Despite critics affirming Mrs Wilcox's "continuing spiritual presence as presiding over the twists and turns of the narrative" following her death (Cruz 2015, 404), she is repeatedly described by Forster as being "under the earth" (77), buried beneath a ground that "might freeze over her forever" (80); the very words 'Ruth/earth' even share a monosyllabic, phonetic similarity that points to the permanence of their relationship. Margaret's reflection that "no dust was so truly dust as the contents of that heavy coffin [...] no flowers so utterly wasted as the chrysanthemums that the frost must have withered before morning" (88) continues to propel this notion; Mrs Wilcox quite literally morphs into the "dust" which forms part of the earth underground, and the chrysanthemums are wasted because, being a "flower" at risk of "withering" herself, Ruth has no need for them. Having fulfilled the notion that "she seemed to belong[...] to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it" (19) Forster clearly positions her as "a counterpoise to the disruptive change and flux that he associates with modernity" (Hoy 1985, 222). Both Margaret and Mrs Wilcox – two women for whom money is no object – are thus tied fervently by the author to pastoral ideals of rural peace and the unpretentious charm of the natural world.

To rid his reader of any doubt that such wealthy characters covet a pastoral landscape and lifestyle, Forster juxtaposes his pastoral vision as the most serene and idealized space in which his upper-middle-class characters might flourish with the unwelcoming and suffocating atmosphere of the city; as Teresa Topolovská asserts, in many ways the “country versus city dichotomy may be regarded as one of *Howards End*’s principal elements” (2017, 72). On the surface, London is certainly represented in the tradition of Victorian philanthropists – as one of many “vast manufacturing cities” supported by “complex machinery” and an “industrious [...] dense, population” (Engels 2010, 15). As Margaret and Mrs Wilcox trail the London streets, Forster’s narrator sees the city as “satanic” with ever-seeming “narrower streets oppressing like galleries of a mine” and eliciting a “darkening of the spirit” for those who travel among the fog (72). The simile conceives the city as oppressive and restrictive for both the body and soul, the blackness of a mine and the lack of light underground metaphorically imposing themselves upon Margaret and Mrs Wilcox’s dampened spirits as they conclude their Christmas shopping, and the atmosphere invoking William Blake’s famous vision of the early days of the Industrial Revolution (1994, 319).

That such impressions are wrought immediately after Margaret refuses an impromptu offer to see Howards End posits the titular house as the luminous alternative, and if London evokes the suffocating fires of Hell in those moments it foreshadows Margaret’s first look upon Howards End as something almost heavenly. As she approaches the property alone “it was as if a curtain had risen” and she truly “saw the appearance of the earth” – the narrator outlines “greenage trees” and “vivid colours” where “Tulips [shone like] a tray of jewels” alongside leaves “of black and palest green,” whilst Margaret is additionally “struck by the fertility of the soil; she had seldom been in a garden where the flowers looked so well” (170). In place of the darkness of the city, or the “gray tides of London” (92) that permeate life in the capital,⁵ Howards End offers a world of vibrant colours amid fertile earth that leads to internal revelation for Margaret:

Her evening was pleasant. The sense of flux which had haunted her all the year disappeared for a time [...] She recaptured the sense of place, which is the basis of all earthly beauty, and, starting from Howards End, she attempted to realise England. She failed [...] but] an unexpected love of the island awoke in her. (174)

⁵ Julie Brown Smith offers a detailed deconstruction of Forster’s use of the colour gray in Smith (2013, 247–250).

Rather than signal a hurried pace, Forster's short, measured sentences and excessive punctuation evoke an overwhelming sense of calm. The "continual flux of London" and "eternal formlessness" of the city (156) are dismissed in favour of a profound sense of belonging; after just a few moments awestruck and alone, a contented Margaret "decided that the place was beautiful" (171). Here Margaret and Mrs Wilcox's affiliation with the natural world and longing to leave London recalls the "pastoral impulse to escapism" (Gifford 1999, 76), whilst Forster's determination to pit the peaceful confines of Howards End against the velocity of city life equally evokes the "pleasures of rural settlement [against] the threat and loss of eviction" (Williams 2016, 22). Forster's contrasting imagery thus establishes a clear dichotomy between country and city, affirming the latter as capable of stifling communication between friends and instilling shadowy feelings of regret; the former as a pastoral haven in which the upper-middle classes are warmed by the nurturing embrace of mother earth.

For the women who own and inherit Howards End, the idyllic rural landscape of the country-cottage becomes a place of refuge from this dark, unwelcoming city. Whilst Margaret is able to capture a sense of contentment among the calming, natural environment of the property, it is in death that Mrs Wilcox also becomes one with the earth around her "beloved, pastoral nirvana" (Womack 1997, 258). Anne Wright identifies how the novel "does not crudely oppose city and country" for its own sake but as a way of drawing "on the literary tradition of the pastoral which sees in the growth of the city a destruction of an old order" (1984, 32). Confronted with the social ills of modernity, Margaret's experiences at the eponymous house hark back to "the past of England [and] its true values" (Harai 1998, 111) embodied by Mrs Wilcox, who Lionel Trilling believes is "descended from the yeoman class to which Forster gives his strongest sympathies" and therefore possesses a "wisdom which is [both] traditional and ancestral" (1959, 103–4). In continuously pairing Howards End and its wealthy owners with this "nostalgic celebration of traditional English life" (Cobley 2009, 246), the author thus constitutes both women as unmistakably pastoral figures, symbolic of the idyllic and peaceful rural surroundings in which they so often find themselves.

Insomuch as Howards End is paired with Ruth, and then Margaret – women who do not work for a living and might be said to comfortably occupy the upper-middle-class life Forster himself enjoyed – it is easy to see how critics have often perceived the property – and by extension, the pastoral mode employed by the author – as "permanently linked with privilege" (Bradbury 1966, 135). John Colmer summarises this privilege when he contends that "of the labour of farm-workers and factory-workers the novel has nothing

to say” (1983 102), but whilst such figures certainly lack definition in the shadows of their upper-middle-class counterparts, this is not an entirely accurate assessment of how the working-classes are represented in the text. On some occasions Forster does shift his depiction of *Howards End* from pastoral idyll to counter-pastoral garden, and it is in these moments working-class figures (albeit marginally obscured) often come into view.

Defined by Raymond Williams as the “practice of agriculture and trading within a [rural] way of life in which prudence and effort are seen as primary virtues” (2016, 19), the counter-pastoral – also known as “the realistic side of pastoral” (Segal 1981, 4) – stresses the reality of rural life as opposed to Forster’s idealised picture of *Howards End*. Nowhere is ‘reality’ more suddenly imposed upon the novel as in the news of Mrs Wilcox’s passing, and before she is buried peacefully underground (as described above) Forster details her funeral with the reactions of “only the poor [who] remained” by her side (75). A local woodcutter, for instance, is depicted as “perched high above their heads, pollarding one of the churchyard elms” and listening to the “rooks [who] cawed,” as if they “knew too” of Mrs Wilcox’s passing (75). The gravedigger is also shown having “stayed a little longer, poised above the silence and swaying rhythmically” (76) whilst finishing his work, before critically observing the “sheaf of tawny chrysanthemums” which he deems too colourful for an occasion so solemn as a funeral (76).

Here Forster shifts his portrayal of the titular property from pastoral idyll to counter-pastoral cemetery; working figures are pictured in the throes of their labour, “pollarding” overgrown trees and dealing with the messy and unkind ‘reality’ of unexpected death. In such moments these workers are also illustrated as possessing an affinity with their natural surroundings, discerning the mournful cries of sorrowful birds and seeing past the Chrysanthemum’s “symbolic status... of death in Catholic areas of Europe” (Goody 1993, 290). Instead the gravedigger’s heightened awareness of the “coloured flowers” (76) permits him to label them as inappropriate by virtue only of their physical, visual qualities – qualities that went unnoticed by the cultured and urban Wilcoxes. Here workers are portrayed by Forster as being endowed with an innate understanding of their arable surroundings, adapting what William Empson called the “trick of the old pastoral, which [...] was to make simple people express strong feelings... in learned and fashionable language” (1966, 17). In *Howards End* Forster abandons the pretensions of “fashionable language” and instead depicts these outdoor manual labourers as emotionally and practically attuned to nature’s way of doing things.

As in Andrew Marvell’s “The Garden” (1681) and Alexander Pope’s “Windsor Forest” (1713) before him, Forster draws on the literary traditions of the counter-pastoral

typified by Virgil's *Georgics* to also evoke the techniques of agriculture and servitude amid the natural landscape as bringing about this sense of peace, rather than such peace belonging inherently to nature itself. Just as Virgil insists that "the Father of agriculture / [...] decreed it an art / To work the fields" and "would not allow his realm to grow listless from lethargy" (2009, 55: 121–4) the labourers around Howards End continue to tend to the fields and crops of hay; as a result, nature provides "a calm security and a life that will not cheat you / Rich in its own rewards" (Virgil 2009, 85: 467–8) – a description that succinctly foreshadows that 'sense of peace' established and nurtured at the country-house. Poets such as Marvell were some of the first to shift Virgil's sentiments from the hills of Italy to the gardens of England:

How well the skilful gard'ner drew
Of flowers and herbs this dial new;
Where from above the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run;
And, as it works, th' industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we.
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers! (Marvell 2006, 1712, 65–72)

Here applying agricultural skills and proving industrious amid the natural landscape is essential for the narrator to recognise the "sweet and wholesome hours" offered by life outdoors; the air is "fragrant" from the pollination of hard-working insects and the "flowers and herbs" only inspire peace and joy once they have been subjected to the attentions of the watchful gardener.

The tranquillity Margaret and Helen find at Howards End similarly depends on such people. Safely lodged at the property following Helen's return from abroad, Forster asserts how Margaret only found "the peace of the country [...] entering into her" after the departure of Miss Avery, who "crossed the lawn and merged into the hedge that divided it from the farm" – literally disappearing into and being subsumed by the greenery surrounding the house (269). The sense of renewal at the close of the novel, where "the air was tranquil now" (286), also relies on "Tom's father [who] was cutting the big meadow" (286). In each instance a moment of peace is preceded by the efforts of a servant or agricultural labourer, so that both Schlegels and Wilcoxes might benefit from "such a crop of hay as never!" (293) and adopt the natural world for their own. That

these labourers exist within *Howards End* as marginal working-class characters but are still essential to what Marvell calls the “happy garden-state” (2006, 1712: 57) suggests that Forster was not unaware of how such pastoral environments rely on the agrarian traditions of labour and toil of the earth – just as the titular property relies on the farmhands and servants who tend to its grounds.

Simon During has suggested that although *Howards End* is “still connected to agrarianism, it is not now, and never was, a landed estate [...] and bears no trace of feudal or Austenian class hierarchy” (2012, 114). This claim does not, however, truly consider Forster’s hierarchical construction of the pastoral idyll or his thin characterizations of those workers he professes to admire. In fact, lower-class individuals in *Howards End* would fail Forster’s own estimations of what constitutes a three-dimensional character. In some ways his continuous pairing of farmhands with uncomplicated counter-pastoral virtues (obedience, hard-work, omnipresence) sees them as “constructed round a single idea or quality” (Forster 2005, 73); a characterization the author attributed himself to ‘flat’ characters possessing little substance or autonomy. In a series of lectures later collected and published as *Aspects of the Novel* (1927),⁶ Forster divided characters into ‘flat’ and ‘round’ to draw a distinction between those in whom he believed an author invested the capacity to surprise, and those who existed merely to serve the machinations of the plot and/or whose “dominant impression [...] can be summed up in a formula” (Forster 2005, 78–9).

By his own standards, the gravedigger, Tom’s father and even “silly old Miss Avery” (172) therefore fail to make a lasting impression. They are marred by “pastoral descriptions” that posit them as “rough and unpolished [...] diamonds” (Hoggart 2009, 5) – as vital to the safeguarding of the English country-house and therefore remotely admirable, but drab and spiritless when viewed independently from the novel as a whole. Miss Avery in particular functions merely as a “comic character [...] of pastoral myth” who is designed to “make profound remarks [...] with unexpectedly great effects” (Empson 1966, 32) – as when she bumps into Margaret at *Howards End* and mistook her “for Ruth Wilcox” (172). Instead, it is the upper-middle-class characters served by these working individuals who come to be most frequently associated with the pastoral idyll.

⁶ Forster was invited to give the annual Clark Lectures, in the field of English literature and sponsored by Trinity College, Cambridge, in the academic year 1926–7. It was the first time a novelist was chosen to deliver the lecture series. For more information see Stallybrass (2005, xix–xxix).

There is, however, some indication that Forster's evocation of this pastoral idyll nevertheless recognises the ill-treatment of the "very poor" at the hands of those possessing more comfort and privilege. Whilst Margaret is initially searching for a replacement home after the Schlegels are evicted from Wickham Place, for example, she asks Henry directly: "can't you turn out your tenant [at Howards End] and let it to us?" (132). Forster does just that, painting the tenant Mr Bryce as a criminal who "had no right to sublet" and offhandedly declaring that to "define him further [would be] a waste of time" (168).

At first sight it once again appears that lower-class characters are meanly displaced in favour of the wealthy Schlegels. But although the undefined Mr Bryce *is* eventually evicted in favour of the Schlegel sisters, the authorial/narratorial tone in both scenes remains uncertain and indistinct; it hints at Forster both acknowledging *and* pointing the reader to recognise the inherent flaws of his pastoral heroine. The conversation between Henry and Margaret, for instance, is immediately followed by an exchange between the pair over socialist values, which Margaret hypocritically defends – just moments after Forster has depicted her playfully but sincerely inquired about inhabiting Howards End, which she knows to be occupied. Similarly, the discussion about Mr Bryce in Henry's office at the Imperial and West African Rubber Company is observed by the narrator with a note of disapproval. Whilst it is Margaret herself who inquires into Mr Bryce's personality, her request comes off as little more than a polite attempt or bourgeois display into the interests of the lower classes. Rather than insist upon knowing Mr Bryce, she meekly accepts that "nobody cared" and permits the Wilcoxes to "on his misdeeds... descant [him] profusely" (168). Yet instead of indulging the reader with the details of their disparaging remarks the narrator moves on swiftly, compressing the conversation into a short, five-line paragraph before concluding Margaret's visit entirely; a compression that hints toward some degree of discomfort in how the lower-classes are discussed by those who might have them evicted from their home at any given moment. If "Virgil's *Georgics* were poems [...] concerned with industrious means of living in an imperfect world" (Harris 2016, 179) it stands to reason that Forster's allusion to such verses suggest there might be something 'imperfect' in the pastoral idyll the narrator of *Howards End* has already professed to admire.

Building upon David Bradshaw's tentative suggestion that it might be "just possible that Forster wishes us to *disapprove* of the Schlegel's blinkered immersion in Literature and Art" (2007, 155; original emphasis), we might see how the author similarly wishes his reader to disapprove of this hostile and ignorant treatment by the Schlegels and Wilcoxes toward the working-class characters who do feature in the text. Disembarking

at Shrewsbury on her journey to Oniton Grange Margaret, for instance, dismisses her chauffer as an “Italian [...] who dearly loved making her late” (179); and later at Howards End, Dolly Wilcox dismisses Miss Avery as “only a farm woman” from whom Henry can “get good value out of” (227). Both characterisations lack colour or insight, and expose the flippant prejudices of the ruling-classes toward those who help make their comfortable lives possible. Forster’s own affection for the working-classes is instead illustrated in Leonard’s final trip to Howards End, where the clerk hails the croppers and haymakers of the countryside as “men of the finest type” and “England’s hope” (276). Although they are not shown the meanest gratitude by their employers, such heroic descriptions imply Forster as recognising the inherent virtues in the working-classes who undertake such counter-pastoral activity, despite no longer working the land for themselves. Whilst “Margaret operates under the nostalgic assumption that feudal ownership of land allowed human beings to live harmoniously within nature” (2009, 277), Forster’s invocation of the Georgic mode appears to instead tacitly acknowledge that it was in fact “the depopulation of the British countryside after the Corn Laws [that] was precisely what made it possible for the bohemian fringe of the middle class to move into their country cottages and play at being rustics” (Delaney 1988, 290). In these moments, Forster attempts to emphasise the resilience of the working labourers at Oniton Grange and Howards End who literally support the class structure which the pastoral idyll depends upon to survive; in acknowledging them as “the finest type,” he suggests their displacement at the hands of Mrs Wilcox and Margaret might not necessarily be for the benefit of countryside and nation.

The narrator of *Howards End* is not, however, always so generous toward working-class individuals. David Cannadine asserts how it was only at the turn-of-the-century that “the worship of the country house [became] a national obsession” (1994, 245) and properties such as Howards End began to be coveted by those outside of the aristocracy and landed gentry such as the Wilcoxes. This obsession drew on a “nostalgia” for the pastoral that presumed “country houses were the setting for a way of life more exquisite, more cultivated and more refined than that which lesser mortals are capable of living” (Cannadine 1994, 243), and we can see in Forster’s novel how – despite cultivating the peace and tranquillity that Mrs Wilcox and Margaret assume for themselves, the “very poor” characters in the novel are often portrayed as such “lesser mortals” unworthy of belonging to country-house (and Forster’s interpretation of pastoral) traditions.

Once installed at Oniton, for example, Margaret amalgamates the servants and reduces them to the “lower wheels of the machine” (188) – an industrial metaphor

that pairs them with the unpleasant associations of the city *and* which robs them of their individuality. Although the third-person narration is focalised through Margaret, there is little suggestion the narrator is opposed to her somewhat patronising label for those who ensure her stay in the country is comfortable (unlike the scene concerning Mr Bryce). Consequently, she reflects how these nameless “wheels” were simply “paid to be serious, and enjoyed being agitated” (188), absolving herself of any responsibility to mark them out as individuals and pay them any proper or extended courtesy. The healing properties of the countryside are once again undermined by the casual dismissal of the lower-classes, and in this instance, Forster fails to challenge Margaret’s unconscious bias.

The woodcutter at Mrs Wilcox’s funeral is treated with similar disdain, described by the narrator as one who “grunts” and is currently “mating” (76) – animalistic language that relegates him beneath the good manners and civility of the upper-classes. Throughout the text, these marginal workers are repeatedly derided as either too wild, too robotic or too inconsequential to ‘belong’ to the pastoral idyll, and whilst the peace proffered by Howards End might rely on the sweat and labour of such characters, they are unable to truly partake in it. Just as Stefan Collini asserts how “for the respectable Victorian [...] work was the chief sphere in which moral worth was developed and displayed” (Collini 1994, 105–6), Forster too betrays a middle-class, Edwardian weakness for finding value in the working-classes only when they are shown happily toiling the land and mutely serving their social superiors. As a result, these “theories of modern pastoral” to which the author often subscribes “go some distance in disestablishing the liberal merits of Forster’s ‘only connect’ rhetoric” (Christie 2013, 14).

In adopting the style of the *Georgics* there does exist some semblance of admiration for those hard-working labourers in *Howards End* – for counter-pastoral virtues exhibited plainly and with modesty. Yet as fully realised individuals such characters remain ‘flat’ and obscured, often depicted in ugly and unflattering terms and never emerging from the background of the novel to surprise the reader “in a convincing way” (Forster 2005, 81). Being “himself firmly a Schlegel” (Gransden 1962, 55), Forster renegades on his vision of such workers as “England’s hope” (276) on multiple occasions and seemingly partakes in the very prejudice he is trying to expose, conforming to the notion that nineteenth-century “liberals [often] showed a lack of sympathy for the urban and rural poor” (Pilbeam 1990, 239). Instead, he repeatedly readjusts the pastoral arcadia of Howards End to better suit the class privilege of Margaret and Mrs Wilcox, leaving little room for proper redistribution of wealth or for any meaningful future improvements amongst

the conditions of the working-classes. In their toil of the arable land and servitude to the primary characters, these labourers thus ensure that the eponymous property – and by extension, their position within it – continues to not merely survive but positively flourish “as never” (293) before by the novel’s end.

Although Forster’s upper-middle-class characters never take it upon themselves to advance the lives of these “very poor” characters in the manner the Schlegel sisters take up their cause in assisting the lower-middle-class Leonard, there does exist within the pastoral environments of *Howards End* some indication that the author at least anticipates the impending socio-economic improvements due to those on the other side of the Edwardian class divide. John Benson touches upon Forster’s reticence in identifying with (or improving the lives of) his working characters when he labels the years 1875–1914 as “a period neither of unthreatened stability nor of revolutionary change [but] rather a transitional period in the history of work [...] which acquiescence was probably as common as struggle and continuity almost certainly more common than change” (2016, 81). Instead there are moments where the pastoral idyll is constructed as conscious of – and a harbinger for – the social change he recognizes as on the horizon, and it is within such moments that privileged characters such as Mrs Wilcox and Margaret are forced to contend with the possibility that their superior social status is as fragile as their displacement of the “very poor” in the rural spaces they so covet and admire.

Mrs Wilcox’s description of the wych-elm that occupies the boundary between the garden and the meadow, for instance, captures her fondness for scientifically inaccurate – but sentimental – rural superstitions:

There are pig’s teeth stuck into the trunk [...] 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. (61)

By using a non-possessive determiner Mrs Wilcox confirms the otherness of “the country people” in opposition to herself; they belong to the labouring rather than the leisure classes, Forster once again positioning agrarian workers as subservient to the pleasures of the owners of *Howards End*. Yet he also displays her fascination with the rural traditions that once took place in the grounds of her country-cottage. Margaret too expresses her “love [for] folklore and all festering superstitions” (61), and Surabhi Banerjee has noted how the wych-elm offers “constant suggestions of companionship” (1995, 8) for both women over the course of the novel.

The pleasure they might derive from such a tale, however, is bittersweet. Mrs Wilcox's observation that "no one comes to the tree" anymore suggests those woodcutters and servants currently working at Howards End no longer abide by simplistic country folklore. If the Elementary Education Acts of 1870–1893 increased access to education, set a lower age-limit for school leavers and ensured a certain standard of education must be achieved by such leavers,⁷ it is not unreasonable to assume that working-class children who benefitted from such changes might have become field labourers and domestic workers such as those installed at Howards End, and no longer subscribe to some of the superstitions valued by their forebears. Such fantastic superstitions reinforce Mrs Wilcox's subconscious opinions of the "very poor" as simple-minded, uneducated country folk, and the metaphor of the wych-elm highlights how the upper-middle classes are happy to exhibit a trivial interest in the lives of such workers, but cannot quite stomach the prospect of genuine social change. Margaret and Mrs Wilcox's fondness for the wych-elm and the folktale of the pig's teeth thus unmask deeper anxieties about the social progression of those "country people" who serve them, with Forster utilising a natural symbol situated within the pastoral idyll of Howards End to illuminate how increasing access to education is dampening the simple pleasures of country life for the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes.

That the (re)construction of the pastoral within *Howards End* betrays a longing for rural simplicity *and* is nevertheless influenced by the precarious foundations upon which such a tradition has begun to crack suggests its function as the idyllic retreat for the upper-middle classes is predicated on at least some degree of uncertainty. When Margaret observes how "even the weeds she was idly plucking out of the porch were intensely green" (170) on her first visit to Howards End, for instance, the author complicates natural imagery once more; despite attempting to remove the unwanted weeds infiltrating the property, Margaret cannot help but admire the strength and vibrancy of their appearance. The plants attempt to cross the threshold of the country-house becomes a metonymic representation of the ascension of the lower classes, and although Margaret is not quite ready to welcome them with open arms, she does begin to see them as more than peripheral figures.

Outside of Howards End, the narrator invokes a shifting natural world to exhibit these feelings of unease, especially during the Schlegel's seaside holiday in Swanage.

⁷ For more information on how the working classes were educated in the era in which *Howards End* was written, see Stephens 1998 (77–98).

Following a quarrel between the two sisters, Helen laments the Wilcoxes reliance on “telegrams and anger” (148) and Margaret is forced to defend their “public qualities” (149) that heavily contributed to the building of England’s infrastructure; indeed she goes as far as to assert that both sisters “couldn’t sit here without having our throats cut” if it were not for families like the Wilcoxes, who stamped out the human urge to “savagery” (149). In the silence after their heated exchange, the narrator moves their gaze to the Dorset coastline:

England was alive, throbbing through all her estuaries, crying for joy through the mouths of all her gulls, and the north wind, with contrary motion, blew stronger against her rising seas. What did it mean? For what end are her fair complexities, her changes of soil, her sinuous coast? (150)

Forster extends his metonymic England beyond the confines of Howards End, and here the nation does not sit peacefully in the present but is active and “alive.” Full of “contrary motions” but nevertheless “crying for joy” and “blowing stronger” against her borders, England is represented as something both tumultuous and exciting; physically taxing but spiritually invigorating for the Schlegel sisters as they observe English life at its perimeter. That such emotions are equally elicited from the pair’s debate just moments prior heavily indicates at the connotations behind such imagery, “changes of soil” implying imminent changes in the composition of social groups in English society; the “sinuous coast” signalling the now fractious but flexible Edwardian class-structure. Forster depicts the rural coastline as a physical manifestation of the social changes taking place at the time, and for sisters and narrator there is both “joy” and “confusion” (illustrated in the chapter’s concluding rhetorical questions) to be found in such changes. E.P. Thompson has detailed how many nineteenth-century liberal observers found the poor “unsightly, a source of guilt [and] a heavy charge on the country” (2013, 860), and in relegating such characters to the borders of the text it is difficult to imagine how the author largely differs from such a description. But whilst Forster (like Margaret) is not quite braced for the social revolution that is to come, these somewhat conflicting impressions of England’s natural landscape do suggest he recognizes the need for – and inevitability of – at least some degree of social change.

Ultimately, however, it is the Schlegels who are welcomed by the most celebrated pastoral space of Howards End by the novel’s close. Forster shows some affection for his working-class characters and is keen to absolve his failures of representation by

commenting how authors such as Dickens' "immense success with types suggests that there may be more in flatness [of character] than the severer critics admit" (Forster 2005, 76). Yet this admits merely a scant awareness of his own privilege (as illustrated in the blurred authorial/narratorial tone and self-conscious depiction of the English landscape) and does not constitute an authentic allegiance to those lower-class individuals who are repeatedly displaced from the natural world and disparaged by their employers throughout the text. In the conclusion of the novel Forster instead betrays his predilection for individuals who resemble himself. Arriving at the property several months pregnant with Leonard's child, Helen is framed by the trappings of nature in a fashion that recalls the beauty of the pre-Raphaelites: whilst "one of her hands played with the buds" hanging over the porch "the wind ruffled her hair [and] the sun glorified it" (246). Similarly, it is Margaret who captures a sense of tranquillity once finally installed at Howards End, observing how the "present flowed by [her and Helen] like a stream. The trees rustled. It had made music before they were born, and would continue after their deaths, but its song was of the moment" (269). The pastoral idyll is thus reconstituted as a 'safe haven' for the immoral individual cast out by the dominant middle classes, and offers auditory confirmation that the Schlegel sisters' way of life will be immortal; it signals that they will inherit Howards End, and that Helen and Leonard's child will "continue" to benefit from the rural landscape and the expenditure of those who cultivate it.

Forster's assertion that he is "not concerned with the very poor" has been cited as evidence that he is guilty of a "casual dismissal" (Turner 2000, 341) of those most-in-need in Edwardian society, but his inclusion of so many "very poor" characters within *Howards End* suggests he was also aware of the difficulties he faced in portraying such individuals with genuine empathy and insight. Yet just as "Jacky and Leonard appear [to some as] little more than embodiments of period liberal sloganeering" (Christie 2013, 25), the "very poor" fail to emerge as three-dimensional figures. It thus appears that Lionel Trilling's early argument that "the class struggle [in the novel is] not between the classes but within a single class – the middle" (Trilling 1959, 102) set an unintended precedent that saw such minor characters in Forster's oeuvre as rarely worthy of closer critical inspection. Yet the "very poor" remain, and in being so obviously and prominently displaced within pastoral environments by Margaret and Mrs Wilcox, "*Howards End* spotlights not the sturdiness of Forster's liberal values, but their relative frailty" (Bradshaw 2007, 171). In his affection for such upper-middle-class characters over the pastoral manual labourer, Forster betrays his

own reticence toward genuine social change; his fear that “every Westerly gale might blow the wych-elm down and bring the end of all things” (286), including pastoral folklore and the life of the countryside to which he subscribes; his willingness to modify the pastoral mode to evict “the small independent farmer” who embodies the “moral life” of peace in Virgil’s *Georgics* (Lyne 2009, xxv–xxvi); and, finally, his determination to create a new rural order that is symbolised by *Howards End*, and reserved only for the wealthy individuals who reside there.

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

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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-hierarchical 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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Travel and Transformations: The Transcultural Predicament of Female Travellers in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924)

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Abstract

Travelling to a new continent and undertaking a journey is often the most fundamental aspect of colonial and postcolonial literatures, especially in the genre of the novel. This article seeks to address travel as an agent of transformation in relation to the transcultural predicament of female travellers in E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* (1924). By seeking a connection between gender and travel, the article demonstrates that the passage to India turns out to be a life-changing experience for the two women travellers, Adela Quested and Mrs Moore, who demonstrate different travel motives, expectations, and goals as compared with their male counterparts. By going beyond the discussion of the novel as a study in anti/colonialism and the impossibility of East meeting West, I set out to examine how the position and status of women on the move in the early phase of twentieth-century literature helps to comprehend the crucial role of travel in shaping their private spheres, particularly the suppressed sides of their self and sexuality within the colonial, imperial, male dominated framework. Moreover, I also investigate how these female travellers despite challenging and contesting colonial engagements within their limited domain end up in only aggravating their transcultural predicament during and upon the end of their journeys. Hence, the article looks deeper into the role of female travellers in the novel as they struggle to define themselves in a new cultural and geographical landscape.

Keywords: female travellers, journey motif, transcultural predicaments, colonial India, imperialism

1. Introduction: Travel, Culture and Gender

Kristi Siegel declares, “Each journey takes the unmistakable imprint of gender” (2004, 9). In other words, gender impinges on the practice of travel. Susan Bassnett chooses to categorise women travellers as “doubly different” (2002, 226) as compared with male travellers whereas Joyce E. Kelly points out “the gendered nature of travel” texts (2015, 17). How women travel is not only connected with asserting freedom or liberty but also encountering cultural difference in a new country or continent. According to Carl Thompson,

To begin any journey or, indeed, simply to set foot beyond one’s own front door, is quickly to encounter difference and otherness. All journeys are in this way a confrontation with, or more optimistically a negotiation of, what is sometimes termed alterity [...] all travel requires us to negotiate a complex and sometimes unsettling interplay between alterity *and* identity, difference *and* similarity. (2011, 9; italics in original)

Sara Ahmed presents another approach to alterity by claiming that “strange cultural encounters” are, in reality, a means of encountering “a stranger in us” (2000, 19–74). Consequently, the ideas of cultural difference, gender and travel tend to overlap in the discourse of both literary and cultural theorists. Taking inspiration from such an overlap, I aim to examine how British women travelled in the early twentieth century and how they experienced cultural difference in the age of imperialism. Since I claim that travel is conducive to cultural and psychological transformations, I address the transcultural predicament of two female travellers, namely Adela Quested and Mrs Moore in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924).

The novel has been discussed as an anti-colonial text from several perspectives (see Said 1993; Suleri 1992). However, the companionship of the female travellers has not been yet touched upon from the perspective of travel and transculturation especially in relation to the emergence of personal and cultural ambivalences the duo, consisting of persons from a young and an old generation, appears to encounter. Divided into two parts, part one of this article theorises the connection between travel and the transcultural along with the role of spatiality and topography, whereas part two employs these concepts as a reading methodology while treating them as important strands of female travel in the novel.

2. Mapping Travel, Transculturation and Spatiality in *A Passage to India*

Travel literature is currently considered to be reflective of the modern condition. Academic interest in travel is prominent in postcolonial studies as postcolonial scholars seek to understand and challenge the destructive consequences of the large European empires of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Thompson 2011, 3). While elucidating the genre of travel writing, Thompson, therefore, states, “From fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, the genre of travel writing played a vital role in European imperial expansion, and the travel writing of this period is accordingly highly revealing of the activities of European travellers abroad and of the attitudes and ideologies that drove European expansionism” (2011, 3). Edward Said’s seminal work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) also underlines the imperial agenda in reading major works of British literature about travelling to distant lands for purposes of celebrating and justifying imperialism. Indeed, no matter which century we go back to – whether centuries of colonial times or present times – travel seems to appeal to the travelling imagination of Western writers tremendously. Now the question arises if travel is only a synonym for mis/adventure, or it is a means of simply discovering unfamiliar or ‘imaginative geographies.’ Or if travel practices only satisfy ‘oriental’ or exotic fantasies and imaginings of the ‘occident’ as Said contends in his work *Orientalism* (1973). The answers to these questions are hard to find in Forster’s novel as he deals with (imperial) travel as a highly ambivalent and complex practice causing an emotional and cultural breakdown of the female travellers in the novel.

The initial meaning of the word travel in English as “travail” refers to “bodily or mental labour or toil,” “exertion, trouble, hardship, suffering” as described in *Oxford English Dictionary* online (2019). As for travel, according to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* online (2019), it is defined as “a movement through space that changes the location of something” or “the act of going from one place to another” (2019). More than travel as travail, I look at it as a movement at several levels. This movement is even implicit in the title of the novel. In this regard, Robert Burden has made a perceptive observation:

The title, like the rest of the novel, does not settle on a single meaning. Amongst its meanings, ‘a passage’ signifies travel (by boat), the ticket itself, and a right to be conveyed; the act of moving through or passed something; access through a corridor or door to another part of the building; a noteworthy portion of a written text; a phrase

or short section of a musical composition; and the action or process of passing from one place or condition to another. In the passage to the other, cultural diversity seems a muddle. However, for those who want to impose the unity of a single cultural reality, cultural relativity appears to offer no consolation, only disillusion. Thus the title of the novel may be read as ironic. (2015, 99)

In this way, the very word travel and its several offshoots like ‘passage’, ‘mobility’, ‘migration’, ‘movement’ cannot be so easily defined, since travel is a multidimensional notion, which the current research tends to establish (see Neumann and Nünning 2012; Bal 2002; Clifford 1997). Similarly, the idea of mobility, included in the term ‘travel’, is no longer the research focus of anthropologists alone but appears to have increasingly fascinated contemporary literary scholars (see Graulund and Edward 2012, or Berensmeyer, Ehland and Grabes 2012). Travel literature as “a hybrid genre that straddles categories and disciplines” (Holland and Huggan 2000, 8) has been discussed with reference to several other aspects in different disciplines in the last years; for example, it is examined in relation to translation by James Clifford who defines it as overlapping experiences punctuated by various translation terms (1997, 11) whereas Michel Butor widens the scope of travel, including reading and writing as part of travel (1974); it is also addressed in regard to gender, colonialism and transnationalism (Grewal 1996; Mills 1991) or memory and modernity (Erl 2011; Burden 2015). In short, travel is increasingly an interdisciplinary concept, which encompasses the poetics of exile, rootlessness, immigration, or borders as spaces of conflict or communication.

Travel and transculturation are deeply connected to each other as several studies demonstrate (Pratt 1992; Taylor 1991, 90–104). Travel writing, according to Mary Pratt, unfolds spaces of cultural encounter as “contact zones” – sites where people and their cultures encounter alterity and mix with each other, occasionally leading to transculturation and hybridity (1992, 1–11). Indeed, travel tends to involve the idea and experience of cross-cultural as well as cross-border travel, leading to a new perspective on cultural connections as well as conflicts. Diana Taylor maintains that since theories travel and change their meaning, it is important to examine “the changing usage of the term transculturation” and “how socio-economic and political power of one culture impacts on, without altogether determining, another” (Taylor 1991, 90). She highlights, “Transculturation is not inherently or necessarily a minority or oppositional theory [...] The term applies not only to other colonized or dominated cultures, but [...] to dominant ones as well [...] Transculturation suggests a shifting or circulating pattern of cultural

transference" (1991, 93). Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz developed the concept of transculturation in 1940 to argue for a replacement of the term acculturation in sociology and ethnography.¹ Since then, transculturation has been widely discussed in relation to terms such as hybridity, métissage, creolization, syncretism, diaspora, third space, in-betweenness, to name but a few.²

According to *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, transculturation is defined as "a process of cultural transformation marked by the influx of new culture elements and the loss or alteration of existing ones" (2019, n.p.) whereas *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines transcultural as: "Transcending the limitations or crossing the boundaries of cultures; applicable to more than one culture; cross cultural" (2018, n.p.). Consequently, there is a conspicuous difference made in the last years between transculturation and the transcultural, which needs to be kept in view when applying to a certain work of literature. However, for my purposes I place the term 'transcultural predicament' in the imperial context to employ it as a perspective of analysing the individual and cultural upheavals of Western female travellers. Gone down in history as arrogant *Memsahibs* or mere protégées of colonial rulers (Grewal 1996, 25), I find it significant to explore the impact of travel on these women in colonial India as presented within the realms of fiction, so that it is possible to examine them as modern travellers who are unable to cope with their position as 'superior' women in a so-called hostile geography. These modern women travellers strive to transcend the borders of home and hearth and enter the slippery realms of new cultural values and norms, which turn out to be beyond their comprehension. In the present context, the transcultural predicament is, hence, defined as a constant struggle to overcome the binary opposition of native and colonial culture,

¹ According to Ortiz: "[T]he word transculturation better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another" and the "creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation" (1940/1995, 102–103). In the post/colonial contexts, transculturation points to the cultural exchange between coloniser and colonised but such an exchange takes place from unequal positions (Pratt 1992, 4–7). See also Young 2016, 193–203.

² Since Ortiz's original conception of the term and its developments, several scholars such as Wolfgang Welsch (1999) or Frank Schulze-Engler (2008) have tried to redefine transculturation as transcultural or transculturality to detach the concept from its original colonial and nationalistic contexts and propose its use in contemporary settings, shaped by global cultural flows (see Appadurai 1996). According to Welsch, transculturality, opposed to the ideas of intercultural and multicultural, refers to "mixes and permeation" (1999, 197), inviting us to acknowledge the importance of the hybrid forms of cultures today.

‘us’ and ‘them’, friends and enemies, self and other, love and hate, rationality and irrationality, and home and abroad in the wake of travel to an unfamiliar space and place.

It is important to keep in view that the notions of travel and the transcultural help us to consider more intricate and complex notions of cultural exchange and overlapping as much as cultural difference and antagonism. In other words, the connection between travel and the transcultural phenomenon facilitates our understanding of “the predicament of culture” (Clifford 1988, 1–18), which actually points to the challenges and tensions that are likely to surface as cultures and their members communicate or interact with one another. I claim that these kinds of challenges and tensions cause an insurmountable emotional burden on the two British tourists in Forster’s novel. So, travel and transculturation viewed as a unit are argued to be immersed in political, personal, subjective and psychological aspects as they appear to be closely connected in my analysis.

Nevertheless, there is another theoretical aspect, namely spatiality which cannot be ignored when theorising the connection between travel and transculturation. Barney Warf and Santa Arias declare “the spatial turn” (2014) in their work, the dimensions of which have already been addressed by seminal spatial theorists, particularly Edward Soja (1989) and Michel de Certeau (1980). According to Gail Fincham, “For E.M. Forster, individuals’ experience of space, in the places in which his novels are set, is simultaneously geographical, cultural and psychological” (2008, 38). Benita Parry has already pointed up the representation of India as a mysterious and macabre space as central to the development of the plot: “As a novel which orbits around a space which is unrepresentable within its perceptual boundaries, *A Passage to India* is impelled to obfuscate that of which it cannot speak, a self-declared incomprehension that issues in fabrications of contradictory Indias” (1998, 181; see also Suleri 1987, 169–175). Alison Blunt further connects spatiality to the gendering of travel and claims them as inseparable (1994), so do Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore and Erica Wilson (2017) who look at travel as an opportunity for women to escape and to enjoy freedom in a male-dominated space, as travel has often been associated with men over the centuries. Indeed, travel as a masculine undertaking has also been established by classics such as H. Ridder Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1884) or R.M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* (1858).

Forster’s *A Passage to India* particularly complicates the connection between spatiality and gendering of travel just as the relationship between travel and transculturation, rendering the whole notion of female travel a highly arduous and larger than life experience with India as a place of menacing and sinister experience for female travellers. The novel unfolds the passage undertaken by two ladies who seek to build bridges

between the East and the West, but this motif behind travel undergoes a radical change as these female travellers are increasingly twined with the Indian landscape of heat and dust – where the weather conditions fundamentally contribute to their predicament. Consequently, the novel systematically unfolds the collapse of discovering the ‘exotic other’ as associated with colonial travels, for the topography of Chandrapore, where the first two parts of the novel are set, does not seem to satisfy “colonial desires” or fantasies (Young 1995, 90–117). Rather, it shatters them completely just as the universal ideas of love, care, trust, compassion and friendship.

The three parts of the novel named after different geographical zones a) Mosque b) Caves and c) Temple are presented as the zones of contact, conflict and reconciliation. Set during the time of the British Raj and the Indian independence movement in the 1920s, Forster treats India as a stubborn, unconquerable space in his fictional frames as he points out: “Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing” (135). Indeed, Forster presents the twin cultural conflict in the novel within his female characters, which tend to echo the conflict in the space around them. This conflict is soon fraught with personal problems: first, the British can never colonise India in the real sense of the word; second, Adela is not able to embrace real India as there are “a hundreds Indias” (13) to be discovered; third, the discovery of real India may urge the discovery of the self, the confrontation of which a traveller may not be able to tolerate.

It is noticeable during Adela’s and Mrs Moore’s travels that Forster’s novel shares several aspects with the literature of travel, which Percy G. Adams defines as “gigantic” with “thousand forms and faces” (1983, 281): first, the novel is based on the theme of travel with journey as a quest particularly elaborated by the character of Miss ‘Quested’; second, the two major female characters in the novel as tourists encounter cultural differences and conflicts, which are mostly indispensable to travelling abroad; lastly, the novel treats places and spaces – Mosque, Caves, Temple – as ambivalent travel destinations and further connects them to the major theme of friendship and connection visible in the novel between the coloniser and the colonised as Aziz declares in part three “Temple, ”: “Never be friends with the English! Mosque, caves, mosque, caves. And here he was starting again... the two nations cannot be friends” (296). These words remind the reader about Mrs Moore’s journey through India, as she befriends Aziz in a mosque, experiences a breakdown in the caves and becomes a dear symbol of remembrance in the temple when the Hindu Professor Godbole has a vision about her as “an old Englishwoman” with “one little, little wasp” (276). In short, the theme of travel in the novel invites us to ponder on the interrelationships of familiarity and unfamiliarity as well as connection and disconnection.

3. The Cultural and Emotional Dilemma of the Tourist Adela Quested

For every travelling subject, travel always means something different due the fact that every travel experience is emblematic of distinct travel expectations according to individual character and history. In the case of Adela Quested, as her type name indicates, travel is exploration and search, but more importantly it is escape, freedom, knowledge, romance, all in one. Adela as a newcomer to colonial India seems to go through the three stages of travel, which a typical traveller may go through according to his or her cultural and emotional background: first, hoping and expecting, for she hopes to accept a good match and expects to befriend natives in her new homeland as a settler; second, falling victim to India as a muddle, only bringing out the muddle within her; lastly, returning home after realising that she has made a mistake about choosing the marriage of convenience and not love, and above all of accusing Aziz as her assailant who has only accompanied her to the dreadful caves. Hence, any further travel plans have to be terminated so that she can go back home in order to avoid facing further hardships.

The first stage of Adela's travel to India is typical of any intrepid traveller who hopes to discover the exotic and the unknown, but she is soon singled out by the British settler community as not one of their kind. As a young, educated, emancipated, and curious woman, she is apparently in search of 'newness' to widen her cultural scope as she has announced upon her arrival in the Club, reserved only for the British, that she wants to see "real India" (23). Upon her arrival, the reader is convinced of the fact that Adela is honest and keen on meeting the natives beyond the prejudicial vision of her colonial rulers, including her fiancé, the city Magistrate Ronny Heaslop. However, her hidden sexuality, combined with the lack of attraction for Ronny, let alone love, begins to dominate and overshadows her good intentions. In short, her real travel motives start to cloud her mind to such an extent that she turns out to be almost insane before her departure to England. By encountering the 'other', she appears to encounter the stranger within from whom she strives to flee. Thus, the experience of travel or the desire of seeing "true India" (42), as opposed to her expectations, turns out to be a journey to a dark reality within her – a reality perhaps in the form of sexual discontent or repression or simply a form of exercising possession or power subconsciously.

During the first stage of travel, both Adela and Mrs Moore formulate a companionship based on trust, so they undertake a journey together in search of thrill and enjoyment like regular tourists even though both have different travel plans. However, very soon

both feel bored and disappointed, yet Mrs Moore being older is able to accept the new situation against her expectations more easily than her younger companion:

‘We aren’t even seeing the other side of the world; that’s our complaint,’ said Adela. Mrs Moore agreed; she too was disappointed at the dullness of their new life. They had made such a romantic voyage across the Mediterranean and through the sands of Egypt to the harbour of Bombay, to find only a gridiron of bungalows at the end of it. But she did not take the disappointment as seriously as Miss Quested, for the reason that she was forty years older, and had learned that life never gives what we want at the moment that we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually. She said again that she hoped that something interesting would be arranged for next Tuesday. (22)

At this stage, the reader can relate to her frustration as she is not ready to accept her boring life passively, which seems to be either a parody or a travesty of life back in England that she has apparently left behind for a more romantic and thrilling one on a continent far away from home. Further, she clearly has a romantic notion of travel, which should lead to her marriage with Ronny and learning about a different culture. Both these motives behind travel are in jeopardy during the second stage of her journey through India. Moreover, unlike Mrs Moore, she is not ready to come to terms with her new existence, which seems to become increasingly dull and drab:

They (Adela and Mrs Moore) had lived more or less inside cocoons, and the difference between them was that the elder lady accepted her own apathy, while the younger resented hers. It was Adela’s faith that the whole stream of events is important and interesting, and if she grew bored she blamed herself severely and compelled her lips to utter enthusiasms. This was the only insincerity in a character otherwise sincere. (124)

Obviously, as Adela arrives in India as a typical tourist full of curiosity dominating her imagination, her ideals seem to clash immediately with the ground reality, which makes her question her future in India and the later course of her life in a new land.

In front, like a shutter, fell a vision of her married life. She and Ronny would look into the Club like this every evening, then drive home to dress; they would see the Lesleys and the Challendars and the Turtons and the Burtons, and invite them and be invited

by them, while the true India slid by unnoticed [...] She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit, and she assumed that it was a spirit of which Mrs Moore had had a glimpse. (42–43)

Perhaps Adela's dilemma lies in the fact that she confuses seeing the true spirit of India with exploring Indian geography. As a result, she neither gets to know the natives better, nor does she learn about their complex cultural features that her naïve mind cannot comprehend. As spatial and geographical dimensions are crucial to having a pleasant or unpleasant travel experience, the visit to the caves as a joyful excursion turns out to be detrimental to Adela's vision of travel; she opts for visiting the caves as a satisfying and thrilling experience with Dr Aziz as her tour guide without imagining the unexpected dangers often attached to such trips. Forster treats Indian geographical space as increasingly dull and drab, so it is not a surprise that during the Marabar expedition, Adela realises that "Sightseeing bores [her]" (143) as it is only a superficial encounter with new places and that she needs to reconsider what she really wants in her life. Her friend Fielding has already suggested to her that she should "try seeing Indians" (23) if she really aims to understand her new homeland. Her dilemma is further aggravated by the fact that none of her countrymen are interested in India at all but only in exercising their hegemony by supporting the 'dignified' ones like Ronny who is a downright *sahib*: "Miss Quested learned it with anxiety, for she had not decided whether she liked dignified men" (22).

Having announced that she is "desirous of seeing the real India" (23), Adela has not only differentiated her intentions behind travel from other colonial settler counterparts but she has also made them utterly uncomfortable. These colonial settlers not only find her despicable but additionally consider her an outcast. "Miss Quested, what a name!" remarked Mrs Turton to her husband as they drove away [...] thinking her ungracious and cranky" (24). And "she wasn't pukka" (25). Thus, the reader soon notices Adela's inability to fulfil her desire to see the 'real India' as she has been put into an unreal situation, which seems to prevent her from experiencing the deeper dimensions of Indian culture as she has anticipated.

Miss Quested now had her desired opportunity; friendly Indians were before her, and she tried to make them talk, but she failed, she strove in vain against the echoing walls of their civility. Whatever she said produced a murmur of depreciation, varying into a murmur of concern when she dropped a handkerchief [...] Mrs Moore was equally unsuccessful. (39)

At this stage, the reader is first introduced to the leitmotif of the all-pervasive echo, which is to dominate the plot. The echo reaches its peak during and after the Marabar expedition. However, during the development of the plot, the reader is prepared for a number of echoes within her – the echoes of cultural connection and conflict, of a prospective marriage devoid of love, and of her own sexual repression combined with not being an attractive woman. The nihilistic echo in the Marabar Caves clearly shatters the idea of travel as romance as well as of ‘West meeting East’:

There are some exquisite echoes in India; there is the whisper round the dome at Bijapur; there are the long, solid sentences that voyage through the air at Mandu, and return unbroken to their creator. The echo in a Marabar cave is not like these, it is entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. ‘Bourn’ is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or ‘bou-ourn,’ or ‘ou-boum,’ – utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce ‘bourn.’ Even the striking of a match starts a little worm coiling, which is too small to complete a circle but is eternally watchful. And if several people talk at once, an overlapping howling noise begins, echoes generate echoes, and the cave is stuffed with a snake composed of small snakes, which writhe independently. (137)

Forster seeks to demonstrate how cultural, social and psychological echoes are inextricably intertwined in Adela’s case, that it is not possible to separate one from the other. Additionally, since “echoes generate echoes” (137), creating a chain of chaos, Adela cannot help sinking deeper into her own personal chaos; in short, the echo inside her during the apparently harmless trip to the caves becomes as dominant as the echo outside, making her lose touch with reality. Hence, Forster invites the reader to place Adela’s transcultural predicament in the broader picture of India as an imperial space as well as India as a space of personal quest.

The echo seems to push Adela to the second, the darker stage of her travel she has not expected. The space of Indian muddle, just like the echo, strangely personifies the muddle within her the longer she stays in India, finally expelling her from that so-called hostile, destructive space back to the safe haven of England. Forster repeatedly toys with the leitmotif of both muddle and echo in order to underline how the internal and external landscapes are overlapping. The echo in the Marabar Caves proves to be not only a turning point in the novel but also in Adela’s life as she falls victim to the more macabre

dimensions of colonial India, which embodies more “a frustration of reason and form” (270) than a romantic journey. These muddles are mentioned in relation to mysteries as Forster seems to imply that since muddles and mysteries are at the heart of colonial India, so are they within the Western travellers like Adela and Mrs Moore. However, Mrs Moore, who tries to demonstrate her adventurous mindset, claims, “I like mysteries but I rather dislike muddles” (63).

It is during the second stage of travel, which shows a travel within travel, that Adela begins to face her reality and falls apart. In fact, it is not only a journey to India but also a trip to the Marabar Caves which proves to be a passage to self-discovery – self-knowledge, that is, a marriage of convenience is not a means to a fulfilling life, that love is important to her if not considered in the first place. It is this discovery in the dark confines of the Marabar Caves which makes her run out of them in panic. She begins to complain about an echo, which is increasingly making her sick. However, once Aziz is set free and as she is free of the shackles of ‘colonial desires’ and duties, she is no longer sick. Finally, she withdraws her charges against Aziz and calls herself a victim of hallucination – a delusion, which remains debatable for the reader.

This leads to the final stage of travel, namely the journey back home to simply discontinue travelling further and to give up her ambitions in India. Adela has tried to be honest, but mere honesty does not help as she ends up wrongly accusing an innocent man. It is during the last stage of travel that both Adela and the reader are able to grasp the experience of travel in colonial India during the first and the second stage more critically. The experience in the Marabar Caves destroys the thrill of travel. Forster does not refrain from experimenting with the idea of travelling to a distant place as intriguing. However, he underlines the fact that from a certain distance, travel appears to be rather alluring; for instance, the caves look magnificent from a distance but proximity to them turns out to be fatal to one’s sanity. This idea is confirmed at the very opening of the novel as well as at the end of the disastrous Marabar expedition. Forster states at the beginning of the novel, “Except for the Marabar Caves – and they are twenty miles off – the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary” (5), hinting at the fact that they are only extraordinary from a distance, for as one comes closer to them, they reveal their ugliness. Finally, Forster declares at the close of the Marabar trip, “As [the train] left the Marabars, their nasty little cosmos disappeared, and gave place to the Marabars seen from a distance, finite and rather romantic” (150). Hence, Adela has genuinely imagined India as a perfect travel destination without anticipating that she may not be able to penetrate the glass ceiling of colonial hierarchies that hamper a genuine transcultural dialogue.

The standard idea or motif behind travel is usually a positive undertaking, leading to a broader perspective on a new culture and country as Adela has hoped, but in Adela's case, the chaotic psychic journey distorts her vision of the world just as it distorts Mrs Moore's in another way. Adela begins to break down as soon her idealism about India, Indians, and her future life as a colonial settler dies out. Although Forster concludes, "This pose of 'seeing India' which had seduced him (Aziz) to Miss Quested at Chandrapore was only a form of ruling India; no sympathy lay behind it" (291–292), it is Adela who deep down seems to seduce Aziz in order to assert her new position as a possessive and powerful woman. Ian Baucom, therefore, claims that "The optic of tourism, and particularly of imperial tourism, is an optic of possession, animated by a desire to freeze the inspected object in time, to locate experience as an accessible, fixed, and re-presentable artefact" (1999, 118). In light of Ian's observations, perhaps, Adela is not a mere victim of hallucinations or delusion, but she is unconsciously shaped by a deeper desire to be both possessed and being in possession. As both these desires are not realised, she falls prey to a panic attack. *A Passage to India* is, in short, a passage to existential questions connected to culture and the self, which cannot be understood by merely focusing on the evil of colonialism but an evil within us that colonialism seems to breed or give vent to. So, a scrutiny of travelling female characters makes the reader look at travel as a life-changing experience, leading to a deeper understanding of our internal and external worlds.³

³ Joyce E. Kelly proclaims: "Estrangement from a customary place can focus a traveller's perception not just outwards but inwards, bringing increased awareness of the physical self, of patterns of consciousness, and of methods of expression, all fascinating new avenues of exploration for early twentieth-century writers [...] As Frances Bartkowski remarks, 'A new place is always an opportunity for sanctioned cross-thinking, inter-speaking [...] cross-'dressing', out of which something may emerge that transforms, transvalues, translated" (2015, 4).

4. The Plight of Mrs Moore and the Breakdown of her Humanism

Like Miss Quested, Mrs Moore also seems to go through the three stages of travel: the first stage is shaped by her new goals in India and excitement about a new place; the second stage is dominated by the suffocating and nihilistic experience in the caves, which leads to the last stage when she dies on the ship bound to her homeland and her dead body is thrown into the Indian ocean. Tragically, the same sea that has promised the romance of travel appears to kill her in the last stage of travel.

Mrs Moore is introduced to us as a “globe-trotter” (27), who comes to India as a “temporary escort, who could retire to England with what impressions she chose” (27). She appears to be an emancipated woman who has been married twice; Ronny is her son from her first marriage, whereas Stella and Ralph Moore are her children from the second one. Just as Adela is unable to connect with the English ladies in the Club, so is Mrs Moore who does not seem to be inspired by the phoney concepts of cultural superiority of the British and its ostentatious display there. In fact, Mrs Moore’s travelling together with young, adventurous Adela unfolds an interesting contrast between an old and a young traveller. Unfortunately, both of them drift apart in the face of their distinct experiences in India. Eventually, Mrs Moore is determined to part company with Adela as Adela’s accusations of Aziz become unbearable for her. The same perspective of travel that has united them also sets them apart; thus, the experience of travel compels them to pursue different paths to come to terms with their cultural and emotional dilemmas.

During the first stage of her travel, Mrs Moore differs dramatically from Adela despite enjoying a companionship. Mrs Moore does not look at India like wide-eyed Adela, whose approach to experiencing India is superficial: “As for Miss Quested, she accepted everything Aziz said as true verbally. In her ignorance, she regarded him as ‘India’, and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India” (65). In contrast to Adela, Mrs Moore applies her own insightful knowhow: “India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to one another. God...is...love...god has put us on earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent even in India to see how we are succeeding” (46). For she finds God “increasingly difficult to avoid as she grew older, and He had been constantly in her thoughts since she entered India, though oddly enough He satisfied her less” (47). However, Adela despite her close friendship with Mrs Moore is not able to share her own deep-rooted insecurities, the whole process of self-discovery and soul searching with her;

consequently, their companionship abruptly ends as Mrs Moore chooses to leave India and Indians with their problems. Although Aziz never forgives Mrs Moore for not being on his side as he forgives Adela for making a mistake about accusing him, Mrs Moore still stays a figure of affection in his imagination: "What did this eternal goodness of Mrs Moore amount to? To nothing, if brought to the rest of the thought. She had not borne witness in his favour, nor visited him in prison, yet she had stolen to the depths of his heart, and he always adored her" (297–298). Hence, even after her demise, Mrs Moore's goodness stays on, showing the power of her goodwill despite being passive in her acts.

Before the Marabar expedition, Mrs Moore has genuinely believed in love and the institution of Christianity, especially Christian values of kindness, which has dominated the first stage of travel. The echo in the caves, however, shakes these views just as the atmosphere in the dark caves shatters the idealism of travel, pushing her into the second stage of travel. For a moment, travel turns out to be the most terrible experience that can rob her of sanity: "Everything exists, nothing has value" (139). Henceforth, she first begins to question the fuss over love and marriage throughout the history of mankind and to doubt her religious views, concluding: "All this rubbish about love, love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference, and I held up from my business over such trifles!" (190). As India compels her to question her set views on religion and mankind, she is increasingly confused and in conflict with her surroundings. As Malcolm Bradbury observes, she is haunted by meaninglessness, namely the spiritual nullity in the caves which she is unable to overcome (1970, 224–243).

The trip to the caves, which induce an inner journey, seems to break down Mrs Moore not only physically but also spiritually as she loses her faith in Western rationalism. It is extremely difficult for Mrs Moore to face that not all can be explained rationally, that the nuances of foreign culture and aspects of human psyche and perception cannot be understood with the faculty of reason. As Aziz loudly calls out Mrs Moore, the echo of which lingers on in the narrow confines of the caves for a long time, Mrs Moore begins to suffer from claustrophobia, disgust, and consternation:

She lost Aziz and Adela in the dark, didn't know who touched her, couldn't breathe, and some vile naked thing stuck her face and settled on her mouth like a pad. She tried to regain the entrance tunnel, but an influx of villagers swept her back. She hit her head. For an instant she went mad, hitting and gasping like a fanatic. For not only did the crush and stench alarm her; there was a terrifying echo. (137)

The same echo that mars Adela's will to continue travelling in India and to settle down there also ruthlessly shatters Mrs Moore's who suddenly feels as if she "journeyed too far" (139). The conflict within her surrounding religion and mankind overpowers her in the horrid caves to such an extent that all she feels is "horror" (139) as every noble sentiment, comforting her throughout her life, appears to be an empty sound: "Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity [...] only amounted to 'boum'" (139).

Space and place are somewhat crucial to Mrs Moore's travel experiences as the events in the foreign space and unfamiliar place seem to change the course of her existence. Having felt terribly bored in the Club as a microcosm of colonial hegemony in the company of her vain fellowmen, she seeks refuge in a mosque where both the tranquillity and her chance encounter with Dr Aziz raise her spirit. However, both space and place during the Marabar expedition become hostile to her in the wake of the breakdown of her humanism, so is her will to continue travelling with anyone. Consequently, she declares to "retire then into a cave on my own" (188) in the third stage of travel. Finally, she seems to get caught up with India as a muddle willingly or unwillingly to such an extent that a passage back home, like that of Adela, is no longer possible as she expires on her way back. Her death on the ship seems to reverberate with her regret that her visit to India has been incomplete.

In fact, as soon as Mrs Moore is in India, she exists in a state of limbo between two worlds, that is England and India, between which she is unable to achieve harmony despite her good will. In several ways, Mrs Moore is neither East nor West as traditionally defined since she clearly seeks to think beyond these neat and clean categories. However, age is apparently against her despite giving her more wisdom than Adela; as a result, she seems to succumb to those who are determined to keep these categories intact. Her spiritual experience in the caves with a loss of faith in Christianity causes a loss of her identity, which is perhaps a reason behind her disappointment with everyone and everything around her. She seems to die in transit between these two worlds, namely Indian spirituality and Western rationality, as she cannot hope to exist in either of them. As she has lost faith in humanism, she fails to show readiness to take sides in a crisis like Adela's and Aziz's. A journey back home into a comfort zone becomes the only hope to regain harmony in existence, which is, however, brutally terminated by death: "She had come to that state where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time – the twilight of the double vision in which so many elderly people are involved" (195). Nevertheless, as John Beer claims, "Mrs Moore is destroyed in body [...] but her spirit lives on in the lives and spirits of others; and in the last section of the novel it is

actually reincarnate in physical form, when her children Ralph and Stella visit India" (1962, 131). Also, her death is presented in a more positive way, as she seems to have left behind her goodwill in India, acknowledged by Aziz himself, as mentioned above.

However, travelling for both Adela and Mrs Moore is a disturbing and unsettling experience as it makes them out of sorts. A passage to India for Mrs Moore is a passage to a disappointing phase, devoid of religion and moral values, which pushes her into a vacuum that seems to suffocate her and accelerate her demise. Even the echo does not seem to leave her as it eventually leaves Adela but appears to take its toll on her later. Thus, both these travellers are emotionally and physically transformed by dislocation and cultural 'otherness' encountered during their travels – the same 'otherness' they have hoped to enjoy and relish with true honesty. Therefore, Parry rightly infers:

The awakenings of two Englishwomen dislocated by an India that confutes their expectations take cataclysmic form and result in derangement and delusion, the one mimicking in her feelings and behaviour the ascetic stance of isolation from the world but misunderstanding its meaning as meaninglessness, the other assaulted by knowledge of sexuality and misinterpreting it as a sexual assault. Both are negative responses to their perceptions of India's otherness: Mrs More shrinks the august ambition of quietism to the confines of personal accidie, while Adela Quested experiences cultural differences as a violation of her person. (1985, 35)

Thinking along Parry's observation, it is important to point out that the novel is not as nihilistic as it appears to be at first, which underlines the crisis of the two female tourists in an extraordinary geographical domain. Travel certainly compels Adela to re-navigate her life in a different direction, as Beer claims "Adela becomes a person" (1962, 131) and makes Mrs Moore come out of the nullity of religious comfort. Hence, travel proves absolutely crucial to self-knowledge, however nerve wrecking or deathly such knowledge turns out to be. In short, both women travellers learn that travel is not a means to relish 'oriental fantasies' but can turn out to be a dark undertaking, shaking the comfort of illusions about the universe and God, native and foreign culture, as well as power and submission.

5. Conclusion: The New Woman Traveller

Although Adela and Mrs Moore genuinely wish to bridge the cultural gaps between the colonial and colonised cultures, the imperial space versus native space as epitomised by the caves seems to overshadow the noble ideal of connecting cultures. The desire to “only connect” (Forster 1910, 198) remains a fantasy of a naïve mind in the final stage of travel for both women travellers. At the same time, by staging the plight of Adela Quested and Mrs Moore, Forster introduces the aspect of women travellers in the larger debate of travel and colonialism, which are hard to find in the works of other prominent writers of colonial literature such as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. By making two women central to the main conflict in the novel unfurled in the caves, Forster seeks to connect the theme of imperialism to female tourism. A trip to the caves, hence, turns out to be a journey not only to the heart of imperial darkness but also a journey to the internal void expanding increasingly within, which eventually seems to envelop the female travellers mentally and physically. Hence, Forster as a modernist is not only engaged with the breakdown of religious and social norms as well as the limits of Western rationalism in the frames of his (anti)imperial fiction, but the condition of the ‘new woman traveller’ as represented by the characters of Adela Quested and Mrs Moore. The cultural and emotional dilemmas apparently confuse and crush these two women who give up the hope of getting to know the myriad aspects of India and the Indians. Yet, they exercise their free will beyond the spheres of colonial masters in India, which urges the reader to acknowledge their role outside the domain of men.

A journey to India for both female travellers proves to be a journey to self-discovery as Forster breaks the fantasy of imperial travels as a romantic undertaking. Thus, by presenting the cross-cultural conflicts of female travellers and by gendering travel, Forster offers different ways of experiencing and understanding travel and transformations in his novel. So, despite failing to achieve their travel aims and facing the transcultural predicament, both Adela and Mrs Moore reach a different status in the eyes of the reader. As Harold Bloom observes, since Adela wants to see India, “Forster too wishes to make us *see*, in the hope that by seeing we will learn to connect, with ourselves and with others” (2005, 251; italics in original).

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Modern Hindu Reformers' View of Hinduism Reflected in *A Passage to India*: “Caves” as a Symbol of the Universal Formless God, and “Temple” as Idolatry

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Abstract

Although there has been a generally agreed interpretation of both “Caves” and “Temple” as the symbols of Hinduism, the structural relationship between the two symbols has been interpreted differently. This paper aims to elucidate the relationship between “Caves” and “Temple” by exploring how Forster’s perception of Hinduism was formed and reflected in the novel, assuming the influence of the monotheistic modern Hindu reformers, the Brahmo Samaj’s concept of “Brahman” and Plotinus’ concept of “the One” as its Western philosophical counterpart. It is found that “Caves” symbolizes “Nirguna Brahman” (Brahman without attributes), the Universal Formless God, while “Temple” symbolizes “Saguna Brahman” (Brahman with attributes), Krishna, or the eighth avatar of Vishnu. Forster represents the Marabar Caves as the nothingness of “Nirguna Brahman,” assuming that “good and evil are the same” in Hinduism, leading Adela and Mrs Moore towards moral nihilism. Forster’s representation of the Indian idea of nothingness reflects the nineteenth-century Western philosophers’ now out-dated concept of nihilism, which regards Early Buddhism’s “nirvana” (developed into “sunyata,” and later further into Advaita Vedanta’s “maya”) as the will for nothingness.

Keywords: *A Passage to India*, Neoplatonism, Brahman, Advaita Vedanta, Hindu Reform Movements

Introduction

While highlighting the problematic ambiguity in E.M. Forster's novels, Virginia Woolf (1942) suggests that "the Marabar caves should appear to us not [as] real caves but, it may be, the soul of India." Similarly, Part II: "Caves" and Part III: "Temple" have been interpreted as a symbol of Hinduism, with critics concurring that the former focuses on the philosophical aspect, the Absolute, while the latter underlines the practical dimension, Gokulashtami, the festival of Krishna's birth. For example, Lakshmi Prakash affirms that "Forster uses the symbol of the caves in the plural to suggest the various off-shoots of Indian thought, echoing the Impersonal Absolute" (1987, 192).

However, critics have interpreted the structural relationship between the two symbols differently. Some argue that "Temple" is a coda to the plot. For instance, Lionel Trilling asserts that "the last part of the story is frankly a coda to the plot [...] it is not to be supposed that Forster finds in Hinduism an answer to the problem of India" (1943, 90). Meanwhile, others maintain that it presents the idea of a synthesis, or that it is the antithesis of the experience of the caves. For example, Prakash mentions that "it is in [...] 'temple' that all the fragments of Forster's experience and memory are brought together" (199–200). Meanwhile, Michael Spencer contends that "the festival is the antithesis [...] the goal is to fuse ourselves with an impersonal God [...] in contrast with the type of life suggested by the caves [...] of Eastern asceticism" (1968, 285).

This disparate confusion in their interpretations can be attributed to the diversity of Hinduism, as Gavin Flood indicates: "some might claim [...] there is 'no such thing as Hinduism', while others might claim that [...] there is an 'essence' which structures or patterns its manifestations" (1996, 5). Forster seems to be aware of this diversity and represents it as "muddle" in *A Passage to India*:

The fissures in the Indian soil are infinite: Hinduism, so solid from a distance, is riven into sects and clans, which radiate and join, and change their names according to the aspect from which they are approached. Study it for years with the best teachers, and when you raise your head, nothing they have told you quite fits. (1924, 288)

They sang not even to the God who confronted them, but to a saint; they did not one thing which the non-Hindu would feel dramatically correct; this approaching triumph of India was a muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form. (1924, 28)

Unlike monotheistic religions¹ such as Judeo-Christianity and Islam, Hinduism offers three ways² to attain spiritual liberation (i. e., moksa, the release from the cycle of rebirth), thus "providing suitable spiritualities for persons of different temperaments or proclivities" (Muesse 2007, 87). To further complicate matters, there are local deities, as well as the pan-Hindu deities, both of which are identified as manifestations (avatars) of each other, or are married to each other, "demonstrating the striking fluidity of the Hindu pantheon" (Frazier and Flood 2011, 306).

Through a monotheistic perspective, this individual and regional diversity of worship is nothing but idolatry, or "muddle." To analyze Forster's intention behind the symbolization of Hinduism as "Caves," we need to determine how he conceptualizes Hinduism: which individual or regional worship style he follows. This study aims to elucidate disparate interpretations of the relationship between "Caves" and "Temple," by exploring the formation of Forster's perspective on Hinduism, assuming that he was influenced by modern Hindu reformers such as Rabindranath Tagore and Annie Besant.³

The Hindu Reform Movements

Under the British colonial rule in the nineteenth century, Hinduism was compelled to reassess its traditions, facing an encounter with Western values, especially Christianity. According to Hayden Bellenoit, after Christian missionaries were allowed into the East India Company's territories in 1813, their impact was tremendous. They criticized Indian customs and religions "to a degree never before seen in the country's history"

¹ Monotheism is defined as "the belief in one god." However, a "strict definition [...] has proved elusive, since religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism do not readily conform to either monotheistic or polytheistic criteria [...] even [...] Christianity, leave room for competing or secondary deities" (*Dictionary of the Social Sciences* 2002).

² According to Muesse (2011, 101), the three ways (Trimarga) are the way of action (Karma-marga), the way of knowledge (jnana-marga) and the way of devotion (bhakti-marga).

³ Eric Sharpe acknowledges the role of Annie Besant in the Hindu reform movements: "The early Hindu reform movements [...] shared the same characteristics: small-scale and elitist [...] The Brāhma Samāj [...] never succeeded in achieving popularity [...] The Theosophical Society had very much the same character, being eclectic and eccentric: so too were its leaders, of whom Annie Besant was the most important" (1975, 56).

(2017, 138). Christian evangelical missionaries denounced the use of idols, caste discrimination, and the traditions of widow burning and child marriage (218–19).

In the region of Bengal, where the Indian independence movement emerged later, some upper caste intellectuals attempted to reform Hindu traditions and practices through an accommodative approach to Western values and Christianity to “restore the perceived greatness of Hinduism’s ancient past” (Flood 1996, 250). These Hindu reform movements were referred to as the Hindu Renaissance, which was characterized by features such as “an emphasis on reason to establish the truth of the Veda,” “the rejection of icon worship, regarded as idolatry,” and “the construction of Hinduism as an ethical spirituality, equal, or superior, to Christianity and Islam” (250–51).

The Hindu Renaissance was in line with European romanticists’ quest to discover the ancient sources of Western civilization in India; it was a positive outcome of the contact between sympathetic Orientalists and Western-educated Bengali elites, who were influenced by their “romantic idealized representations of India” (Altglas 2014, 26). These movements led to the nationalization of Hinduism: the reconceptualization of religious traditions as “the anchor of Indian nationhood under British colonial rule” (Bellenoit 2017, 218).

There were three significant reform movements: (1) the Brahmo Samaj (the Society of Believers in Brahman), which took a liberal approach to Hinduism (Muesse 2003, 164); (2) the Arya Samaj (the Society of Nobles), which took a fundamentalist approach to Hinduism, considering “the Veda as the only authoritative Hindu text” (Muesse 2003, 164); and (3) the Theosophical Society, a Western esoteric movement influenced by orientalism. Following the death of its founder, Helena Blavatsky, the society split into two groups and Annie Besant, a British social reformer and theosophist, became the president of the society in Adyar, India in 1907.

Among the modern Hindu reformers, the Brahmo Samaj was a forerunner; it was founded in 1828 by Ram Mohan Roy, who is considered to be the father of the Indian Renaissance, and Debendranath Tagore, a Hindu philosopher and the father of Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel laureate in literature. Forster met Rabindranath Tagore in 1912 and reviewed two of his books (Ganguly 1990, 26). He also reviewed Devendranath Tagore’s autobiography (Tagore et al. 1914) and learned about Brahmoism, or the modern Hindu reform movement. This experience appears to have significantly influenced Forster’s concept of Hinduism.

Roy worked for the East India Company, learned English and became familiar with the works of European Orientalists. He realized that, although European perceived

Vedantic monism with fascination, Vedic polytheism was seen with abhorrence: his belief in strict monotheism deepened. He attempted to prove that Hindu "textual references to polytheism [...] were purely allegorical whereas references to an overarching Supreme Deity were the essential nexus of Hinduism" (Doniger 2015, 18), and subsequently, he formulated a universal monotheistic religion, extracting monistic elements from Islam, Hinduism, and Christian Unitarianism (18).

Roy was inspired by Advaita Vedanta, the philosophy of absolute non-dualism; it was the first school of Vedanta philosophy rooted in the Vedas, and especially the Upanishads. Its greatest exponent was Adi Shankara in the eighth century (Grimes 2009, 31–32, 333). Shankara's philosophy was deduced from the text of the Chandogya Upanishad: "In the beginning, dear boy, this was Being alone, one only, without a second" (Swahananda 2016, 21). It assumes three basic perspectives: (1) the non-duality of Brahman (the Ultimate Reality); (2) the non-reality of the empirical world; and (3) the non-difference between atman (the individual soul) and Brahman. Brahman stands beyond any attributes or representation. Undoubtedly, it would be easier for ordinary people to understand the Absolute through attributes like creator, preserver, and destroyer. Shankara, therefore, "makes concession to the idea of devotion (bhakti) to a personal Lord (Isvara) as a lower level of knowledge" (Flood 1996, 242). He explains that "God with attributes" (Saguna Brahman) is only a manifestation of "Brahman without attributes" (Nirguna Brahman).

Roy's new Hinduism appears to be based on cherry-picking from the selected sources of Shankara's philosophy, holding "Nirguna Brahman as supreme" on the one hand, while discarding "Saguna Brahman as idolatry" on the other. The Brahmo Samaj was supported by lower-class Brahmans and the emerging urban middle classes. However, it was not supported by ordinary villagers, who followed the way of ritual and devotion to deities (Flood, 253–54). Orthodox Hindus, who disliked their westernized interpretation of the tradition, criticized it as well (Altglas 2014, 28).

The Formation of Forster's Perception of Hinduism

Considering the Brahmo Samaj's religious and historical role, we will now explore how Forster's perception of Hinduism has been represented in *A Passage to India* by examining his writings and related documents. Devendranath Tagore's autobiography reveals how Devendranath, or the Brahmo Samaj, wished to realize the doctrine of Nirguna Brahman (Brahman without attributes):

During my travels, how often have I prayed to my God with tears in my eyes for the day when idolatrous ceremonies would be abolished from our house, and the adoration of the Infinite commence in their stead. (Tagore et al. 1914, 18)

The Brahma Samaj split into three groups in 1878. When some members deplored the internal dissension, Max Muller, a distinguished Sanskrit philologist at Oxford, expressed a positive view to encourage the movement to create a universal formless God:

They are all doing, I believe, unmixed good, in helping to realise the dream of a new religion for India, it may be for the whole world—a religion free from many corruptions of the past [...] and firmly founded on a belief in the One God, the same in the Vedas [...] the Old [...] the New Testament [...] the Koran, the same also in the hearts of those who have no longer Vedas or Upanishads or any sacred Books (Tagore et al. 1914, 25)

Forster was a conscientious objector during the First World War and stayed in Alexandria as a volunteer for the British Red Cross (1915–1918). He seems to have been aware of the similarity between the ancient Indian philosophy and Plotinus' philosophy. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Forster's mentor at Cambridge, specialized in Neoplatonism and the Far East Civilization. Their friendship must have influenced the formation of Forster's perspective on Neoplatonism and Hinduism, leading him to develop an enhanced interest in the Indian Vedantic philosophy. Forster compares Plotinus' philosophy with Christianity in *Alexandria: A History and Guide*:

the vision of oneself and the vision of God are really the same [...] and here is the great difference between Plotinus and Christianity. The Christian promise is that a man shall see God, the Neo-Platonic—like the Indian—that he shall be God. Perhaps, on the quays of Alexandria, Plotinus talked with Hindu merchants who came to the town. At all events, his system can be paralleled in the religious writings of India. He comes nearer than any other Greek philosopher to the thought of the East. (1922, 83)

Plotinus' concept of the One in *The Enneads* is very similar to Advaita Vedanta's concept of Nirguna Brahman. Plotinus' spirituality is based on “the desire for ultimate unity [...] with the One” (Cary 1999, 22). It is a religious concept with regard to the origin of the world, wherein everything is derived from emanations stemming from the One.

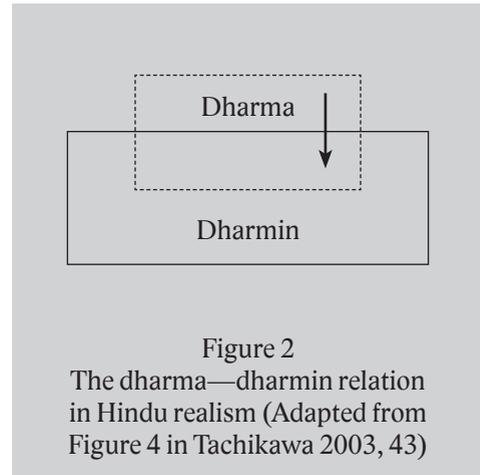
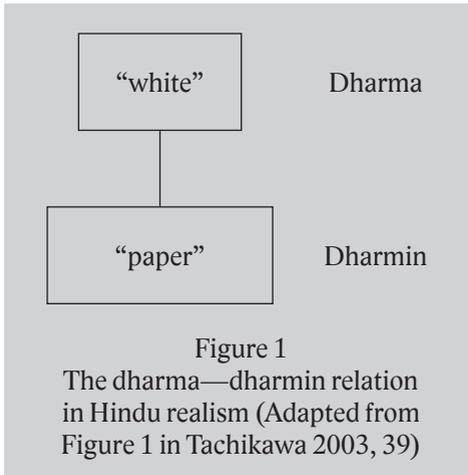
According to Cary (1999, 22, 25), Plotinus organized the world into four levels: (1) the One or the Good, like the sun emanating light and colour; (2) the divine Mind or the intelligible world, which contains all the Forms; (3) the Soul, which includes both the World-Soul and human souls; and (4) the visible or material world.

Meanwhile, for Advaita Vedanta, the world is *maya*, or "an illusory appearance in Brahman just as the snake in the rope, when mistaken, has the appearance of a snake" (Dhavamony 1999, 21). In other words, the world is only an illusion, and Brahman alone is real. That is, the world is Brahman itself. Hence, Advaita Vedanta logically accepts neither the "ex nihilo" creation that God formed the world out of nothing (Michael 1992, 281) nor the "emanation" whereby the world emerged from the One.

To illustrate the difference between Plotinus' the One and Advaita Vedanta's Brahman, let us examine how Indian philosophers⁴ in medieval India conceived the ontological structure of the world. They contended that the world is composed of various factors, and that the relationship between them can be described "in terms of the dharma-dharmin relation" (Tachikawa 1981, 6). Dharma implies "the basis of all order, whether social or moral" (Grimes 2009, 143), while dharmin signifies the "bearer of any characteristic mark or attribute" (Narayanaswami and Glashoff 2016). The term dharma is a key concept of Indian philosophy, but is used in diverse ways in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. In this context, dharma implies a property or attribute of an entity, and dharmin refers to the entity that possesses the property, or the substratum of attributes (Tachikawa 1981, 4, 10).

For example, when considering the image of "a fire on a mountain," Indian philosophers perceive the fire as the dharma (property), and the mountain as the dharmin (the possessor of the fire). In terms of "a blue pot," they see the colour blue as the dharma (property) and the pot as the dharmin (the possessor of the colour blue). Accordingly, if they were to look at a piece of "white paper," they would conceive of it as follows: there is the property of the colour "white" (dharma) in the "paper" (dharmin). The model diagram in Figure 1 illustrates this dharma-dharmin relationship.

⁴ Indian philosophy is defined as "the systems of thought and reflection that were developed by the civilisations of the Indian subcontinent," including both orthodox systems, such as the Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva-Mimamsa, and Vedanta, and unorthodox systems, such as Buddhism and Jainism (Mohanty n.d.).



If we were to apply this dharma-dharmin relationship to the ontological structure of the world from the perspective of the Hindu orthodox schools, which accept the Vedas' authority, dharmin is Brahman and dharma is the world. Among the orthodox schools, the realists hold the view that the world is real; thus, there is a distinction between the two entities: dharma (the world) and dharmin (Brahman). This divergence is in line with the difference between the two concepts of Brahman: Saguna Brahman (attributes) and Nirguna Brahman (the substratum of attributes).

Conversely, the idealist schools deny the reality of the world (dharma), and hence reject the clear distinction between dharma and dharmin (Tachikawa 1981, 9–10; 2003, 40). In particular, Advaita Vedanta emphasizes that the world (dharma) is illusory, and Brahman (dharmin) alone is real. Their conception of “the world as Brahman itself” necessarily blurs the distinction between dharma and dharmin (as displayed in Figure 2). Therefore, they hold that only Nirguna Brahman exists, and Saguna Brahman is a mere manifestation of Nirguna Brahman.

Forster is fully cognizant of the difference between Nirguna Brahman, “an impersonal, Absolute God without form” (Ramos 2017, 10) and Saguna Brahman, “a personal god with form.” In describing Gokul Ashtami, a festival to celebrate Krishna's birth at Dewas, he observes the locals' religious practice:

I enjoyed the walk, for the preacher (an Indore man) was well educated and explained what the various groups were singing—some praised God without attributes, others

with attributes: the same mixture of fatuity and philosophy that ran through the whole festival. (1953, 111)

As for the Hindu festival's idolatrous aspects, Forster is ambivalent: he has a negative impression about the festival's decoration and ornaments, whereas he appreciates the people's bhakti (devotional love) for Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu (Saguna Brahman):

There is no dignity, no taste, no form, and though I am dressed as a Hindu I shall never become one. I don't think one ought to be irritated with Idolatry because one can see from the faces of the people that it touches something very deep in their hearts. But it is natural that Missionaries [...] should lose their tempers. ("Letters of 1921" cited in Forster 1953, 107)

What troubles me is that every detail, almost without exception, is fatuous and in bad taste. The altar is a mess of little objects [...] the walls are hung with deplorable oleographs, the chandeliers, draperies—everything bad. Only one thing is beautiful—the expression on the faces of the people as they bow to the shrine. ("Letters of 1921" cited in Forster 1953, 106)

G.K. Das emphasizes that, in his early writings, Forster has "curious impressions of the temples of Khajuraho" and declares his "conflicting reactions to Hindu architecture in general" (1977, 147):

The general deportment of the Temple is odious. It is unaccommodating, it rejects every human grace, its jokes are ill-bred, its fair ladies are fat, it ministers neither to the sense of beauty nor to the sense of time, and it is discontented with its own material. No one could love such a building. Yet no one can forget it. It remains in the mind when fairer types have faded, and sometimes seems to be the only type that has any significance. When we are tired of being pleased and of being improved, and of the other gymnastics of the West, and care, or think we care, for Truth alone; then the Indian Temple exerts its power, and beckons down absurd or detestable vistas to an exit unknown to the Parthenon. (*The Athenaeum*, 26 September 1919, 947 cited in Das 1977, 147–148)

As Forster becomes aware of the Hindu philosophical perspective that underlies the arrangement of the temple building's structure, he tries to identify the positive aspects of the allegedly idolatrous architecture:

I became easier with the Indian temple as soon as I realised [...] that there often exists inside its complexity a tiny cavity, a central cell, where the individual may be alone with his god [...] The exterior of each temple represents [original] the world mountain, the Himalayas [...] round its flanks run all the complexity of life [...] The interior is small, simple. It is only a cell where the worshipper can for a moment face what he believes. He worships at the heart of the world-mountain, inside the exterior complexity. (*Listener*, 10 September 1953, 420 cited in Das 1977, 112)

Forster visited Kandariya Mahadeva Temple in Khajuraho in 1912 and again in 1921. Kandara means "cave" in Sanskrit and Mahadeva means "great God, a name for Lord Siva" (Grimes 2009, 219). Kandariya Mahadeva Temple is, therefore, the temple of the Great God of the Cave. It symbolizes "Mount Kailasa, the abode of Shiva, or Mount Meru" (Desai 2000, 25). While stating that "the exterior of each temple represents [...] the Himalayas", Forster understands that Mount Meru corresponds to the Himalayas in the present day and that the "tiny cavity" inside the temple embodies the cave in the world mountain, which is considered the centre of the universe. This Hindu philosophical symbolization of the connection linking the universe to the world mountain and its cave must have inspired Forster's mystical story of the fictional Marabar Caves, where Siva (Saguna Brahman) in the Temple's sanctum, is replaced with the Brahma Samaj's Universal Formless God (Nirguna Brahman).

The Marabar Caves as Nirguna Brahman

Part II: "Caves" commences with a description of the Ganges and the Himalayas, referring to the creation myth of Vishnu and Siva (Saguna Brahman), while emphasizing that "the high places of Dravidia" are older than them and therefore "older than anything in the world." Forster suggests that in the oldest known places (i.e., the Marabar Hills and Caves), there is something much higher than the gods and goddesses (Saguna Brahman), and something related to the world's beginning:

The Ganges, though flowing from the foot of Vishnu and through Siva's hair, is not an ancient stream. Geology, looking further than religion, knows of a time when neither the river nor the Himalayas that nourished it existed [...] The mountains rose, their debris silted up the ocean, the gods took their seats on them and contrived the river [...] In the days of the prehistoric ocean the southern part of the peninsula already existed, and the high places of Dravidia have been land since land began [...] They are older than anything in the world. (1924, 123)

As Aziz and Adela approach the caves, they experience something both Hindu and mystic. They see maya, an illusionary appearance of the "breasts of the goddess Parvati" and "a snake" in Nirguna Brahman, a key concept of Advaita Vedanta: this implies they are encountering the Vedantic world:

As the elephant moved towards the hills [...] a new quality occurred, a spiritual silence which invaded more senses than the ear [...] Everything seemed cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion [...] there were some mounds by the edge of the track, low, serrated, and touched with whitewash. What were these mounds – graves, breasts of the goddess Parvati? The villagers beneath gave both replies [...] Miss Quested saw a thin, dark object reared on end at the farther side of a watercourse, and said, "A snake!" [...] But when she looked through Ronny's field-glasses, she found it wasn't a snake, but the withered and twisted stump of a toddy-palm [...] Aziz admitted that it looked like a tree through the glasses, but insisted that it was a black cobra really [...] Nothing was explained, and yet there was no romance. (139)

The Marabar Caves have been described as extraordinary, of complete renunciation, and without attributes: "nothing" is Forster's interpretation of the Brahmo Samaj's concept of Nirguna Brahman. However, ordinary Hindu followers maintain a certain distance from them:

Hinduism has scratched and plastered a few rocks, but the shrines are unfrequented, as if pilgrims, who generally seek the extraordinary, had here found too much of it. Some sādhus did once settle in a cave, but they were smoked out, and even Buddha, who must have passed this way down to the Bo Tree of Gya, shunned a renunciation more complete than his own, and has left no legend of struggle or victory in the Marabar. (123–124)

Forster wrote a review of Edward O. Martin's *The Gods of India* (1914) in *The New Weekly* in 1914 (Das 1977, 151). Martin quotes Max Muller's translation of Buddhist literature, *the Lalitavistara* ("Detailed Narration of the Sport of the Buddha" in Sanskrit) to explain the legendary life of Gautama Buddha. Forster, thereby, must have learned about the Buddha's doctrine of the Middle Way, which rejects the two extremes of traditional Hindu practices: the habitual practice of the pleasures of sense; and "the habitual practice [...] of self-mortification (a practice painful, unworthy and of no abiding profit)" (148–149). Forster seems to have incorporated this episode and the doctrine into the novel. Not surprisingly, as a founder of a non-Vedic school that rejects the authority of Brahman, Buddha showed no interest in a complete "renunciation" in the Marabar Caves.

Now, let us examine Godbole's conception of the Marabar Caves. The name "Godbole" was taken from somebody real whom Forster met in Lahore when he was invited to a reception by the Brahma Samaj. He was a Brahmin (a Hindu priest) and sang to Forster in a garden just as the fictional Godbole did so at Fielding's tea party (Sarker 2007, 363–364). However, as critics claim, the character of the fictional Godbole was modelled on the Maharajah of Dewas (Forster 1953, 9), as well as on the Maharajah of Chhatarpur, who insistently longed for the union with Krishna (Lewis 1979, 46). The fictional Godbole can therefore be considered a Vaishnava Brahmin, or a worshipper of Vishnu (Saguna Brahman). This is also apparent in his song about Krishna and the milkmaids and his religious practice during Gokulashtami. As an orthodox Brahmin who is embarrassed by the Brahma Samaj's westernized interpretation of Brahman, Godbole hesitates to explain the Marabar Caves to Adela and Aziz:

'Do describe them, Professor Godbole.'

'It will be a great honour.' He drew up his chair and an expression of tension came over his face [...] 'There is an entrance in the rock which you enter, and through the entrance is the cave.'

'Something like the caves at Elephanta?'

'Oh, no, not at all; at Elephanta there are sculptures of Siva and Parvati. There are no sculptures at Marabar.'

'They are immensely holy, no doubt,' said Aziz, to help on the narrative.

'Oh no, oh no.'

'Still they are ornamented in some way.'

'Oh no.' (Forster 1924, 73)

Forster visited the Barabar Caves on 28 January and the Ellora Caves on 1 April 1913 (Lewis 1979, 126). He remarked that in the Barabar Caves "there was not much to see except highly polished granite walls and not much to do except to try to wake the echo" (Beauman 1994, 275). As for the Ellora Caves, which encompass magnificent rock-cut temples decorated with elaborate frescoes, which are now designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Forster did not seem very impressed with them either. He might have perceived the Ellora Caves' stunning decorative art and architecture as idolatry. However, in looking for something mystic that could be used as the material for his novel on India, which focusses on "God without attributes," he must have found the "Caves with less attributes" much more convenient for his purpose.

According to Robin J. Lewis (1979, 78), Forster stated explicitly that the Marabar Caves are based on the Barabar Caves. More precisely, however, as Wertenbruch suggests, "Forster seems to have combined the Barabar and the close Nagarjuni Hills in order to create his Marabar Caves" (2011, 62). In other words, although the name of the Marabar Caves is derived from the Barabar Caves, Forster's description of "polished granite wall" and "echo" seems to be modelled on the nearby Nagarjuni Caves, the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India, situated among the twin hills of Barabar and Nagarjuni. Forster may have intentionally chosen the term "Barabar," perhaps knowing that "Nagarjuni" comes from the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna.

Nonetheless, the two groups of caves should be distinguished. Both, the Barabar and Nagarjuni Caves, have inscriptions engraved on their entrance walls (Lauren 2019). They are both "quite unadorned" and "the inner walls [...] are finely polished" (Sarker 2007, 409). The two caves were donated to the Ajivikas (one of the non-Vedic schools that rejected the authority of Brahman) by Emperor Asoka and by his grandson, Dasaratha, respectively. The Barabar Caves have more "ornately carved and beautiful" entranceways, while the walls of the Nagarjuni Caves are flatter and highly polished (Lauren 2019). Being aware of this difference, Forster must have fictionalized the Nagarjuni Caves as the Marabar Caves, or the imaginary "Vedic Caves without attributes." He only focuses on the highly polished walls and the peculiar echo, completely ignoring the "non-Vedic inscriptions," in order to emphasize the nothingness of the Caves. Forster portrays the Marabar Caves as follows:

The caves are readily described [...] the pattern never varies, and no carving [...] Nothing, nothing attaches to them [...] They are dark caves [...] until the visitor arrives [...] and strikes a match. Immediately another flame rises in the depths of the

rock and moves towards the surface like an imprisoned spirit: the walls of the circular chamber have been most marvellously polished. (1924, 124)

The sides of the tunnel are left rough, they impinge as an afterthought upon the internal perfection [...] Nothing is inside them, they were sealed up before the creation of pestilence or treasure; if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil. (125)

The problem here is that Forster seems to interpret “Brahman” based on Plotinus’ concept of “the One,” which is identified with the Form of the Good in Western philosophy. According to Maria M. Brito-Martins, in arguing about the problem of evil, Plotinus adopts Aristotle’s definition of the Good as the principle of all existence, and comes to believe that “beings that emanate from the first emanatory are, in their essence, good,” thus, “evil cannot take form among beings [...] Evil can only belong to the non-being” (2014, 3). When we explore the formation and characteristics of Forster’s concept of “Brahman,” we need to consider that the Indian philosophical traditions are not as concerned with the problem of evil as the Western philosophy is. That is, Indian thinkers conceive of Brahman in a very different way from Greek or Christian intellectuals. As Mark Muesse indicates, “Brahman encompasses all that is good and all that is evil, and yet, transcends good and evil [...] beyond morality altogether [...] transcends all human categories and images [...] is nirguna [...] without qualities” (2003, 109).

Indian scholars do not perceive evil in the same way as Western philosophers of theodicy do. Instead, they focus on each person’s moral action (karma) and its consequences. Accordingly, “good karma counts toward a favourable rebirth,” while “bad karma counts toward an unfavourable rebirth” (Muesse 2003, 46). Whitley Kaufman asserts that “the doctrine of karma and rebirth represents perhaps the most striking difference between Western [...] religious thought and the great Indian religious traditions” and that “Indian thought is able to endorse a complete and consistent retributive explanation of evil: all suffering can be explained by the wrongdoing of the sufferer” (2005, 15). Arthur Herman maintains that “since the rebirth solution is adequate for solving the theological problem of evil, this undoubtedly explains why the problem was never of much concern to the classical Indian” (1976, 288). According to Muesse, “Karma is a principle of justice” and “in most of the Hindu traditions, there is no god or divine being meting out justice” (2011, 70). Even the gods (Saguna Brahman) are subject to the law of karma.

In brief, Nirguna Brahman (dharmin), or "Brahman without attributes," transcends good and evil. The world is its attributes (dharma), where people seek a spiritual path to liberation from suffering by trying to achieve good karma and to avoid bad karma. The doctrine of karma and rebirth functions as an ethical system in India; therefore, the nothingness of Nirguna Brahman does not lead people towards nihilism, as interpreted by nineteenth century European philosophers. Forster, nevertheless, seems to understand the Indian idea of nothingness as nihilistic⁵:

No, she did not wish to repeat that experience [...] the echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life. Coming at a moment when she chanced to be fatigued, it had managed to murmur, "Pathos, piety, courage – they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value." If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same – "ou-bourn." (1924, 147)

Brahman without attributes is represented here as the nothingness of the Marabar Caves, which is reinforced by the echo of "Bourn," "bou-ourn" or "ou-bourn." The strange echo is assumed to be modelled on the most famous Vedic mantra (a sacred verbal formula) "om"; it is "revered as the sound of the absolute which manifests the cosmos, the essence of the Veda" (Flood 1996, 222). As a narrator, Forster understands that good and evil are both aspects of Godbole's Lord, or Krishna (Saguna Brahman). Yet, it is not certain whether he is aware that Nirguna Brahman transcends each of them: the One has no attributes, neither good nor evil. Just after the cave event, Fielding and Godbole argue about good and evil at the college. Fielding becomes frustrated because Godbole's response does not seem to recognize the difference between good and evil, as Westerners do:

⁵ Forster presupposes that Indian philosophy holds that "evil and good are the same" (1924, 175) and that it clashes with the Western philosophical Idea of the Good, leading Westerners towards nihilism. "Moral nihilism rejects the possibility of absolute moral or ethical values [...] good and evil are nebulous" (*The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, n.d., s.v. "nihilism"). Advaita Vedanta's "maya" was built upon Mahayana Buddhism's "sunyata," which was conceptualized from Early Buddhism's "nirvana," the cessation of suffering and its causes (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* online, n.d., s.v. "nirvana," "sunyata" and "Advaita"). Nietzsche's "passive nihilism" reflects Early Buddhism's "Four Noble Truths," regarding the attainment of "nirvana" as the fulfilment of the instinct of self-destruction, the will for nothingness (Morrison 1997, 30).

‘You’re preaching that evil and good are the same.’

‘Oh, no, excuse me once again. Good and evil are different as their names imply. But, in my own humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great, as great as my feeble mind can grasp. Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence, and we are therefore entitled to repeat, “Come, come, come, come.” (175)

According to Nirmala Sharma (2016, 148), in the review of E.O. Martin’s *The Gods of India* (1914), Forster (1914) writes that good and evil are obscure in Hinduism. Martin was a Christian missionary, but in his book, he says “I have honestly striven to be impartial,” arguing that “the stories of the Hindu deities need neither denunciation nor condemnation from my pen” (viii). Nevertheless, he still seems embarrassed by the Hindu deity’s immoral, licentious behaviour towards milkmaids:

We might pass on to other well-known incidents in Krishna’s life, e.g. his stealing the clothes of the milkmaids of Vraj when they were bathing, and dancing with them in the famous circular dance. (137)

The most popular picture of Krishna – the one in which he is depicted sitting on the clothes of the milkmaids – is so indecent in character that it cannot be presented to English eyes, yet it is to be found in nearly every bazaar. (142)

Martin explains in his book that “the Supreme Spirit Brahman” is “Nirguna, or destitute of qualities” and takes “various forms, all of which may be worshipped,” and that only the “deepest thinkers look beyond the personal God to impersonal Spirit” (78). However, he fails to understand that the personal God or Goddess (Saguna Brahman) is not like God in the Christian sense, or “an eternal [...] being of immense power, knowledge, and goodness” (Wierenga 1995, 240). He goes so far as to claim that “Hinduism is God without morality” (150). Therefore, he is baffled by the twofold manifestations of the Hindu Goddess: benevolent, gentle, and life-giving “cool goddesses” compared with malevolent, terrifying, and lustful “hot goddesses” (Muesse 2011, 158):

As Parvati she is beautiful, gentle, faithful, and full of womanly qualities. But alas! when she appears as Durga and Kali she exhibits a very different spirit. Nothing is

sadder in Hinduism than the transformation of the gentle Uma and Parvati into the cruel, bloodthirsty Durga and Kali. (180)

According to Muesse, all individual goddesses are forms of Mahadevi (the great Goddess), and different gods represent Mahadeva (the great God). Likewise, both Mahadevi and Mahadeva ultimately symbolize and reveal Nirguna Brahman (2011, 156–7). Parvati is a beneficent goddess, and her influence on the fierce and evil-minded Siva is always for the good (E.O. Martin 1914, 182). Durga is a goddess of war and protects the cosmos against demons. Kali is a destroyer of evil forces and “represents the ferocious or destructive aspect of the phenomenal universe” (Grimes 2009, 193). The point here is that both Durga and Kali are considered to be different manifestations of Mahadevi, or Parvati.

Sharma maintains that it is the “dancing Shiva, the representation of the creation and dissolution myth” that Forster depicts in the Marabar Caves. Further, she asserts that he “does not represent it in its totality,” distorting other symbols as well as the philosophical implication (2016, 78). Her understanding is that, in Hinduism, “life is both good and evil.” Life “is evil because it is unreal, transitory”; and “it is good because every moment of experience is suffused with a deep Dionysian joy” (84–85). She, therefore, criticizes Forster for portraying “the caves as a main spring of evil” (78), only focusing on one part of the philosophical dichotomies.

Sharma, however, overlooks the fact that Forster (1924, 73) designates the Elephanta Caves as a place where Siva and Parvati (Saguna Brahman) are represented as idols, stressing the difference from the Marabar Caves (Nirguna Brahman) where there is no sculpture, no holiness, and no ornament. It is from Plotinus' perspective of evil that Forster describes the nothingness of the Marabar Caves. For Plotinus, the One is good; hence, “evil can only belong to the non-being” (Brito-Martins 2014, 3). Yet, in Hinduism, the One (Nirguna Brahman) transcends both good and evil. In Christianity, God is good, and therefore, Mrs Moore is overwhelmed by the echo of the “ou-boum” (Vedic mantra), which illustrates the “muddle” of India. For Westerners, in Hinduism, good and evil are the same; this perspective leads Mrs Moore towards moral nihilism. Reuben A. Brower explains her state of mind in the following way: “All distinctions of feeling and of moral value have become confused and meaningless” and “the doctrines of Western religious faith become equally empty” (1951, 119).

There is a more extreme interpretation of the echo as evil. From the perspective of Jungian psychology, Cumhur Y. Madran contends that “the universal archetype

evil which emanates from the Marabar Caves moves through the echo over the whole universe”; and “the echoing nothingness, meaninglessness, emptiness penetrates the universe” (2010, 85). Madran fails to comprehend Forster’s efforts to incorporate Hindu doctrines into the story. That is, the Marabar Caves typify “the soul of India” (Woolf 1942), and the echo symbolizes a sacred Vedic mantra.

When reviewing E.O. Martin’s *The Gods of India* (1914), Forster is aware that two roads are open to the soul’s quest for God (Nirguna Brahman): by worshipping a personal god (Saguna Brahman), or by directly contacting with God (Nirguna Brahman) through the challenging path of knowledge:

It could either proceed directly by the spinal cord, or indirectly through one of the Hindu deities who were dispersed about the body. When asked which road was the best, the Holy Man replied: “That by the spinal cord is quicker, but those who take it see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing of the world. Whereas those who proceed through some deity can profit by –” he pointed to the river, the temples, the sky, and added, “That is why I worship Siva.” But Siva was not the goal. (“The Gods of India,” *The New Weekly*, 30 May 1914, quoted in Ganguly 1990, 158)

Adwaita Ganguly suggests that the Holy Man’s answer may have influenced Forster’s depiction of Mrs Moore’s state of mind after the cave experience. He affirms that, while Godbole approaches the Absolute Brahman through his worship of Krishna (1990, 159), Mrs Moore follows the path of knowledge. He explains her state of mind from the viewpoint of yoga practice: her “soul undergoes a negative process, emptying itself of every distinct operation of mind.” Nonetheless, she does not reach “complete identity with the Brahman” (the state of Samadhi); and thus has a “double vision” (159).

Meanwhile, from a Western philosophical standpoint, Richard Martin claims that Mrs Moore’s double vision “enables her to see evil and good equally,” and that “absolute right and absolute wrong come to be meaningless terms” (1974, 172). Both Martin and Forster believe that the Hindu Absolute God or Hinduism embraces both good and evil; this causes Westerners’ moral values to collapse, leading them towards nihilism.

Conclusion

We have seen the formation and characteristics of Forster's concept of Hinduism, focusing on the Brahmo Samaj's notion of Nirguna Brahman (the Universal Formless God), which incorporates the Western idea of monotheism into traditional Hinduism, especially Advaita Vedanta. This exploration suggests that Forster perceives Nirguna Brahman through the eyes of Plotinus and that he portrays Nirguna Brahman as embracing both "evil" and "good," which confuses Mrs Moore and Adela, leading them towards nihilism. Forster describes the Marabar Caves as a place where "West meets East": the Western philosophical notion of "the One" (good) in Neoplatonism is overwhelmed and repelled by an encounter with the Indian concept of "the One" (good and evil) in Advaita Vedanta. Since the nineteenth century, Western philosophers have misinterpreted the Indian idea of "nothingness" – such as "nirvana" (literally "blowing out" in Sanskrit, the absence of suffering, bliss) or "sunyata" (emptiness) – as "nihilism," due in part to inappropriate translations and the fact that the "West's negative evaluation just didn't penetrate the Buddha's teaching deep enough to recognise its ultimately optimistic outlook" (Muesse 2007, 191). For example, in *The Gods of India* (1914), for which Forster wrote a review, E.O. Martin perceives Buddhism as "a passionless, hopeless form of atheistic morality – for beyond existence was extinction, and beyond death was Nirvana – Nothingness" (143). His interpretation of nirvana as nothingness must have influenced Forster's representation of the nothingness in the Marabar Caves.

Nonetheless, almost a century later in Britain, Ajahn Sumedho, a practising Theravada Buddhist monk, reinterpreted the traditional Western understanding of nothingness:

In English, "nothingness" can sound like annihilation, like nihilism. But you can also emphasize the "thingness" so that it becomes "no-thingness." So Nibbana is not a thing that you can find. It is the place of "no-thingness," a place of non-possession, a place of non-attachment. (Ajahn and Ajahn 2009, 16)

Thich Nhat Han, a Zen Buddhist monk, argues that "Western philosophy is preoccupied with questions of being and nonbeing, but Buddhism goes beyond" (2017, 28) this matter. He maintains that "sunyata" (emptiness) means "something is empty of a separate self" and should not be misunderstood as nothingness, or as "a teaching of nihilism" (13). This Buddhist idea of "nothingness" (nirvana or sunyata) affected the

Western concept of “nihilism,” as well as Advaita Vedanta’s notion of “maya”. It was this Buddhist concept of “nothingness” (nirvana or sunyata) that influenced the Western concept of “nihilism,” as well as Advaita Vedanta’s concept of “maya.”

Sunyata is similar to the Indian mathematical concept of zero: the point between non-existence (a negative number) and existence (a positive number). It refers to a mental state far from nihilism, where we can reset ourselves and overcome suffering or mental difficulties, realizing that everything is changing and that nothing remains the same, and feeling as if the world were empty. In order to be fair to Forster, although his understanding of Hinduism is limited within the framework of Western philosophy, we should appreciate that during his time, he was very eager to “see the real India” in his attempts to dismiss the English imagination of India wherein “there was no real religion in the country, no literature, no architecture” (Das 1977, 1). Furthermore, “with the twentieth century begins a new interpretation [...] in religion Mrs. Besant has shown us that Hinduism has a meaning, even for the West [...] in literature India has told her own heart, through the mouth of Rabindranath Tagore” (2). Whether Foster was aware or not – and although they are now out of date – *A Passage to India* reflects the Brahmo Samaj’s Hindu reform movements (under the influence of sympathetic Orientalists) and the nineteenth century Western notion of nihilism.

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Short Stories

Hotel Melodrama in E.M. Forster's "The Story of a Panic" and "The Story of the Siren"

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"But this assumption of melodrama
is produced by the hotel itself"
(Field Levander and Pratt Guterl 2015, 89)

Abstract

Ostensibly unconnected and critically underexplored, E.M. Forster's hotel-related stories "The Story of a Panic" (1904) and "The Story of the Siren" (1920) seem to resonate with genuine hotel-generated melodrama(s). Both short stories were inspired by Forster's respective hotel sojourns in Ravello and what reads as a synthetic amalgam of Palermo and Capri. They both belong to Forster's Italian hotel literature and point to the author's consistent hotel literariness. The geographical proximity of these (Tyrrhenian) hotel stories only accentuates the irony of the overarching tautological formula. The essay traces the new modes of being that Forster's male protagonists dare to experience maintaining that they point to Forster's modernist dialectics with the already established thread of literary melodrama. Viewing these stories through the lens of melodrama – manifested in the avant-garde sentimentality, queer ostentation, exaggeration, flamboyance, and theatricality of their protagonists – the essay serves to highlight their emotive potential culminating in the unsettling of stereotypes. In a decidedly modernist turn, both "The Story of a Panic" and "The Story of the Siren" open up the possibility for uncharted territories and new modes of being, while triggering a backward dialectical movement that brings forth the forlorn legacy of melodrama as per Peter Brooks' formulation. Thus, they generate genuine hotel melodrama.

Keywords: E.M. Forster, literary hotels, melodrama, Queer Modernism, short stories

1. Introduction: Hotel Literature and the Melodrama of Modernism

A seemingly unrelated epigram constitutes this essay's starting point. Discussing the dramatic extensions of Hollywoodian hotel scenes, in the context of their literary and cultural genealogy of hotel life entitled *Hotel Life: The Story of a Place Where Anything Can Happen*, Caroline Field Levander and Matthew Pratt Guterl point to "the enduring feature of the hotel" as a site for "dramatic endings" due to its polyvalence (2015, 89). It is worth quoting from this critique of hotels as paradigmatic sites for the unfolding of such literary and cinematic melodrama(s) before the essay expands on the relevance and applicability of these observations to E.M. Forster's Tyrrhenian hotel stories, and his hotel-related literature in general:

[T]his assumption of melodrama is produced by the hotel itself and is an aftereffect of the corporate conceit that, in life and in death, every guest has a story to tell. A hotel is, we are implicitly told, good for an ending as well as for a new beginning. (Levander and Guterl 2015, 89)

Drawing on this conceptualization of hotel life,¹ my essay maintains that the critically underexplored hotel settings of Forster's short stories introduce and showcase the melodramatic potential of hotel spaces, and more specifically the literary trope of hotel death. While Forster invariably posits the cultural construct of the hotel as a space for the unfolding of genuine melodramas that reshape experience or transform the banality of the quotidian through the transcendental power of escape and/or death, his literary hotels also present readers with the view of the hotel as a convergence of opposites depicting the normalising potential of hotel culture and the covert disciplining that it often imposes on its sexually liberated, socially inept, or resistant residents.

¹ In their sustained discussion of the discontents of literary hotels, Levander and Guterl offer a prompt overview of the trope of hotel melodrama. However, they offer no exploration of Forster's hotel literature and its revisiting of the established pattern of continental melodrama: "The idea that the hotel could serve as the backdrop for a tragic farce, or for a world-gone-mad storyline, has a long history. *Hotel Topsy-Turvy*, a turn-of-the-century play, chronicles the experiences of guests in a building managed a bit haphazardly by a circus troupe. A mix of vaudeville and melodrama, it foreshadowed the campy visions of the "hotel hell" of the contemporary moment" (2015, 173).

The depiction of Forster's hotels seems to negotiate a binary between enfranchisement and radical disenfranchisement. "Surrounded by the plastic, unreal ethos of the hotel" (Levander – Guterl 2015, 89), Forster's melodramatic scenes invariably point to the anxiety of his protagonists and their frustration with a world that lacks spiritual power. They also seem to embody this paradoxical hotel binarism. The modernist trope of failed epiphanies and queer affect is connected to the preexisting schema of melodrama. The modernist uses of affect, avant-garde sentimentality, as well as the relevance of camp aesthetics in its uninterrupted flow of male homosexual ostentation, exaggeration, flamboyance, and theatricality, point to the fact that Forster's short stories trigger a backward dialectical movement. This anachronistic movement concerns the centrality of melodrama in the critical, literary, and aesthetic discourses of continental modernity and the revisiting of this "persistence of the seemingly antiquated theatrical form of melodrama" in Forster's *oeuvre* (Kohlmann 2013, 337). Forster reworks and revives the legacy of melodrama via the lens of sentimentality, failed epiphany, queer affect, and a trope that connects with the modernist call to open up for new modes of being.² Triggering a forlorn dialectics, Forster's melodramas blur into the already established pattern of melodrama in modernity.

A melodrama is a dramatic work marked by its overt sensationalism. Its origins can be traced in the French popular theatre and the continental, Italian and Spanish drama. Designed to appeal strongly to the emotions – Victorian melodramas³ featured orchestral music accompanying the bombastic action – melodramas are artistic or literary forms that favour unrestrained sentimentality. Since, melodramas typically concentrate on feelings and feature largely stereotyped characters, sensationalism often takes precedence over detailed characterization. This is an additional thread that links melodrama with Forster's Tyrrhenian hotel stories. It is this stereotyping and this privileging of sensationalism that is accountable for the unequivocal, pejorative use of the term in contemporary criticism, and that also, perhaps, accounts for the recurrent criticism surrounding Forster's stories.

In his seminal genealogy of melodrama, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (1965), Peter Brooks maintains that

² For an exploration of modernist dialectics with the tradition of melodrama refer to Kohlmann (2013, 337–352).

³ See Booth (1965) for an overview of British stage and screen romantic and historical melodrama spectacles.

melodrama is an underrepresented, crucial mode of expression in modern literature. Having explored stage melodrama as a dominant popular form in the nineteenth century, Brooks moves on to Balzac and Henry James to show how the realism of these novelists avails itself of the excess of melodrama. Brooks maintains that the apprehension of experience through melodramatizing as a mode of imagination connects melodramatic works to fantasy or mythography and its posterior uses in modernism. Preoccupied with the ways literature articulates the melodramatic and having Balzac's "vulgar melodramatism" (1976, 3) as a starting point, Brooks seems to claim that melodrama unites high and low cultural sensibilities through the ontological anxiety that it brings forth.

While there appear to be only two fleeting references to the relevance of melodrama to Forster's modernist fiction (Brooks 1976, 130–131), this essay posits Forster's fiction and his short (hotel) stories as pivotal to any critical understanding of melodrama. Brooks maintains that in the sphere of melodrama: "we can observe the narrator pressuring the surface of reality (the surface of his text) in order to make it yield the full, true terms of his story" (1976, 1–2). Forster's narrators in both stories explored here function in identical ways pointing to the profound through the mundane. One can adduce a multitude of examples, but the overarching principle seems to be the fact that, in literary melodrama, "the novel is constantly tensed to catch this essential drama, to go beyond the surface of the real to the truer, hidden reality, to open up the world of spirit" (Brooks 1976, 2).

Brooks underscores the fact that the melodramatic is a peculiar modern mode: "[w]e might, finally, do well to recognize the melodramatic mode as a central fact of the modern sensibility" (1976, 21). This chain of association further substantiates the link with the hotel culture and the pervasive hotel spirit as a product of modernity in Forster's modernist, literary hotels. Besides, echoing Wallace Stevens, Brooks clearly posits melodrama as the "central poetry," the dominant shaping force of literary modernity in the relevant part of his treatise entitled "Melodrama: A Central Poetry" (1976, 200). Brooks summarizes all the tenets and principles of the melodramatic mode as hues of the modern sensibility as such: "[A]n exciting, excessive, parabolic story – from the banal stuff of reality. States of being beyond the immediate context of the narrative, and in excess of it, have been brought to bear on it, to charge it with intenser significances" (1976, 2). The melodramatic mode points "to what lies behind, to the spiritual reality which is the true scene of the highly colored drama to be played out in the novel" (Brooks 1976, 2).

Ross Chambers expands on this argument claiming that the genre of melodrama also includes authors like Forster whose (hotel) melodramas, unlike those of the masters

of continental melodrama, remain critically underrepresented. The same can be argued about the processes through which Forster's modernist fiction triggers a backward dialectical movement that brings forth and redirects the legacy of melodrama. I argue that his hotel stories present readers with what Chambers perceives as "the adaptation of the melodramatic sensibility, not only into that genre of 'ennobled melodrama' that is the drama of Hugo and Dumas père, but also into the novelistic tradition of moral concern" (1986, 116). He maintains that while the melodramatic tradition "originates with Balzac," it continues to flourish "in Dostoievski, Henry James, and twentieth-century descendants such as D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster" (Chambers 1986, 116).

In spite of these clearly established threads and connections, Forster's fiction remains conspicuously absent from the existing contemporary scholarship on melodrama.⁴ For example, Forster is not included in *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama* (Williams 2018). Having said that, Lionel Trilling offers one of the most original, if not one of the most enthusiastic, appraisals of Forster's powerful melodrama asserting that Forster's fiction "delights in surprise and melodrama and has a kind of addiction to sudden death" (1971, 10). However, Trilling's focus is not on Forster's hotel literature. Discussing Forster's underdeveloped plots, a claim that seems to have a direct bearing on his short stories, he maintains that "they are always sharp and definite, for he expresses difference by means of struggle, and struggle by means of open conflict so intense as to flare into melodrama and even into physical violence" (Trilling 1971, 12). Trilling's terse aphorism summarizes the debate on the centrality of melodrama in Forster: "he contemplates by means of hot melodrama" (1971, 65).

Other scholars posit the Forsterian melodrama less favourably. In his discussion of the recurrence of melodrama in Forster's literary production, Herbert Marshall McLuhan maintains that it does not yield new insights as it remains, for the most part, mechanical (1997, 138). Unlike Trilling, he finds "Forster's embarrassing passion for the melodrama of coincidence" rather disconcerting, also suggesting that it often borders superficiality: "the conflicts and cleavages of melodrama can never yield new insight because they

⁴ Interestingly, Josie Gill revisits the literary trope of Forsterian melodrama showcasing its contemporary relevance in her discussion of Zadie Smith's 2000 novel *White Teeth* maintaining that it is written "in a Forsterian comic mode characterized by coincidence, irrationality, humour and melodrama, designed, in the vein of Forster's novels, to convey the 'messy concoction' of life" (Gill 2020, 84–85). She also addresses Smith's "defence of Forster's melodramatic plots" maintaining that, for Smith, Forster's melodrama constitutes one of his most peculiar charms (Gill 2013, 17).

are mechanically predetermined. In fact, melodrama, like the split man, is not an artistic achievement but the by-product of cultural neurosis” (McLuhan 1997, 139).

The Tyrrhenian hotel stories traced in this essay are telling examples of this dynamics and the relevance of Forster’s hotel *oeuvre* to critical discourses on the literary and cultural construction of melodrama hitherto overlooked. Ostensibly unconnected, Forster’s hotel-related stories “The Story of a Panic” (1904) and “The Story of the Siren” (1920) are marked by their hotel-sponsored melodrama, evident in the centrality of a quasi-operatic death trope, and their heavy ontological aura. Both stories, described by Forster himself as “fantasies” that “were written at various dates previous to the first world war” (Forster qtd. in Leavitt and Mitchell 2001, vii) feature hotel settings that function as death-arias and portend death through, on the one hand, outbursts of melodrama, verbosity, quasi-atavistic, histrionic, moments of return to the mythological past, and on the other, through the depiction of the tension between Catholicism and the immanence of paganism.

Earlier critical works have attempted to trace the eclectic affinities of the two hotel stories. S.P. Rosenbaum points to the original reception of both stories suggesting that they were commonly perceived as inherently flawed due to their melodramatism and fancifulness:

Even closer to ‘The Story of a Panic’, and a better story than either it or ‘Albergo Empedocle’, is ‘The Story of the Siren’, which the *Temple Bar* nevertheless rejected early in 1904 (*LTC*, p. ix). The story remained unpublished until 1920, when Virginia and Leonard Woolf printed it [...] as the ninth publication of the Hogarth Press and the first by a member of the Bloomsbury Group other than themselves. Virginia did not think ‘The Story of the Siren’ would sell very well, and Roger Fry, unaware of when it was written, complained to her, that ‘It’s always the same theme; I wish he could get something new and more solidly constructed. He exploits too much of his fancy.’ (qtd. in Rosenbaum 1994, 47)

It is the undeniable sensational dimension of Forster’s hotel melodramas that has invited criticism and skepticism in responses to Forster’s *oeuvre*. Being the very nature of melodrama, strong sensationalism often takes precedence over detailed characterization in Forster. Krzysztof Fardoński also brings the two stories together, via the shared theme of death, distinguishing them both, as well as *A Room with a View*, from the totality of Forster’s fiction on Italy:

At least three times, [...] Forster introduces descriptions of tragic deaths of Italians which in each case awake the English characters from their spiritual slumber and put them on the path to self-awareness. And yet in each case the Italians are merely sketched, the young man murdered in Piazza Signoria [...] does not even have a name. (Fordoński 2012, 26)

2. The Melodrama(s) of Hotel Life in "The Story of a Panic"

Published in 1904, "The Story of a Panic" was conceived and largely written in 1902 on the occasion of Forster's hotel stay in Ravello. More specifically, Forster wrote the most part of the short story, a sure allusion to his homosexual panic apropos the wild, pagan, emancipatory, eroticism of Italy, while in residence (Friday, May 22nd – Thursday, May 28th 1902) at the Villa Palumbo in Ravello, Amalfi Coast (Heath 2008, 538). This hotel story is special in that it also marks Forster's literary breakthrough following a long gestation period. On May 25, 1902, Forster took what later proved to be a life-changing walk near his Ravello hotel. Here is how the writer describes his quasi-epiphanic experience also pointing to the consistent centrality of hotels in his fiction:

I think it was in May of 1902 that I took a walk near Ravello, I sat down in a valley, a few miles above the town, and suddenly the first chapter of the story, "The Story of a Panic", the first story I ever wrote, rushed into my mind as if it had waited for me there. I received it as an entity and wrote it out as soon as I returned to the hotel. (qtd. in Beauman 1993, 112)

It appears that Forster's hotel is identical with the unnamed "delightful little hotel" in Ravello, the residence of the panic-stricken, travelling protagonist in "The Story of a Panic" (Forster 2001a, 1). The hotel residents, the common Forsterian entourage of idiosyncratic British intellectuals, artists, closeted homosexuals, aunts, and landladies on their escapist, Mediterranean grand tour, are progressively exposed to a three-part melodrama. The first part concerns a group picnic to a secluded valley near Ravello and Eustace's shocking encounter with the spirit of paganism or with what reads like a secular theophany of God Pan himself. The second traces the frantic return to the buffer zone of the Ravello hotel and the anticipated removal from the most disconcerting pagan

spectacles of the countryside, whereas the third part of the story hosts the full *crescendo* of the hotel melodrama, whereby chaos erupts within the hotel itself.

In the first part of the story, Eustace Robinson, “a boy of about fourteen” and nephew of the “two Miss Robinsons” (Forster 2001a, 1) surreally encounters the mythological spirit of place. What Eustace perceives as Pan still roaming the woods and clearings of Ravello – a near-certain allusion to Forster’s epiphanic moment on the outskirts of the selfsame town – shocks the conventional conceptions of morality of his fellow travellers like Mr. Tytler, the narrator of the story. Eustace’s “primal panic terror tinged with desire” (De Cicco 2015, 58) points to the traditional mythological accounts of Pan: “Pan causes his subjects to feel that their own queer, uncontrollable desires – e.g., panic dread/passion – are inherent and inescapable. Pan queers the subject by exposing the sexual dissidence that lies dormant within the individual” (De Cicco 2015, 59). Pan/ic-stricken and alarmed, Eustace indulges in an unprecedented fit and is quickly transported to his hotel room. Eustace’s fellow-travellers believe that his prompt removal from the flora and fauna of the Tyrrhenian hills of Ravello and subsequent transport to the civil and civilizing hotel setting will signal the end of his existential nausea. Having glimpsed at the awe-inspiring, queer monstrosity of Pan, who is notorious for his hypersexualized, untamed desires, Eustace feels overwhelmed by the force of this raw magnetism. His, typically Forsterian, homosexual awakening comes crashing through the superficial veneer and façade of civilized, cosmopolitan modernity. It is effectively set against the hotel and its rigid set of conventions, cosmopolitan rituals, highbrow clientele, social refinement, and non-negotiable moral decorum.

The third part of the genuine melodrama in “The Story of a Panic,” takes place when Eustace is returned to his hotel room. The culmination of his violent outburst challenges the limits of tolerance of the hotel residents, as well as the very ordered nature of the place itself. Eustace’s melodramatic fit and unrestricted mobility undoes the literal taxonomy and classification of the hotel, the arrangement of rooms that the hotel residents inhabit, the public spaces that visitors are permitted to access, and the private parts of the hotel gardens as his literal and metaphorical transgressive Pan/ic grants him access to the most inaccessible parts of the hotel. It simultaneously fosters a homosexual *erotica* that originally is beyond Eustace’s, or anyone else’s, comprehension. Eustace’s escape is mostly achieved through the assistance of Gennaro, the sympathetic hotel waiter, who facilitates Eustace’s escape from the hotel confinement. Resembling an ill-fated pair of star-crossed lovers, Eustace and Gennaro leap into the hotel courtyard together, but the fall kills Gennaro. Uninjured and emancipated, Eustace manages to climb over the

hotel garden walls. He escapes, presumably forever, a sure fate of institutionalization and incarceration on the "false" premise of some unidentified psychiatric disorder prompted by his fury manifested in his erratic behaviour following his conscious revisiting of the forlorn, mystical and pagan past, which challenges the constraints of secular reasoning. Eustace's latent homosexuality possibly accounts for what is perceived as a deep-seated, repressed rage. The operatic melodrama of the hotel story ends with the piercing screams and loud cries of the "nice landlady, Signora Scafetti" (Forster 2001a, 1) – an apt melodramatic finale, which seems to recall the notions of fanfare, tension-building, escapist frenzy, and queer death as fundamentals of the emotive potential of the melodramatic dialectic formulated by Brooks.

The narrator finds Eustace repellent in that he lacks the conspicuously manly look of most teenage English boys: "his features were pale, his chest contracted, and his muscles undeveloped. His aunts thought him delicate" (Forster 2001a, 2). Eustace's fear of swimming further corroborates his failure to comply with the accepted standards and expectations of virility as defined by the narrator: "Every English boy should be able to swim" (Forster 2001a, 2). Following Pan's theophany and Eustace's breakdown, the narrator clearly alludes to the disciplining potential of the Edwardian hotel culture as a guarantor of authority and moral standards that cannot tolerate any sort of queer-ness: "I changed the conversation by asking what we should say at the hotel. After some discussion, it was agreed that we should say nothing, either there or in our letters home" (Forster 2001a, 10).

Contrary to the narrator's suggested downplaying of the crisis, Forster juxtaposes Eustace's desire to access the hotel with the intensity of his desire, craving, and longing for Gennaro's presence. Subverting the narrator's hopes regarding the normative potential of the hotel, Eustace's frenzy seems to transform the story into a hotel narrative of queer desire through the excess of melodramatic cries and the "Mode of Excess" as per Brooks' formulation (1976, n.p.): Answering Mr. Sandbach's question about why Eustace would like to see Gennaro, the boy utters exuberantly, "'Because, because I do, I do; because, because I do.' He danced away into the darkening wood to the rhythm of his words" (Forster 2001a, 11). Given the fact that Forster's hotels often embody impermanence and flux, the Ravello hotel seems to aggravate things further rather than placating Eustace's restlessness as it was originally hoped. While Eustace can no longer conceal his desire, the fair share of Italian melodrama and extravagance of the extract sublimate his displays of affection:

But when we came to the Piazza, in front of the cathedral, he screamed out: ‘Gennaro! Gennaro!’ at the top of his voice, and began running up the little alley that led to the hotel. Sure enough, there was Gennaro at the end of it, with his arms and legs sticking out of the nice English-speaking waiter’s dress suit [...] Eustace sprang to meet him, and leapt right up into his arms, and put his own arms round his neck. And this in the presence, not only of us, but also of the landlady, the chambermaid, the *facchino*,⁵ and of two American ladies who were coming for a few days’ visit to the little hotel [...] Meanwhile, Gennaro, instead of attending to the wants of the two new ladies, carried Eustace into the house, as if it was the most natural thing in the world. (Forster 2001a, 12–13)

The intense, sexualised physicality between Eustace and Gennaro becomes more pronounced in the scene of Eustace’s frenzy. While Gennaro attempts to placate him, the narrator discerns what seems to be the “grotesque figure of the young man, and the slim little white-robed boy. Gennaro had his arm around Eustace’s neck” (Forster 2001a, 19). Their intimacy is also suggested in the passage where, much to the consternation of Eustace’s fellow hotel banqueters, they converse in the singular form: “To my annoyance, Gennaro, in his answer, made use of the second person singular – a form only used when addressing those who are both intimates and equals [...] an impertinence of this kind was an affront to us all” (Forster 2001a, 13). While melodrama is sustained throughout, the story also serves as a wry exploration of the pervasive socio-political climate of its time, apparent in the ridiculousness of the narrator’s racist admonitions to the “poor Italian fisher-boy” to behave respectfully to the “young English gentleman,” as well as his conviction that “the wretched down-trodden Italians have no pride” (Forster 2001a, 14). Now that the semblance of order is established the narrator and all members of the entourage of British expatriates finally withdraw to their hotel rooms.

But alas, the narrator’s laconic description points to the nocturnal melodrama now unfolding in the hotel gardens disrupting the façade of propriety: “But the day was nothing to the night” (Forster 2001a, 14). The sheer surrealness and implausibility of the spectacle that the omniscient, all-seeing, narrator observes from his panoptic, “first floor” room which looks “out on to the garden – or terrace” (Forster 2001a, 15) could be roughly summarized as an erratic, fantastical pastiche of Victorian melodrama:

⁵ There is a note on Forster’s reference to the “*facchino*” (12) in the “Explanatory Notes” on the text: “*facchino*. In Italian, a porter” (Forster 2001a, 193).

"I realized that Eustace had got out of bed, and that we were in for something more. I hastily dressed myself, and went down into the dining-room which opened upon the terrace" (15). Rambling like a somnambulist, Eustace feels exasperated. His pleas and cries, while he is temporarily apprehended by Gennaro as his assailant, point to the emancipatory potential of the hotel. When Eustace goes "wild in the hotel," Forster seems to emphatically assert that he happens to be, "contra public moral outrage," in "the right place for all the right reasons" (Levander and Guterl 2015, 49). Levander and Guterl point to the hotel room potential for all sorts of transgressions and its being a place where anything can literally happen:

The hotel room is thus a production site – one of many – for the modern sexual self. And hotels work, generally, to create and confirm contemporary notions of sex and sexuality, and to make possible, at the same time, a planned, if carefully delimited, escape from the normal rules, especially, but not only, for men. There are, then, no "misdeeds" in a hotel room; no one really behaves really badly there, and this tends to be the case because of the fluidity and seeming infinite flexibility. (2015, 49)

In its daring and progressive heights and subversive appeal, Forster's hotel literature seems to foreshadow the popularity of queer or gay-friendly hotels in postmodernity. Fostering flamboyant, extravagant displays of queer desire and sensuality, like Eustace and Gennaro's intense physicality and tenderness, Forster's Ravello hotel dares to imagine the unimaginable "in a most alarming way" through the nocturnal melodrama at play in the story (Forster 2001a, 16).

"Singing and chattering to himself" (Forster 2001a, 16), Eustace soon becomes the protagonist of his own Italian hotel opera. Speaking of the flora and fauna of Italy, the perennial drama of the gulf on Naples, the evocative inlet of the Tyrrhenian sea, "the smoking cone of Vesuvius," "the showers of white rose-leaves that were tangled in his hair," Eustace aptly contextualizes his melodrama (Forster 2001a, 16–17). For his melodramatic outburst to become more plausible, Forster depicts him "crying" in the "starlight" (Forster 2001a, 17). Eustace's quasi-literal hotel *melodramma* points to the fundamentals of the genre seeming to be perfectly in context in the vicinity of Naples. As if part of an Italian opera, Eustace's grandiose emotional tensions and melodramatic antics are communicated and amplified by the appropriate music that highlights the fact that he succumbs to a larger-than-life self-realization while "singing, first low, then loud—singing five-finger exercises, scales, hymn tunes, scraps of Wagner – anything that came

into his head” (Forster 2001a, 16). Eustace’s hotel aria grows “stronger and stronger” and ends “with a tremendous shout” which awakes and mortifies “everyone who was still sleeping in the hotel” (Forster 2001a, 16). His melodramatic singing reads as the swan song of his hotel opera. The hotel melodrama of the story literally ends with Eustace’s incoherent song followed by a dramatic sequence of screams. Besides, the affinities of Forster’s fiction with the genre of opera have been repeatedly explored. For example, Judith Scherer Herz explores Forster’s musicality maintaining that: “the construction of Forster’s novels often resembles that of the ‘classical’ opera (Mozart-Weber-Verdi)” (1997, 140). Forster most certainly used musical elements and forms to structure his literary works but the connection between his allusions to opera and the melodramatic characterization of his queer protagonists has not always been clear. The affiliation of the operatic and the melodramatic element in Forster’s short stories and the complex ways these are implicated in one another allows for a more dynamic unfolding of queer desire within the emancipatory hotel premises.

The melodramatic end of the story of Caterina Giusti that Gennaro recites also subtly foreshadows the tragic end of the failed homosexual saga of the story. Caterina, Eustace’s dramatic counterpart, is locked in a room while Gennaro strives, in vain, to rescue her: “They would not let her out, though I begged, and prayed, and cursed, and beat the door, and climbed the wall” (Forster 2001a, 21). The hotel proprietress implies that a similar disciplining fate awaits Eustace within the civilized matrix of the hotel: “‘Now they are caught,’ cried Signora Scafetti. ‘There is no other way out’” (Forster 2001a, 22). Nonetheless, Eustace manages to escape following a comedy of errors and Gennaro’s self-sacrificial helping hand. It is poor Gennaro instead, who pays the price for his complicity in the manic outrage and his triggering of the homosexual desire of Eustace.

While Eustace’s final, operatic cry resonates through the hotel, Gennaro perishes. As suggested by the narrator’s commentary, the hyperbole and intensity of Eustace’s cry – “a strange loud cry, such as I should not have thought the human voice could have produced” (Forster 2001a, 22) – brings forth “the desire to express all” as a fundamental characteristic of the melodramatic mode as per Brooks’ formulation (1976, 4): “Nothing is spared because nothing is left unsaid; the characters stand on stage and utter the unspeakable, give voice to their deepest feelings, dramatize through their heightened and polarized words and gestures the whole lesson of their relationship” (Brooks 1976, 4). The common, Forsterian deferral of same-sex desire through the intimacy of the protagonists with what reads as an untamed death drive, as well as the stereotyping of Gennaro, cannot detract from the blatant queer homosociality of the scene.

The genuine hotel melodrama of the story ends with the sight of rose leaves falling on Gennaro's dead body lying within the Ravello hotel grounds. The evocation of St. Gennaro's bloody sacrifice authorizes the melodramatic intensity of the story. Two weeks prior to his writing of "The Story of a Panic," Forster sees "San Gennaro's once-living blood imprisoned in a glass bottle in a glass case and chained to a priest" (Heath 2008, 538). More specifically, having crossed the Tyrrhenian sea from Messina accompanied by his mother, Forster arrives in Naples on the 8th of May, "four days too late to see the festival of the liquefaction of the blood of San Gennaro" (Heath 2008, 537). Having been misinformed by an inaccurate travel publication, Forster and his mother miss the Catholic extravaganza of the festival and check in at the Neapolitan "Hotel Belle Vue (M. Scafetti, prop.)" (Heath 2008, 537). Apart from the redemptive hotel waiter named Gennaro, Signora Scafetti is a most certain echo of the hotel proprietress of the Forsters' in Naples. Having invoked the imagery of San Gennaro's blood and Forster's actual Neapolitan hotel stay, the Ravello hotel in "The Story of a Panic" then becomes intelligible only if it is regarded as an amalgam of forces that point to melodrama. In the final scene, the hotel clearly becomes a token of a melodrama that invokes redemption and perdition, life and death: "rose leaves fell on us as we carried him in. Signora Scafetti burst into screams at the sight of the dead body, and, far down the valley towards the sea, there still resounded the shouts and the laughter of the escaping boy" (Forster 2001a, 23).

3. The Melodrama(s) of Hotel Life in "The Story of the Siren"

Two fleeting references to an unnamed hotel complicate the melodrama and the failed epiphanies at work in Forster's "The Story of the Siren." Published in 1920, the unsettling story was conceived and written in 1902 following one of his Italian hotel sojourns. This essay presents evidence suggesting that, as a matter of fact, the setting of "The Story of the Siren" could be viewed as a synthetic amalgam of Palermo and Capri rather than its supposed, exclusively Sicilian setting. Besides, Capri serves as the ideal backdrop for Forster's masculinist melodrama to evolve organically. Given Capri's elite associations, pomp, aura of exclusivity, and cosmopolitanism, and with Italy being stereotypically viewed as an apt place for the unfolding of maximalist melodramas in literature, cinematography, and music, this new identification of Capri as a potential covert setting of "The Story of the Siren" underscores these problematics.

In his exploration of Italian male homosexuality in art, motion pictures, and music through the lens of the antithetical pairing of realism and melodrama, John Champagne maintains that “the corollary of the Italian man as prone to passion is the portrayal of Italy as a place of sexual licentiousness” (2015, 4). Besides, Champagne repeatedly acknowledges his indebtedness to the long line of literature on Italian homosexual melodrama, quoting, as he does, extensively from the historian George Mosse. In the context of his discussion of the construction of Italian masculinities as essentially more effeminate, Champagne maintains that “modern European masculinity depended on displays of affect that constituted the antithesis of the melodramatic *and* that Italian men were typically exempt from this requirement” (2015, 4). Forster seems to perennially contemplate this imaginative construction of a radical, melodramatic, open-minded Italy as a place of promiscuity and emancipation. Fordoński addresses the recurrent “myth of Italy as a homosexual haven” while tracing Forster’s imaginative conflation of Southern Italy with Greece via the overarching notion of Greek love (Fordoński 2010, 92). Being exempt from the stigmatization and puritan morality of middle-class Britain, the excessive sensualism and the decorative lushness of Italian hotels in Ravello and Palermo or Capri offer an ideal, homoerotically charged, maximalist background for the perils of queer melodrama to emerge.

“The story of the Siren” is preoccupied with two marine ordeals. The first, which is narrated, thus constituting a story within the story, concerns the mysterious, enigmatic predicament of a vacationing Englishman who goads a Sicilian local (Giuseppe) into diving to the sea floor. While deep in the water of the grotto Giuseppe encounters a mythical siren, whose marine realm encompasses the sea caves and stereotypically lures mariners to destruction. Giuseppe is hauled out barely breathing but radically transformed; innocence is irrevocably lost and chaos ensues. The underwater trial of Giuseppe is narrated by his poor brother himself who—being an avid swimmer and the boatman of an entourage of boastful English visitors to some idyllic Italian sea caves—is ironically doomed to undergo the second liquid ordeal of the short story repeating his brother’s marine feat in a melodramatic *crescendo*. The young man undresses and dives in order to rescue the book of the narrator/protagonist of the story who enjoys the pastoral vision of the statuesque naked man with a sexual force amounting to tension in one of Forster’s rare, homoerotically charged scenes. The soaked, religious notebook is recovered from the bottom of the grotto and, unlike his brother, the sensual, marine diver is spared this time. Luckily, there is no glimpse of the ominous female siren.

While seemingly incompatible with the maximalism, cosmopolitanism and ostentatious air of the hotel where the affluent, complacent protagonists of the story reside, the

overflow of sentimentality and the sequence of pseudo-epiphanic moments at play in the story is, in a pretty unexpected twist, fostered by the very hotel itself and its aesthetics of excess. The narrator of the story writes his seminal, religious book on the Deist Controversy while being a hotel resident. He carries his manuscript along while touring the Mediterranean coast and accidentally loses it when it slips from his hands disclosing its leaves quivering into blue. Having witnessed the accident of the surreal immersion of the book in the opaque waters of the grotto, the protagonist's aunt seems to affirm Forster's own view of the hotel as a creative shelter for aspiring writers: "'It is such a pity,' said my aunt, 'that you will not finish your work in the hotel'" (Forster 2001b, 153).

Thus, readers are presented with a short story that mirrors Foster's actual hotel sojourn. Besides, only a week prior to Forster's 1902 Capri stay which, as I maintain, seems to have inspired the setting of "The Story of the Siren," the author writes extensive parts of "The Story of a Panic" while being a Ravello hotel resident (Heath 2008, 538). The geographical proximity of Ravello in "The Story of a Panic" and what reads as the synthetic amalgam of Palermo and Capri in "The Story of the Siren" offers additional corroborating evidence to the affiliation attempted here via the lens of melodrama.

Hence, despite its anonymity, the hotel mentioned in "The Story of the Siren" seems to also mirror the actual Capri hotel Forster stayed at while on the Tyrrhenian Island. As far as the particulars of the visit of the Forsters to the *Quisisana* are concerned, the check-in date is May 31st with the checkout date being estimated for approximately a week later (end of the first week of June, 1902) as per Heath's claim (2008, 538). Known for its prominent location on the fashionable Capri *piazzetta* and opposite the Hotel *La Residenza* and the Hotel *Villa Sanfelice*, the *Quisisana* boasts about having hosted many distinguished guests including Oscar Wilde (along with Lord Alfred Douglas). The British doctor George Sidney Clark first established the hotel as sanatorium in 1845, and the hotel official website offers a sketchy chronology mentioning, under "Mario Morgano's Quisisana" section, that Clark's sanatorium gradually took on the function of a residence. The transition was formalized in 1861 when it officially became the *Grand Hotel Quisisana*. "Qui si sana" can be literally transcribed as "here one heals" and certainly relates to the mild climate of Capri that was to cure the ailments typically afflicting the weather-wise disadvantaged northerners (n.p.).

Additional corroborating evidence challenges the accepted setting of the story as exclusively Sicilian. Besides, the story features a set of references to the Blue Grotto of Capri itself: "The Blue Grotto at Capri contains only more blue water, not bluer water" (Forster 2001b, 154). While there is an abundance of sea caves in the Mediterranean,

the reference to the sublime beauty of the famed *Grotta Azzurra* shows that Forster was definitely contemplating, to say the least, the island of Capri, the Tyrrhenian Sea on the south side of the Gulf of Naples, and, by extension, the *Quisisana* itself while writing the story. The archival material from the 1902 horrifying visit of the Forsters to the awe-inspiring sea cave also points to the same direction. The June 1st 1902 account of the trip to the Capri cave by Forster's mother seems to evoke the unsettling spirit that the author will later immortalize in the story itself: "I felt quite nervous in the dark grottoes" (Heath 2008, 538). In a June 8 letter from the neighbouring Castellammare di Stabia she mentions that they were both: "much excited with the Blue Grotto" (Heath 2008, 538).

However, the most powerful evidence linking the setting with Capri can be traced in a reference to the advent of the funicular railway: "One English lady in particular, of very high birth, came, and has written a book about the place, and it was through her that the Improvement Syndicate was formed, which is about to connect the hotels with the station by a funicular railway" (Forster 2001b, 156). With 1902 being the date of Forster's visit to Capri and with 1905 marking the first operation of the scenic *Funicolare di Capri* (officially inaugurated in 1907), the connection is self-evident. The railway line connects the *Marina Grande* on the coast with the central *Piazza Umberto I*. Given the fact that the distance between the *Quisisana* and the funicular is approximately 220 metres, all it takes to be transported from the hotel to the station is a three-minute walk. Forster's description that the funicular "connect[s] the hotel with the station" (Forster 2001b, 156) could not have proven more accurate. So is the reference to the Society "Improvement Syndicate" (Forster 2001b, 156) that supposedly fostered its creation. The formation of the Italian-American Society SIPPIC (*la società proprietaria dei contatori*) in 1892 provided the impetus required for reforms marking the onset of the Capri development project (Angelini 2004, 36–39). While the tourist industry of Sicily, the alleged setting of the story, was still dormant and the available facilities substandard, Capri enjoyed relative prosperity and a steady influx of visitors. This was also on account of its being in close proximity to mainland Italy, Naples, Pompeii, as well as the attractions of Amalfi coast. With the sole exception of the *Tranvia di Palermo-Monreale (Funicolare di Monreale)* in Sicily – which operated at the time of Forster's visit but is removed from the sea and does not seem to link any major hotels with a marina of any kind – there is no evidence suggesting that there is a funicular in close proximity to any Sicilian sea caves at the time. In any case, the *Quisisana*, perhaps conflated with the *Hotel de France* in Palermo where Forster spent time in April 1902 seems to have been the model for the setting of the story (Heath 2008, 536).

In his recent exploration of the emancipatory potential of the island of Capri through the lens of literature, Jamie James maintains that, in the British imaginative intercourse with the Tyrrhenian island, Capri "serves as an emblem of freedom" often functioning as a queer "hedonistic dreamland" (James 2019, 5). While James lengthily explores the transgressive power of Capri in authors like Joseph Conrad and D.H. Lawrence claiming that it is the tolerant and accepting fabric of the cultural capital of the island itself that seems to have inspired the construction of some of their queerest characters, the question of the applicability of the same pattern to Forster's short story still remains elusive. More specifically, there is only a passing reference to Forster in the context of an evaluation of the daring heights of his queer literature. There, James rightfully maintains that Forster was for the most part "writing in code" (James 2019, 120).

However, the broad emancipatory effect of Capri on Forster, made manifest in the charged homosexual erotica of the sea cave scene, is not registered. I maintain that this omission can be attributed to the heretofore erroneous identification of the setting of the short story with Sicily. In a pretty ironic twist, what seems to propose a definitive identification of "The Story of the Siren" with Capri is the self-evident; the very existence of the mythical siren herself and the mythology surrounding her Tyrrhenian marine realm. The notorious affinities of Capri with enchantment have a long tradition with the island being traditionally identified with an oversexualized version of the Homeric Siren Island: "few would challenge Capri's claim, supported by centuries of cheap souvenirs, to be the Siren Island. [...] for the rhapsodes who chanted *The Odyssey*, the islands of the Tyrrhenian Sea were remote, legendary places that only venturesome sailors had ever seen (James 2019, 8). James also cites the "noncanonical Homeric myth" of the founder of Naples, the alluring Tyrrhenian Siren Partenope (Parthenope), and traces the tangible contemporary extensions of the myth in the toponymy of the Neapolitan shore across from Capri maintaining that it adds "corroboration to Capri's claim" (James 2019, 8).

In his travelogue *Siren Land: A Celebration of Life in Southern Italy*, Norman Douglas seems to also surrender to these critical discourses associating Capri with the mythical habitat of the Homeric Sirens (Douglas 1929). Returning to James, his literary historicizing of the Naples Aquarium also points to the horror of prominent visitors aghast at the unorthodox sight of "anthropomorphic fish" or monstrous sirenoids being served at dinner (James 2019, 267). The grotesque dish served ironically points to the taming of the pagan past of Capri: "The boiled Siren lay on a bed of greens, encircled by a wreath of pink coral stems" (James 2019, 267). The paradoxical culinary tradition points to the uncanny convergence of the mythical and the secular through the manifestation of the symbol of

the siren. This emancipatory convergence of past and present also seems to lie at the heart of Forster's "The Story of the Siren," where the ritualistic immersions of sailors result in their near-fatal encounters with the siren. Her manifestations are sure echoes of the mythological past of Capri and potent allusions to the perils of (self) exploration.

In shedding critical attention to Forster's early reflections on hotel culture and the literary hotel as a haven for aspiring writers through the matter of the story's backdrop, I am suggesting that the work – being a heterogeneous amalgam – becomes intelligible only if its setting is regarded synthetically. The evidence that the story seems to have also been inspired by Capri points to the fact that Forster seeks to create an apt, maximalist, cosmopolitan setting for his Italian hotel melodrama to unfold. The liberating open-mindedness, aesthetics of excess, and sophistication of destinations with the cultural capital of Ravello and Capri can stage such melodramas and give rise to epiphanic and sentimental moments arising from the juxtaposition of the mythical, pagan, metaphysical context of the hotel surroundings and the artificial, physical setting of the hotel premises.

"For all its absurdity and superstition" (Forster 2001b, 158), the story portends death through fits of melodrama, verbosity, and the near-palpable tension between Catholicism and the immanence of paganism, homosexuality, and heteronormativity. Following his apocalyptic glimpse at the siren, Giuseppe experiences schizophrenic fits; he roams the streets looking haggard and forlorn. The hotel owners side with the Catholic Church ruthlessly demonising him. They eventually have him ostracized instigating violence and, perhaps, go as far as to murder his equally deranged and psychotic wife in what reads as a dark, dramatic turn of events: "They have pushed her over the cliffs into the sea" (Forster 2001b, 159). Forster's wry commentary presents readers with the clear-cut rationale of the ostentatious hoteliers: "The whole village was in tumult, and the hotel-keepers became alarmed, for the tourist season was just beginning. They met together and decided that Giuseppe and the girl must be sent inland until the child was born, and they subscribed the money" (Forster 2001b, 159). Resolved not to tolerate any sort of queerness and nonconformity, the Italian hotel owners offer a glimpse into the dark, sinister side of the hotel culture, which also induces disciplining and institutionalizes subjects that disrupt the façade of propriety. Hoteliers go as far as to introduce punitive practices for intractable people like Giuseppe. The common former function of hotels like the *Quisisana* as sanatoria points to this consistent institutionalising potential. In keeping with good taste, propriety, and the established conventions of hotel etiquette, Forster's hotel in "The Story of the Siren" seems to also emphatically bring forth the adverse effects of the emerging Edwardian hotel culture.

Thus, things come full circle and the story seems to echo and resemble its Tyrrhenian counterpart "The Story of a Panic." There, the mental breakdown, or the emancipation of the protagonist from the normative nexus of the hotel premises depending on the point of view one assumes, presupposes his flight from the hotel incarceration and his progressive somatic surrender to the sublime forces of nature. A sequence of similar escapes seems to be the solution proposed in "The Story of the Siren." There appears to be an endless set of parallels in these two hotel-related stories: Eustace encounters Pan whereas Giuseppe comes face to face with the siren, a mythological creature nonetheless. Both experience severe mental distress and an unorthodox nervous breakdown and undergo fierce disciplining by their respective hoteliers or local hotel owners. Both eventually escape. The negative register of the hotel culture feeds melodrama in that it also seems to embody the social restraints, the impersonal, inhibiting rules imposed on those that have metaphorically dared to get a glimpse at the siren. Thus, the harsh dichotomies, the intense cleavages which bring forth the pathology of melodrama in Forster's fiction, culminate within the paradoxical and self-contradictory hotel culture itself. Hotels that seemingly liberate and sexually emancipate their upper-class clientele, simultaneously banish the less privileged permanent residents that fail to fulfill the highbrow, cosmopolitan mores of the Italian resort town and the prevailing, haute expectations in "The Story of the Siren." It is the punitive potential of hoteliers, who often seem to conflate authority with authoritarianism, which further fuels the vicious circle of melodrama in Giuseppe's story.

Having originally operated as a sanatorium offering supervised recuperation, the Tyrrhenian hotel in "The Story of the Siren," becomes the arbiter of the mental and emotional health and accepted moral standards of the community. It is sharply ironic that Forster's plot contemplates the exact former function of the hotel as an asylum through the hotel policing and punishment of the "madness" of Maria and Giuseppe. Operating as shady law enforcement authorities, the Italian hoteliers of "The Story of the Siren" handle the mental health crises, which pose a threat to the nascent tourist industry of the place and the reputation of the local hotels. Their nefarious practices in dealing with the psychic "aberrations" of Maria and Giuseppe, point to the disciplining power of hotel life manifested through punishment as a clear trajectory of power. The turn-of-the-century conflation of asylums – sanatoria or, at least, the indefinability surrounding them, highlights this indeterminacy. The parallels with "The Story of a Panic," where Eustace's overall sense of imprisonment within his hotel room reaches a *crescendo* inducing manic fits of rage, remains obvious throughout.

In any case, it would be a conceptual fallacy to assume, because of the semblance of anonymity and guise of cosmopolitanism, that hotels exist in a perfect vacuum operating independently of the established power relations and social conventions. Having spent a considerable amount of time as a hotel resident in a multitude of locations, Forster embeds the hotel's disciplinary potential in his fiction. Invoking the disciplinary aspect of the gaze of the hoteliers and the hotel as a panoptic setting, he designates the hotel as a metaphor of the normalising discourses and practices of institutions that wish to induce submission. Giuseppe and Maria's interchangeable states of "permanent visibility" and "permanent observation" (Foucault 1995, 201, 249) are a case in point. Forster's Italian hoteliers acquire retributive power, punishing their hotel residents for their misdemeanours. Forster emphasizes the despotism of the "hotel-keepers" who decide who must "be seen" and who must "starve" in "The Story of the Siren" (2001b, 159), suggesting that the patronizing, didactic attitude of the hoteliers, empowered by the church, safeguards their role as guarantors of the moral standards of the community: "'Do not go,' I said. 'I saw the priest go by, and someone with him. And the hotel-keepers do not like you to be seen, and if we displease them also we shall starve'" (2001b, 159).

The melodramas of Forster's hotel stories find culmination in (queer) death or banishment from the society often downplayed through the surreal near-implausibility of the plot and the grotesqueness of the melodramatic events narrated. The sequence of hotel-prompted deaths and/or marine near-losses of seductive divers and *hommes fatales* in "The Story of the Siren" points to the ambivalent intertwining of the modernist trope of hotel death with the theme of escapism in Forster's overwhelming hotel melodramas. So is the ambiguity surrounding the "murder" of Giuseppe's mentally ill wife Maria, as well as the sudden disappearance or ostracisation of Giuseppe himself following her loss.

However, a renewed sense of transcendental hope finally seems to prevail in "The Story of the Siren." The hotel-related or, rather, the hotel-sponsored melodramatic predicament of Giuseppe and his brother finally transgresses the spatio-temporal limitations in what reads like a prophetic glimmer of an emancipatory potential. The colourful rendering of the narrator's homosexual desire for the Italian diver only accentuates the irony of Forster's anticipatory envisioning of a polychromatic, multicoloured queer future: "He leaned back against the rock, breathing deep. Through all the blue-green reflections I saw him colour" (Forster 2001b, 160). This chain of associations seems to be further corroborated by the following sentence whereby a prophecy is articulated. The siren will, in spite of everything, finally "come out" singing the terrible human melodrama and signaling the end of silencing and solitude: "I heard him say: 'Silence and

loneliness cannot last for ever. It may be a hundred or a thousand years, but the sea lasts longer, and she shall come out of it and sing'" (Forster 2001b, 160).

4. Conclusion: The Emotive Potential of Forster's Hotel Melodrama

The melodramas of Forster's hotel literature present the friction and discontents that the inherently paradoxical, emerging hotel culture embodies. They oscillate between the flourishing of characters' passions and the carefully delineated stereotypical processes of normalization that serve to impose heteronormative, patriarchal, and supremacist constraints on what reads like an overflow of repressed feelings. Lavender and Guterl argue that whenever "the hotel operates as a privileged stage for this drama, it does so because of its seeming infinite malleability" (2015, 174). It is the very paradoxical malleability or changeability of hotel life that creates the tension that brings forth the terrible human melo-drama in Forster: "At the one end of the spectrum the hotel functions as an oasis and at the other as that place where actions are too unspeakable to see the light of day. The ultimate asylum in both senses of the word, the hotel can be heaven or hell, depending" (Lavender and Guterl 2015, 174).

The emancipatory dreams of the protagonists of Forster's extravagant hotel fantasies and the subversive melodramas that the emerging hotel culture of the time propagates also serve to unsettle the commonplace conventions and solipsistic, self-aggrandizing standpoints of British travellers overseas. Viewing the Tyrrhenian hotel stories of Forster through the lens of melodrama, the essay serves to highlight their emotive potential, which remains powerful in spite of their factual near-implausibility. It is this emotive potential that culminates in the unsettlement of stereotypical binaries within Forster's hotel premises. Champagne maintains that "melodrama typically voices a protest of the weak against the powerful" (Champagne 2015, 30). The applicability of this reading to Forster's hotel stories can hardly be questioned in that they seem to negotiate the distance between conventional actuality and fantastic reality. Both hotel stories open up, in a decidedly modernist turn, the possibility for uncharted territories and new modes of being operating in tandem with the modernist paradox of Forster's fantastic realism (Medalie 2002, 73). Forster's stories, indeed, promote the view of melodrama and realism as opposites that are not fully antithetical but, rather, complementary.

The literary trope becomes easily identifiable by now: two short stories, inspired by Forster's respective hotel sojourns and written within the hospitable hotel premises,

mostly concerning sensitive males who experience genuine hotel-generated melodrama or false epiphanies. The geographical proximity of Ravello and Palermo/Capri in these Tyrrhenian hotel stories only accentuates the irony of the overarching, critically under-explored, tautological formula traced here. The new modes of being that Forster's male protagonists dare to experience constitute Forster's dialectics with the already established thread of melodrama in modernity. It is within the modernist hotels that stories will be written, melodrama will inevitably thrive, and death, or escape from the constraints of the heteronormative matrix will, ultimately, take place. All seems to point to the very fact that melodrama: "represents a victory over repression" in that "the melodramatic utterance breaks through everything" and "desire cries aloud its language in identification with full states of being" (Brooks 1976, 41). Driven by Foster's plot, Eustace's, Gennaro's, Giuseppe's, Maria's, Signora Scafetti's, and the narrators' melodramatic cries seem to forever echo within the hotel premises daring to articulate the ineffable at a time when this was inconceivable.

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“So Far No Other”: Alterity in Forster’s “The Other Boat”

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Abstract

Posthumously published in the collection *The Life to Come and Other Stories* (1972), the story “The Other Boat” (began in 1913 and completed in 1957–8) has long been considered “a worthy finale to Forster’s fiction” (Stallybrass 1987, xvii). This essay explores the foregrounding of alterity in “The Other Boat” within the context of imperialist politics. The significant use of the term “other” in the story problematizes hierarchies and interrogates binaries of inclusion/exclusion. Highlighting alterity, “The Other Boat” engages with the colonizer/colonized dichotomy in ways suggestive of postcolonial conceptualizations of otherness. Thus, the story explores ideologies predicated upon what Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) terms the Orient’s “foreignness” and illustrates the conditions which preserve the Orient’s “permanent estrangement from the West” (Said 1978, 244).

Keywords: E.M. Forster, “The Other Boat,” alterity, other(ness), orientalism

Here is our place and we have *so far no other* and only we can guard each other. The door shut, the door unshut, is nothing, and is the same. (Forster 1972, 189; emphasis added)

Posthumously published in 1972 in the collection *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, “The Other Boat” is considered, according to Oliver Stallybrass, “a worthy finale to Forster’s fiction” (1987, xvii). This thirty-page story, which Norman Page considers “perhaps the finest short story [Forster] ever wrote” (1987, 15), centres on an interracial same-sex relationship. Following P.N. Furbank’s categorisation of Forster’s “homosexual stories” into “facetious” and “serious” ones, Stallybrass places “The Other Boat” in a group of “serious homosexual stories” (1987, xv) which show Forster “at the height of his powers” (1987, xvi).¹

According to Stallybrass, the first section of the story, the section which takes place on the boat and the title specifies as “other,” was “probably” written “around 1913”; in 1948 this section was published in the *Listener* with the title “Cocanut & Co: Entrance to an Unwritten Novel” (1987, xvii). The publication of this section as well as Forster’s return to the story and its completion in 1957–8 suggest Forster’s approval of the material and his continued interest in exploring the paradoxes of, what Stallybrass terms, “an East-West encounter” (1987, xvi). In the story, which unfolds in five parts, this encounter of an Englishman with otherness develops during two voyages on two different ships. Initially, the main characters meet on “the other boat” travelling from India to England; ten years later they are both on a passage to India. As neither of the characters, the representatives of East and West respectively, reaches India, the passage remains incomplete.

In “The Other Boat,” as in *A Passage to India* (1924), Forster engages with the colonizer/colonized dichotomy in ways suggestive of postcolonial conceptualizations of otherness as described by Edward Said. “The Other Boat” explores ideologies predicated upon what Said in *Orientalism* (1978) terms the Orient’s “foreignness,” illustrating the conditions which preserve the Orient’s “permanent estrangement from the West” (244). This essay explores the foregrounding of alterity in “The Other Boat” within the context of imperialist politics. The significant use of the term “other” in the story problematizes hierarchies and interrogates binaries of inclusion/exclusion.

Critical attention to “The Other Boat” in the decades since its publication has included references to the colonial theme which foregrounds alterity explicitly.

¹ In their discussions of the story some critics consider it “grim” (Land 1990, 230) as well as inferior when compared to “the culmination of Forster’s art in *A Passage to India*” (Rosecrance 1982, 183) although they find some similarity between *A Passage* and “The Other Boat” as regards the characters of Aziz and Cocanut.

Considered “a novelist for whom the encounter with otherness is primary” (Goodlad 2006, 325), Forster in his work “pays homage to the redemptive possibilities inherent in the love of the totally other” (Levine 1984, 87) and “certainly recognizes Orientalist tropes” (Morey 2007, 270). Yet, as Jeremy Tambling argues, Forster’s “liberalism” may have kept the author from “seeing fully the structures of oppression – class, race and gender-based – that he was part of” (1995, 11).

Most scholars approach “The Other Boat” psychoanalytically (such as the Jungian reading by James Malek 1977) and focus on homoeroticism in the context of colonial narratives (explored in detail by Christopher Lane in his publications in 1995, 1997, and 2007, on “Fosterian sexuality”). The “internalization of the English antipathy to homosexuality” is also the view Paul Peppis takes in discussing the “ambivalences” in Forster’s “national allegories” (2007, 58). Similarly, Dominic Head, who notes the othering of Coconut as “emblematic of colonial hypocrisy,” considers the theme to be the “repression of homosexuality” (2007, 88). Tamera Dorland’s Lacanian reading focuses on the repression of sexuality and the oppressiveness of “Maternal Law” (1997, 214). Dorland highlights the significance of the colonialist context, arguing that the story “proves” to be a “hybridization of Forster’s narrative of homosexuality in *Maurice* and his focus on issues of Anglo-Indian sexuality and Oriental seductiveness in *A Passage to India*” (1997, 216).

Like *A Passage to India*, which in Benita Parry’s view is “a text which disrupts its own conventional forms and dissects its own informing ideology” (1995, 136), “The Other Boat” is a text which juxtaposes ideological positions through the exploration of binaries. While Robert Aldrich considers that the posthumously published stories which explore interracial relationships “represent indictments of ideologies that dominated Britain during [Forster’s] life” (2003, 325), the text of “The Other Boat” resists such certainty. Aldrich notes that these stories “form Forster’s strongest statements of support for personal sexual emancipation and his strongest denunciation of imperialism” (2003, 325); yet, efforts to determine whether the foregrounding of alterity in “The Other Boat” valorises or critiques imperialist discourse result in conflicting evidence. As other critical views on *A Passage to India* suggest, Forster’s fiction not only allows “gaps in representation for ‘otherness’ to show through” (Malik 1997, 223) but also “invites the exoticizing and fetishizing of otherness” (Goodlad 2006, 325). Christopher Lane concludes in *The Ruling Passion* (1995) that the “colonial narratives” of interracial relationships substitute “hostility for desire” (174) and foreground “sexual and racial ambivalence” (175).

The first section of the story takes place “on that other boat” (Forster 1972, 173, 181).² The principal characters, a military Captain, Lionel March, and Cocomat Moraes, nicknamed “Lion” and “Monkey” respectively, meet first as children during the time of the British Empire on board of an unnamed vessel travelling from the colonies to the imperial centre. The omniscient narrator self-consciously employs colonial stereotypes, specifying that March represents the “Ruling Race” (169; caps in the text)³ and Moraes the “half-caste” (183). The remaining four sections of the story occur ten years later during a voyage towards Bombay when March and Moraes are young adults. Using free indirect discourse to represent Lionel’s “prejudices” (174) as well as his memories of the “faraway boat” (189) where “things had actually started” (181), the third-person narrative shifts perspectives to represent varying viewpoints but maintains an ironic distance as well; the omniscient voice records and questions normative ideologies, highlighting otherness but also employing orientalist tropes.

Throughout the text Cocomat, and the first boat, are identified as “other” several times (178, 181, 186, 188). Cocomat is the “other one, the deep one” (178), who represents alterity and who pleads in favour of “our place” (189). The many cultural differences between these two representatives of East and West are carefully laid out in the story from the start: as their revealing nicknames, Lion and Monkey, suggest, they differ greatly in temperament, beliefs and behaviour due to their diverse social backgrounds, nationalities and racial identities. They are linked only through desire for each other. Unable to accept his own otherness, Lionel adheres to normative views of sexual orientation but also to colonial hierarchies of power in relation to constructions of race, ethnicity, class and gender. Following such norms and power structures, March views his lover as other; he considers that being with Moraes exposes him to a constant risk.

During the first voyage, the one from India to England, Lionel’s mother, identified only as Mrs March, reluctantly consents to allowing her five children to play with Cocomat. Who is Cocomat and who is he travelling with? Who are his parents? What is his actual name since Cocomat is a nickname relating to his “peculiar shaped head” (171)? He is a stranger who originates from a mixed ethnic background as indicated by Captain

² All references to the story “The Other Boat” relate to the text in the collection *The Life to Come and Other Stories* (1972), edited by Oliver Stallybrass, pages 166–97. Subsequent in-text references include only page numbers in parentheses.

³ For details on Forster’s use of the term “member of the Ruling Race” in reference to himself in his correspondence with Syed Ross Massood, see Aldrich (2003).

Armstrong’s racist reference to the boy as having a “touch of the tar-brush” (167). The existence of Cocoanut on a boat travelling towards England produces aporia on a semantic and a cultural level; the facts of his origin are never clarified. When asked about the boy’s identity, Mrs March responds “I don’t know”; she is only aware that Cocoanut is someone “always hanging on” to her children (167). While Mrs March views her son as a lion, the emblem of the nation which controls the empire, she considers this unknown other as a monkey “hanging on” to and from the imperial tree. Mrs March only tolerates his “hanging on” because for her family this is the “voyage home” (167). For Lionel’s mother Cocoanut is a “silly idle useless unmanly little boy” (170).

As “a clergyman’s daughter and a soldier’s wife” (169), Mrs March is the voice of normative ideologies: the mother is shown to be the medium of indoctrination. Her conviction that no “good thing can come out of the Levant” (169) represents established views within the colonial context. Like his siblings, Lionel has internalized such discriminatory views; however, he also likes to “play at soldiers” with Cocoanut as he is the only one who “falls down when he is killed” (166). Within the colonial setting, even as a child, Lionel longs for and is appalled by otherness. When Lionel insists “I want him” and Cocoanut responds teasingly “I am beesy” (166), the desire/denial binary, which already regulates this divided colonial world and determines the children’s games, foreshadows the future: their reunion as adults and their relationship as lovers appears prescribed in orientalist terms.

In the story’s first section Cocoanut indirectly makes himself the leader of the group, determining the games the March children play on “the other boat.” The March children seem less curious about their mixed-race playmate, absorbed as they are in unwittingly following his lead. Cocoanut is not only of mysterious origin and theatrical in his passionate engagement with games; he is also imaginative as he invents the “m’m m’m m’m’,” enigmatic beings which hide in the ship’s bow and for which there is no “name” (166–7). While the dark-skinned boy is not bothered by the absence of a linguistic sign or of a visible presence verifying the existence of the “m’m m’m m’m’,” the white children insist on proof and rationality: Western logic demands that to acknowledge even the existence of the unknown, it must be viewed and named.

As a representative of the Orient, Cocoanut appears undisturbed by the inability to “name” the “m’m m’m m’m’”; in this Cocoanut resembles Aziz in *A Passage to India* who is not bothered by the echo in the Marabar Caves. The “m’m m’m m’m’” are never explained so they function similarly to the echo which responds to every linguistic signifier with the same meaningless boom. Both “m’m m’m m’m’” and boom are

manifestations which the texts suggest taunt Western reason but are of no concern for the Oriental others. Cocoanut and the “m’m m’m m’m’,” like the Marabar Caves and India, signify the otherness of an Oriental world the incomprehensibility of which, Said considers in *Culture and Imperialism*, “cannot in fact be represented” (1993, 200).

While the narrative situates the March children in a recognisable social milieu, Cocoanut is presented as elusive as the “m’m m’m m’m’.” Yet for the March children the presence of Cocoanut also validates the presence of the “m’m m’m m’m’.” The linguistic indeterminacy of the unknowable “m’m m’m m’m’” is significant; in the text they become a sign identified with Cocoanut and therefore with alterity. By connecting Cocoanut with the ‘m’m m’m m’m’ as well as with the ‘other’, the text invites the reader to unite within this character the signs of incomprehensibility, unknowability and alterity. As a symbol of the Orient, Cocoanut is both unnameable and ‘m’m m’m m’m’-other; he is metaphorically both m-other and son, both origin and creation of the Orient.⁴

Cocoanut’s disruptive presence as other in the story’s first section foreshadows the challenges which emerge when the boys meet again as young men and become lovers in the following four sections of “The Other Boat.” The imperialist discourse employed to turn the characters into stereotypes is also challenged when Moraes, the colonial subject, is presented in the following sections as more successful financially, more sophisticated and emotionally aware than March, the representative of the Empire.

After the initial encounter narrated in the first section, the rest of the story occurs ten years later during a voyage towards Bombay on board the steamship *Normannia*. The name seems to allude not only to the norms of sexuality and masculinity which dictate Lionel’s behaviour but also to the imperialist state, Britannia, which Lionel serves as an officer. With hindsight, Lionel considers the first boat, which, like the ‘m’m m’m m’m’, remains unnamed, as “that other boat” (173, 181), the “faraway boat” (189) where “things had actually started” (181).

In these four sections the narrative again presents both major characters through orientalist tropes: Lionel, the “Nordic warrior,” is presented as “irresistible” (172), a “Goth” (178), or “Viking” (180); Cocoanut, who “belonged to no race,” is “subtle” (174). He is the “other one, the deep one” (178), who seduces and fulfils stereotypical expectations. In “The Other Boat” ideologies of control are present even in the secluded

⁴ For McClintock the Orient is “feminized in a number of ways: as mother, evil seducer, licentious aberration, life-giver” (1995, 124). McClintock also notes how “sexuality as a trope for other power relations was certainly an abiding aspect of imperial power” (1995, 14).

space of a cabin on a boat. Thus, March becomes identified with Britannia, Cocoanut with the Orient.

Lionel finds the colonial subject, in typical orientalist mode, both seductive and repulsive. Cocoanut is presented as transcending but also as inhabiting the stereotypes that the text and the context impose on this character: in section four he is presented as amoral, shady in his financial affairs, buying silences through bribes. Cocoanut also remains elusive linguistically as he utters “incomprehensible words” (179) and acts in inexplicable ways which Lionel terms “’m’ m’ m’ m’ m’” as they remind him of “oddities on the other boat” (180). Eventually, Cocoanut reveals he possesses two passports, one Portuguese and the other Danish, with conflicting information so the text makes it “impossible” to fix his age, nationality, or even his name (181).

During their reunion, Lionel experiences the conflict at the centre of colonial politics. Cocoanut spoils him with gifts in a reversal of the power dynamics: Lionel realizes that his “pyjamas” are “a sultan’s gift” (179). Lionel enjoys the attention: “It was presents all the time. [...] His gambling debts were settled [...] and if he needed anything [...] something or other appeared” (179). Although Cocoanut is partly placed in a position of control and influence as financier and seducer, the story maintains normative cultural order while foregrounding orientalist traits for both colonizer and colonial subject.

Adopting colonial hierarchies of nationhood, Lionel insists on using ethnic slurs, like “wog” and “dago,” which allow him to maintain control over the relationship despite his insistence that “his colour-prejudices were tribal rather than personal” (174). Below deck and within the enclosed space of the cabin, Lionel engages in a passionate sexual relationship with the ‘m’ m’ m’ m’ m’-other; while on deck Lionel maintains his allegiance to the “Ruling Race” as prescribed by his mother. For Lionel, Mrs March is “the Mater,” a Victorian form of address that suggests social class but also denotes veneration and authority: she sets the limits, “always objecting to something or other” (176). Cocoanut is the ‘m’ m’ m’ m’ m’-other, the “something or other” to which the Mater objects, but also the one who offers Lionel “the whole world” (178). Experiencing simultaneously sexual desire for Cocoanut and the impulse to desert him, he is “caught” (174) in a “web spun” by his mother who “understood nothing and controlled everything” (193).⁵

⁵ For a discussion of Mrs March “as an indirect arbiter of imperialist and British propriety,” see Dorland (1995). Whether the text conflates Lionel’s desire for Cocoanut with Oedipal desire or whether Lionel’s same-sex desire is a rejection of his overbearing mother are considerations worth exploring further but fall beyond the remit of this essay.

Forster uses free indirect discourse to represent Lionel's "prejudices" (174) but also allows glimpses into the wishes of Cocoanut who understands normative thinking but also pleads in favour of "our place" (189). Cocoanut responds to Lionel's fears of discovery, when the latter realizes the cabin door was left unlocked during their lovemaking, with a plea for companionship and togetherness: "only we can guard each other," he argues; then the "door shut, the door unshut, is nothing, and is the same" (189). Unlike the Lion, the emblematic English soldier who "expected either repentance or terror" to accompany any act of transgression (176), the oriental Monkey insists that "only [they] can guard each other" (189). Using "guard," a military term, to request protection and insist that their allegiance should be to "each other," Cocoanut defends "our place," making a country out of the ship's cabin. Such guarding for Lionel is unpatriotic: defending the cabin requires betraying the motherland. Ultimately, Lionel adheres to normative views of sexual orientation but also to colonial hierarchies of power in relation to constructions of race, ethnicity, class and gender.

Lionel is unable to accept his own desires even if he is "fonder" of Cocoanut than he "know[s] how to say" (187). While in the course of the relationship Lionel finds he cannot choose between the "folk to whom he belonged" (192) and the "kid" he wishes his kind would "leave alone" (194), March is also unwilling to "think how he had yielded" to "their foolish relationship" (193). If, like his father, he "went native" (183), Lionel is convinced "he would become nobody and nothing" outside the hierarchies and conventions of his national identity and social class (192). Thus, the possibility of "each-other"-ness for the principal characters is negated since otherness is rejected.

As a committed servant of the empire, Lionel cannot deny the dominant ideology; he is unable to embrace alterity. Seeking to regain control over the colonial subject, Lionel decides that "the whole thing has been a bit of a mistake" (194). However, Cocoanut's bite "onto [Lionel's] muscular forearm" transforms March into the colonial soldier "in a desert fighting savages" (194). The imperialist wish for domination is mixed with the language of desire for conquest: the cabin is now a battlefield.

The final sexual union of colonizer and colonial subject is a "sweet act of vengeance" (195) which denies any possibility for nonviolent coexistence: the killing of Cocoanut brings Lionel "no sadness, no remorse" (196). Before diving into the sea, Lionel thinks of the trajectory of his relationship with the colonized subject as "part of a curve that had long been declining" (196). Lionel's suicide exposes the very ideology he defends; ironically, he contributes to the "declining" curve. The "deep" that buries

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Dystopian Space in E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops"

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Abstract

E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1909) is an anomaly in his literary career. Not only is this story one of his very few science fiction works, but it is also one of the first dystopian science fiction works in the English language. Nonetheless, until recently it has received rather scant critical attention. Among the critical studies to date, the spatial environment in this short story has received no critical consideration. This study attempts to illustrate the possibilities of approaching this narrative in more spatial terms. Specifically, it seeks to explore the spatial configurations and how they relate to dystopian aesthetics, how corporal disintegration as represented in this short story is correlated to a loss of self-identity. The theoretical backdrop of this study falls within the purview of the so-called "spatial turn" in literary studies and will partially draw on postmodern aspects of spatiality developed by Fredric Jameson.

Keywords: E.M. Forster, Fredric Jameson, spatiality, dystopia

It should perhaps come as little surprise that in a period of lockdowns and quarantines, of travel restrictions and social distancing measures, a short dystopian story from a century ago depicting isolated humans living in closed quarters connected to each other only by way of a television network should make a resurgence as one of the most prescient, if not outwardly prophetic, stories in the dystopian cannon. “The Machine Stops” was one of two science fiction works – or what at the turn of the century was referred to as “scientific romance” or “scientific fantasy” – that E.M. Forster wrote in his long career; the other one was his last short story, “Little Imber” (1961). First published in 1909 in *The Oxford and Cambridge Review*, when the term “dystopia” had no application to literature, the short story was included almost ten years later in the collection *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories* (1928). Since then, it has been relegated to the marginalia of Forster’s literary output, receiving only scant and sporadic critical attention.

The reasons for its obscurity were at least twofold. Not only was it out of character from Forster’s more “serious” literary creations, but it also suffered from the stigma commonly associated with the science fiction genre, considered until relatively recently as a less-than-respectable literary form. This certainly did little to promote “The Machine Stops” as a work worthy of academic consideration. The first major study of “The Machine Stops” can be found in Mark R. Hillegas’s *The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians* (1967) and it was not until much later, in Tom Moylan’s *Scarpes of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (2000), that an in-depth analysis of the story was published. Both authors stress the seminal role “The Machine Stops” has in twentieth-century dystopian fiction, with its anti-Wellsian and neo-Luddite purport attracting particular interest. Recently, the text has garnered recognition for its almost prophetic depiction of our socially destructive overreliance on internet technology (Seabury 1997; Caporaletti 1997) and its relevance in relation to ecocriticism (Seegert 2010).

Seeing that relatively little critical consideration has been given to the spatial environment in “The Machine Stops,” this study aims to present this narrative in more spatial terms. Specifically, it seeks to explore the spatial configurations and how they relate to dystopian spatial aesthetics, how corporal disintegration as represented in this short story is correlated to a loss of self-identity. The theoretical backdrop of this study falls within the purview of the so-called “spatial turn” in literary studies.¹ Though

¹ For a detailed account of geocriticism and spatial theory in literature, see the introduction to Robert T. Tally’s *Spatiality* (2013).

criticism working from within this theoretical context usually takes as its object of research narratives depicting "real" spaces, a case has been made to extend this line of inquiry to the work outside the mimetic and realistic convention. In his discussion on the romance aspects of SF, Jameson suggests "[w]e need to explore the proposition that the distinctiveness of SF as a genre has less to do with time (history, past, future) than with space" (Jameson 2005, 313). The possibility of extending the reach of geocritical studies to science fiction and fantasy literature was also indicated by Robert T. Tally Jr. in his conclusion to *Spatiality* and later considered more extensively in the publication of *Popular Fiction and Spatiality: Reading Genre Settings*.

While there already had been a rich history of dystopian-themed literature prior to "The Machine Stops," this was one of the first works to shift attention away from economic and political considerations occupying the works of William Morris and H.G. Wells towards the impact of technology on social life. It was not until the early twentieth century that scientific themes became more prevalent in dystopian works, which is why Gregory Claeys concedes that "The Machine Stops" could be described as "dystopian science fiction" (2017, 333) and is certainly one of the first technologically-centered dystopian narratives to have come out of this period. Other prominent works that deal with similar issues are Karel Capek's *R.U.R.* (1920) and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924). All of these works share a similar apprehension with regard to the possible long-term consequences of surrendering social change to technological development. These consequences usually take the form of technocratic dystopias, which have successfully erased the values in the defense of which the abovementioned writers created their literary dystopias. The critique of emergent totalitarian social systems in the abovementioned works underscores the centrality of such notions as individuality and agency. The task for the author then becomes to illustrate the shift away from ideological enslavement, automation, totalitarianism, and collectivism towards individual freedom, free will, and self-determination. "The Machine Stops" exhibits some of the anti-fascist and anti-totalitarian themes that would find their fullest expression in later works of dystopian fiction inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, most notably Zamyatin's *We*. Forster's anxiety was incited not so much by totalitarian regimes as by the encroaching tide of modernity, which is why Tom Moylan sees "The Machine Stops" as going "against the grain of an emergent modernity" (2000, 111). Going against this grain meant resisting the optimism characterizing modernism at its nascent stage. Instead of being a force for the advancement of society and a tool for fulfilling the potential of humanity, technology is presented as extracting a price for the optimization of comfort.

In line with the conventions of the dystopian genre, “The Machine Stops” thrusts a rebellious protagonist into a fictional world where social politics are aligned in such a way as to project stability and utopian perfection, but where the protagonist alone sees that something is amiss, that is, the protagonist begins to question the assumptions underlying the integrity of the whole social system. This is the beginning of the journey towards self-realization for the protagonist, who during its course discovers the value of what he has been denied. At worst, such narratives fall victim to sanctimonious pedagogy, at best they are able to avoid that pitfall and offer by means of extrapolation a more nuanced commentary on the flaws of contemporary culture. It is into this latter convention that “The Machine Stops” falls.

This story presents Forster’s bleak vision of the future world dominated by technology, which in the story takes the metaphorical shape of the all-encompassing, all-seeing “Machine.” All these subterrestrial inhabitants are consigned to living solitary lives in their cells, spending their time exchanging intellectual thoughts through a computer network resembling Skype. Forster enjoins us to image this world:

Imagine, if you can, a small room, hexagonal in shape like the cell of a bee. It is lighted neither by window nor by lamp, yet it is filled with a soft radiance. There are no apertures for ventilation, yet the air is fresh. There are no musical instruments, and yet, at the moment that my meditation opens, this room is throbbing with melodious sounds. An arm-chair is in the centre, by its side a reading desk—that is all the furniture. (Forster 1997, 87)

We find ourselves in an artificial, isolated space, where every convenience and need is immediately satisfied by the omnipresent Machine. The rooms can generate music, fresh air, videos, access to lectures, and the inhabitants can participate in lectures, social activities without ever having to leave the comfort of their arm-chairs.

In fact, the mere thought of leaving this safe space and see other people incites horror in Vashti. When the protagonist, Kuno calls his mother, Vashti, with an unusual invitation that she embark on a trip to see him so he can tell her of his recent experiences in person, “not through the Machine [...] not through the wearisome Machine” (88), she is mildly irritated that he is interrupting her routine and hesitantly gives him five minutes of her time. We can see that not only are all types of physical human contact and displays of affection frowned upon, but also the maternal and familial bonds are deemed undesirable and obsolete, replaced by self-isolation and intellectual

self-actualization. Kuno feels somehow out of place in this world, at odds with the worship that is accorded to the Machine, with the rules that everyone seems to be following blindly and so he decides to find his way outside, onto the surface, where it is believed that survival is impossible. He begins to rebel against what he recognizes as zealotry and worship for the Machine:

You talk as if a god had made the Machine [...]. Men made it, do not forget that [...]. We created the Machine, to do our will, but we cannot make it do our will now. It has robbed us of the sense of space and of the sense of touch, it has blurred every human relation and narrowed down love to a carnal act, it has paralysed our bodies and our wills, and now it compels us to worship it. (88)

In an effort to prove to himself that life is possible on the surface of the planet, he took initiative to find a way without government approval. For this he was threatened with "homelessness," which is the same as being exiled to the supposedly toxic surface. Though travelling to the surface is not technically illegal, doing so without any purpose and without going through the official channels to receive permission is denounced. Kuno's desire to discover the surface on his terms puts him on a quest for knowledge of what lies beyond his preserved confines. None of the other inhabitants share this desire, compelled by fear or habitual passivity to remain content to live out their lives in their small cells. This is where Moylan locates Forster's "romantic humanism and privileged individualism" (Moylan 2000, 113).

Much of the criticism on "The Machine Stops" revolves around the issue of technology, this being the obvious target of Forster's narrative. What have humans done with the conveniences afforded to them by the Machine? It would seem that with the provision of all necessary accommodations and comforts, humans will be able to focus their undivided attention on self-actualization. What readers find, however, is a perverted version of this dream. With the sole purpose being the pursuit of knowledge, which takes the form of exchanging, or rather recycling, second-hand knowledge with the help of short lectures through televisual devices. Vashti's engagement in these lectures and her obsessive desire to "have ideas" are absolutely of no relevance outside the theoretical realm, as the title of her lecture is meant to indicate: "Music during the Australian period." What might have been intended as a delicate nudge away from intellectual posturing towards more practical intellectual pursuits can now be construed as a warning of the dangers of virtual reality and Internet addiction.

Ideally, technology allows for the transcendence of corporeal demands and obligations, opening the possibility of fully devoting oneself to intellectual pursuits. On the other hand, increasing the reliance on technology to mediate reality comes at a price. Forster satirizes the optimistic view of technology being a saviour of humanity when depicting the bodies of our protagonists as having degenerated into “swaddled lump[s] of flesh” (87), with their muscles atrophied from inactivity. Excessive reliance on technology separates us from our bodies and it is Kuno’s awareness of his body that brings about a change in his perspective. This idea of physical strength being a counterweight to decadent intellectualization was signalled earlier with the Machine’s preference for physical weakness. In a reverse Spartan manner, the strong-bodied infants are cast away, as they might be less likely to conform to the mandated docility defining the culture of Forster’s dystopia. Having been deemed in possession of excessive physical strength, Kuno barely survived this postnatal selection process. This would later come to affect his attitude; he would start to pose questions, exhibit doubt.

Dystopian fiction provides fertile ground for explorations of spatial and architectural constructions, as it greatly relies on world creation as a means for externalizing ideological content. Attention to architectural detail and spatial aspects not only generates the appropriate mood of dread and despair but also gives voice to the ideological tenets governing the described dystopian society. I would argue that in “The Machine Stops” Forster is not only, in a somewhat reactionary tone, decrying the loss of a mode of living altered by modernity as described above; he is also tracing the contours of phenomena that would take form years after his death, namely, postmodernism, and more specifically “that new spatiality implicit in the postmodern” (Jameson 1991, 418). It should be remembered that postmodernism was initially an architectural concept and has always been tied to spatiality as opposed to modernist literature’s concern with time. Michel Foucault in his famous “The Other Spaces” emphasizes this point by stating that twentieth-century philosophy has shifted from concerns of time to concerns of space, and by declaring the present as the “epoch of space” (Foucault 2008, 14).

It is important to realize that Kuno’s environment is placeless. This quality is reinforced by the Machine’s lack of a specific location or any material presence for that matter; it is presented as a ubiquitous multimedial network looking over the functioning of the whole system of civilization. It does not matter where one is as long as the Machine is present. Geographically, the underground network is also placeless. Though we learn from the narrator that the underground network of cubicles is located in Wessex, this

location does not mean anything to the current inhabitants. The underground facilities are not located anywhere specific for the characters, for whom the whole world seems to have become an interconnected monolith of identical cubicles. Each individual is confined to their quarters in this elaborate beehive structure which ensures their physical separation despite close proximity. And without the need to commute, as physical interpersonal contact has become obsolete; without the need to be anywhere specific as one's life is lived from the arm-chair and through an internet link, it no longer matters where one is and the idea of place loses its meaning. To reverse Tally's assumption,² if human beings are no longer "social animals"—Aristotle's *zoon politikon*—they are no longer spatial animals. The idea of space ceases to have meaning.

Kuno's indictment of this state of affairs often involves the way in which he feels separated from the space around him:

you know that we have lost the sense of space. We say 'space is annihilated', but we have annihilated not space but the sense thereof. We have lost a part of ourselves [...]. 'Near' is a place to which I can get quickly on my feet, not a place to which the train or the airship will take me quickly. 'Far' is a place to which I cannot get quickly on my feet [...] though I could be there in thirty-eight seconds by summoning the train. (100)

He tells his mother that the Machine

has robbed us of the sense of space and of the sense of touch, it has blurred every human relation and narrowed down love to a carnal act, it has paralyzed our bodies and our wills, and now it compels us to worship it. (105)

As the characters are immobilized in their cubicles, they experience a certain sense of spatial disorientation and dread when they allow themselves to diverge from the routine prescribed by the Machine. It is this loss of bearings that is a defining feature of postmodern space as described by Fredric Jameson in *The Postmodern Condition*. Drawing on David Lynch's *The Image of the City*, Jameson develops the idea of "cognitive mapping," the process of orienting oneself spatially in increasingly discommodulating urban spaces.

² "To the extent that human beings are "social animals" – Aristotle's *zoon politikon* – they are also *spatial* animals" (Tally 2013, 16).

Disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of *a sense of place* and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories. (Jameson 1991, 51; emphasis mine)

The ambiguous idea of the “sense of place” is central to both “The Machine Stops” and Jameson’s analysis. What do we mean by “sense” and what do we mean by “space” or “place”? Neal Alexander in his article “Sense of Place” (2017) goes some way towards offering an explication of these terms by tracing their origins in the Roman idea of *genius loci* to the modern notion of sense of place. In his article, he argues “that sense of place (in the plural) emerge from the engagement of our five sense not only in apprehending but also in actively making places, and in making sense of the worlds in which they take place” (39). An important observation regards viewing the dual meaning of “sense” as both sensory perception and a conceptual self-awareness of where one is. If Kuno’s physical involvement with the space around him is non-existent, then there can be no way of him making sense—or cognitively mapping—the world around him. The scope of this article does not allow for a detailed explanation of the difference between the concepts of “place” and “space.” Suffice it to say for the purpose of this analysis, relying on Yi-Fu Tuan’s *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), space is more abstract and undifferentiated, whereas place is more static, immediate and familiar.

As Moylan observes, Kuno’s quest is to map his surroundings and “to assert his agency by enhancing his cognitive map of his personal space and the space of his society” (Moylan 2000, 115), which would put him in a similar spatial environment as that described by Jameson; however, what is not mentioned by Moylan is that by mapping his environment, Kuno gains not only agency but also identity. Recognizing oneself in a defined space is, as Jeff Malpas argues, intrinsic for constructing a sense of identity, but as he emphasizes this is impossible without active engagement, something which Forster deliberately denies his characters. Malpas explains that

we are the sort of thinking, remembering, experiencing creatures we are only in virtue of our active engagement in place; that the possibility of mental life is necessarily tied to such engagement, and so to the places in which we are so engaged [...] our identities are, one can say, intricately and essential place-bound. (Malpas 1999, 177)

Kuno's predicament extends further than a lost sense of place, as the comforts of the cubicle seem to supply this need to the rest of the population, but only on condition that they forgo attempting to develop a sense of space, a sense of being in the world in relation to others.

Forster's decision to locate this world underground influences the narrative in a number of ways. Firstly, it puts the protagonist on a trajectory of moving upward from the interior of a womb-like environment to the surface of the earth. Kuno's journey through a ventilation tube is evocative of being expelled through the birth canal, of being reborn, which ultimately is Kuno's desire, thus casting the secondary quest to confront his mother in an ironic light. Also, being underground severs the inhabitants from any external means of orienting themselves (the sun and the geographical features), allowing the created civilization to develop uniformly.

Beneath those corridors of shining tiles were rooms, tier below tier, reaching far into the earth, and in each room there sat a human being, eating, or sleeping, or producing ideas [...]. thanks to the advance of science, the earth was exactly alike all over [...]. The buttons, the knobs, the reading desk with the Book, the temperature, the atmosphere, the illumination – all were exactly the same. (95)

Uniformity reinforces the indistinctive quality of Kuno's environment. Vashti travels to the other end of the world to visit Kuno, but her environment remains unchanged. This spatial indistinctiveness is mirrored by the uniformity of the population, as everyone everywhere is the same.

Society in "The Machine Stops" functions on the basis of separation not just from one another but also from knowledge. The short lectures absorbing Vashti are representative of a larger mechanism at play.

Beware of first-hand ideas! [...] First-hand ideas do not really exist [...] Let your ideas be second-hand, and if possible, tenth-hand, for then they will be far-removed from that disturbing element—direct observation" Indeed, Vashti is "seized with the terrors of direct experience. (95)

Direct experience has been eschewed in favour of mediated "second-hand" experience, evocative of the Baudrillardian image of simulacra and endlessly deferred "first-hand ideas" representing original thought, or thoughts of the origin. Losing sight of anything

believed to be original or authentic, separated from one another and any objective physical reality, the inhabitants have become docile, unable to anchor their actions in anything resembling personal agency. The dismissal of direct experience, especially that of touch and personal contact, reinforces this docility.

Secluded and quarantined enclaves are the trademarks of utopian and dystopian societies. Jameson believes that “all SF of the more ‘classical’ type is ‘about’ containment, closure, the dialectic of inside and outside, [...]” (Jameson 2005, 312). Elsewhere he writes that, “Closure is initially motivated by secession and the preservation of radical difference (as well as the fear of contamination from the outside and from the past or history). (Jameson 2005, 204). This was the case in both Orwell’s and Huxley’s dystopian worlds, and this is the case today of suburban gated communities being approached through the lens of dystopian aesthetics. These strictly enforced borders support the examination of utopias in carceral terms, as the interdiction against leaving the designated underground areas is maintained by coercion and fear. Any attempt to defy this interdiction is punishable by “homelessness,” or in other words exile, disconnection from the Machine.

This anxiety is maintained through the stories of “The Great Rebellion,” when rebels were exiled to die on the surface as a warning to the rest of the population. Compliance with the rules set forth by this technocratic system ensures its own survival and preserves the status quo. This is in line with Jameson’s understanding of the function that closure plays in anti-utopian fiction: “[...] the system develops its own instinct for self-preservation and learns ruthlessly to eliminate anything menacing its continuing existence without regard for individual life” (Jameson 2005, 205). This sentiment is echoed by Kuno, when he implores his mother to understand the inflated position of the Machine in relation to humans: “that it is we who are dying and that down here the only thing that really lives is the Machine [...]. The Machine develops – but not on our lines. The Machine proceeds – but no to our goal” (105–106). It is the idea of the Machine as a global entity uniting everyone that must be maintained in order to conceal the inherent isolation of the population.

In conclusion, it has been established that the central theme of “The Machine Stops” explores the consequences of what might happen if society were to give full rein to unfettered technological progress, an issue that was understandably compelling in Forster’s time, considering the rapid pace of technological, urban, scientific development at the start of the twentieth century. The anxieties accompanying the awareness of what must have seemed as unrestrained change certainly had a formative influence on the

development of science fiction and dystopian literature, and perhaps it is this anxiety that is responsible for this narrative's slightly reactionary tone. However, aside from giving shape to these anxieties, Forster in "The Machine Stops" was also able to illustrate in spatial terms the mechanisms responsible for the mental enslavement of the population. The claustrophobia evoked by the description of the living quarters is linked to the agoraphobia experienced by the inhabitants, in this case Vashti. Such enclosed spaces reaffirm the superiority of the governing system over the governed inhabitants. In postmodern terms, the loss of spatial bearings is linked to the inability to create a "cognitive map" of one's surroundings, which in effect leads to a state of alienation. This state can be remedied through active participation or engagement with the physical surroundings, a point that Forster narrativizes in Kuno's illegal acts of physical engagement with his surroundings. All these implications and conditions are evoked through a careful description of the spatial environment, which if elaborated in those terms, reassert the importance of space as a fertile context for literary studies, especially in relation to works hitherto ignored on account of their generic pedigree.

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Encounters with Forster

E.M. Forster and the Legacy of Aestheticism: “Kipling’s Poems” (1909) and Forster’s Dialogue with Max Beerbohm

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Abstract

E.M. Forster’s 1909 lecture on Rudyard Kipling’s poetry was a key document in his development as a critic. He used this talk as an occasion to re-examine his relationship to the “Art-for-Art’s-Sake” principles of the late-Victorian Aesthetic Movement, which continued to guide influential contemporaries such as the artist and author, Max Beerbohm, with whom Forster had both personal and professional connections. Distinguishing his own responses to Kipling from those of Beerbohm, as expressed through the latter’s savagely satirical visual works, was a necessary step in Forster’s forging of an individual voice for the modern age. But despite Forster’s wish always to avoid labels and to escape being identified with inflexible positions, he turned in his later years to open advocacy of Art for Art’s Sake.

Keywords: E.M. Forster, Max Beerbohm, Rudyard Kipling, Aestheticism, Modernism

In a tribute to E.M. Forster that appeared in the 5 June 2020 issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* (UK) in the midst of a global pandemic, Robert Douglas-Fairhurst has spoken of him as the champion of those who wish to evade lockdowns of one kind or another: “Nearly every character we are asked to admire in his fiction is trying to escape from something: the unforgiving grip of the past, or the hollow rituals of convention, or the geographical boundaries and social limitations of England” (2020, 10). Douglas-Fairhurst is certainly correct about these fictional figures. But Forster was something of an escape artist himself, refusing to allow labels to be placed on himself and on his own talents, even going so far as to eschew anything that smacked of professional recognition for his interests and abilities. He was, for instance, an astute commentator on art, and this was never more the case than in his essay “Me, Them and You” in *Abinger Harvest* (Forster 1936a). There, he detailed his reactions to an exhibition of John Singer Sargent’s artworks, focusing his wrath on *Gassed*, with its glamourized depiction of blinded, working-class conscripts in the First World War, and expressing his moral outrage over the “lie” that this painting represented (Forster 1936a, 28). Yet in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, Forster later would deny that he had ever been a useful commentator on visual images, insisting that “I am bad at looking at pictures[,]” and that “Long years of wandering down miles of galleries have convinced me that there must be something [...] which I am incapable of detecting for myself” (1951b, 131).

His refusal to assume the title of art critic concealed, however, the lifelong centrality to his critical practice in general of observations upon and interactions with works of art. Although he insisted, in the essay “Not Looking at Pictures,” that he lacked any “natural esthetic [sic] aptitude” (Forster 1951b, 132), and that only with the patient tutelage of friends such as Roger Fry had he found his “appreciation of pictures” to be “improving” (Forster 1951b, 133), this was hardly the case. Forster adhered more closely than he might have wished to acknowledge to the model of his immediate predecessors in the Aesthetic Movement – in particular, of Oscar Wilde. As Michael F. Davis has shown, Wilde’s development as a writer paralleled and intersected with his “long arc of increasingly complex thinking about art”; he had a “primary interest in art and aesthetics” and a “broad understanding” of visual effects (2018, 111). Wilde was, moreover, a compulsive sketcher of faces and other forms, especially while in the midst of literary composition, as the recent discovery in the Free Library of Philadelphia of his poetical notebook, ca. 1879–1880 has revealed (Richter 2016). In this, Wilde scarcely was unique, for many of his contemporaries among the late-Victorian Aesthetes defined themselves through their ability to

range across the arts and to evaluate, or even to produce, visual objects in conversation with written texts.

So, too, reflecting upon visual images allowed Forster to clarify and articulate his own ideology, as he did, for instance, when confronted with the literal painting-over of working-class men's suffering and exploitation by the British Army in Sargent's *Gassed*. Differentiating his own responses to images, which tended toward the moral and political (as in "Me, Them and You"), from those of many of his Aesthetic Movement predecessors – such as Walter Pater, for whom Beauty and Art for its own sake were the primary concerns – helped Forster to define his philosophical and social positions, particularly in the first decades of the twentieth century. In doing so, he participated in what Christine Froula has described as "Bloomsbury's ethical aestheticism," which was a departure from the "Decadent aestheticism" of the earlier generation associated with the late-nineteenth century, yet a derivative of Aestheticism nonetheless (2017, 127).

While awareness of Aesthetic Movement antecedents in general played an important role in his formation, Forster remained especially indebted to Max Beerbohm (1872–1956). Beerbohm proved a particularly valuable mentor-figure, because he had staked his claims to public notice not merely as an essayist, a reviewer, a fiction-writer, and a visual artist, but as a master of the sort of urbane, ironic and comic, but also pointedly critical, voice to which Forster himself would aspire. Yet Beerbohm functioned, too, as a negative touchstone for Forster, for he represented an ultimately untenable stance. Despite the upheavals of the British social landscape – in terms of gender roles, along with class – in the years leading up to and following the First World War, Beerbohm adhered to the aesthetic credo that he had formed in the 1890s, when he was part of the elite *Yellow Book* circle. His was a fidelity to artistic ideals, as well as to a fixed social order, that Forster would find admirable in principle, but too rigid in practice for the demands of the new age. It tempted Forster, even as it repelled him.

In the case of Forster, perhaps more than most Bloomsbury modernists, engagement with (and disengagement from) the Aesthetes' philosophy of Art for Art's Sake would remain a complex, lifelong, and sometimes tortuous process. His struggle with it, moreover, was personal, for it informed his relationship with individuals in daily life, as well as with individual texts. The legacy of Aestheticism was one that he never would wholly abandon, and his discomfort with that legacy was a matter he never could fully resolve.

The dilemma posed by his ambivalence becomes strikingly – if not painfully – clear in the context of a lecture on Rudyard Kipling's poetry that Forster composed toward the end of the first decade of the new century, a moment when he was in transition, remaking

himself from an inheritor of late-Victorianism into a commentator ready to take on the coming age. Written for delivery sometime in 1909 at a meeting of a provincial literary society, Forster's lecture, which is now housed in the King's College, Cambridge University archives, was newly and expertly edited by Michael Lackey for the Spring 2007 issue of the *Journal of Modern Literature*. Reading "Kipling's Poems" today can afford literary historians an invaluable perspective on Kipling as a continuing flashpoint for controversy. Equally important to scholars interested in Forster, however, is the surprisingly vigorous defense it offers of Kipling's right to be regarded as a serious, accomplished poet. Significantly, this defense begins, despite his later disavowal of any claim to serve as a guide to art, with Forster's description of his encounters with two works of visual art. Both works were contemporary caricatures of Kipling drawn by Max Beerbohm, and both were images that savaged Kipling's literary reputation, as well as his physical appearance. One skewered him as an opportunist posing as the spokesperson of the working classes and pandering to the jingoism and coarseness of the masses. The other portrayed him as a writer unworthy of the Nobel Prize that he had received 1907, particularly in comparison with two late – Victorian Aesthetic poets – George Meredith and Algernon Swinburne – who, in Beerbohm's opinion, had deserved that honour instead, and whom he depicted as floating loftily above the undeserving awardee.

Forster's lecture on Kipling was a work of multi-dimensional and also multi-directional appraisal. There, Forster contended not only with Kipling in his role as a poet, weighing his weaknesses against his strengths, but with the hovering presence of Max Beerbohm, the arch Aesthete, in his dual roles as both a visual artist and as a critic. In confronting, considering, and then rejecting Beerbohm's unequivocal dismissal of Kipling, Forster seems to have arrived at a new position in relation to the twin poles of dynamic populism and of Aesthetic elitism – albeit a position that would never be an entirely comfortable or fixed one – and so to have furthered his own progress toward the creation of an independent voice with which to articulate the complexities of a changing age. He moved closer, moreover, to what Michèle Mendelssohn has defined as an "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" that simultaneously embraced a distinctly English perspective and stood outside of it, while it "enable[d] [...] a politically engaged take on modernity" (2016, 493).

...

As Peter Jeffreys has established in *Eastern Questions: Hellenism and Orientalism in the Writings of E.M. Forster and C.P. Cavafy* (2005), Forster was greatly influenced by

what he calls the "Decadent Aestheticism of Paterian Hellenism" that had shaped the world (especially the homosocial and homoerotic circles) of turn-of-the-century British university life from which, as a 1901 Cambridge graduate, he had emerged; yet, as Jeffreys also notes, Forster was "dissatisfied" with any purely aesthetic mode of thought and conscious of its limitations (2005, 140). He could not follow Walter Pater in advocating unqualifiedly for the principle of Art (with a capital "A") for its own sake, nor could he partake in the spirit of Pater's *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (1889) and confine himself to an *appreciative* reading of visual works. Though he might sometimes mock gently, as he did in *A Room with a View* (1908), both the legacy of John Ruskin and the conduct of Ruskin's disciples, Forster was nonetheless influenced himself by Ruskin's competing Victorian vision of art criticism as necessarily a form of moral criticism. In essays such as "Me, Them and You" and in his public lectures, Forster's own engagement with a visual work often involved weighing the justness of the artist's representation of a subject alongside the justice of the artist's view of life as a whole. From art, he both sought and demanded wisdom, rather than mere aesthetic pleasure.

It was, therefore, unsurprising that when beginning his own critical evaluations in the lecture titled "Kipling's Poems" for the Weybridge Literary Society, Forster would have turned first to something visual: the pencil, ink, and wash sketches of Max Beerbohm, and it was characteristic, too, of Forster to describe Beerbohm's caricatures of Rudyard Kipling as offering viewers no simple enjoyment, but rather "food for thought" (Forster 2007, 12). He attributed to artists in general a power akin to that of writers to affect their audiences' judgement – a power that he sometimes decried, as in the essay "Me, Them and You," when it was abused by Society painters such as J.S. Sargent, or by the cartoonists of *Punch* who, as he wrote in "Notes on the English Character" (1920), pandered to the middle-class insularity "of the suburban householder who can understand nothing that does not resemble himself" (Forster 1936b, 9). Forster framed his lecture on Kipling's poetry not only by describing in detail two of Beerbohm's images – *Mr. Rudyard Kipling takes a bloomin' day aht ...with Britannia, 'is gurl* [sic] (1904) and *The Nobel Award* (1907) – but by treating these works as the productions of a fellow critic whose negative opinions of the poet would have to be examined, understood, and ultimately countered.

In the case of Beerbohm, moreover, the visual artist with whom Forster contended was also a writer – one who had excelled at some of the very genres that Forster himself was attempting, and one who would continue to be mentioned by critics as an influence upon and even a rival to Forster, particularly as a wit and as a fantasist. When, for

instance, in the *Dial* magazine of May 1924, Hamish Miles reviewed Forster's fiction, it was to Beerbohm's that he compared it, while noting its lack of Beerbohm's "elaborated urbanity" (1973, 192). The shadow of the elegant silhouette of "Max" (as he was always called familiarly by his contemporaries) loomed large throughout Forster's past, present, and future as a formidable presence.

For more personal reasons, too, Max Beerbohm was not a figure whom Forster could ignore. Although he maintained an ambiguously heterosexual public persona, Beerbohm had eagerly affiliated himself with the gay male set of Aesthetes surrounding Oscar Wilde in the 1890s; as N. John Hall says, "Max was close to homosexual men, and in his youth he moved easily in a circle that was about as openly homosexual as you could find" (2002, 34). The Aesthetic Movement in general was suffused with an atmosphere of queerness that attracted the young E.M. Forster. After the turn of the century, too, Beerbohm remained associated with a number of men with whom Forster became friends, as well. Beerbohm was more than merely a popular caricaturist, a drama critic, a writer of short fantasy fiction, or a successful author of parodies and comic essays. He was also an icon in the "Oxbridge" environment that Forster chose to inhabit, and Beerbohm's reputation remained potent in the donnish world that he memorialized in his most celebrated fiction, the 1911 fantasy novel *Zuleika Dobson*. His attitudes, opinions, and even his paradoxical pose as both a dandy and a humble man all proved significant in Forster's life and literary self-fashioning.

The degree and quality of the personal relationship that existed between Forster and Beerbohm is difficult, however, to pin down. S.N. Behrman, who recorded for posterity his extensive conversations with Beerbohm in the 1950s shortly before the latter's death, claimed that Forster ranked among "Max's great enthusiasms in literature" (1960a, 232). This list also included Jane Austen, Henry James, Ivan Turgenev, George Meredith, and Charles Lamb and thus dovetailed, perhaps not coincidentally, with many of Forster's own candidates for the literary Pantheon. But the Beerbohm scholar J.G. Riewald, on the contrary, insisted that "Max was not a great admirer of E.M. Forster" (2000, 88). Indeed, Riewald went on to note that in 1930 Beerbohm had admitted to Siegfried Sassoon that "he had not been able to get beyond Chapter One of *A Passage to India*" and had "disagreed" with Forster's 1927 *Aspects of the Novel* (2000, 184). Certainly, Beerbohm never showed the eager interest in Forster that he demonstrated in many of his other favorite authors (such as Meredith and Swinburne) through repeated, affectionate caricaturing of them. To produce his sole drawing of Forster, he waited until 1940 (Hart-Davis 1972, 65). He and Forster knew each other socially, although more intimately in the

1940s while Beerbohm and his wife, escaping war in Italy, were reluctant inhabitants of the village of Abinger in which Forster had made his home. (Beerbohm and Forster were fellow contributors to the *Abinger Chronicle*, the locally based literary magazine edited by Sylvia Sprigge during the Second World War.) They also corresponded occasionally, but Beerbohm never strove for a deeper friendship.

Forster, on the contrary, treated Beerbohm deferentially, both in print and in person. In "Notes on the English Character," a 1920 essay that appeared later in *Abinger Harvest*, he used Beerbohm's caricatures as an example of something that "really was funny," in contrast to the witless jokes that disfigured *Punch* magazine (Forster 1936b, 10). His 1929 evaluation of the Decadent comic author Ronald Firbank, also collected in *Abinger Harvest*, saw Forster comparing Firbank to the *Yellow Book* contributors of the 1890s and lauding Beerbohm as the more "intelligent" writer (Forster 1936c, 118). Forster went on record, too, with his praise of the novel *Zuleika Dobson* in *Aspects of the Novel* and thus helped to make Beerbohm's fantasy fiction, as F.W. Dupee has said, "obligatory reading for [...] literary initiates of the Twenties" (Dupee 1974, 175). According to P.N. Furbank, Forster's biographer, "Forster and Beerbohm liked each other and respected each other's work"; he adds, "For Beerbohm's seventieth birthday in 1942 [while Beerbohm was living in Abinger] a 'Maximilian Society' was founded, and the members presented him with a large gift of wine. Forster, as a member of the society, went one afternoon to help him drink it" (1979, 251). Ten years later, on the occasion of Beerbohm's eightieth birthday, Forster contributed to *Max Beerbohm 1952*, a celebratory manuscript volume of tributes, now housed in the library of Merton College, collected from artists and from "the most distinguished men of letters of that time" (Riewald 1991, 72–73).

To take on Beerbohm directly, therefore, in the opening of his 1909 lecture on Kipling, and to distinguish his opinions from those of a figure with whom he hoped to forge personal and professional links (and would go on doing so) was both a daring and a necessary strategy on Forster's part. It was also quite a logical move, for no one was better known than Beerbohm for public opposition to Kipling. Any defense, however partial or qualified, of the latter as a writer (and especially as a poet) would have to respond to Beerbohm's widely circulated attacks. In his 1972 catalogue of Beerbohm's published and unpublished caricatures, Sir Rupert Hart-Davis identified fully twenty-six different images of Kipling, ranging from savagely comic representations of Kipling alone to many that placed him in small or large groups of figures. This list did not even include, as J.G. Riewald has pointed out, the "cruel, bitterly satiric" drawings, "full of loathing," that Beerbohm added privately to the so-called "improved" copies of books

by or about Kipling that he owned – volumes such as *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892), “in which he had altered the illustration on the title-page into a portrait of the author, blood dripping from his reddened fingernails” (2000, 160). Among the most remarkable visual expressions of Beerbohm’s “loathing” was a caricatured head of Kipling that he incorporated into a 1922 fresco on the wall of the Villino Chiaro, the house in Rapallo, Italy where Beerbohm lived from 1910 until his death in 1956 (except for the time spent during the Second World War, by necessity, in Abinger). Though far away from Britain, Beerbohm chose to remind himself every day of the face of his longtime English nemesis.

Beerbohm did indeed cast himself in the role of Kipling’s implacable enemy and behaved accordingly. Only in old age would he speak almost regretfully of the vehemence and virulence with which he had pursued Kipling in decades past. To S.N. Behrman, who visited him in Italy during the final four years of his life, he confessed that the act of jabbing at Kipling – whether through the caricatures he published or exhibited, through his theatre reviews of plays adapted from Kipling’s fiction, or through his literary parodies of Kipling’s verse and prose – had taken on the aspect of a psychological compulsion. As he told Behrman rather sorrowfully in the 1950s,

When I first met him [Kipling], in Baltimore [in 1895], he received me so nicely [...] He was charming [...] And then – you know – his books kept coming out, and occasionally I was asked to review them. I couldn’t, you know, abide them. He was a genius, a very great genius, and I felt that he was debasing his genius by what he wrote. And I couldn’t refrain from saying so. It went on and on. Friends of his and mine kept telling me that he was pained and shocked by what I wrote, but I couldn’t stop. You know, I couldn’t stop. As his publications increased, so did my derogation. He didn’t stop; I *couldn’t* stop. I meant to, I wanted to. But I couldn’t. (1960a, 70; italics in original)

Rudyard Kipling’s early biographer, C.E. Carrington, was, as Behrman affirms, incorrect in asserting that Kipling remained “unmoved by Max’s attacks”; on the contrary, he wore the scars of his wounds forever: “When David Low wrote to Kipling asking to caricature him, Kipling refused, because, according to Low, he was still exacerbated [sic] by a caricature Max had done of him twenty years before, and on this ground he repelled all caricaturists” (1960b, 67).

Kipling’s reaction is easy to understand. Almost all commentators label Beerbohm’s series of visual and textual assaults on Kipling as the “cruellest thing” he ever did (Hall 2002, 145–46). Katherine Lyon Mix, chronicler of the *Yellow Book* magazine and its

1890s circle, stated unequivocally that "no person would ever be more bitterly caricatured by Max than Kipling" (1974, 16). J.G. Riewald added that Beerbohm "reserved his greatest hostility" for Kipling, and

frankly belonged to that 'acute and upright minority' of 'haters of Mr Kipling's work' [...] [hounding] him relentlessly in caricatures, critical articles, acerbic recollections, satirical verses, and in 'P.C. X, 36...' a devastating parody of his short-story style, first published in the *Saturday Review* of 15 December 1906 and subsequently included in *A Christmas Garland* (1912). (2000, 155–56)

Kipling was, as N. John Hall summed up in his Introduction to a 1993 reissue of *A Christmas Garland*, "Beerbohm's *bête noire*" (Hall 1993, xii). Only David Cecil, one of Beerbohm's early biographers, stood apart in suggesting that "Of course, he did dislike some people more than others [...] Kipling, for instance – and the fun he makes of them has a sharper edge to it in consequence. But his dislike is not so fierce as to make him lose his temper; so that his portraits are not horrible" (1964, 139). Yet Cecil went on to quote the words inscribed by Beerbohm on the title-page of his copy of Kipling's *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917): "By R.K. the Apocalyptic Bounder who can do such fine things but mostly prefers to stand (on tip-toe and stridently) for all that is cheap and nasty" (1964, 367). By any standard, this constituted quite a "horrible" denunciation of the author's conduct, as well as a gratuitously "fierce" dig at his short physical stature.

What fueled this animus? Lawrence Danson, in *Max Beerbohm and the Act of Writing* (1989), lay much of the blame at the victim's own doorstep: "It would be no paradox to say that what Beerbohm hated in Kipling was Kipling's hatred, his fierceness of feeling that only made itself more dangerous when it appeared in the service of chauvinism or sentimentality" (1989, 169). Some critics have agreed in principle, citing Kipling's repugnant positions on domestic and foreign political questions. David Cecil, for example, suggested, "As for the new middle-class imperialist Toryism associated with [...] Kipling – aggressive, hustling, ungentlemanlike – it was all Max detested most. The Boer War was its typical manifestation. Max was opposed to the Boer War" (1964, 180).

Despite his championing of some aspects of Kipling's poetry in his 1909 lecture, E.M. Forster responded to Kipling's politics with an antipathy equal to Beerbohm's, as he demonstrated in a letter of 29 July 1911. There he told Malcolm Darling about reading Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) with "mingled joy and disgust," while objecting specifically to its xenophobic determination to teach British audiences that "foreigners

are envious and treacherous, Englishmen, through some freak of God, never –” (Forster 1983, 123). In the same letter, Forster continued, “Kipling and all that school know it’s an untruth at the bottom of their hearts – as untrue as it is unloveable [sic]. But, for the sake of patriotism, they lie” (1983, 123). For Forster, there was no graver sin on the part of an artist than failure to speak the truth – hence, his condemnation of Sargent’s *Gassed* for its “lie” about working-class male bodies in the First World War (1936a, 28). As his lecture on Kipling’s poetry showed, Forster could forgive Kipling’s own politically motivated lie only because he felt that Kipling did speak truly about other matters, including parental love, childhood, and children.

While conceding that Kipling possessed the virtue of never being dull, Forster declared himself, in his 1909 talk, most in sympathy with the poems that invested their literary energy not in political matters, but in the affections, especially in familial relations. In “Kipling’s Poems,” he lauded without irony, as a significant and timeless theme, the strain of fatherly affection – evocations of what he called that “nobler bond: the thread of paternal love that has descended unbroken through the centuries” (Forster 2007, 26) – running throughout Kipling’s work; he also quoted at length examples of verse informed by this loving emotion. Indeed, praise for this aspect of Kipling’s literary sensibility was the note toward which the lecture built and on which it ended. Here, it is worth remembering Furbank’s descriptions of Forster’s own familial attachments, which were both obsessive and excessive. With his mother, in particular, Forster engaged in a “love-affair” that “made Forster’s childhood a radiantly happy one, [... that] went on, in a sense, for the rest of both their lives [... and that] dominated Forster’s existence” (Furbank 1979, 21). When it came to depictions of the ties between parents and children, Forster responded positively – perhaps for biographical reasons – to a bathetic strain that Beerbohm resisted. Indeed, as Lawrence Danson has pointed out, Beerbohm distrusted Kipling’s strategic indulgence in moments of “sentimentality” (1989, 169). In a 1903 letter to a friend who was about to see the dramatized version of one of Kipling’s short stories, Beerbohm cheekily advised, “Do not drown the stalls with your tears; buckets can be obtained from the attendants” (1989, 36–37).

Beerbohm’s main quarrel with Kipling’s work, however, sprang from different sources. On the one hand, as N. John Hall has pointed out, “Max especially disliked Kipling’s brutish notion of ‘manliness’” (1993, xiii) with all its concomitant macho posturing and homophobic rejection of what was supposedly effeminate. In an infamous critique of a theatrical adaptation of Kipling’s *The Light That Failed* (1890) for the 14 February 1903 issue of the *Saturday Review* magazine, Beerbohm naughtily flipped Kipling’s hyper-masculine persona, insisting that anyone who wrote so “feverishly” about men’s “virility” was

probably not a man at all, but in fact a woman author employing a male pseudonym (1924, 245–46). No other accusation could have injured its target so effectively. That same drama review, however, also contained a less widely repeated pronouncement that went directly to the root of Beerbohm’s deepest antagonism toward Kipling: “The ugly word, the ugly action, the ugly atmosphere – for all these he has an inevitable scent; and the uglier they be, the keener seems his relish of them” (1924, 247). Beerbohm found distasteful the bullying tone, the slang, the affectation of hearty masculinity, the worship of capitalist acquisitiveness, and the militarism, along with the relentless advocacy of the British Imperialist project, in Kipling’s prose and poetry alike. But above all, he objected to what he saw as Kipling’s purposeful embrace of ugliness and deliberate eschewal of beauty.

At the core of Beerbohm’s philosophy was devotion to the Beautiful (with a Paterian capital “B”). As Dennis Denisoff has noted, “From early on in his career, Beerbohm wished to distinguish himself from aestheticism’s major names”; yet his “sympathy and respect for people such as Wilde, Pater, and Swinburne” proved unflagging and life-long (2001, 133). The major figures of the Aesthetic Movement remained his guides, and their principles informed his own. Indeed, as Kristin Mahoney puts it, one of Beerbohm’s favorite cultural roles was that of an “old guard representative of England’s previous avant-gardes” (2015, 27), and that included the Aesthetic Movement. It was not merely that Kipling “jarred horribly on a sensitive taste,” as David Cecil would have it (1964, 251); rather, Kipling offended against a creed that elevated beauty to the highest of ideals, which was a belief to which Beerbohm adhered as fervently as any religious zealot. Even in his role as a visual satirist, Beerbohm asserted the supreme importance of pursuing beautiful effects. In a 1901 essay titled “The Spirit of Caricature,” he wrote,

The perfect caricature is in itself a beautiful thing. For caricature, not less than for every other art, beauty is a primal condition [...] The most perfect caricature is that which [...] most accurately exaggerates, to the highest point, the peculiarities of a human being, at his most characteristic moment, in the most beautiful manner. (1962, 102)

What he demanded of the visual arts, he also required of literature. In drawing after drawing, he protested against Kipling’s deliberately “ugly” writing by turning its author into a repellent, bullet-headed dwarf, while always doing so beautifully, of course.

Beerbohm’s caustic images reached a wide audience. The first of the two caricatures to which Forster refers at the opening of his lecture on Kipling’s poetry – *The Nobel*

Award (1907), with its caption of “Lord God, they ha’ paid in full!” echoing Kipling’s own line (“Lord God, we ha’ paid it in!”) from “The Song of the Dead” – was exhibited at the Carfax Gallery in London in April 1908. The second, *Mr Rudyard Kipling takes a bloomin’ day aht, on the blasted ‘eath, along with Britannia, ‘is gurl* (1904), not only hung at the Carfax in May 1904, but also was reproduced that year in Beerbohm’s volume of twenty caricatures, *The Poets’ Corner* (Hart-Davis 1972, 87). Thus, Forster felt comfortable in assuming that his listeners at the Weybridge Literary Society’s meeting in 1909 would have seen and remembered these two images: the first blasting Kipling’s unworthiness to receive a laurel that should have been awarded to far better late-Victorian poets, such as George Meredith and Algernon Swinburne; the second lampooning Kipling as an absurd figure, with his British chauvinism and his aggressive courting of the working classes. Further visual mockery by Beerbohm of Kipling as a belligerent, vain, and pushing figure had appeared at the turn of the century in such diverse publications as the *World* magazine’s Christmas number in 1900, the *Pall Mall* magazine of February 1902, and in the 1896 volume of Beerbohm’s work titled *Twenty-Five Gentlemen* (Hart-Davis 1972, 87). Long before Beerbohm wrote to Holbrook Jackson to disagree with the positive evaluation of Kipling in Jackson’s study, *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913), readers were well acquainted with the visual manifestations of his belief that “as a poet [...] R.K. seems to me not to exist, except for the purpose of contempt” (Beerbohm 1989, 94).

When, in his lecture on Kipling’s poetry, Forster wrote of the error of defining Kipling merely as a bounder who wears a cheap derby and consequently of missing what was remarkable in Kipling’s verse, it was clearly of Max Beerbohm that he was thinking, and it was Beerbohm’s caricatures that he was referencing. The publicly circulated descriptions of Kipling as a callow, crass figure and the visual images of Kipling as a little man in just such a hat were Beerbohm’s own creation. But in “Kipling’s Poems,” Forster did not attribute the dismissal of Kipling to any vicious or unjust impulses on Beerbohm’s part; instead, he suggested respectfully that the fault lay with the doctrine of Aestheticism – with the limitations of judgement and blind spots that it encouraged. Early in his lecture, Forster explicitly named the philosophy of “Art for Art’s sake” as one of the “two danger fronts which the critic has to avoid[,]” for it would cause him to “undervalue Kipling” and “miss half the wonder of his work” (2007, 14). The second such “danger front” was its opposite – i. e., what Forster called the worship of “Life for life’s sake” and of mere “virile stuff,” which would lead the critic to “overvalue” Kipling (2007, 14). In staking out this position, Forster distinguished himself from Beerbohm by seeking an aesthetic

middle ground: a critical space that would allow him to recognize the centrality not only of beauty, but of a vital, albeit uncouth, energy that rightly appealed to the newly democratized mass audiences whose opinions increasingly mattered. At the same time, he pledged fealty to neither perspective.

There were other moments, too, in this same lecture, when Forster seemed not merely to be keeping Beerbohm in mind but talking back to him directly, especially while praising Kipling's poems inspired by childhood. To call the hyper-manly Kipling a child-like figure and even "half a child himself" as Forster did in his 1909 talk (2007, 25) was in itself controversial; with Beerbohm as part of the audience that Forster had in mind for this statement, it was aggressively provocative. Kipling's work for young readers had long been accepted as part of the training for British Imperial manhood, by "limiting and hardening acceptable forms of masculinity" and, as Kimberley Reynolds has put it, by showing boys "that the kind of men who can successfully expand and rule the empire need to live on their wits and physical daring" (1994, 31). Forster, however, stripped Kipling of the aura of a drill sergeant and suggested instead that he was an imaginative, sensitive, and even somewhat fey being, prone to dreaminess and to inhabiting the sphere of fairies and other imaginary beings, "progressing, however shyly, from the rule of the Law to that of the Spirit" (2007, 26). Forster emphasized, moreover, Kipling's identity as one who, Peter-Pan-like, never grew up – a description with tremendous resonance for all who knew Max Beerbohm and for Beerbohm himself.

If there is one consistent note struck in the biographies of Beerbohm and in the autobiographies of his personal acquaintances, it is the characterization of him as like a child. David Cecil wrote of him as "an unusual mixture of the childish and the precocious" and described how "Along with his prolonged childhood Max kept the child's confidence in the possibility of happiness" (1964, 27). In his memoir of the turn-of-the-century London art scene, the artist William Rothenstein, one of Beerbohm's intimates, spoke of his friend's juvenile appearance and "baby face" (1937, 144). Lawrence Danson, too, has illuminated how Beerbohm used this childishness self-consciously and made it a key component of his self-caricatures throughout his lifetime, offering the public a visual image of himself as "always a small figure," with an emphasis upon "the delicate body with its tiny feet" and the "round playfulness of the high forehead, small chin, and infantile button-mouth" (1982, 1). This "playfulness" was not a matter of physical qualities alone, for David Cecil has also linked it to the authorial persona developed by Beerbohm in his essays: "If he does make a serious point [...] it is in a playful tone; any imaginative moment takes the form of a playful flight of fancy" (Cecil 1970, 14). Indeed the sole

flaw in Beerbohm's narrative voice, according to Cecil, was a tendency to sound, as in his *Yellow Book* fantasy "The Happy Hypocrite" (1896), "a little too childish" (1970, 14).

By identifying Kipling not as an Imperialist bully, but instead as a childlike character, Forster metaphorically seized the pen from the caricaturist's hand. He redrew Kipling's small figure as Beerbohm's double, and implicitly challenged Beerbohm to acknowledge this resemblance. It was a daring move that came toward the end of his 1909 lecture, but no more daring than his insistence upon casting the hyper-macho Kipling as a rather fey artist, who sometimes lived in the realm of the fantastic and who could write delicately about what Forster labeled as "exquisite things" (2007, 26).

Belief in the importance of the fantastic was dear to all the late-Victorian Aesthetes and their disciples. It suffused Walter Pater's 1878 semi-autobiographical short story, "The Child in the House," with, as Denis Donoghue says, the presence of "spiritual entities" and gave readers the image of childhood as "a dream" state populated by "ghosts and revenants" (1995, 181–82). Both early and late in his career, Beerbohm followed Pater's lead in writing fiction rife with spectral presences and supernatural interventions. He also emulated Pater and Oscar Wilde in perfecting a style that was, to use the word so prized by turn-of-the-century advocates of Aestheticism, *exquisite*: "Beauty of expression had been Max's aim from the time when, as a freshman at Merton, he had amused his tutor by his wish to attend Walter Pater's lectures," as S.C. Roberts reports (1962, xiii). By associating Kipling with fantasy and also with "exquisite" writing, Forster proposed an unexpected – and no doubt unwelcome – likeness between Beerbohm, as the adherent of Art for Art's Sake, and Kipling, as the pragmatic advocate of a brutal Imperialism. (Later, in his 1927 study of fiction, *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster would apply the very same adjective, "exquisite," to the effects in Beerbohm's own *Zuleika Dobson* [1927, 117]). Forster undermined the grounds for the revulsion towards Kipling that Beerbohm felt and spread through his visual caricatures, at the same time that he asserted the artistic value of certain qualities, such as raw vitality and energy, that Beerbohm neither had nor wished to possess. By doing so, Forster opened the way toward exhibiting such antithetical qualities himself, in forging a new modernist style that would differ from Beerbohm's Aestheticism.

When arguing against Beerbohm, Forster was of course also arguing with himself. As he showed through the composition of his 1908 novel *A Room with a View*, he was indeed attracted (philosophically, as well as erotically) to the elemental, dynamic physicality embodied by George Emerson and by the anti-elitist, democratic vision of George's father. Yet at this period in his life, the fictional character with whom he had more in

common was the awkward and hyper-refined Cecil Vyse, who distances himself from experience through Paterian appreciation and who clings proudly both to his educated tastes and to his "decadence" (Forster 1908, 142).

Through the process in 1909 of deciding upon Kipling's place as a poet, Forster engaged in a critically pivotal struggle to come to terms with the legacy of late-Victorian Aestheticism. He made use of Beerbohm's hostile caricatures of Kipling to define where Aestheticism grew too narrow to appeal to him; he also made use of Kipling's work to help expand the parameters of value for his own writing and to incorporate "vitality" (Forster 2007, 13). Eventually, he would declare that art is "unique not because" it is "beautiful," but because it is coherent: "it is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony" (Forster 1951a, 90). Forster's version of modernism would attempt to yoke the "exquisite" appreciation of the fantastic (as perfected by the Aesthetes) to the unironic celebration of common sentiment and even of vulgarity (as perfected by Kipling) into something resembling coherence. One fruit of that yoking would be his 1910 novel, *Howards End*. Published a year after Forster's lecture for the Weybridge Literary Society, that work of fiction became his meditation on the act of mediation. In it, he would *connect*, however awkwardly, the Kipling-loving world with Beerbohm's and bring the energy of the motor car into relation – at times, even into a loving relationship – with the refinement of the art gallery through the merging of Basts, Wilcoxes, and Schlegels.

In the past, some historians of literary modernism chose to overlook Forster's responses to late-Victorian concepts of Art for Art's Sake as crucial elements in the development of his fiction and non-fiction prose alike. David Medalie's 2002 study, *E.M. Forster's Modernism*, for instance, made not a single mention of either Walter Pater or Oscar Wilde, let alone of Max Beerbohm. Such omissions are puzzling, for Forster never strayed completely from allegiance to the aesthetic vision that sustained Beerbohm, and no discussion of Forster's mature style or critical stance can be complete without attention to this relationship.

In his *Commonplace Book* of 1937, Forster wrote, "T.E. [Lawrence] used to say I was civilised [sic]. Max certainly is" (1985, 105). An important aspect of being civilized, it seemed, was affirming the value and importance of the "unfashionable" (Forster 1951a, 87). Max Beerbohm, as J.G. Riewald has noted, espoused openly "views [that] were often remote from, or at variance with those of the majority of his intellectual contemporaries" (2000, 88), and such independent "variance" was a quality that Forster never ceased to admire. Among the "unfashionable" doctrines to which Forster himself

laid claim, in a 1949 address to the American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters, was a distrust of “mateyness” in artists (Forster 1951a, 92) – i.e., the pose of ordinariness, social conformity, and hail-fellow-well-met-ness of the sort that Kipling had cultivated, especially as a poet. An artist, Forster averred in this post-Second World War lecture, was always more properly a “Bohemian” and an “outsider,” detached from and even above his fellows (Forster 1951a, 93). Turning to the words of the art critic Sir Kenneth Clark – yet another figure from the visual arts – for support, Forster concurred with Clark in stating that the work of poets and of painters still mattered “precisely because they are not average men; because [...] they far exceed the average” (Forster 1951a, 93). If this meant that the “Bohemian” artist sometimes risked falling into the attitudes of “idiosyncrasy and waywardness” that had afflicted the Paterian Aesthete – what Forster called the condition of walking around “with a peacock’s feather in his hand” – so be it (1951a, 93). To Forster in 1949, looking back upon Aestheticism after nearly half a century of modernism’s own errors and excesses, such preciosity seemed a risk worth taking and a sin worth committing.

Perhaps most surprisingly, Forster also announced at both the beginning and the end of this same 1949 speech that his own “unfashionable” beliefs included the very one that had fueled Max Beerbohm’s attacks on Kipling: that is, faith in “Art for Art’s Sake” (1951a, 95). When doing so, he even employed the Paterian capitalization of the concept. Returning to and re-examining some of the issues he had raised four decades earlier in his lecture on Kipling’s poetry, Forster closed a circle in his thinking. He had long ago effected his transition into modernism, and modernism itself had moved on from its initial self-definition through opposition to Aestheticism. Eventually, he no longer needed to separate himself with the same vehemence from this literary and artistic point of origin. Despite what Robert Douglas-Fairhurst has rightly identified as Forster’s impulse in his earlier work to champion escape from constraints and evasion of labels, by the time he had reached the age of seventy, Forster chose to proclaim proudly in the concluding words of his 1949 address that “though I don’t believe that only art matters, I do believe in Art for Art’s Sake” (1951a, 95).

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Appendix



Max Beerbohm, *The Nobel Award*, 1907 (Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press) (c) Estate of Max Beerbohm 2020.

Forster, Kipling and India: Friendship in the Colony

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Abstract

Both E.M. Forster and Rudyard Kipling in their major Indian novels, *A Passage to India* and *Kim*, valorised friendship across the imperial and racial divide. In this comparative and contrapuntal study of these classic novels about India, I attempt to see how they negotiate the complications caused in personal relationships by haughty imperial attitudes on the one hand, and resistant nationalism on the other. Another dimension underlying the personal relationships in these narratives is that of sexual politics in instances where friendship leads to intimacy with dramatic consequences. The opposite of this perhaps is an attempt to sublimate the personal and the empirical into the spiritual, a trend evidenced in different ways in both. Finally, I refer to the work done on Forster and Kipling by a few other Indian scholars, to see how they engage with the issues outlined here.

Keywords: E.M. Forster, Rudyard Kipling, colonial friendship, imperialism, nationalism, sexual politics, spirituality

E.M. Forster (1879–1970) died fifty years ago but it feels as if he has been gone for much longer. One reason for this is that the last novel he published was nearly one hundred years ago (*A Passage to India*, 1924). But there is another reason which is perhaps of wider significance, that the world he belonged to and his works so aptly reflect has passed away too in a way he could hardly have anticipated though he did live long enough to see it go. If his England has changed beyond recognition since the publication of his last two novels set in that country, i.e. *Howards End* (1910) and *Maurice* (drafted 1913–14, published posthumously 1971), the India that he experienced and depicted is now in another orbit altogether, as a free country to which the British no longer have a passage except with a visa granted by the government of India.

In this article, I propose to read Forster's greatest work in relation to another British novel of India, *Kim* (1901) by Rudyard Kipling. The corpus of British novels on India comprises several other major works too, such as (to name only my favourite dozen) *Oakfield or Fellowship in the East* (W.D. Arnold, 1853), *The Competition Wallah* (G.O. Trevelyan, 1864), *The Old Missionary* (W.W. Hunter, 1895), *Lilamani: A Study in Possibilities* (Maud Diver, 1911), *The Village in the Jungle* (Leonard Woolf, 1913), *A Farewell to India* (Edward Thompson, 1931), *Burmese Days* (George Orwell, 1934), *The Pool of Vishnu* (L.H. Myers, 1940), *Bhowani Junction* (John Masters, 1954), *The Siege of Krishnapur* (J.G. Farrell, 1973), *The Jewel in the Crown* (Paul Scott, 1966), and *Heat and Dust* (Ruth Praver Jhabvala, 1975). But there can be little doubt that in their historical and aesthetic significance, *Kim* and *A Passage to India* remain unmatched as the major literary monuments of British rule in India.

I. The Comparative and the Contrapuntal

Traditionally, *Kim* and *A Passage to India* (henceforth *Passage*)¹ have been regarded as being worlds apart in more ways than one. Kipling is seen as an arch-imperialist and jingoistic champion of the British dominance of India, while Forster is regarded as the archetypal liberal sensitive to the injustices of the Raj and keen to advocate measures for making it a more humane and civilized institution. *Kim*, published in 1901 but set in the 1880s, represents the Raj at its zenith, at what has been called the high noon of empire,

¹ Quotations from both texts are referenced simply by page numbers, and are from the editions specified under "Works Cited."

while *Passage*, published 23 years later and encompassing the period broadly of its long and fitful gestation from 1912 to 1923, depicts a situation in which there is clearly friction and discord between the rulers and the ruled. While *Kim* is an idyll, *Passage* is a fraught contestation. It may thus seem that there are hardly any points of convergence between these two novels., but only a clear and even sharp contrast.

The consideration that the two novels belong to two very different eras of British rule in India may be addressed straightaway. This certainly seemed to be the case when *Passage* was published in 1924, for since the publication of *Kim* in 1901, several vastly transformative events had taken place in both Europe and India. The First World War had begun and been lost and won, while in India, the liberal constitutional opposition to British rule offered for decades by highly anglicized Indians through polite petitions for relief and reform had been rendered obsolete with the arrival on the scene of M.K. Gandhi in 1915, who had launched in 1920 his nation-wide movement of Non-cooperation with the British government and mobilized mass support for it on a scale never seen before. The immediate trigger for it was an episode from the previous year, in which the British army had fired at a peaceful, unarmed crowd assembled in a park in the city of Amritsar called Jallianwala Bagh, killed 379 people, and injured several hundred others in a matter of about fifteen minutes.

Kipling could not have imagined any of this happening when he published *Kim*. Nor could have anyone else for that matter, including Forster when he began writing *Passage* in 1912. Many critics have noticed that though finished and published after all the events listed above had taken place, Forster's novel bears the ambience of its initial conception and contains only a passing and oblique allusion or two to the events of 1919. The most notable is the suggestion made in the aftermath of the alleged assault on Adela Quested that as a collective punishment, Indians "ought to crawl from here to the Caves on their hands and knees" (211) – as they had in fact been made to crawl in a lane in Amritsar before the massacre. But there is no Gandhi, no mass movement, and no recognition generally of a transformed political climate. This frozen frame made *Passage* seem as if it was already outdated politically when it came out.

But there is a larger and more important point to be made here regarding the chronological gap of twenty-three years between *Kim* and *Passage*. As it happened, another twenty-three years after the publication of *Passage*, the British left India and it became an independent nation – again a development that no one could have thought possible within such a short time-span. It may be recalled that on the last page of *Passage*, Aziz tells Fielding that (not he but) his sons will one day "drive" the British out of the country,

whether it takes “fifty or five hundred years” (317) – with both the projected figures here turning out to be grossly over-estimated. Incidentally, it is a curious episode of Forster studies that these figures were reprinted in edition after edition as “fifty-five hundred years,” a patently absurd and virtually sempiternal time-span, without apparently any reader or editor batting an eye-lid, until Oliver Stallybrass in his authoritative Abinger edition (1978) corrected the howler.

Furthermore, these two successive spans of twenty-three years, between *Kim* and *Passage* and between *Passage* and Indian independence, are dwarfed by the post-colonial fact that India has now been free for over three score years and ten. In their own day, Kipling and Forster may have seemed to belong to two different worlds, but now in our present perspective they both seem much of a muchness, lumped together as having published their great works in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In Bernard Shaw’s play *Candida*, when the eponymous heroine tells the nineteen-year old poet Eugene Marchbanks, who is besotted with her, to go away because she is fifteen years older than him, he replies: “In a hundred years we shall be the same age” (2020, n.p.). Postcolonially speaking, in more or less one hundred years that have passed since *Kim* and *Passage* were published, Kipling and Forster have indeed become the same age.

This comparative study of Forster and Kipling, or more precisely of *Kim* and *Passage* with occasional references to some other Indian writings of both the authors, is by no means undertaken with the intent to set one of them up against the other. Though “Comparative Literature” (more accurately called Comparative Literary Studies) has always been regarded as an odious and odorous enterprise, especially among those not initiated into the discipline, its purpose is not to weigh two or more authors/texts against each other and then pronounce one of them as being superior to the other(s) as in a competitive sport. Rather, its true endeavour is to read two authors together in a way that would illuminate both and enhance our appreciation of each, in ways that would not have opened up had we not chosen precisely those two writers to read one with the other, and from a point of view which renders them comparable in this positive sense. Kipling and Forster cry out to be compared with each other anyhow, if only because they are the most eminent examples of the sub-genre of the British Novel about India. They are eminently comparable, not the least because of their very eminence.

In this comparative exercise, it seems appropriate to invoke as well a related critical practice advocated by Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism*, namely that of a “contrapuntal” perspective and reading (Said 1994, 18, 32, 51, *et passim*). This method required, he said, that “we must be able to think through and interpret together

experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formulation, its internal coherence and system of external relationships” (Said 32). In *Kim*, for example, he explained, “its picture of India exists in a deeply anti-theoretical relationship with the development of the movement for Indian independence,” and both must be taken on board to highlight “the crucial discrepancy between them” (Said 1994, 32).

As I have sought to demonstrate elsewhere, Said proved better at outlining this radical agenda than at fulfilling it, at least in the case of Kipling and *Kim* (Trivedi 2010, 120, ff). This was probably because his knowledge of the West was naturally more sure-footed and comprehensive than his knowledge of India. Further, his very metaphor of the “contrapuntal,” deriving as it does from Western music, presupposed a harmonious blending eventually of whatever might be “discrepant” but would not brook what was forthrightly discordant and could not be reconciled. Nevertheless, the breakthrough that he pioneered in putting a contrapuntal reading on our agenda is definitely worth persevering with.

In the case of both *Kim* and *Passage*, the aperture for a contrapuntal reading is offered by the implied addressivity of both the authors, a dimension Said does not register. These works were both meant to be read by the Western reader located by and large in the West, and though Indian characters participate vitally in the action of both novels, neither novelist countenances the possibility that many Indian readers may actually pick up these novels to read. For in those times, English had not yet become a global language and a vast majority of the population of India was illiterate even in its own languages.

It is this unanticipated, unaccounted for, and presumed-to-be absent gaze of an Indian reader that is contrapuntally provided here in this essay, with the proviso of course that there is no such thing as “*the* Indian reader” but rather, only individual Indian readers. The “internal coherence” of these novels is open in our postcolonial times now to the scrutiny of the external anglophone reader resident in the colony, as it barely was when these novels were published. (What may happen to these texts when they are translated into an Indian language, as *Passage* has been and *Kim* apparently not yet, is of course another question altogether which may be explored in its own right in another essay.)

II. Friendship in the Colony: Kipling

Embedded underneath the utterly different locales and contexts, story-lines, and the range of characters in *Kim* and *Passage*, there lies a question which is at the heart of both the novels: Can the British and the Indians be friends with each other even while Britain rules India? This may sound a bit like asking whether a lion and a lamb can be friends while the lion remains the king of the forest, and of course, it may surprise no one that the answers that each party returns are not identical.

In Kipling's novel (to take up the two novels in the chronological order), the boy-hero Kim is the orphan son of an Irish father. He grows up in the "bazaar" and can pass off effortlessly as a native. Initially, the boy is proclaimed to be "the Little Friend of all the World" and then "the Friend of all the World;" he is so called about forty times in the novel by various characters ranging from some he encounters only in passing to those he spends a lot of time with, including Mahbub Ali, Hurree babu and the lama (5, 7, 16, *et passim*). As this is an unfamiliar collocation in English, the suggestion clearly is that this phrase is a hallowed Indian term of praise, bestowed on Kim by the local people because he is universally popular – except that no such phrase is known to exist in Hindi or Urdu, the two vernaculars spoken in the novel. It is apparently an invention on the part of Kipling intended to glorify the footloose and fancy-free hero whom many critics have read as a wish-fulfilling projection of the author himself. (Kipling was born and initially brought up in India but sent off "home" to England at the age of five where, by his own account, he had a miserable time with his mean and oppressive foster-parents, which must have proved particularly galling after he had lorded it over a household of eight servants which his parents maintained in Bombay).

On the opening page of the novel, we are similarly told that Kim, a white boy, "consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar" (3). But this is not quite borne out by what we see happening. We see him sitting astride the legendary gun Zam-zammah after he has "kicked" a Hindu boy off its trunnions, and then a Muslim boy as well, and hurled abuses at them both and slandered their parents too for good measure (3, 6). The narrator comments: "There was some justification for this [...], since the English held the Punjab and Kim was English" (3). Later, when he is brought to the army barracks and left in the care of a drummer-boy his own age, Kim despises him and is in turn beaten by him (134). There is not much love lost between Kim and another boy he comes across, similarly nameless and called just the "Hindu child," especially after he

wins comprehensively against Kim at a game they play of close observation and memory, which leaves Kim “stamp[ing] in vexation” (159).

In some of his poems and short stories, Kipling portrayed a relationship between an Englishman and an Indian of the so-called martial races in which the two are locked in rivalry or even combat but feel a mutual admiration for each other’s valour which transcends the barriers of race and rank. As he put it in the opening stanza of his “Ballad of East and West”:

*Oh! East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!*

(Kipling 2020, n.p.; italics in the original)

The closest we come to such bonding in *Kim* is the link between Mahbub Ali, the adventurous Pathan horse-trader, and Colonel Creighton who is the master of a ring of spy-agents such as Mahbub Ali; the two have a bantering relationship, though it is always clear who the boss is.

Kim himself gets on better with several older persons who are kind to him and take care of him; indeed, they act as father-figures: the lama, Mehboob Ali, Colonel Creighton and Hurree babu. These relationships have been read as being fictional compensation for the absence of Kipling’s father in his own childhood, a father whom he grew up to regard as a mentor and who was a creative collaborator in several works of his, including *Kim* (See Trivedi, 2021). Thus, Kim roams freely all over India because he knows that he is assured of acceptance and indulgence from everyone he comes across. This may arguably be interpreted as representing the belief – or fantasy – entertained by many of the British in India at that time, including Kipling himself, that the natives welcomed them and were happy with their presence amidst them. The friendly feeling was believed to exist even more on the native side than on the British, if only because the latter could be firm and admonitory in a superior way whenever they fancied – as Kim is at the beginning of the novel to his peers Chhota Lal and Abdullah.

III. Friendship in the Colony: Forster

In the case of Forster, friendship as an equal and mutually enriching relationship was of the highest value. While a student at Cambridge, he became a member of a secret society informally called The Apostles whose objective was described by one of its members as “the pursuit of truth [...] by a group of intimate friends” (qtd in Furbank 1979, I: 75). After Cambridge, Forster was part of the Bloomsbury Group whose members included some men who had been Apostles together with Forster, but also several other men and women who were rather more inclined to be creative than high-minded, including notably Virginia Woolf and her sister Vanessa who was a painter. The inveterate truth-seekers from Cambridge here constituted a “mute circle [...] who sat puffing their pipes” while they were surrounded by a wider circle of people who were “more worldly and more garrulous” (Bell 1972, I: 100–101). The latter too believed in friendship but somewhat more light-heartedly, with their irreverent, promiscuous, and outspoken ways, and without carrying the burden of the common pursuit of truth or indeed of any other grand object. Forster remained in the first group though he mellowed over the years, while Lytton Strachey and Leonard Woolf (who married Virginia Stephen) seemed to have crossed over in different degrees.

Forster’s belief in friendship found iconic expression in his essay “What I Believe” (1938), written when a second World War seemed inescapably imminent. In it he famously declared: “If I had to choose between betraying my country or betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.” (Forster 1938, 66). Going back to an earlier phase of his life, it was his friendship with a younger Indian, Syed Ross Masood, which had led to his going to India and writing a novel about the country. Although *Passage* is not only “about” friendship, yet it was indeed born out of Forster’s passionate friendship with an Indian. Kipling, in contrast, seems to have had no Indian friends, at least judging by the fact that while he lived in India or during the years after he left the country, he seems to have written not a single letter to any Indian at all, whereas his letters to persons of many other nationalities fill six printed volumes. The Indian closest to him seems to have been his *khidmutgar* (man-servant or valet), Kadir Buksh. In his autobiography, written in the last year of his life and published posthumously, the only other Indians Kipling mentions are also servants or a couple of subordinates who ran the press at the newspapers he worked for (Kipling 1990, 3–4, 26, 89, 174, 176).

Forster, on the other hand, had two Indian friends who were dear to him, and he used both of them as partial models for characters in *Passage*. One was of course Syed Ross

Masood (1889–1937), for whom Forster had nursed an unrequited homosexual passion. In the novel he is the major source for Aziz whose name means “the dear one.” Masood was fond of Urdu and Persian poetry, as many educated Muslims in India then were, and felt nostalgic for vanished Mughal glory, as several of them did too; both these common traits of the times are shared by Aziz. In fact, Forster drew directly in *Passage* on some of Masood’s favourite Urdu verses (Furbank 1979, II: 113). But, unlike Aziz, Masood was educated at Oxford and was a distinguished educationist who served in high positions initially in the Muslim princely state of Hyderabad, and then as the vice-chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University from 1929 to 1934. Though Masood was emotional and demonstrative by British standards (as a majority of Indians could be said to be), he was, unlike Aziz, clearly not impulsive or maudlin. On the contrary, he had “a rather grand and princely manner” (Furbank 1979, I: 143), got into no trouble at all with the British, and was in fact knighted in 1933. Nor did his wife die early, as Aziz’s does; a photograph of Masood with his wife taken in England in 1935 by the celebrated literary hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London (National Portrait Gallery 2020).

Forster dedicated *Passage* to Masood but there is no evidence to suggest that Masood was pleased with the book or the dedication. Forster had sent him the novel in manuscript so that Masood could help him rectify any factual errors, especially of a legal kind in his depiction of the trial scene, for Masood was a trained lawyer. But Masood’s response was laconic: “It is magnificent. Do not alter a word,” which Forster’s authorized biographer P.N. Furbank interpreted to mean that he had responded “unhelpfully” (Furbank 1979, II: 119). But another way of looking at it could be that Masood was politely but firmly distancing himself from the work, perhaps understandably so, as feeling hard done by as the real-life model for Aziz, an identification that Forster’s dedication did nothing to disguise: “TO/ *Syed Ross Masood*/ AND TO THE SEVENTEEN YEARS OF OUR FRIENDSHIP” (6). On the publication of the novel when fault was found with the legal procedures depicted in the novel, Forster “cursed Masood for the errors of Indian detail” (Furbank 1979, II: 130). Their personal friendship, however, seemed to have recovered and resumed.

Forster’s other great friend in India was his employer on his second visit to the country, Maharaja Tukoji Rao III Puar (1888–1937), who was the ruler of Dewas State Senior from 1918 to 1934. Forster thought him to be the most saintly man he had ever known, and a man with the most “loveable spirit” (Furbank 1979, I: 185). He appears in the novel belatedly in the third and last section as the Raja of Mau but we see him only

too briefly. He does not speak a word or interact with anyone, as he is shown singing and dancing like other devotees, such as Godbole, and then, quite suddenly, we learn that he is dead. Worse, his death is shown as being kept secret from everyone lest it should interrupt the festivities. This sounds improbable, for one thing because at that very public event, such a secret would have been practically impossible to keep, but also because it would have been considered a sacrilege to let the festivities carry on when the king was dead; even when a common Hindu dies, all festivities for the whole of the ensuing year are routinely suspended by the family. But Forster of course may not have known this.

What is especially discordant here is that after the novel was published, Forster expressed surprise at being complimented on his “fair-mindedness” while acknowledging that he had been obliged to “repress” his own preferences in order to “hold the scales.” Having scrupulously done so, he now went on to add: “It makes me so sad that I could not give the beloved [the Maharaja] a better show.” He also rued the fact that hardly anyone had found Aziz “charming” as he had intended him to appear (Furbank 1979, II: 126). This was, to say the least, disingenuous of him. Given his fine artistic control, his farcically comic or curtly curtailed treatment of the characters who were based on his two dearest Indian friends could not have been wholly unintentional.

The central friendship in the novel is that between Aziz and Fielding, a character traditionally read as representing some of Forster’s own attitudes and values. The imbroglio concerning Aziz and Adela Quested serves to obscure the relationship between the two men to some extent though it also serves to provide its acid test. The public statement by Forster about betraying one’s country rather than one’s friend was still fourteen years in the future, but it could be suggested that Fielding’s brave act of siding with Aziz in defiance of the aggressive attitude of the whole of the British community in Chandrapore provides a proleptic illustration of it. When Fielding resigns from the Club in the patriotically perfervid atmosphere prevailing in it, it is the equivalent in miniature of his giving up his British citizenship. However, Fielding himself looks on his act not as a gesture of self-sacrifice on the altar of friendship but rather as the only decent thing to do, since he knows it for a fact that the charges against Aziz are baseless.

After Aziz is acquitted, Fielding proceeds quite even-handedly to do the decent thing by Adela Quested as well, by providing her with shelter in his college, by talking to her at length about what she has done, and in the process warming to her in a way he has not done before. When he asks Aziz to waive off the punitive damages he wants her to pay, Aziz sees it as all but a betrayal of their friendship which presupposes unquestioning loyalty. They break off and over the next two years Aziz imagines the worst he can of

Fielding, while he finds a new friend, ally and well-wisher, in Godbole. This new friendship bridges the turbulent Hindu-Muslim divide, historically a far older chasm than the British-Indian divide which Aziz's friendship with Fielding had for a short while spanned.

In the final episode of the novel, Fielding wishes to recapture his old relationship with Aziz and asks him why they cannot be friends again. Now out of the reach of the prejudiced and vindictive machinery of the Raj, Aziz with his new nationalist ardour tells him that they can be friends only after the British have been driven out of the country as its rulers. Fielding responds: "But why can't we be friends now?... It's what I want. It's what you want" (317). Fielding here wants Aziz to prioritize personal relationship over nationalist loyalty, and is appealing to him, in effect, to betray *his* country for a friend. This may seem even-handed, even fair-minded, except that it is not, for one cannot compare a ruling country with a ruled country. In any case, Aziz does not need to answer this extreme demand from a friend who, in his view, had come up short, for the whole universe seems to answer it on his behalf; "the earth didn't want it" (317). A novel that began by asking the question whether it is possible for the English and the Indians to be friends ends by returning a comprehensive no as the answer.

IV. Beyond Friendship: National and Sexual Politics

On 15 August 1947, Forster made a radio broadcast to India in which he said: "You must excuse me if I begin with my friends. They are so much on my mind on this momentous occasion" (qtd in Fordoński 2017, 116). In this oblique and deflected acknowledgement of India's independence, Forster is once again prioritizing friendship over the country, as Fielding had wanted Aziz to do in the concluding episode of *Passage*. When Aziz shouts, "India shall be a nation!" the narrator reports (in indirect speech) Fielding as mocking the aspiration: "India a nation! What an apotheosis! Last comer to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood. She whose only peer was the Holy Roman empire [...]" (317).

But this jibe seems historically inaccurate and inconsistent. It is commonly accepted that the idea of the nation crystallized following the Treaties of Westphalia signed between May and October 1648, and only the especially fragmented stragglers among the European countries, such as Germany and Italy (the latter being the core successor of the Holy Roman Empire), had to wait until the nineteenth century to acquire a unified nationalist political identity, the other European nations having done so much before that. Nor was India to prove to be such a late-comer, for if the number of independent nations was

less than fifty in 1947, it is close to two hundred now, as indicated by the membership of the United Nations. India was in fact the first of the British colonies in Asia and Africa to become a free nation. Thus, Fielding (and the narrator) here seem to be flailing around a little illogically to find any argument or excuse to counter Aziz's nationalism.

In *Passage*, the ultimate solution to the problems of imperial rule, as suggested for example, by Mrs Moore who is distinctly sympathetic to the Indians, is to be more pleasant to them, but even this of course is utterly unacceptable to her son Ronny: "India isn't a drawing-room" (49). The generalizing editorializing omniscient narrator, who seems not easy to distinguish from Forster himself at places, pronounces: "One touch of regret [...] would have made the British empire a different institution" (50).

The most trenchant critic of what the British are doing in India is the young, naive but earnest Adela Quested. With her searching honesty, she tells Fielding that the haughty conduct of the British at the Bridge Party has made her "angry and miserable," and adds: "I think my countrymen out here must be mad" (46). But this scathing comment is allowed to fade away without a response as the plot moves on to embroil her in terrible troubles of her own. One of the paradoxes of the novel is that in the episode at the Caves involving Adela and Aziz, Forster brings about an explosive political situation involving both race and rape, but then lets it drift and diminish into one woman's heated delusion. He seems to shy away from anything political and indeed from the word "politics" itself. When Fielding is asked by Hamidullah how Britain is "justified in holding India," Fielding's immediate reaction is that of exasperation: "There they were! Politics again." And the best answer he can make to this vital question is as lame and limp as anyone could think of offering: "It's a question I can't get my mind on to" (108).²

If Forster who was a liberal could not countenance Indian nationhood and independence, Kipling as a conservative who had worked in India as a journalist from 1882 to 1889, more than twenty years before Forster visited the country for the first time, could hardly be expected to do so. In fact, Kipling blamed the Liberals for encouraging the idea of independence in the first place. He recalled in his autobiography that "a Liberal Government had come into power at Home" in the early 1880s, and passed an act providing that "Native Judges should try white women"; this was the Ilbert Bill passed in 1883 which was vehemently opposed by the British community in India and had to be amended

² In parts, this discussion of Forster's politics derives from, and further develops, some of the formulations in my "Introduction" to a new 2021 edition of *A Passage to India* by Penguin India.

in 1884. (This led Forster to commit one of his several significant errors in depicting the trial of Aziz in *Passage*).

When recounting the Ilbert Bill episode in Chapter 3 of his autobiography which he wrote fifty years later in 1935–36, Kipling connected it with what he sarcastically but prophetically called “the great and epoch-making India Bill” which had just been passed by Westminster in 1935. Officially called the “Government of India Act,” it laid the constitutional basis for the granting of independence to India (a development interrupted and retarded by World War II), so it did prove “epoch-making” as Kipling had astutely foreseen. He alleged that those who passed it were, like those others behind the Ilbert Bill fifty years ago, “parting with their convictions” in relying on arguments such as “There’s no sense running counter to the inevitable” and deploying “all the other Devil-provided camouflage for the sinner-who-faces-both ways” (Kipling 1990, 31–32). He simply could not believe that the British could grant India independence except out of dubious and hypocritical motives or under duress, and he was not the only one to hold that view.

If Forster, and his sympathetic characters such as Mrs Moore and Fielding, used friendship between individuals and general goodwill as a shield against the harsh realities of politics, Kipling’s evasion of colonial politics was even more thoroughgoing. He evacuated *Kim* of all traces of British authority in India so as to be able to show that there was no resistance to it! As I have pointed out elsewhere, the whole mighty machinery of the Raj which we see move into grinding action in *Passage* is entirely absent in *Kim*: no Collector, no Superintendent of Police, no City Magistrate, no Civil Surgeon, no college Principal, no Mem sahibs, and no educated Indians either except a solitary one who is eminently loyal, while Colonel Creighton, the master of the network of spies, is only rarely seen as befits his role. And just as there are no significant British characters in the novel, except the nativized boy Kim, there are no significant Indians in it either. Of the two major native characters, Mahbub Ali comes from Afghanistan and the lama from Tibet, both of which territories lay outside British control and jurisdiction (See Trivedi 2011, xxxvi–xxxvii).

Kipling’s knowledge of India was far wider than Forster’s and in many respects deeper too, for he had seen what has been called the dark side of India: dark because it lay beyond the British “civilizing” influence, because some of the British who experienced it found it terrible as well as terrifying, and also because it was revealed only to a few persistently questing and probing Englishmen like Kipling. One of these areas was relationships concerning white men and Indian women. Though there is no inter-racial love interest in *Kim* because the hero is only a boy and fights shy of a native overture when it comes late in the novel from the Woman of Shamlegh with “her silver necklaces clicking on her broad

breast" (257), Kipling did depict in several of his short stories transgressive inter-racial love and sexual relationships, whether secret or open, with their varied consequences.

In "Beyond the Pale" (1888), the Englishman Trejago has a secret affair with a native woman named Bisesa through leading a "double life so wild" that he can later hardly believe it. But when she finds herself betrayed by him and then is found out by her family, her hands are chopped off while he is stabbed in the groin to leave him with a limp for the rest of his life; as Kipling says ironically, he is afterwards "reckoned a very decent sort of man" (Kipling 2011b, 42). In "Without Benefit of Clergy" (1890), Hodden too leads a double life and has a child with Ameera, which she hopes might help cement the inconstant "love of a man, and particularly a white man" (Kipling 2011b, 227), but then the child and the mother both die and he is seen sorrowing for a short while before duty calls him away. And in "Lispeth" (1886), the sturdy young hill woman of seventeen whom a missionary couple have converted and given the Christian eponym (as she pronounces it), finds one day a sick Englishman lying on a hillside, carries him home in her arms, and nurses and loves him for she believes he too loves her. He then goes away making a promise to return, which the missionary couple support to keep her quiet. When she realizes his word was false from the start, she says to them: "I am going back to my own people. You have killed Lispeth [...] You are all liars, you English." The righteous wife of the chaplain now claims that she believed that Lispeth "was always at heart an infidel" – presumably ever since she was converted at the age of five weeks! (Kipling 2011b, 36).

Politics, as we understand the term now, is never quite absent from human relationships and it takes on a stronger colouring when a relationship turns into physical intimacy and friendship is no longer platonic. This is even more so when the setting is imperial/colonial and relationships cross the racial divide. The distribution of authorial sympathy between the two sides in the stories by Kipling discussed above may come as a surprise to those readers who think they already know his politics only too well, for he finds each of the three Englishmen clearly blameworthy. In Forster's case, the *frisson* is perhaps greater in *Passage*, for unlike in Kipling, he reverses the racial equation and stages in his novel a friendship, or perhaps only an incipient acquaintance, between a man who is Indian and a woman who is white. But their relationship is not at all one of mutual attraction as Forster is at pains to make abundantly clear; the two of them just happen to be thrown together for a morning's jaunt with a large group of other people. There is no love in the air; instead, there is a major distraction as Adela is thinking and fretting in her mind about her engagement with Ronny while physically walking alongside Aziz. The engagement is shortly broken, as other engagements were broken in two

previous Forster novels as well. Forster's patience with heterosexual love relations seems to have been wearing thinner and thinner as his career progressed, until he stopped writing fiction prematurely, partly because, as his biographer reports: "being a homosexual, he grew bored with writing about marriage and the relations of men and women" (Furbank 1979, II: 132).

To the extent that fiction derives not only from the author's imagination and observation but also from his personal experience, Forster's frustration with the form and the conventions of the English novel as it had evolved since before Jane Austen is not difficult to understand. It just did not speak to him anymore, especially with his homosexual novel *Maurice*, completed in 1913 but lying unpublished (and unpublishable) until after his death, as he struggled meanwhile to complete the long-stuck *Passage*. In contrast, the teen-aged Kipling had apparently led a full-blooded life of adolescent adventure in Lahore from 1882 onwards, walking in the native city through the night, smoking at opium dens, and frequenting brothels.

Forster's only sexual experience in India was apparently with "Kanaya" (whose name clearly was Kanhaiya which Forster presumably found to be too much of a mouthful, or simply did not bother to get right); the ever considerate Maharaja of Dewas had served up this servant on a platter with his royal compliments to Forster for his delectation. In contrast, Kipling's own slumming among Indian women is caught with a nicety in a fictionalized biography by the Indian psychoanalyst-author Sudhir Kakar. He shows Kipling going to a high class establishment where he sees a lovely bejewelled courtesan and is "enchanted [...] but not aroused," and on another occasion going into a narrow lane and encountering a "short, plump and [...] very dark" woman, merry and forthright, and being unable to resist her (Kakar 2018, 189–90, 190–93). To state the obvious, Forster and Kipling wrote so differently about India possibly because they had each experienced the country in dramatically different ways, and the difference remains even when they address similar or comparable themes.

V. Conclusion: Politics, the Canon and Friendship

Not only did Forster and Kipling experience quite different Indias but they had also come from very different Englands. When he was eight years old, Forster was left a sum of 8,000 pounds (just under a million pounds today) by an aunt. This set him free for life from financial worries and secured, as he put it, his "financial salvation" (qtd in

Furbank 1979, I: 24) He had gone to King's College Cambridge, one of the most highly regarded academic institutions in the world, and was forever afterwards "a King's man," even before he went back to live in the College as a fellow for the last decades of his life. The novelist Rose Macaulay, reviewing *Passage*, alluded to this essential affiliation of Forster's, calling King's "perhaps the most civilized place in the world" (qtd in Furbank 1979, II: 124) Reflecting on the review, Forster spelt out what the place had meant to him in a letter he wrote to another King's man now serving in India:

I have wondered...whether I had moved at all since King's. King's stands for personal relationships, and they still seem to be the most real things on the surface of the earth, but I have acquired a feeling that people must go away from each other (spiritually) every now and then and improve themselves if the relationship is to develop or even to endure. A Passage to India describes such a going away – preparatory to the next advance, which I am not capable of describing [...]. The "King's" view over-simplified people; that was its defect. (qtd in Furbank 1979, II: 124)

In responding to another reviewer (who had served in India for a long time), Forster answered the charge that he was "always prejudiced" against the English characters by saying that he meant to be so, "for this lack of balance is inherent in the Indian tangle." He added that someone else may well come along and write "the perfect, the unaccented book some day, and all my theory of an Indian tangle [may] prove mere Cambridge" (qtd in Furbank 1979, II: 130). As Forster acknowledged somewhat self-consciously, he had not only gone to Cambridge but *was* Cambridge by his very temperament and mental constitution.

Kipling, on the other hand, had not gone to university at all because his father on his low Indian salary could not afford it, and the only legacy he received was the legacy of India. (See Trivedi 2021). His father Lockwood was an artisan from Burslem in the Potteries who had worked on the terracotta decorations of the building that is now the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, but as his salary there would not have supported a family, he had on marrying sailed out with his wife to India. When Rudyard finished school in England in 1882, Lockwood had called him back to live with the family in Lahore and fixed up a job for him as a journalist for a small English newspaper there (Lycett 2015, 23–25, 107). Over the next seven years as he served in India, Rudyard began to share some of the attitudes of the other British who had lived and worked in India for long and viewed with amused contempt persons coming out of England just for a few months'

tour and forming hasty liberal opinions on the Indian situation. Kipling wrote a poem titled "Pagett M.P." (1886) and then also a short story, "The Enlightenments of Pagett M.P." (1890), in both of which he mocked such visitors, and the name Pagett became a byword for the ignorant but meddling visitor to India. When Forster first visited India in 1912, he mused: "I am becoming quite a Padgett [sic] M.P., being full of good advice to everyone" (qtd in Furbank 1979, I: 230), and after *Passage* was published, Forster again acknowledged that to his British critics who had lived for long periods in India, he probably seemed to be like "Padgett [sic] M.P." (qtd in Furbank 1979, II:127).

Forster had in fact read Kipling extensively as he demonstrated in a lecture he gave titled "Kipling's Poetry" (1908). He divided Kipling's poems into several distinct categories, quoted several of them at length, and distributed both praise and blame, with just a bit more of the latter. The one trait of Kipling that he spoke most admiringly of was his "spiritual standard" and his "mysticism," as displayed in a few poems too but above all in *Kim* (Forster 2007, 22). This may seem surprising, coming from the sceptical and atheistic Forster with his preferred comic-ironical mode, but it makes better sense in the light of his remark, cited above, that in *Passage* he had tried to indicate that for the development of personal relationships, "people must go away from each other (spiritually) every now and then." It is not immediately obvious just how he showed that in the novel, but he possibly had in mind the circumstance that Fielding goes away from India for two years, and then returns and meets Aziz again. However, a difficulty in accepting this interpretation is that at that meeting after an interval, their relationship turns out to be more discordant than it has been ever before.

On the other hand, the spirituality and even mysticism that Forster discerned in Kipling is perhaps not so apparent to many other readers. Kipling himself would not have claimed any such thing for himself nor has any critic of his work. What he does is to make the lama a *religious* man of ardent faith who would go to any length to complete his pilgrimage by finding the River of the Arrow, for the reason that having found it, he would be ready for salvation. But all this is a matter of the lama's creed and his personal mythology rather than anything spiritual or mystical.

Nevertheless, Forster in his lecture waxed eloquent about Kipling's mysticism, so much so as to sound even a little envious. "There is no explanation of the gift of mysticism," he wrote; "[...] only one thing is certain; it is the peculiar gift of India, and India has given it to Kipling, as he gave it to his boy hero, Kim" (Forster 2007, 22). This reverent formulation by Forster seems to be an instance of Orientalism at its fervent best, especially as it seems difficult to reconcile this with what actually happens in Kipling's novel.

The boy Kim is a self-confessed “chela” of the lama, i.e., a disciple who would smooth his worldly path for him, begging for him and buying railway tickets and so on, but he seems singularly uninterested in the lama’s religious wisdom. His own parallel quest is to find his own people, i.e., his deceased father’s regiment; having done that quite early in the novel, he then spends three years in an elite school supported, somewhat improbably, by the lama’s funds in Tibet, leaving the lama to fend for himself during this long period by begging and travelling all on his own. At the end of the novel, he rejects the ready-made salvation, almost by proxy, that the lama kindly offers him, and chooses instead to go with Mahbub Ali and join the adventurous espionage network of the Great Game. As I have argued elsewhere, “there is not a single spiritual bone in Kim’s body” (Trivedi 2011, xxx).

Just as spirituality may be seen to be allied with an exalted form of friendship (and spirituality is in fact a form of friendship in Sufi belief, which neither of the novelists here evokes however), politics may be thought to be an awareness of the worldly factors that may complicate friendship. It is no surprise to find therefore that both Kipling and Forster seem keen to downplay, if not to deny, that their great novels considered here had any palpable political content in them. This is partly because of the simple reason that the word “politics” had a much narrower meaning in their times that it does now, for what it signifies has changed and been expanded exponentially since then. In fact, there is hardly any aspect of life now that cannot be, and is not, interpreted as being political, in the sense of involving a play of power relationships. In the specific context of literary criticism, it was perhaps Irving Howe’s *Politics and the Novel* (1957) that signalled this radical transformation as much as any other single work. While the *Oxford English Dictionary* continued to say even in a supplement published in 1982 that a political novel was “a novel about imaginary politicians,” Howe had already inaugurated a new way of thinking when he declared: “I meant by a political novel any novel I wished to treat as if it were a political novel” (Howe 1957, 17). In stark contrast, Forster had concluded his lecture on Kipling by stating that Kipling has some poems “that only deal with what is permanent and noble in our humanity. They speak to us of the past; they may speak of us to the future, in days when our politics are forgotten and our newspapers indecipherable” (Forster 2007, 27).

In what may seem to be a little paradox, readers and critics in the Anglophone West in recent times have increasingly exposed and highlighted the politics underlying the works of not only Kipling and Forster but of writers in general, from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolf, while several dedicated readers in India have continued to read both Kipling and Forster from a largely apolitical point of view. Perhaps the most prominent

and influential of such Indian scholars was G.K. Das of the University of Delhi, who in his book *E.M. Forster's India* stated that while *A Passage to India* was “apparently” about “the dissolution of the British Empire of India,” what was “more important from Forster’s point of view” was “looking at India and Indians as such, independently of the political context” (Das 1977, 74).

Of Das’s two students who too later went to Cambridge for their doctoral studies, Rukun Advani chose to work on Forster’s criticism, while Christel Devadawson attempted a comparison between Forster and Kipling – or rather, a juxtaposition, with Kipling discussed in the first two chapters and Forster in the next two, before they could finally meet in the fifth and last chapter. Devadawson adopted a thoroughly non-political and anti-postcolonial view, for the solicitous consideration that “the postcolonial reinscribes the antagonisms of the colonial world” (Devadawson 2005, 186). On the other hand, the view of British rule in India that she took was so benign that her British supervisor John Beer joked in his “Foreword” that while Forster had said that he found it “impossible to be fair” to the British in *A Passage to India*, Devadawson “so often achieves precisely that” (Beer 2005, 10).

Another student from the University of Delhi, Parminder Kaur Bakshi, who went not to Cambridge but to Warwick, did in fact offer a radical view of Forster by stating forthrightly in the very opening words of her thesis that “E.M Forster is a homosexual writer,” and then by proceeding to treat each one of Forster’s six novels, from *The Longest Journey* to *Maurice*, from a homoerotic point of view (Bakshi 1996, 1). As for Kipling, there is apparently only one Indian in recent decades to have pursued a Ph.D. exclusively on his works, and in her three-fold approach, Madhu Grover takes on board the political and aesthetic dimensions of Kipling’s works as well as “what I tentatively term as the claims of the ‘spiritual sphere’” (Grover 2007, 3) – and this without having seen Forster’s lecture on Kipling.

Apart from the meagre volume of research being undertaken on either Kipling or even Forster in current times, these two authors are seldom set as required reading even in the B.A. syllabi in Eng. Lit. in India. (Kipling was never in the University of Delhi undergraduate syllabus, for example, and Forster was dropped a couple of decades ago). One hundred years after they published their masterpieces depicting the British Raj, the two writers are not only the same age but they seem similarly stranded by history and the evolving literary canon, at least in India. The country has its own English-language writers with whom to pack its syllabi, as well as writers in English translation from the numerous Indian languages. The very meaning of “English Literature” has changed

since British rule ended, and that perhaps is a sign of the true postcolonial. Nor does one hear friendship mentioned very often; it is all about partnerships now, and the more strategic they are the better. The Age of Imperialism is well and truly over, and so is the age of Liberal Humanism which was once thought capable of redeeming the worst of Imperialism.

To return to friendship, both Kipling and Forster necessarily looked on the term and the concept as they are normally used in England and among the English. But friendship in India is not understood to be quite the same thing amongst Indians as it is in the West. This makes it doubly problematic in inter-cultural terms when it comes to friendship between the English and the Indians. There are hardly any works of literature in the Indian languages which entertain even the possibility of such a friendship as depicted by Kipling and Forster in their novels. In fact, the great majority of English characters in them are depicted as being “cunning and depraved” or as “representatives of brutal Western power and machinations,” who are capable of casual and murderous cruelty at any moment without plausible provocation; in contrast, the rare English character who is good and kind-hearted acquires the mythic aura of a character in “a fairy-tale” (Das 2001, 208, 214). Even the greatest of Indian writers, including Sir Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), who won the Nobel prize in literature in 1913, and Premchand (1880–1936), the greatest fiction-writer in both Hindi and Urdu, depict such terrible and terrifying English characters. The worst of the English characters painted by Kipling or Forster would seem to be saints in comparison.

To try and bridge such a huge gap of fact and perception that prevailed during the colonial period through an occasional instance or two of individual friendship was going to be a fragile and precarious enterprise in the best of circumstances, and most Indians would not have thought it even worth the attempt. At the beginning of *Passage*, Hamidullah, who has been a student in England in the good old times of Queen Victoria when there were very few Indians in England and correspondingly less hostility towards them, says that it is possible to be friends with them but only in England and not in India, i.e., not on colonial ground. Mahmoud Ali, who has never been to England, says it is not possible at all, and “the very sad talk” they are having gets even sadder as they begin recounting the insults and slights they have to put up with every day from the English, to which Aziz contributes his own share. He goes further than the other two to say, “Why talk about the English? Brrr...! Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends?” The narrator now sums up, “He too generalized from his disappointments – it is difficult for members of a subject race to do otherwise” (2, 14, 15). And this is even before

Aziz meets Mrs Moore, Fielding or Adela, and is disgraced, humiliated and traumatized by the false charge of assault brought against him by Adela, and thereafter feels embittered enough to flee from the English and seek refuge in the kingdom of a Raja who is a devout Hindu (and thus by prejudiced definition antipathetic to Muslims though obviously in fact not so).

Friendship with the rulers is thus not a felt need of any member of “the subject race” in either *Passage* or for that matter *Kim*. It is the two English authors who keep projecting friendship or even intimacy as a psychological necessity on the part of their English characters. Kipling asserts Kim to be a friend of all and sundry, the whole “world” – which may be thought somewhat to dilute the effect intended. What is more, he paints Kim as having gone native and smoothly passing off as an Indian, thus transcending friendship to a stage of osmosis. In *Life's Handicap*, probably the best single collection of his short stories set in India, Kipling in his “Preface” states that the stories he narrates in the book were told him by a whole variety of Indians with whom he was obviously on close enough terms for them to share their life-stories with him, and these included Indian priests, a carver, a carpenter, and “nameless men...[and] women spinning outside their cottages in the twilight” (Kipling 1997, 9). His claim to such a wide and intimate knowledge of Indians and India also served to authenticate what he narrated, at least in his own view.

Forster's Indian “friends” included two Hindu Rajahs, one of whom was his employer, and some members of the Muslim elite whom he saw for a few days at a time as he travelled across the country on his two brief sojourns in India, with the notable exception of Masood who was his one long-term Indian friend. Beyond these personal circumstances, both Kipling and Forster as writers evidently believed, in their different ways, that if they and their fictional characters could have Indian friends, such interracial relationships would somehow take the sting out of the general inequities of colonial rule if not quite compensate for it. This would, in a postcolonial retrospective view, seem to have been a fond belief that was wishful to the extent of being fanciful. The best that can be said for it is that while it may seem historically facile and paternalistically patronizing, it was at least well-intentioned.

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The Mother-Child Relationship in E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*

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Abstract

This article compares E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1909) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) by focussing on the mother-child relationship in order to explore the relation between these works, particularly the influence of the former on the latter. The article first compares Vashti and Kuno in "The Machine Stops" with Linda and John in *Brave New World*. Both mothers appear to represent technology, progress, and rationalism, while both sons appear to represent nature, tradition, and imagination, but the two texts deconstruct this binary opposition to a certain degree. These futuristic narratives also depict a mother's mixed feelings of love and hatred towards her son as well as an indefinable, special relationship between mother and child, who look identical but are different individuals. Compared with Forster's story, Huxley's novel delves deeply into the psychology of the son and closely delineates the rational system of reproduction. These differences, to some extent, reflect the development of contemporary contexts of psychoanalysis and reproduction. The present article concludes that, regarding his representation of mother and son, Huxley owed much to Forster in terms of theme, plot, and characters.

Keywords: E.M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, mother-child relationship, reproduction, futuristic story

She was ashamed at having borne such a son,
she who had always been so respectable and so full of ideas.
E.M. Forster, “The Machine Stops” (1997, 103)

And I was so ashamed. Just think of it:
me, a Beta – having a baby: put yourself in my place.
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (2007, 103)

1. Introduction

E.M. Forster’s short story, “The Machine Stops” (1909), is known as an important work in the history of utopian literature, and its influence on subsequent pieces of dystopia, particularly Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), has also been pointed out by scholars (see Claeys 2017, 334). However, curiously enough, it has not been examined in detail what kind of influence Forster’s tale had on Huxley’s novel. This article is an attempt to address this matter.

In fact, “The Machine Stops” has two aspects; it can be read as “social” fiction and “personal” fiction (see Stone 1966, 22). One of the themes spreading over both is the mother-child relationship. Significantly, this is also true of *Brave New World*. The mother-child relationship is a crucial perspective for reading these texts together. There have been several studies that, although not directly discussing this theme, have given some suggestions about it. By applying Eve Sedgwick’s criticism of binary opposition in the context of sexuality, Ralph Porzjik interprets Forster’s story as “a text allegorically dramatizing the problem of engaging a literary coming-out while at the same time denying the presence or feasibility of such an act of public identification” (2010, 55). Yohei Ando analyses the representation of masculinity in Forster’s narrative and argues that the author wishes to undermine gender norms that deny the diversity of gender (see 2014, 216). On the other hand, with an interest in gender, critics have placed Huxley’s descriptions of reproductive technologies in the contemporary context of reproduction (see Squier 1994, 133–67; Deery 1996, 103–10; McLaren 2012, 19–20). Nevertheless, no studies seem to have examined both works together, with a particular emphasis on the representation of mother and child. In this article, by focussing on the mother-child relationship, I would like to compare “The Machine Stops” and *Brave New World* in order to explore the relation between these writings, especially the influence of Forster’s tale on

Huxley's novel in terms of theme, plot, and characters. My approach is primarily a close reading of these texts with regard to historical contexts; it also observes, supplementarily, theoretical concerns about postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and so on.

Let us start by reviewing the connection between these two authors. Forster and Huxley were not on close terms and did not leave many comments on each other. Yet when both of them attended the International Congress of Writers in Paris in 1935 as British delegates, Forster, in his letters, called Huxley "the only bright spot" among the members and appreciated that he "made a very good speech" (letter to Charles Mauron [31 May 1935], Lago 1985, 131; letter to Alice Clara Forster [22 June 1935], Lago 1985, 132). About *Brave New World*, he also stated that the novel is "often disgusting, but it is witty and vivid, the scenes bite in" (letter to May Buckingham [10 August 1935], Lago 1985, 136). Huxley, too, was familiar with Forster's writing. According to his essays and letters, Huxley read at least *A Passage to India* (1924), *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) and *Abinger Harvest* (1936).¹ Under the aggravating situation of international politics, including the rise of Nazis, Huxley wrote a letter to Forster on 17 February 1935, confessing frankly: "I share your gloom about the period, and add to it a considerable gloom about myself" (Smith 1969, 391). Although he displayed an interest in Bertrand Russell's idea of the progress of "scientific technique" as "a straight, un-undulating trajectory," Huxley wondered "if that straight trajectory isn't aiming directly for some denial of humanity" (Smith 1969, 391). This kind of anxiety about scientific advancement seems to have motivated the two novelists to work on their imaginative fiction, although the time of each publication was different.

Indeed, apart from the mother-child relationship, there are similarities in the settings of "The Machine Stops" and *Brave New World*. This is partly because, at least according to their own comments, Forster and Huxley began to write these pieces as reactions to H.G. Wells's work (see Forster's Introduction to the 1947 edition of *Collected Short Stories*, 1997, xvi; Huxley's letter to Kethevan Roberts [18 May 1931], Smith 1969, 348). Both are set in a futuristic World State where the majority of human beings believe in progress and lead a "civilized" (convenient, comfortable, healthy) life, depending on, or being controlled by over-developed science and technology. A catchphrase in Forster's future – "How we have advanced, thanks to the Machine!" (Forster 1997, 97) – is equivalent to

¹ See Huxley, "By Their Speech Ye Shall Know Them" (1924), 2000, 382; "If My Library Burned Tonight" (1947), 2002, 374; letter to Mrs Kethevan Roberts (28 November 1930), Smith 1969, 343; Murray 2002, 208.

a maxim in Huxley's future – "Progress is lovely" (see Huxley 2007, 86–87). On the other hand, religion, literature, and other forms of traditional culture are tabooed or banned as being uncivilized or savage. Most of the citizens feel no doubts about the present conditions because they are effectively brainwashed or conditioned by the central authorities. While Forster envisages humans literally spending almost all their life inside an individual room, Huxley imagines that each of them "goes through life inside a bottle," in that they are controlled from birth to death (Huxley 2007, 196). Each world is divided into two parts – the civilized and the primitive. In Forster's future, the majority of humanity lives in an artificial environment below the ground but a small group of people appear to survive on the devastated surface, whereas in Huxley's future, most of the world is unified through civilization but there remain exceptional regions called the Savage Reservations.² These similarities of the settings are enough to suggest a close relation between "The Machine Stops" and *Brave New World*. In order to understand this relation more deeply, the following sections will examine their representations of mother and child.

2. Vashti and Kuno

The main characters of "The Machine Stops" are no doubt Vashti and Kuno. The plot begins with their meeting through the blue plate and ends with their actual meeting and death together above the ground as a result of the Machine stopping. Their exchange of words covers most of the story.

Vashti is "a woman, about five feet high, with a face as white as a fungus" (Forster 1997, 87) and "without teeth or hair" (92). She is an "advanced" lecturer who, like the majority of her contemporaries, worships the Machine as "the spirit of the age," never questioning the validity of the Book of the Machine or the policies of the Central Committee (90). While disliking physical activity and contact, Vashti values intelligence, which, however, mainly functions in a realistic, rational, and calm way. For her, seeing nature such as the earth, sea, and stars is nonsense because it provides "no ideas" (88–89, 98).

² In principle, this article does not add quotation marks to "civilized," "savage," and other similar words, except for particular cases. This is because, as argued later, *Brave New World* questions rather than confirms these concepts, and these words in the text do not testify to Western-centred discrimination against those who are called "savages." The present article also uses "(American) Indians" instead of "Native Americans," following Huxley's use of the former in the text.

On the other hand, Kuno apparently embodies a kind of "atavism": "The very hair that disfigured his lip showed that he was reverting to some savage type" (103). Indeed, led by "the spirits of the dead" as well as his interest in nature, he comes out onto the surface of the earth, where it is said "no life remains" (89, see 101–02). Kuno, a "muscular" man who is "possessed of a certain physical strength" (100), emphasizes the bodily senses, particularly those of "space" and of "touch" (105). He not only adores heroes such as Orion, a hunter in Greek mythology who became a constellation, and Alfred the Great, King of Wessex (see 89, 106, 118), but also undertakes a life-risking escapade after hardening his muscles. Sceptical of the Committee, he thinks and acts for himself. He is passionate and imaginative, preferring God to the Machine (see 108).

It is thus natural that both the mother and the son admit they are "too different," "having nothing in common" (105, 112). Overall, Vashti represents machinery, civilization, progress, intelligence, reason, and realism, while Kuno represents humanity, nature, tradition, body, enthusiasm, and imagination. Summarizing their relationship like this may give the impression that the story thematizes the opposition between two sets of values, a familiar subject in Forster's many novels. Indeed, as well as this mother and son, the contrast between two sets of values – the underground world with artificial light, which symbolizes technology and progress, and the earthly world with sunshine, which symbolizes nature and tradition – certainly appears to dominate the entire story.

However, "The Machine Stops" deconstructs the binary opposition to a certain degree. The world of machinery and progress sometimes intermingles with that of nature and tradition. The image of the Machine repeatedly overlaps the images of religion and god. People pray to and worship the Machine, treating the Book of the Machine (instructions against every possible contingency published by the Central Committee) as their greatest support in life (see 88, 91, 95, 99–100). Finally, the Machine publicly comes to reign like the God, who is "omnipotent, eternal," and the Book of the Machine officially becomes the Bible, which gives a "strange feeling of peace" (110–11). Science is thus associated with religion, the future (or modernity) being associated with the past (or antiquity). Ironically, people who believe they have rejected superstition and trusted in their reason and civilization can no longer be differentiated from "the devotees of an earlier religion" (117). Such confusion can be found in the relation between machinery and human nature, too. As suggested in the scene where Kuno calls a doctor for Vashti, the mechanical and the human are not necessarily in opposition but rather compatible: "the human passions still blundered up and down in the Machine" (93).

It is thus not surprising that the relationship between Vashti and Kuno is also not merely contrasting. In fact, the mother and the son share some similarities in their personality. (This is exactly why they can ultimately reach a reconciliation.) Probably Vashti herself is vaguely aware of this, especially when she recognizes that “there was something special about Kuno – indeed there had been something special about *all* her children” (93; emphasis added). Finding out Kuno has been sentenced to Homelessness (virtually a death penalty), Vashti is “ashamed at having borne such a son, she who had always been so respectable and so full of ideas” (103). Even this feeling is actually based on her assumption that she and her son, by nature, are supposed to be identical. Kuno’s narrative of the primitive or earthly world absorbs her not just because she is “inquisitive” like Kuno but also because she herself is probably interested in the primitive (see 105–06).

In reading “The Machine Stops” as a tale of mother and son, their affection should be most noticeable. At first sight, this point also seems to show a contrast: Vashti does not love her son while Kuno loves his mother. Certainly, in response to Kuno’s request for her to “meet face to face,” Vashti thinks it very troublesome, flatly replying that she can “scarcely spare the time for a visit” (88). Even when Kuno, “flesh of her flesh,” is standing before her eyes, she cannot help feeling: “what profit was there in that?” (99). Regretting having borne an incomprehensible son like him, Vashti finds her talk with him “a disastrous waste of time” and judges him to be “mad” (106, 108): “Was he really the little boy [...] to whom she had given his first lessons in the Book?” (103). Apparently, Vashti does not worry much about her son, destined for death, and she never contacts or meets him, even though he comes to stay in a room not far from her own. To her, Kuno is no longer her son but a “man who was my son” (112). However, a closer reading of the text will convince one that these descriptions are not enough to grasp the whole picture of this mother’s attitude towards her son. At the beginning of the short story, on hearing from Kuno, Vashti’s “face wrinkled into smiles” (87), and after all, she decides to travel all the way to the other side of the earth to meet him by taking an air-ship. This is because, although “Parents, duties of,” says the Book of the Machine, “cease at the moment of birth,” she still remembers “Kuno as a baby, his birth,” and his existence is still “special” to her (93). The substantial reason why Vashti is reluctant to meet Kuno is that, probably like the majority of the people of this world, she “dislike[s] [taking] air-ships,” which involves seeing nature and having contact with other people (88; see 94–97). She is also personally “frightened of the tunnel” to the air-ship station, which appears to remind her of the traumatic birth of “her last child” (92). Vashti certainly does not openly express

her affection, but this is because it is not desirable according to the spirit of this age: "She was too well-bred to shake him [Kuno] by the hand" (99). Rather, one may find in the representation of Vashti the reality of a mother's psychology concerning her child, namely the mixed feelings of love, hatred, and so on.

On the other hand, Kuno seems to be consistently attached to his mother. When removed to the public nurseries, Kuno visited her repeatedly while she visited him once (see 93). His resistance to the Machine can be read as his resistance to his father. Vashti treats the Machine as if it were her husband or Kuno's father, for example, when she kisses, caresses, and is comforted by (the Book of) the Machine, as well as when she admonishes her son by citing the words of the Machine (see 90–91, 95, 117). The obstinacy of Kuno's defiance against the Machine, resulting in his escape from the Machine's realm, may also suggest his intense jealousy towards, and his strong desire to free himself from, this quasi-father. In the earthly world, Kuno encounters a girl – although it is not clear whether she really exists or is an illusion – but cannot have relations with her because she is soon killed by the worms (the mending apparatus, i.e., an agent of the Machine) (see 108). He is also not allowed by the Machine to have a child (see 102). The final reunion of the mother and the son, which is rather unexpected to the readers, suggests that Kuno has come to Vashti's room to see her in the last moment of his life. All of these factors seem to be enough to demonstrate that Kuno's love for the other sex has been consistently directed towards Vashti alone.

It is by no means appropriate to interpret the relationship between Vashti and Kuno as an antagonistic configuration or as one lacking mutual affection. The final scene of the story most graphically depicts their ideological and personal commonality. By quitting her blind devotion to the Machine and abandoning her Book of the Machine – namely, physically and mentally opening "her prison" – Vashti can reunite, or unite for the first time, with her son. They become one in both mind and body:

They wept for humanity, those two, not for themselves. They could not bear that this should be the end. Ere silence was completed their hearts were opened, and they knew what had been important on the earth. Man, the flower of all flesh, the noblest of all creatures visible, man who had once made god in his image, and had mirrored his strength on the constellations, beautiful naked man was dying, strangled in the garments that he had woven. [...] The sin against the body – it was for that they wept in chief [...]. (117)

Vashti and Kuno snuggle together, and as if to represent their physical union, his “blood spurt[s] over her hands,” the two’s blood coalescing into one (118). They “touch, [...] talk, not through the Machine”, and “kissed [kiss]” (118). They die together, putting their hopes in “men on the surface of the earth”: “For a moment they saw the nations of the dead, and, before they joined them, scraps of the untainted sky” (118). In the final scene above, they embody and symbolize the destiny of humanity. Even though the two are certainly “different,” it is suggested that they are not alternative but are both necessary, should coexist, because each of them has her/his own value – the mental and the physical, the calm and the passionate, the realistic and the imaginative. The problem is that the former has overwhelmed the latter. Human beings are remiss in their efforts to “only connect” as remarked in the epigraph of *Howards End* (1910).

3. Linda and John

Although not as central as the relationship between Vashti and Kuno, the relationship between Linda and John is also important with regard to the personality and destiny of John, the protagonist in the latter half of *Brave New World*. Linda is originally a Beta-Minus worker in the Fertilizing Room in London, namely in “civilized” society. About 20 years previously, she came to the Savage Reservation in New Mexico with her boyfriend, Thomas (now the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning Centre), and was left there by him after he accidentally lost sight of her. She gave birth to a boy and has lived with him and “savages” in the Reservation since then. Linda looks “fat” and ugly, and “two of the front teeth [a]re missing” (Huxley 2007, 102). Having been conditioned to be “civilized,” she lives happily at least in London and entertains no doubts about this technological and totalitarian world. Her son, John, has grown up in New Mexico and comes to be called “Savage” after he enters London with his mother. In the “primitive” society he was “lonely” just because he was “different” from others (119), and this loneliness is never healed even in the “civilized” society.

The Savage is very critical of the state of civilized society, and after his mother’s death, begins a resistance movement for “manhood and freedom” (187) only for it to fail. John is caught by the police, and his friend Bernard predicts he will be “killed” by the authorities (187–88). Significantly, elements of old culture that have been abolished or forgotten in the civilized society, such as Zúñi, Christianity, and Shakespeare, have formed his personality. Thus, unlike civilized people, John longs for self-sacrifice

and heroism (see 100–01, 119). Although his attitude towards romance is ascetic, John tends to emphasize the body and action; he has a habit of “whip[ping]” himself in self-reproach (see 100, 219–20, 223) and believes it is necessary to engage in life-risking challenges (such as hunting a lion) in order to get married (166). Basically, Linda represents technology, civilization, and progress – i.e., new culture and humanity – while John represents nature, savagery, and tradition – i.e., old culture and humanity. Although she happened to live in the Savage Reservation, Linda is proud of being “civilized” (103–05) and is not regarded by Londoners as a “real savage” like her son because she was “hatched out of a bottle and conditioned like anyone else” (133). She judges John, who is drawn to “primitive” culture, to be “mad” (105) and *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, which he loves, to be “[u]ncivilized” and “full of nonsense” (113). Meanwhile, John deems Linda’s only book, *Practical Instructions for Beta Embryo-Store Workers* (somewhat equivalent to the Book of the Machine), to be “bestly” (112).

However, it is also true that the relation between civilization and savagery (primitivism), which appears to be oppositional, is effectively deconstructed in *Brave New World*. The image of “civilization” repeatedly overlaps the images of “savagery” and “primitivism.” What is most conspicuous is that the car king, “Our [Henry] Ford,” has replaced “Our Lord” as a messianic figure of the World State. This substitution can be found everywhere in the text, but to cite just one example, “T,” coming from the Ford Model T, has taken the place of every Christian cross. This is how science and religion, machine and god, overlap in this novel, too. Moreover, conditioning citizens to be “civilized” is not perfect. Bernard, who is individualistic because of his inferiority complex, and Helmholtz, who is individualistic because of his superiority, are clear cases, but other civilized characters also often behave in an “uncivilized” way. For instance, Lenina loves the same man for too long, Thomas cannot shake off his memories of his former girlfriend, and Linda, as discussed later, sometimes takes an “uncivilized” attitude towards John.

One can better understand this feature of the text by considering the relation between civilized society and the Savage Reservation. In a pueblo, the Indians’ religious ceremony ironically reminds Lenina, a civilized visitor, of the rituals performed in her civilized society, such as Solidarity Services, Ford’s Day celebrations, and a lower-caste Community Sing (97). It is worth adding that this point can be confirmed on the level of the author’s creativity as well: Huxley deliberately disturbed the opposition between civilization and primitivism. Although in his descriptions of New Mexico he admitted to his use of Smithsonian Institution publications on American Indians (see Plimpton 1963, 165), Huxley actually also consulted the writings on “primitive” cultures by anthropologists

such as Bronisław Malinowski and Margaret Mead in order to imagine London life in the future (see Huxley's letters to Julian Huxley [13 July 1929; 12 October 1929], Smith 1969, 314, 318; letter to Norman Douglas [7 January 1930], Smith 1969, 326; letter to Kethevan Roberts [28 November 1930], Smith 1969, 343). Consequently, some images of both societies are similar or interchangeable. However, a more essential understanding can be obtained by speculating about why Savage Reservations exist and why civilized people want to visit them. Apart from the economic reason mentioned in the text (see 141), one can think of more substantial reasons. Assuming the historical fact that human societies have derived their identities negatively (see Said 1979, 54), the existence of the Savage Reservations, or "savages," may be required by the World Government to make and maintain its citizens, who are not completely conditioned, as the "civilized" (see Ozawa 2019b, 104). In another sense, the Savage Reservations are exceptional spaces to which old cultures repressed in civilized society have escaped. Civilized people may want to visit them precisely because of their repressed desires for the old customs (see 2019b, 105).

Similarly, the relationship between Linda and John cannot be viewed only as oppositional. Linda, who has visited the Savage Reservation, must have an interest in something primitive or savage that is tabooed in civilized society. Physically and mentally, she cannot be regarded as being completely "civilized" in that she not only gave birth to a baby but has formed a special, personal relationship with him somehow or other. As Vashti gives Kuno lessons in the Book, Linda teaches John to read (111), eventually enabling him to absorb "uncivilized" cultures such as the literature of Shakespeare. It is also overhasty to brand John merely as a "real savage" or a critic of the World State. John as a boy used to like Linda's talk of "the Other Place," i.e., civilized society (110), and being drawn to this image of utopia, he comes to decide to visit London: "O brave new world that has such people in it. Let's start at once" (121; see 177). In Linda's words, John was also conditioned a little by her (see 105).³

Linda's affection for John is not simple. She certainly does not seem to love him very much because she was conditioned not to love an individual deeply (see 104–05);

³ As Patrick Brantlinger indicates, the majority of Victorian intellectuals assumed "the racial superiority of white Europeans" and believed in their responsibility to cast "the light of civilization" on the races they thought to be primitive or savage (1988, 8). Yet towards the end of the nineteenth century, diverse boundaries including those between races began to be seriously disturbed for several factors such as "fears of regression and degeneration" (see Showalter 1990, 4–5). Such ambiguity was certainly reflected in Forster's 1909 text and became more evident in Huxley's 1932 text.

"everyone belongs to everyone else" is one of the proverbs every citizen remembers (see 34, 37, 40, 104, 180). As a civilized Beta, Linda is "so ashamed" at having borne John (103, see 105), treats him as a nuisance in her love affairs, and even abuses him at times. Yet this hatred is intertwined with love, as portrayed in the following scene:

"I'm not your mother. I won't be your mother."

"But, Linda ... Oh!" she slapped him on the cheek.

"Turned into a savage," she shouted. "Having young ones like an animal ... If it hadn't been for you [...]. [...] That would have been too shameful."

He saw that she was going to hit him again, and lifted his arm to guard his face. "Oh don't, Linda, please don't."

"Little beast!" She pulled down his arm; his face was uncovered.

"Don't, Linda." He shut his eyes, expecting the blow.

But she didn't hit him. After a little time, he opened his eyes again and saw that she was looking at him. He tried to smile at her. Suddenly she put her arms round him and kissed him again and again. (109–10)

Looking back on her life in the Reservation, Linda confesses: "It's too revolting [to have children]. And to think that I ... Oh, Ford, Ford, Ford! And yet John *was* a great comfort to me" (105). She has a traumatic fear of childbirth, which echoes Lenina's dread of imagining having her own baby (see 96, 103).

In contrast, John has been consistently attached to Linda since his infancy and has never accepted her meeting other men to such a degree that he tried to murder one of her lovers, Popé (see 108, 114–15). John not only criticizes Thomas, "a bad, unkind unnatural man" (101), but also comes to kill him socially in that his coming to London brings down ruin on his "father" (131–33).⁴ John cannot love any other woman in a sexual sense (see 117–18, 148–49, 168–72, 227–28), partly because when approaching another woman he thinks of Linda, feeling as if he were betraying his beloved mother: "Poor Linda whom he had sworn to remember. But it was still the presence of Lenina that haunted him" (222); "Oh, Linda, forgive me. Forgive me, God" (223). On hearing that Linda is dying in the hospital, John hurries to her sickbed but cannot tolerate her remembering Popé in her dream. True or

⁴ This scene, in which Bernard has the Director meet with John and Linda, appears to be based on a scene in *Howards End* in which Henry Wilcox is embarrassed and leaves when Helen arrives with Leonard Bast and Jacky, a woman whom Henry seduced and abandoned in Cyprus.

not, he assumes that he has “killed her” (179–81). Although he starts a self-sufficient life in Surrey Heath, John cannot escape from the images of Linda and Lenina, finally committing suicide. He thus joins the nations of the dead, where his mother is waiting.

In this way, “The Machine Stops” and *Brave New World* have many similarities in the characterization of mother and child as well as in the plot centring on them. Both mothers believe in the present civilization while their sons, beyond their understanding, are rebellious against its authority, preferring nature, old culture and values of humanity such as passion and bravery. Each mother-child relationship appears to be a binary opposition but both texts carefully deconstruct it. Even though both sons are “savages,” Vashti, an advanced thinker, is fascinated by Kuno’s account of his adventure on the savage earth, and a similar interest can be found in Linda, who visited the Savage Reservation out of curiosity. Although both mothers seem to lack affection for their children, they actually entertain mixed feelings of love and hatred towards them. The sons are consistently attached to their mothers, which makes it difficult for them to fall in love with other women or perform sexual acts. With these points in mind, it can be argued that in his representation of mother and son Huxley consciously or unconsciously owed much to Forster’s short narrative.

However, it is also worth noting the differences in their descriptions of mother and son. One of these concerns where the emphasis is placed on the mother-child relationship. In Forster’s story, Vashti is the protagonist or at least a main character, ranked with Kuno. She is an intellectual who can be her son’s opponent in debate somehow or other, although she is often severely attacked by him. In the end, they reconcile, empathize, and die together. The meaning and value of their deaths, as argued before, are not different. In contrast, in Huxley’s novel, John is the protagonist, and Linda is not intelligent enough to discuss the rights and wrongs of civilization with her son. Instead of her, the World Controller Mustapha Mond plays the role of John’s opponent in the highlight scene (see Chapters 16 and 17). And Linda and John die separately, not together. For the plot of the whole story, Linda’s death is not as important as John’s. Because John’s role is the main one (and because the work itself is much longer than Forster’s), his psychology, particularly towards his mother, is complicated compared with Kuno’s. The presence of Linda’s lover and husband (John’s real, not metaphorical, father) adds to this complexity.

Assuming that Huxley was inspired by Forster in his representation of mother and son, why did he introduce such a difference? This can be discussed from various angles, but in the light of historical contexts, one cannot ignore the influence of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis, especially on the Oedipus complex. In “The Machine Stops,” the Oedipal relationship is not clearly represented. Curiously, Kuno’s biological father is not

mentioned at all. Yet, as stated before, the Machine is an entity like his father in that it is loved by his mother and threatens his existence, preventing him from engaging in sexual acts and having children. Kuno, who loves Vashti, resists the Machine, and though it is not a direct result of this campaign, his attempt comes to fruition in the sense that the Machine ultimately collapses and he metaphorically unites with his mother.

In *Brave New World*, John's relationships with his parents are easier to explain concretely in terms of the Oedipus complex. The son is too attached to his mother to love other women, and ostracizes his father socially. Forster claimed never to have read Freud's writing, and since the English translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), in which the outline of Oedipus complex first appeared, was not available until 1911, he probably did not know the theory itself (see Buchanan 2010a, 125). Even so, the possibility of the influence from the Oedipus story cannot be ruled out.⁵ On the other hand, as shown by his choice of Freud as a messianic figure of the World State (see 33), when writing his novel, Huxley knew just as much or more about Freud's psychoanalysis than his contemporary intellectuals, although he was critical of Freud's analytical style and some aspects of his arguments.⁶

Huxley's emphasis on the Oedipal motif in *Brave New World* can also be considered biographically, in relation to his senior friend D.H. Lawrence as well as Huxley himself. While editing *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* (1932), Huxley prepared and wrote *Brave New World* from May to August of 1931 (see Bedford 2002, 755), and modelled the Savage partly on Lawrence, who had lived in New Mexico for two years (see Miller 2008, 153–58; Buchanan 2010b, 113–17). It is thus not surprising if John embodies the Oedipal aspect of Lawrence, as described in *Sons and Lovers* (1913). Moreover, one can take into account Huxley's own attitude towards his parents. In 1908, as early as the age of 14, Huxley lost his beloved mother Julia and, though probably not for a single reason,

⁵ In 1903, Forster had already written "The Road from Colonus," another story with the Oedipal motif.

⁶ Interestingly, in a letter to his father dated 24 August 1931, immediately after finishing *Brave New World*, Huxley remarked that the novel adumbrated "abolition of the family and all the Freudian 'complexes' for which family relationships are responsible" (Smith 1969, 351). For the similarities of *Brave New World* to Freud's work other than the Oedipal theory, see Buchanan 2010b, 110–13; Higdon 2013, 96–103. Huxley was particularly dissatisfied with Freud's reductionist tendencies: "The basic Freudian hypothesis is an environmental determinism that ignores heredity, an almost naked psychology that comes very near to ignoring the physical correlates of mental activity" (Huxley, *Literature and Science* [1963], 2002, 140). For the influence of Freud on Huxley's early work, see Ozawa 2016, 194–98.

came to hate his father Leonard, who remarried in 1912.⁷ Some critics even suggest that Huxley's dislike of Freud can be associated with the fact that his own life appears to be readily explicable by the Oedipal theory (see Thody 1973, 16–17).

Compared with Forster, Huxley certainly deepened the psychology of the son, partly because of the influence of Freud's discourse on the Oedipus complex, which placed an emphasis on the son rather than the mother. It can also be argued that his relativization of the role of the mother in the whole plot reflected the gender asymmetry involved in Freud's theory.⁸

4. The System of Reproduction

However, the most striking difference regarding the mother-child relationship between Forster's and Huxley's works concerns how they imagined and portrayed the system of reproduction. Forster's tale focuses on the individual relationship between Vashti and Kuno, whereas Huxley's novel is more interested in the systems of reproduction itself. Unlike *Brave New World*, "The Machine Stops" lacks specific explanations of the present structure of the world and how it was established.

Forster's future, set a few centuries after the time of his writing (see 117), adopts natural reproduction, and Vashti, too, has given birth to children. Yet reproduction is placed under state control in terms of number and quality. The "death-rate was not permitted to exceed the birth-rate" (112; see 98), and not everyone can become a parent. A man who is travelling in the same air-ship as Vashti and who has so little physical strength as to drop his Book of the Machine is "sent to Sumatra for the purpose of propagating the race" (98; see 94), while Kuno's "request [to be a father]" is "refused by the Committee. His [i]s not a type that the Machine desire[s] to hand on" (102). To the Machine, because of his ideology and "physical strength," Kuno is a dangerous and undesirable being who is not "adapted to his surroundings": "By these days it was a demerit to be muscular. Each infant was examined at birth, and all who promised undue strength

⁷ Huxley fictionalized his view of his mother and father in his autobiographical novel, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936).

⁸ Freud developed some aspects of his psychoanalysis based on himself, and his arguments, including his notion of Oedipus complex, tended to be male-centred and has been denounced by feminists and other critics for his "replication of patriarchal values and masculinist assumptions" (see Elliott 2014, 71–72, 114–15).

were destroyed. [...] it would have been no true kindness to let an athlete live; he would never have been happy in that state of life to which the Machine had called him" (100).⁹ Children are removed to the public nurseries, having hardly seen their mothers, because, according to the Book, the duties of parents "cease at the moment of birth" (93).

On the other hand, *Brave New World* devotes its first three chapters to explaining in detail the fundamental systems of the 26th century World State, especially reproduction and conditioning. Under its motto "Community, Identity, Stability," Ford's principle of mass production has been applied to human reproduction, all citizens being born not from their mothers but through ectogenesis. The Government rigorously controls the number and quality of its citizens, producing members of each class (from Alpha to Epsilon) based on intelligence and physique in fixed proportions. As soon as they are born, children are made, through wordless conditioning and hypnopaedia, to become desirable citizens who live happily without any doubt about their status or the policies of the World State. They have no parents. In fact, because everyone now belongs to everyone else, there are no such special relationships as family or marriage (see 33–34). According to Mond, this is the result of the (radical) application of Freud's psychoanalysis, which was "the first to reveal the appalling dangers of family life" (33): "Mother, monogamy, romance. High spurts the fountain; fierce and foamy the wild jet. The urge has but a single outlet. My love, my baby" (35). The words "parent," "mother," and "father" sound obscene or gross (see 19, 131–33), and the appearance of Linda and John not only brings laughter to London citizens but also becomes a scandal to the Director. Meanwhile, in the Savage Reservation, "children still are *born*" and the inhabitants "still preserve their repulsive habits and customs ... marriage, [...] families ... no conditioning" (88–89). Civilized visitors, Bernard and Lenina, are shocked to see "two young women giving the breast to their babies" (96).¹⁰

"The Machine Stops" and *Brave New World* share something in common in that reproduction is managed by the state in terms of number and quality, and childcare is also monopolized by it. On the whole, Huxley's system of reproduction appears to rationalize Forster's. In Huxley's future, natural reproduction has been replaced by artificial reproduction, and families and parents do not exist. This is why, as cited in the epigraph

⁹ The paragraph including this passage was certainly based on Wells's discourse of degeneration in *The Time Machine* (1895) (see Wells 1996, 77–81).

¹⁰ Here, Lenina shows her hatred more explicitly than Bernard (see 96). This is not only because of their gender difference but also because Bernard is not as conditioned as Lenina and still holds traditional values.

of the present article, Vashti is “ashamed at having borne *such a son*,” while Linda is “ashamed” at “having *a baby*” itself (emphases added). Because of his detailed descriptions of the system of reproduction, it may be argued that Huxley narrated a story of mother and child against the backdrop of the system, or that he developed the personal theme of the mother-child relationship into the public theme on reproduction.

This difference between Forster and Huxley reflects to a certain degree the development of contemporary discourses on reproduction and motherhood. Although it is impossible to give here the total picture of the intellectual context on these subjects, by the 1920s reproduction and child rearing came to be thought of as national, racial matters rather than a woman’s individual experience (see Squier 1994, 67). This public interest can be confirmed in, for instance, many volumes on reproduction and motherhood included in *To-day and To-morrow* (1923–1931), a series of more than a hundred titles which provided rich discussions about the present and future of Britain and other countries, and to which many of Huxley’s acquaintances contributed. Huxley certainly owed much of his delineation of reproductive technologies to his friend, J.B.S. Haldane’s *Daedalus or Science and the Future* (1924) (see Haldane 1924, 57–68). This biochemist foretold that the practice of ectogenesis – a word first used in this text, referring to fertilization outside the womb – would become popular by the end of the 20th century. Despite their differences in political ideology, many *To-day and To-morrow* contributors agreed that motherhood was in some sort of crisis.¹¹ For some contributors such as Anthony M. Ludovici, C.P. Blacker, and Norman Haire, reproduction was essentially an issue of nation, race, or humanity, while for others, such as Dora Russell, Vera Brittain, and Eden Paul, reproduction or motherhood was vital to both the public and a woman’s personal life.¹²

¹¹ For instance, both the anti-feminist Anthony M. Ludovici and the feminist Dora Russell attacked British society for underestimating the value of the body by using nearly the same phrase: “the greatest revolt against the old notions of Life, Motherhood, and Domesticity” (Ludovici 1924, 30); “A revolt against motherhood” (Russell 1925, 42).

¹² From racial and national perspectives, Blacker advocated birth-control, which in his view would contribute to “a genuine and permanent world-peace” (see 1926, 95). As a eugenicist, Haire proposed “compulsory sterilization or contraception” to prevent the birth of “unhealthy” people (1928, 76–77). Meanwhile, Brittain tried to harmonize women’s self-realization with the interest of the community (see 1929, 83–86). Paul regarded the maternal instinct as “real,” something essential to women, and discussed the appropriate relation between the individual and the state (see 1930, 28–30, 51–56). For a comparison of *To-day and To-morrow* and Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* (1928), see Ozawa 2019a, 168–69.

Huxley's prediction of reproduction as a supreme concern of the State, as well as his portrayal of an individual mother-child relationship against this background, can be positioned in the interwar debate as seen in *To-day and To-morrow*. *Brave New World* can also be read as a satire on some aspects of the discourses, especially the optimistic tendency regarding the impact of the progress of science and technology on the future of reproduction and women's life.

5. Conclusion

The comparison of "The Machine Stops" and *Brave New World* from the perspective of the mother-child relationship has thus far revealed many similarities between these two works. Although the impact of Forster's story on the dystopian settings of Huxley's novel is known, the present article demonstrates that in his representation of mother and son, Huxley was consciously or unconsciously influenced by Forster. On the other hand, the mother, who is a main character of equal significance to the son in "The Machine Stops," plays a minor role compared to the son in *Brave New World*. The system of reproduction, shown only fragmentarily in the former, is also portrayed in much more detail in the latter as a more rational system. These differences reflect the contexts of psychoanalysis and reproduction which developed during the interwar period. Certainly, critics have discussed the influence of Wells's utopian fiction and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921) on *Brave New World* (see Firchow 1984, 57–64, 117–28; Baker 1990, 36–45). However, regarding the overall picture of the novel, especially its plot and important characters, Huxley actually owed more to Forster. Although my article has observed the mother-child relationship, comparison of these two works with a focus on other themes will bring to light other hidden aspects of these pieces and the authors.

Both "The Machine Stops" and *Brave New World* represent the mother and child in an imaginary world. Precisely because of this non-existent setting, Forster and Huxley could freely envision the system of reproduction and a specific relationship between mother and child. What has not changed even after several centuries is suggested by them as something fundamental to humanity. Even though "The Machine Stops" and *Brave New World* represent a mother-child relationship in the future, they do not simplify or idealize it with such stereotyped images as "maternal love." Rather, these futuristic narratives portray a woman's complicated feelings of love and hatred towards her son, and an indefinable, special relationship between mother and child, who look identical

but are different individuals.¹³ By reading “The Machine Stops” and *Brave New World* together, and especially by observing the seemingly awkward relationship between mother and child and the surprising system of reproduction, we can realize that the maternal is constructed, the state of reproduction may be changed, and after all, we can think more flexibly about the mother-child relationship.

¹³ For a theoretical study on the mother-child relationship, see Rose 2018. In the essay from which this monograph originated, Jacqueline Rose points out the complexity of a mother’s love, which is ambivalent, mixed with hate, and suggests the creation of an environment which tolerates such complexity so that each woman can calmly experience being a mother (see 2014, 17–22).

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“Go West!”¹ In Search of the “Greenwood” in Mike Parker’s *On the Red Hill*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the legacy of E.M. Forster’s queer rurality – the writer’s famous “greenwood” – in Mike Parker’s *On the Red Hill*, a 2019 memoir which brings together the political and aesthetic concerns of queer anti-urbanism and new nature writing. While analysing Forsterian “inheritance” and its impact onto Parker’s book, as well as the lives of its four auto/biographical characters, the essay explores the conjunction between queer sexualities (male nonheteronormativity in particular) and rurality in the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the shift that has occurred with regard to the perception (and valorisation) of the non-metropolitan queer life.

Keywords: new nature writing, queer rurality, queer heritage, E.M. Forster, Mike Parker

¹ The title of this paper borrows the phrase “Go West” from the 1979 song by Village People and its famous 1993 cover by the English duo Pet Shop Boys. The very song (by the latter performers) was Mike Parker’s “anthem of [his] Welsh research trip” in the 1990s (Parker 2019, 261).

Our greenwood ended catastrophically and inevitably. [...] [T]he wildness of our island, never extensive, was stamped upon and built over and patrolled in no time. There is no forest or fell to escape to today, no cave in which to curl up, no deserted valley for those who wish neither to reform nor corrupt society but to be left alone. (Forster 1993, 254)

Although the American dream of the West [...] is a far cry from ours, there are overlaps. West is best for elemental landscapes soaked in mystery and crossed by the songlines of the elders. It is the repository of ancient arcana and the dreams of seers. West travels at a different pace, its only immutable appointment the setting of sun on the sea. In the States it is the Grand Canyon and Death Valley, Yosemite and the Navajo, Portlandia and Vegas, Beverly Hills and the Golden Gate. On this side of the Atlantic, it is Stonehenge and Avebury, tors and moors, Glastonbury and Caerleon, lost kings and drowned lands. It is Wales. (Parker 2019, 262)

Young Man 9: It's [*Howard's End* – R.K.] a hundred years old.

Young Man 7: The world has changed so much.

Young Man 3: Our lives are nothing like the people in your book.

Morgan: How can that be true? Hearts still love, don't they? And break. Hope, fear, jealousy, desire. Your lives may be different. But surely the feelings are the same. The difference is merely the setting, context, costumes. But those are just details. (Lopez 2020, 9)

1. Queer Folks

Inseparability of queer sexualities and the city has long been acknowledged as the dominant (and sometimes *the only*) paradigm for thinking about the nexus between modern (both early and late) male nonheteronormativity and place. If, for example, one looks at the map of so-called “Uranian Europe” meticulously drafted by Graham Robb in one of the appendixes of his seminal study *Strangers*, one soon realises that the map showcases only three non-urban queer retreats: Fonthill Abbey, the house of William Beckford, Millthorpe, the rural idyll of Edward Carpenter and George Merrill, and Plas Newydd outside Llangollen inhabited by Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby (known as the Ladies of Llangollen) (Robb 2004, 278–279). In an introductory part to his study of homosexuality in the turn-of-the-20th-century London, Matt Cook states what appears to be an indisputable truth to most proponents of urbanised gay, lesbian, and queer studies: “Think of ‘gay’ men and ‘gay’ culture and we think of cities, from ancient Athens through

biblical Sodom and Renaissance Florence to Armistead Maupin’s San Francisco or Pedro Almodovar’s Madrid” (2003, 2).

Matt Houlbrook’s partly historical and partly cultural investigation of the homosexual experience of the British metropolis from the end of WWI to the publication of the Wolfenden report is no less unequivocal about the city being the ultimate “queer space” (2006, 3). Having analysed a number of historical records (epistolary records in particular²), Houlbrook concludes: “‘Being queer’ is equated with the cultural experience of urban life” (3). If, according to the historian, the city means “speaking out,” “fulfilment,” and “being,”³ the non-urban/rural space is synonymous with “silence,” “repression,” and most importantly “nonbeing” (3). Peter Ackroyd’s *Queer City* published in 2017 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Britain decriminalizing homosexuality was equally enthusiastic about various opportunities that the city has offered to queer individuals over the centuries. Recreating the history of “gay London” from antiquity to the present day, the writer hailed the city as a “jungle and a labyrinth where gay life could flourish, [...] a phantasmagoria or a dreamscape, [...] upon which the queer man or woman could project the most illicit longings” (Ackroyd 2017, 149).

However, in recent years one has observed a counter approach to the above-mentioned paradigm in the form of queer anti-urbanism, which, in its critical version, appears to challenge urbanised queer studies and their various tenets (briefly stipulated above). Most importantly, it attempts to divulge the latter’s “chronic [...] dismissal of rurality” and prove that “queer life beyond the city is as vibrant, diverse, and plentiful, as any urban-based sexual culture” (Herring 2010, 5, 6). Scott Herring’s *Another Country* of 2010 has turned out to be particularly illuminating with regard to queer “metronormativity,”⁴ which the study expertly deconstructs, and “critical rustic-

² In one letter its anonymised author confesses the following: “I have only been queer *since* I came to London” (Houlbrook 2006, 2; my emphasis).

³ The city is further described as a space of “affirmation, liberation, and citizenship” (Houlbrook 2006, 3).

⁴ A view that the city is the only possible site for the emergence of queer identity, culture, community, etc. Herring borrows the term from Jack Halberstam who defines it in the following manner: “This term reveals the conflation of ‘urban’ and ‘visible’ in many normalizing narratives of gay/lesbian subjectivities. Such narratives tell of closeted subjects who ‘come out’ into an urban setting, which in turn, supposedly allows for the full expression of the sexual self in relation to a community of other gays/lesbians/queers. The metronormative narrative maps a story of migration onto the coming-out narrative. While the story of coming out tends to function as a temporal trajectory within which a period of disclosure follows a long period of

ity,” which the scholar defines as an “intersectional opportunity to geographically, corporeally, and aesthetically inhabit non-normative sexuality that offers new possibilities for the sexually marginalized outside the metropolis as well as inside it”⁵ (Herring 2010, 68).

Although Herring (after Jack Halberstam) considers E.M. Forster (alongside, for example, Marcel Proust, Henry James, and Thomas Mann) to be the notable pioneer of modernist metronormativity (2010, 33, 153), one could argue that some aspects of Forster’s writing might well be seen as harmonious with selected principles of queer anti-urbanism, while Forster himself might be acknowledged one of spiritual forefathers of queer rurality. A category that appears to be the strongest ally in the positive re-valuation of non-urban sexual cultures is, of course, Forsterian “greenwood”; or, given its various mutations in the twelve-year period between its first and last appearance (1902–1914; see Wood Ellem 1976), its specific incarnation as a homoerotic (natural/rural) retreat – the kind where, as Kelly Sultzbach and Claudia Rosenhan have persuasively argued, a “prominent accent on land use politics” and a “focus on environmental ethics” (Sultzbach 2016, 30) meets an “intra-action between self and environment” (Rosenhan 2018, 277). This greenwood creates the conditions for an “entanglement with nature” which “serves [one’s] mental, and moral⁶ development, *as well as* [one’s] sexual being” (Rosenhan 2018, 283; emphasis in the original). This greenwood is not so much an escape from persecution, a refuge, but, above all, an opportunity.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the legacy of Forster’s queer rurality (understood after Herring as “at once a geographic entity and a performative space” [Herring 2010, 12]⁷) – his “greenwood” – in Mike Parker’s *On the Red Hill*, a memoir which brings together the political and aesthetic concerns of queer anti-urbanism and new nature

repression, the metronormative story of migration from ‘country’ to ‘town’ is a spatial narrative within which the subject moves to a place of tolerance after enduring life in a place of suspicion, persecution, and secrecy. [...] [T]he rural is made to function as a closet for urban sexualities in most accounts of rural queer migration” (Halberstam 2005, 37).

⁵ An example of such “critical rusticity” could be England’s “lesbian capital,” i.e. the village of Hebden Bridge, which is the only queer non-urban/non-metropolitan place acknowledged by Ackroyd in *Queer City* (Ackroyd 2017, 231).

⁶ And, one could be tempted to add, environmental.

⁷ “[W]e should theorize ‘rural’ or ‘non-metropolitan’ locales as performative geographic positions that have often enabled individuals and group subjects to experience themselves as distinct from dominant spatial performatives of the ‘urban’ or the ‘metropolitan’” (Herring 2010, 13).

writing. While analysing Forsterian “inheritance” and its impact onto Parker’s book and the lives of its four auto/biographical characters, this essay’s major concern will be the exploration of the conjunction between queer sexualities (male nonheteronormativity in particular) and rurality in the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the shift that has occurred with regard to the perception (and valorisation) of the non-metropolitan queer life.

2. New (queer) nature writing

True to the poetics of new nature writing, as well as the poetics of the memoir, *On the Red Hill* is a “cross” (Miller 1996, 3), a hybrid nature-/life-narrative which recounts, in equal measure, the story of the Welsh countryside, landscape, and nature, focusing in particular on Rhiw Goch, the titular “Red Hill,” as well as the lives of four gay men who have owned and inhabited the very place located in the Powys county.

Parker’s book shares a number of characteristics with the paradigmatic specimens of new nature writing,⁸ a relatively recent trend in contemporary British literature.⁹ Its form is experimental¹⁰: the volume is divided into four parts; each part consists of four

⁸ What it does not share with new nature writing is its “elevated tone,” a specific writing style which combines heightened lyricism, spirituality, and literariness, and which has been rightfully mocked by Kathleen Jamie (2008). This style became widely associated with new nature writing despite the fact that Jason Cowley, one of its first theoreticians, hailed its language which was supposed to be “free from cliché” (2008, 9). The very queerness of *On the Red Hill* (and its author) also challenges the conviction that new nature writing is the domain of “white, middle-class Englishmen” for whom “Cambridge is still the centre of the world” (9) and that it has substituted “culture-nature axis” with “literature-landscape,” thus becoming socially and environmentally *unconscious* (Cocker 2015).

⁹ Jos Smith traces the beginning of this literary phenomenon to Richard Mabey’s 1996 *Flora Britannica* (2017, 1), while most would name a special issue of *Granta* magazine published in 2008 and entitled “New nature writing” (issue no. 102) in which Jason Cowley’s introduction provided some of the first theorisations of this literary development (Cowley 2008, 7–12). Today, perhaps the best known volumes associated with new nature writing are Helen Macdonald’s *H is far Hawk* (2014) and Robert Macfarlane’s *The Wild Places* (2007) and *Landmarks* (2015). See Cocker 2015 and Moss 2019 (the latter with reference to new nature writing’s problems with gender and ethnic diversity, the former with its dilemma regarding the notion of “wildness” and predominantly urban/metropolitan audience).

¹⁰ “The best new nature writing is [...] an experiment in form” (Cowley 2008, 10). According to Smith, the trend’s aesthetics is based on “self-reflexive conflict with convention” (2017, 26).

sections titled after four elements, four cardinal points, four seasons, and four principal male characters. It provides its readers with a novel and thoroughly unorthodox way of thinking about space and place,¹¹ thus producing what Jos Smith calls a “counter-map” (2017, 6) in which rural Wales becomes a “truly *fairy* place” [my emphasis] with a “queer cunning in the air,” a “quiet tolerance,” and “no shortage of [queer] comradeship” (Parker 2019, 58, 9). It focuses on a specific locality (Wales, Powys county, Rhiw Goch), and, while studying its nature, history, and people in detail, the book embraces methods and instruments typical for a variety of disciplines such as social history, environmentalism, botany and ornithology, anthropology, and ethnography.

Though the book does narrate the story of gay men’s travels to (and exploration of) non-urban Wales, it does not partake in the “lyrical pastoral tradition of the romantic wanderer,” the very feature which Jason Cowley associated with “old nature writing” (2008, 10).¹² Instead, *On the Red Hill* appears to be highly alert and attentive to the political and social present-day reality (the book opens with a first same-sex civil partnership ceremony in the county), to the now,¹³ including human influence and often detrimental effect on nature, as well as larger processes such as globalisation and economic changes.¹⁴ Like most of the Anthropocene-conscious writers and their works, Parker and his contribution to new nature writing are imbued with a new understanding of nature (which is neither a straightforward opposite – of man, culture, etc. – nor a passive object to be studied [Smith 2017, 12–17]), as well as of the relationship between humans and nature. It is also imbued with a sense of loss – an elegiac tone, which Cowley has identified as another marker of new nature writing (2008, 11), having been introduced in the book’s prologue with the death of George and Reg, the owners of Rhiw Goch, a gay couple¹⁵ who

¹¹ Smith claims that in new nature writing place is an “open-ended and experimental process, an ongoing performance of social and cultural reality that is in often difficult dialogue with other scales of place” (2017, 21).

¹² “[T]hey don’t simply want to walk into the wild, to rhapsodize and commune: they aspire to see with a scientific eye and write with literary effect” Cowley states (2008, 9).

¹³ After Cowley, one could insist on new nature writing being a “moral enterprise” (2008,9). Also see Smith 2017, 5, 28.

¹⁴ Especially ones that seriously affect the countryside, e.g. property and land ownership. As Parker admits, “of our many contemporary anxieties, property is by far the most incandescent. We are all consumed by its white heat, however loftily we pretend otherwise. For so many, the housing ladder has vanished from view, and shows little prospect of reappearing” (2019, 115).

¹⁵ Though they remain highly uncomfortable with the category. When during the same-sex civil partnership ceremony the Powys registrar calls them “gay,” the two men appear to be

in 1972 moved from Bournemouth to mid-Wales in search of their own “greenwood.” But *On the Red Hill* is also a legitimate specimen of the memoir, and one of the genre’s prime parameters, namely its “travelling” between “categorical oppositions of the self and other, autobiography and biography” (Kusek 2017, 70), becomes particularly helpful in revealing and acknowledging the legacy of E.M. Forster and its impact not only onto the lives of the book’s four gay characters, but, first and above all, onto the book itself.

It might be argued that a transgenerational desire for the greenwood – here represented by Wales and its “Red Hill” – is one of the most conspicuous themes of Parker’s life-cum-nature writing. This desire for the “queer rural” (Parker 2019, 6) certainly affects the four main characters of the book: George Walton and Reg Mickish, as well as Mike Parker and his partner Peredur (Preds) Tomos, who inherited Rhiw Goch after the former couple’s death in 2011. Early in the volume Parker confesses to his love of the “not-city” (287) and his unambiguously queer anti-urban perception of the countryside. He states the following:

If the countryside appears at all in gay histories, it is usually only as a place to escape from, and as swiftly as possible. For many of us, this is a pattern that never fitted. Since childhood, the green places have called us the loudest, and although we did the urban thing to burst from the closet, the lure of the rural soon overwhelmed the anonymity of the city. It didn’t even feel like a choice, but something intrinsic that would have been dangerous to resist, like the act of coming out itself. (5–6)

Throughout the book, Parker repeatedly emphasises the fact that queer rurality is a legitimate way of being in/experiencing/expressing the world for nonnormative sexualities. In order to substantiate his claim, the writer puts forward a variety of examples of nonnormative individuals who, over the centuries, have established a positive relationship with the countryside (particularly Welsh countryside), and, consequently, have become the “pioneers” of queer rurality: from the Ladies of Llangollen, G.M. Hopkins, the painter Cedric Morris, Edward Carpenter, twice in the book called “the great queer rural hero” (125, 290) who “mapped out” the queer rural life for the likes of Parker himself (295), to gay men like George and Reg. Parker’s self-reflexive account is quite

highly irritated: “[Reg] might have just married the man he had been living with for nearly sixty years, but he still didn’t want anyone, least of all a pen-pusher from the county council, calling him A Gay” (Parker 2019, 3).

illuminating with regard to the changing status of the non-metropolitan queer life. He admits to a variety of difficulties that a nonheteronormative male faces when considering “shak[ing] off the city” (22): from “farmerphobia” (206), threats imposed by “small-town morality” (256), to widespread beliefs that the best a gay man might hope when moving to “Llan-nowhere” is “to be ignored and to die a lonely old queen”; and the worst “to be hanged like a hillbilly Mussolini from the nearest lamp post” (7). Though Parker’s queer rurality is by no means an idyll (he does recognise the longevity and persistence of homophobia in the countryside and duly documents its various manifestations), he, nevertheless, staunchly resists the notion that the city is the exclusive space of “affirmation, liberation, and citizenship” (Houlbrook 2006, 3) available to queer individuals. “Every parish had its hen lanc [Welsh for ‘the confirmed bachelor’],” Parker states, often living undisturbed, perhaps with his special friend, his brother, blood or otherwise. His twin, even, sharing a bad and a midwinter birthday, their old farm neatly bisected by the frontier between Wales and England: *On the Black Hill* redux” (2019, 375).

The story of Parker’s own life is, perhaps, the best example of this pro-rural and anti-urban shift that has been the experience of a number of queer individuals. The writer confesses that “going West” – which to a Birmingham-born gay man meant, in the early 1990s, an amalgamation of coming-out and sexual liberation, exploring the countryside, and, quite literally, moving to Wales – has been his dream since early youth. For example, he discloses his obsession with an “isolated white house on a green hillside” that he developed as a twelve-year-old having watched a video for the Boomtown Rats’ “I Don’t Like Mondays.” “Its stark purity seared into me, and I was forever searching it out, the place of my recurring dream. It was, I knew, in Wales,” the author states (303).

Parker is also disillusioned with the city and the utopian myth of its unbridled liberating potential,¹⁶ and regularly reminds his readers of similar, if not equal opportunities that rurality may offer to queers: “Away from the cities and the commercial gay scene – on walks up hills and by rivers, in cafes and country pubs, at parties and raves in quarries and forests – I found comrades, sensed others and heard whisper of many more” (256–257). The last pages of *On the Red Hill* are the final attempt to dismantle the fantasy about urban superiority and rural inadequacy, and to reconcile queer rurality and queer urbanism: “[t]he revolution over the last half-century in notions of gender, sex and sexuality is real and massive; it lives in the fields and hills just as happily, and just as unhappily, as it does in the streets” (375).

¹⁶ “For too many, the city has become just another closet” (Parker 2019, 287).

Commonplaceness of queer rurality, its ordinariness and plurality which Parker vehemently insists on, is also exemplified by the figures of George and Reg. The two men and their move to rural Wales in 1972 appears to resist interpretations that would easily appease the proponents of either queer anti-urbanism or radical queer rurality. Though Parker often refers to them as “pioneers,” they are presented as far from being as radical and unconventional as, for example, Edward Carpenter; on the contrary, upon moving to Wales, they were “respectable, conservative¹⁷ gentlemen, lower middle-class sons of London shopkeepers and already middle-aged” (59–60). Also, their decision to abandon Bournemouth was the product of various desires, necessities, and circumstances: including George’s previous experience with travelling across Britain (prior to WWII) and the spirit of male comradeship that he enjoyed at the time; demise of the Dorset coast as a prime UK holiday destination in the 1960s (due to the rise of mass international tourism and discovery of the Spanish coastline) and its effect on the socio-economic and professional conditions of both men; as well as the fantasy of having one’s very own Millthorpe, or Pound Farm (inhabited by Cedric Morris and his companion Arthur Lett-Haines), or – most likely given the couple’s frequent weekend visits to the place, Clouds Hill, a solitary cottage and the former house of T.E. Lawrence.¹⁸ “He [George] wanted his own version [of Clouds Hill],” Parker concludes. And adds: “[A] manly pied-à-terre, remote and self-sufficient, smelling of leather and books, lit by candles and warmed by open fires. To persuade Reg, he packaged it as their own Howards End, a bower of flowers with a ‘sense of space, which is the basis of all earthly beauty’” (176).

If in case of Reg and George an impetus for the move from the city to the countryside might have only partly and rather indirectly come from Forster,¹⁹ it soon transpires that Forster should, indeed, be recognised as *the* architect behind Parker’s desire for the

¹⁷ Parker highlights George’s love of the royals and Mrs Thatcher (2019, 121).

¹⁸ Though not necessarily a beach hut in nearby Beaulieu, a famous meeting place for homosexual friends and acquaintances of Lord Montagu, which saw the events leading to his and Peter Wildeblood’s arrest and imprisonment in 1954, and which George and Reg visited in 1952.

¹⁹ Parker notes that Forster was the sole representative of gay literature in George’s and Reg’s impressive collection of books. In this collection Forster’s oeuvre was represented only by *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* (Parker 2019, 26) and there is no evidence that either man has ever read *Maurice*. Elsewhere Parker adds that one of George’s books was the 1977 biography of Forster by P.N. Furbank (163), which must have introduced George to the writer’s posthumous work.

“greenwood,” as well as behind *On the Red Hill* itself – the book which quite unambiguously takes for its motto the following line from Maurice: “Men of my sort could take to the greenwood” (Forster 1993, 12; Parker 2019, 2). Parker is quite explicit about the transformative function and identity-shaping role that Forster has played in his own life. He credits the Merchant Ivory adaptation of *A Room with a View* with helping him to come out as a gay man in 1985 (214–215). The book’s (and movie’s) famous skinny-dipping scene is believed to have provoked Parker’s love of water and swimming, and resulted in him becoming an “aquaphile” (216). He also clearly links the origins of his “search for the queer rural” (6) with reading and watching *Maurice*. As a twenty-year-old student, Parker “secretly ached for a country house weekend of skinny-dipping larks, spied on from behind a tree by a handsome gardener, who later that night would climb into my chamber and have me on crisp white linen” (215).

It is Forster’s posthumously published work that helps Parker to hope for comradeship and space where same-sex desire could be freely enacted: “The greenwood. I literally pined. ‘Two men can defy the world’. I slunk through the shadows behind Maurice and Alec, down to the boathouse, the evening sun reflected in ripples that washed the walls and there, stock-still in the dancing light, the outline shape of *him*, waiting” (215; emphasis in the original). *On the Red Hill* also features plenty of other, more or less subtle allusions to Forster’s life and work: be it the Italian journeys of Reg and George (including a trip to San Gimignano); references to a nearby menhir called Carreg y Noddfa and its function as a sanctuary for “outlaws” (a word taken almost directly from *Maurice* [Forster 1993, 127, 135, 243, 254], a code name for homosexuals) – which, in turn, transforms Rhiw Goch and its vicinity into the paradigmatic “greenwood”; or Parker learning about the rules of living in the “greenwood” by taking a piece of advice from Edward Carpenter (“Oh, do sit quiet!”) – one that was originally given to Forster upon his first visit to Millthorpe in 1913 (Parker 2019, 348).

However, if “the lava flow of Forsteresque fate” (116) affects, to a different extent, all the auto/biographical characters of Parker’s book, it remains particularly conspicuous with regard to the titular “Red Hill”: Rhiw Goch, a new incarnation of Forsterian Howards End.

3. Queer inheritance

Typically for memoirs of place (also known as periegetic narratives [Kusek 2017, 111] or instances of “auto/bio/geo/graphy” [Rybicka 2014, 420]), *On the Red Hill* prioritises one spatial unit which not only becomes equipped with the memoirist’s individual meanings, but is also a site of memory, a *lieu de mémoire*, a result of “cultural” and “humanistic geography” (Mitchell 2002, xi). This spatial unit is Rhiw Goch, an 18th-century farmhouse purchased by Reg and George in early 1980s and turned into their home, which, together with its narratives, memories, and meanings – all diligently reconstructed by Parker – becomes an exemplar of what I shall call “queer heritage,” namely a “meaningful past”²⁰ that is recognised as queer and considered a resource for its contemporary users (present-day queer individuals).

However, crucially for my argument about the legacy of Forster, Rhiw Goch is not just heritage but also an inheritance, physical materialisation of *Howards End* that is passed down (officially, with “no *Howards End* deathbed scribble” [Parker 2019, 114]) from one generation of nonheteronormative males to another – from Reg and George to Mike and Preds. Rhiw Goch’s resemblance to *Howards End* is, indeed, uncanny. With the fictional house (and its source, i.e. Rooksnest) it shares the same genius loci: “communal, convivial excess is its lifeblood” says Parker about the Welsh farmhouse he has inherited (31). It is bequeathed not to “biological” successors, but to “spiritual” heirs – and, one should add, the likes that have experienced dispossession, uprooting, and loss of home. Despite Rhiw Goch’s double ownership/inheritance, the narrative of *On the Red Hill* leaves no doubt that the book’s Ruth Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel are Reg and Preds – the latter a son of local farmers who first saw and fell in love with the Red Hill thirty years before he became its co-owner. “The six-year-old boy drank it all in, and with the same surety as the deathbed note in *Howards End*, a destiny was cast,” Parker states (302). “The spell was cast,” the writer adds elsewhere (114). Throughout the narrative Preds is presented as the right(ful)²¹ heir to Reg’s and George’s house – more than Parker himself, despite his training in the history of queer rurality. As a Welshman, Preds re-claims the land once owned by his folks and later lost to large-scale agriculture and farming, as well as Englishmen buying (often holiday) property in rural Wales. As a modern environmentalist and farmer,

²⁰ I borrow this phrase from Sharon Macdonald’s apt definition of heritage which she identifies as “meaningful pasts that should be remembered” (Macdonald 2009, 1).

²¹ “Passing it on correctly is your last great duty to the place” (Parker 2019, 378).

he restores land to its past state and function: from a leisure to vegetable and fruit garden, from a B&B to a farmhouse. “This is what Preds has been training for all his life,” says one of the couple’s first guests to their newly inherited abode (373).

If Rhiw Goch is not just a house but a “spirit,” as Forster would have about Ruth Wilcox’s house (2002, 70), or a “spiritual possession” as the character of Morgan says about Walter Pool’s Hamptons house (another incarnation of Howards End) in Matthew Lopez’s play *The Inheritance*²² (2020, 107), then it should come as no surprise that the Red Hill is an “inheritance far beyond bricks and mortar” (Parker 2019, 114). Mike and Preds inherited not only Reg’s and George’s house but also their lives: “[W]e inherited their lives, and the challenge was – still is – to live them. To live *with* them” (Parker 2019, 10; emphasis in the original). With Parker, one might claim that they are Reg’s and George’s “sequel” (113).

²² Lopez’s play, which had its premiere in 2018, is a narrative governed by the principle of “transdiegetisation” (Genette 1982, 418–419) – a term I have borrowed from the transtextual lexicon of Gérard Genette. When talking about a derivational relationship between a given text B and a pre-existent text A from which the former has been derived (13), Genette identifies a number of formal operations (called transformations or transpositions), including diegetic transformations, i.e., changes in the diegesis (“l’univers où advient cette histoire” [419]) of a given hypotext and hypertext. In other words, transdiegetisation is a procedure which allows for the transfer of an action or character from one period to another or from one location to another. In the process, historical and geographical settings are (obviously) altered as are “les événements et les conduites constitutives de l’action” since “on ne peut guère transférer une action antique à l’époque moderne sans modifier quelques actions” (442). Nevertheless, what lies at the very heart of this operation is an understanding that a hypertext narrates a story that is essentially (i.e., pragmatically but also, one could further claim, epistemologically) the same as the one told by a hypotext, while readers can recognise the very fact by means of identifying various (textual) inscriptions preserved by this new diegetic world. *The Inheritance* is thus a transdiegetised version of *Howard’s End* which transfers the action and characters from turn-of-the-20th-century England to turn-of-the-21st-century New York; simultaneously, it modifies the characters’ vital statistics and other parameters (names, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, background, etc.). In Lopez’s play – whose subtitle reads “inspired by the novel *Howards End* by E.M. FORSTER,” a capitalised name on the play’s cover implying Forster’s co-authorship of the play – a Hamptons house owned by Walter Pool (a stand-in for Mrs Wilcox) is bequeathed to Eric Glass (Margaret Schlegel) who is deprived of his inheritance by Walter’s partner, none other than Henry Wilcox, but later rightfully re-claims it. The play also features the character of E.M. Forster (named Morgan) who comments on the action and converses with a group of young men (a substitute for Greek chorus) and who emerges as a central figure for queer heritage.

I should claim that conceptualisation of inheritance as “past presencing,”²³ as history that not only repeats itself but is performatively re-enacted – which perfectly corresponds to new nature writing’s alternative thinking about time (Smith 2017, 6) – might be discerned in Parker’s book in two ways. Firstly, through the book’s form and its very structure based on the principle of repetitiveness and loop – manifested, among others, by the trope of four seasons and natural cycles which provide the frame for the entire narrative. In *On the Red Hill* the trajectory of time is overtly cyclical resulting in queer temporality par excellence, one that is “not straight” (Dinshaw et al. 2007, 185). And secondly, through the figure of Forster and his ongoing presence – as a forefather of queer rurality, a source of literary inspiration and provider of the book’s intertextual hypotext, an identity-shaping force in the lives of queer men, down to his hauntological appearance in the final pages of the book when New Year’s Eve party at Rhiw Goch turns into a “celebration of yr hen lanc and his *eternal greenwood*” (378–379; my emphasis). In a fantastical scene – which, nevertheless, makes perfect sense in the context of the book’s nonnormative vision of time – the transgenerational queer party is joined by the likes of E.M. Hopkins, Edward Carpenter and George Merrill, Emlyn Williams, Ivor Novello, W.H. Auden, Cedric Morris, J.R. Ackerley, Lord Montagu, and David Hockney – the figures that have shaped Parker’s view of the conflation of rurality, queerness, and Wales. However, the most notable presence is that of Forster who is engaged in directing a remake of a nude bathing scene from *A Room with a View* which stars George, the late owner of Rhiw Goch (379–380). Though this very sequence *On the Red Hill* does not only testify to the performative re-enactment of history, but, most importantly from the point of view of the present essay, to a transgenerational conversation with queer past, a conversation with Forster.

²³ Understood here, after Sharon Macdonald, as actively engaging with the past, and not necessarily simply remembering it (Macdonald 2013, 12).

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Conference Reports

Re-Orientating E.M. Forster: Texts, Contexts, Receptions. The Cambridge Forster Conference 2020

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The onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the early months of 2020 caused the cancellation of many major academic events, including the conference planned to commemorate the half-centenary of E.M. Forster's death on 7 June 1970. This conference, which had been more than five years in the planning, was to have been held at King's College and the Faculty of English at the University of Cambridge from Thursday 2 to Saturday 4 April 2020. Eighty-two papers were to have been presented. At the end of February, it was still hoped that the conference would take place; within two weeks, however, it became absolutely clear that this could not happen, and speakers and others who had registered for the meeting were informed of its cancellation on Monday 16 March.

There can be no adequate substitute for a cancelled conference: discussions after papers, informal conversations, the immediate sense of engagement in a shared enterprise, and the making and remaking of connections in an atmosphere of bonhomie are irreplaceable factors. And yet even the outline of the programme for this conference may serve as a useful snapshot of the state of Forsterian studies fifty years after Forster. The names of speakers and the titles of their presentations are set out at the end of this contribution; some background and a brief analysis may be thought helpful.

The first informal enquiries about the scholarly appetite for a large-scale Forster event were made in late 2014 and early 2015, and met with considerable enthusiasm. Some initial ideas were presented at the conference on 'E.M. Forster's Legacy: "Only connect"

over a Century of British Arts' organized by Laurent Mellet and Elsa Cavalié and held at the Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès on 10–11 December 2015; the same meeting saw the foundation of the Association for Forsterian Research. Exploratory work, in particular involving discussions with King's College, Cambridge, Forster's *alma mater*, continued during 2016 and 2017. An advance notice about the event was circulated at the International E.M. Forster Society conference, 'E.M. Forster: Nature, Culture, Queer!', organized by Krzysztof Fordoński, Anna Kwiatkowska, and Heiko Zimmermann, and held at the Pädagogische Universität Ludwigsburg on 13–14 April 2018. Both the Association for Forsterian Research and the International E.M. Forster Society offered welcome support for the Cambridge event, and generously promoted it among their members.

In the same month, a conference Steering Committee was set up, with the following membership: Edward Allen (Christ's College, University of Cambridge); Howard Booth (University of Manchester); Santanu Das (King's College London; subsequently All Souls College, Oxford); Gemma Moss (Birmingham City University); Amber Regis (University of Sheffield); David Scourfield (Chair; Maynooth University); and David Trotter (University of Cambridge). The Committee was later augmented by the addition of Laura Davies (King's College, University of Cambridge). It was supported by a 25-member International Advisory Board, empanelled during the summer of 2018, and drawn from fourteen countries on five continents.

A call for papers was advertised in February 2019. It attracted widespread interest, with many more proposals being submitted than the Steering Committee could accept, given the space and time constraints of the conference. In addition to those who had proposals accepted for a twenty-minute paper or a short 'lightning talk', eight distinguished speakers accepted invitations to deliver keynote lectures or to participate in plenary panels.

The call for papers outlined the central aims and aspirations of the conference in these terms:

E.M. Forster, one of the major British writers of the twentieth century, died on 7 June 1970. The fiftieth anniversary of his death affords a special opportunity for a comprehensive re-evaluation of his place and significance in the literary and wider culture of Britain and beyond. This conference, to be held at the Cambridge University Faculty of English and King's College – where Forster was an undergraduate and where he later resided for many years as an Honorary Fellow – invites a wide-ranging exploration of his life and work, while focusing attention on two broad areas: (a) Forster in his

historical and cultural context; (b) receptions of Forster since 1970. A central aim is to facilitate a productive dialogue between these two perspectives, with a view to defamiliarizing dominant perceptions of Forster and his work, exposing what has been occluded, and identifying new directions of travel in Forster studies.

Forster's novels are widely read and have frequently been adapted for radio, television, and the cinema; he continues to be a major influence on other writers. *A Passage to India* remains a foundational text for postcolonial studies and Anglophone writing about India, while *Maurice*, first published in 1971, is a cornerstone of queer fiction. But how does the Forster that emerges in the artistic and scholarly production of the years since his death relate to the Forster of the years of literary creation? How far have contemporary receptions of Forster been shaped by our own cultural perspectives, agendas, and anxieties? To what extent and in what regards has E.M. Forster the man become E.M. Forster the myth? How might he be seen as a different writer from the one we think we know – perhaps one even more radical and unsettling?

In evaluating proposals, the organizers will pay careful regard to fulfilling the general aims and conception of the conference. Submissions are welcome on any topic.

The call for papers also explicitly invited reflection on

the relevance of Forster's *Weltanschauung* (itself inviting exploration and definition) to our own historical moment, with consideration of this question: What, fifty years after his death, has Forster's concern for 'connection' and for civil liberties to say to us at a time when narrow nationalisms and authoritarian ideologies have once again become prominent across the world?

In keeping with the commemorative and celebratory aspects of the conference, a number of events were planned outside the programme of papers. Chief among these was an exhibition of written and other materials from the substantial and important Forster collection in the King's College Archive Centre, curated by the Archivist, Patricia McGuire. Arrangements had also been made for conference registrants to view the suite of rooms where Forster had resided for many years as an Honorary Fellow of the College, as well as for a screening at the Cambridge Arts Cinema of the Merchant Ivory film adaptation of *Maurice* (1987) in its recent 4K digital restoration. For the wider public, a short course on Forster's best-known works ('Close Encounters of the Forsterian Kind'), taught by Edward Allen, had been programmed by the Cambridge

Institute of Continuing Education for April and May. Regrettably, none of these events could take place.

The conference was essentially self-funding, but generous support was extended by the following: King's College, Cambridge; the University of Cambridge Faculty of English; the University of Manchester; and the Modern Humanities Research Association, which awarded the conference one of its competitive Conference Grants for academic year 2019–20.

As the inclusion in the programme of a plenary panel on 'Global Forster' suggests, a broad international dimension to the conference was held to be of special importance. The fulfilment of this aspiration is reflected in the geographical spread of speakers. Of the 82 speakers listed below, the largest contingent (27) were affiliated to institutions in the United Kingdom (England and Scotland), with 13 from the United States, 8 from France, 6 from India, and 4 from Italy. The other countries represented were Australia, Canada, China (including Hong Kong), Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and Turkey. The list also includes five independent, unaffiliated scholars. It was a particular pleasure for the organizers to be able to include in the programme at least two speakers who had participated in the celebrations associated with Forster's birth-centenary in 1979.

The papers accepted for the conference through the open call were grouped into two- or three-paper panels in order to fit comfortably and conveniently into the conference schedule. Two-paper panels were accorded sixty minutes, three-paper panels ninety minutes, with approximately twenty minutes allocated to each paper and ten to questions and discussion. Four panels were to be held in parallel in each session, with obviously undesirable clashes avoided as far as possible. In one of the 60-minute sessions, four 'lightning talks' were scheduled alongside three regular panels. The conference was to have opened and closed with the plenary panels, with discussion left until after all three 20-minute papers had been delivered, in order to allow the freest possible exchange of ideas. The two keynote lectures, each allocated approximately fifty minutes, were scheduled at prominent times on the first two days.

A small number of speakers had withdrawn, and been replaced by others on a reserve list, before the Covid-19 pandemic became an issue for the event. The list below represents the programme as at 1 March 2020, with the proposed dates and times of lectures and panels omitted. It was soon after that date that withdrawals related to the pandemic began, rapidly increasing in frequency thereafter.

The titles of the papers will speak for themselves,¹ but a few points may be highlighted here. All the finished novels appear by name on the list, with the exception of *The Longest Journey* (which is not, however, altogether forgotten), *A Passage to India* and *Maurice* most frequently; the short fiction is also well represented. Forster's essays, broadcasts, and the libretto to *Billy Budd* also make their appearance. Among his contemporary fellow-writers, Elizabeth Bowen and D.H. Lawrence are the most prominent (the Lawrence panel was indeed proposed as a unit). Forster's relationship with modernism comes under scrutiny, together with literary questions of a more traditional kind, and a focus on textual issues, reflecting a current tendency towards contextual studies.² A great deal of interest is shown in the reception of his work, not only in adaptations of the fiction for screen and stage but in novels shaped or deeply informed by it, as well as in translations into other languages. Thematically, there are the postcolonial and queer emphases anticipated in the call for papers, but additionally a wealth of topics across a wide range, some in tune with highly contemporary concerns (the nonhuman, ecocriticism), others looking back to (for example) Forster's educational formation in Classics or the philosophical contexts of his work. Politics (democracy, liberalism) features appropriately; at this time in history, it is striking that the titles of two papers include the word 'tolerance'.

All who were involved in the organization of this conference felt great frustration and indeed sadness at the necessity to cancel what had promised to be a memorable event. Many of the speakers, too, contacted the organizers to express their disappointment and regret at the cancellation. The persistence of Covid-19 throughout the world at the time of writing (September 2020), not to mention the complexity of organizing an event on this scale, means that it is unrealistic to contemplate a comparable conference in the near future, though it is hoped that smaller in-person events will prove possible. Meanwhile, we look forward, with Forster himself, to a Happier Year.

¹ The titles listed are the confirmed titles provided by speakers on their conference registration forms, with minor editorial interventions for reasons of consistency only.

² A new Forster edition – The Cambridge Edition of the Fiction of E.M. Forster – has been commissioned, with Howard Booth as General Editor and several other conference speakers as editors of individual volumes.

Re-Orientating E.M. Forster: Texts, Contexts, Receptions

List of scheduled presentations

Keynote Lectures

Paul B. Armstrong, 'E.M. Forster's Ironic Liberalism and the Challenge of Our Time'

Leela Gandhi, 'Invisible, Inc.'

Plenary Panels

Global Forster

David Trotter, 'Becoming Global: Space and Place in Forster's Early Fiction'

Stefania Michelucci, 'Forster's Italian Places: An Anthropological Perspective'

Santanu Das, 'Let Egypt in India Melt: Forster's Translocal Libido'

Forster as Critic and Public Intellectual

Laura Marcus, 'Forster and the Character of "Character"'

Rachel Potter, 'The "Inner Mumble": Forster, International PEN, and Free Expression'

Stefan Collini, 'The Higher Feebleness: Forster as a Public Intellectual'

Panels (parallel sessions)

Adaptations in other media I

Mihaela Cel-Mare (Avram), '"Dear Pensione Bertolini": A Rhetoric of (In)fidelities in Lance Sieveking and Richard Cottrell's 1966 Stage Adaptation *A Room with a View*'

Alberto Fernández Carbajal, 'Hipsters End: Hegelian Property, Imitation vs. Authenticity, and Queer Time in Matthew Lopez's *The Inheritance*'

Adaptations in other media II

Monique Rooney, 'Only Mediate: The Mere Interest of "Interbrow" in *Howards End*, Novel and Television Mini-Series (1910; 2017)'

Claire Monk, '*Maurice* and its Adaptations across Media: From Forster's Palimpsest to Screen, Stage, Radio, and Beyond'

Jaya Yadav, '(De)canonization of E.M. Forster: Unveiling the Screen Adaptations of *Howards End* and *Maurice*'

Alterities in the posthumously published short fiction

Munejah Khan, 'Race, Sexuality, and the Empire: Analysing the Colonial Encounter in E.M. Forster's "The Life to Come" and "The Other Boat"'

Anastasia Logotheti, "'So far no other": Alterity in Forster's "The Other Boat"'

Aspects of the nonhuman

Nour Dakkak, 'Tolerance and the Nonhuman in E.M. Forster's Fiction'

Ming Panha, "'Part of your world": The Speculative Narratives of the Nonhuman as a Challenge against Tourism in "The Story of the Siren" (1920) by E.M. Forster'

Derek Ryan, '*A Passage to India* and E.M. Forster's "Unentomological" Aesthetics'

Classical antiquity

David Scourfield, 'Forster's Aeschylean Travesty'

Jennifer Ingleheart, 'Classical Education and Sexuality in the Fiction of E.M. Forster'

Nikolai Endres, 'Expurgating Martial: The Romosexuality of *Maurice*'

Democracy

Benjamin Wood, 'Reading E.M. Forster in the Culture Wars: Augustinian Politics and Protecting the Greenwood'

Laurent Mellet, "'Literature and democracy are natural allies" (BBC Talk, 11 February 1942): Forster's Liberal and Democratic Fiction'

Anasthasia Castelbou, 'Aspects of Sharing: Co-Existence and Tolerance in Forster's Fiction'

Editing Forster

Howard Booth, 'The Manuscripts of *Maurice*: What We Know for Sure, What We Can Infer, and What We Don't Know'

Gemma Moss, '*Where Angels Fear to Tread* and Modernist Editing: The Manuscript and Proofs'

Sujan Mondal, 'Annotations in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*'

Egypt

Richard Bruce Parkinson, "'Old things belonging to the nation": Forster, Ancient Egypt, and the Queer Museum'

Cedric Van Dijck, 'Forster and the Egyptian Revolution'

Expanding the Forstersphere

Evelyne Hanquart-Turner, 'E.M. Forster and Africa: Travelogue, Letters, and Essays'

Anna Fåhraeus, 'Hiding in Plain Sight: E.M. Forster and Perceptions of Moral Mystery in the American Media between the Wars'

Qiang Huang, "'Would it be too late to become interested in China?': E.M. Forster and China'

Forster and D.H. Lawrence

Hugh Stevens, 'Friendship and Panic: Homoerotic Desire in Lawrence and Forster'

Bethan Jones, '*Billy Budd*, "The Prussian Officer," and the Imperfect Politics of War'

Susan Reid, 'The Elephant in the Text: Sense, Sound, and Empire in E.M. Forster and D.H. Lawrence'

Forster and Elizabeth Bowen

Diana Hirst, "'Place-Feeling" in the Fiction of E.M. Forster and Elizabeth Bowen'

Helen Tyson, "'Oh to acquire culture!": Clerks and Culture in E.M. Forster and Elizabeth Bowen'

Forster and the novel: techniques, critiques, theories

John Attridge, 'E.M. Forster and the Ante-Disciplinary Theory of the Novel'

Stuart Christie, 'Surrounding Forster'

Anna Kwiatkowska, 'Framing Experience: The Cinematic in E.M. Forster's Narration'

India: politics, language, power

Harish Trivedi, 'Reading Forster in India – against Kipling: Hindus and Muslims, English and the "Vernaculars"'

Cynthia Drake, 'In Shining Royal Robes: The Ashokan Haunting of *A Passage to India*'

Marina Alonso Gómez, 'Language and Power in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*'

Intertexts and influences

Anna Enrichetta Soccio, 'Textuality and Intertextuality in *Howards End*'

Xavier Giudicelli, 'Romances of Boys Bathing: Word and Image Dynamics from Forster to Hollinghurst'

Richard A. Kaye, "'A Happier Year": E.M. Forster's *Maurice*, Christopher Isherwood, and the End of the Auden Generation's Art of Obliquity'

Legacies

Elsa Cavalié, “‘That something [...] was the spirit of English Prose’: E.M. Forster’s English Legacy’

N. Cyril Fischer, ‘To Whom Does Forster Beautifully Belong?’

‘The Machine Stops’: Contexts and intertexts

Jan Hollm, ‘Englishness and Ecotopian Discourse in E.M. Forster’s “The Machine Stops”’

Max Saunders, ‘Forster and the Future’

Memory, perception, symbol

Ria Banerjee, ‘Against Memory: Wartime and Postwar Remembrance in E.M. Forster’s Public and Private Writings’

Annika J. Lindskog, “‘Melted into a single mass’”: Sight vs. Sound in *A Passage to India*’

Tania Zulli, ‘E.M. Forster and Italo Calvino: The Language of “Exactitude” and “Multiplicity” in *A Passage to India*’

(Meta)communications

Chris Mourant, ‘Aspects of the Epistolary Novel: E.M. Forster and Letters’

Rosie Langridge, “‘Telegrams and anger’”: E.M. Forster’s Mediated Personal Relations’

Daniel Ryan Morse, ‘A Queer Archive: Re-Orientating Forster’s Broadcasts’

Modernist perspectives

Simonetta de Filippis, ‘From *The Lucy Novels* to *A Room with a View*: The Genesis of a Novel and the Progress of a Writer’

Julie Chevaux, “‘ Pictures are not easy to look at’”: Forster and (Modernist) Perspective’

David McAllister, ‘E.M. Forster’s Stereographic Modernism’

Music

Josh Torabi, ‘Wagner, Nietzsche, Forster: Music in *Howards End* and Beyond’

Tsung-Han Tsai, “‘Might the violin satisfy?’”: Music and the Sense of “Proportion” in “Dr Woolacott”

Pageants and places

Parker T. Gordon, ‘Reclaiming the Pageant Ground: Forster’s Experiments with Tradition’

Catherine Lanone, “‘My wood’”: Forster’s Engagement with Ownership and Preservation’

Philosophical contexts

Thomas Newman, 'Neoplatonism in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*'

Jana Giles, "'Beyond the killing glare of truth": E.M. Forster Rewrites the Sublime'

Christina Root, 'The Disenchantment of the West: E.M. Forster and the Enlightenment Tradition'

(Post)colonial discourses: Forster, Said, Bhabha

Mohammad Shaheen, 'Orientalism Re-Orientated: Forster, A Case Study'

Afrinul Haque Khan, 'Articulating Difference and Desire, Negotiating Selfhood and Nationness: A Study of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*'

Queer friendships, queer fiction

Bárbara Gallego Larrarte, "'Young people keep me young": Intergenerational Friendships and E.M. Forster's Public Turn'

Nadine Tschacksch, '*Pray the gay away!* – Corruption and Disruption in E.M. Forster's Queer Fiction'

Simon Turner, 'Celebrating Ecstatic Death in "Dr Woolacott"'

Space and identity

Leonie Wanitzek, 'In Santa Croce with Lefebvre: Englishness and the Production of Touristic Social Spaces in Forster's Italy'

Rohit Chakraborty, 'Queers of Brit-India: Assimilation, Excision, and (Dis)orienting Homosexuality in E.M. Forster's *Maurice* and Neel Mukherjee's *Past Continuous*'

Translating Forster

Krzysztof Fordoński, 'From the English of E.M. Forster – An Overview of a Century of Forsterian Translations'

Heiko Zimmermann, '*Maurice* Goes Socialist: The First East German Publication of *Maurice*'

Women

Jane Goldman, 'Wonham – Am I That Name? E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Queer Women, and Catachresis'

Sania Iqbal Hashmi, "'Being invisible, they seemed dead already": Reading the Spectrality of Muslim Women in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*'

Meri Tek Demir, 'Female Voices: Aspects of Culture and Intellectualism in *Howards End* and *On Beauty*'

Lightning Talks

Terry Kidner, "Art Appreciation" as Character Code in *A Room with a View*'

Kate Haffey, 'Forster and Queer Friendship'

Eden Rea-Hedrick, 'Toward a Queer Humanism in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*'

Toshiyuki Nakamichi, 'Hindu Modernists' View of Hinduism Reflected in *A Passage to India*: "Caves" as the Symbol of the Universal Formless God, and "Temple" as Idolatry'

“E.M. Forster’s Legacies Half a Century After His Death: Nostalgia, Heritage and Queer”. Conference Report

Kaoru Urano (Kyoritsu Women’s University, Tokyo)
Takahiro Mimura (Chiba Institute of Technology, Chiba)
Saeko Nagashima (Chuo University, Tokyo)
Masayuki Iwasaki (Fukuoka University, Fukuoka)

A symposium entitled “E.M. Forster’s Legacies Half a Century After His Death: Nostalgia, Heritage and Queer” was held online on November 7, 2020, as a part of the 40th annual conference of the Virginia Woolf Society of Japan. Chaired by Dr Kaoru Urano (Kyoritsu Women’s University), the symposium began with her brief introduction which examined the reception of Forster’s works after his demise in 1970, and drew attention to the resurgence of interest in his works from the 2010s onward. This was followed by a keynote speech by Professor Krzysztof Fordoński (University of Warsaw), the chairman of the International E.M. Forster Society. Professor Fordoński demonstrated how widely Forster’s influence has permeated our culture and called Forster one of the “most contemporary” writers. Then, three panellists gave presentations on the topics described below.

The first speaker, Professor Takahiro Mimura (Chiba Institute of Technology) presented paper entitled “A Study on the Function of Places in E.M. Forster’s Work.” Forster famously explains in the introduction to *Collected Short Stories* (1947) that he got his inspiration from places such as Italy, Greece, and Cornwall, but his use of the term *genius loci* (the spirit of the place) seems to have baffled readers concerning the narrative function of places in his work. Although this term generally implies the innate function of a place, which effectively explains *Howards End* (1910) or the hollow tree in

“The Road from Colonus,” some places often have unexpected and overwhelming power over his characters, such as the violet terrace in *A Room with a View* (1908) or the vast field in Vallone Fontana Caroso near Ravello in “The Story of a Panic.” Professor Mimura classified and interrelated these functions by referring to ideas of human geography. In particular, he focused on Doreen Massey’s concept of “throwntogetherness,” which introduces contingency and crosses over into geographical studies.

Professor Saeko Nagashima (Chuo University) presented the second paper entitled “*Maurice* and the Closet.” In Professor Nagashima’s opinion, among Forster’s writings, *Maurice* holds a unique position in that it was kept “in the closet” for more than half a century before its posthumous publication in 1971. In her paper Professor Nagashima investigated the concept of the closet by examining the interactions this novel has created between Forster and other creators and their works. From Christopher Isherwood’s close friendship with Forster to the works by filmmakers and other artists today who are inspired by the story of *Maurice* and its closet, the text’s wide range of influence helps us imagine *Maurice*’s closet not as a dark, isolating cell, but as a relatively safe space where marginalized voices can be, and have been, raised and heard.

The third speaker, Dr Masayuki Iwasaki (Fukuoka University) presented the paper entitled “E.M. Forster’s Legacy: *On Beauty* as Hyperreal *Howards End*.” This paper explored the transhistorical attributes of Forster’s narrative inherited by Zadie Smith. Smith adapts Forster’s narrative of *Howards End* (1910) in *On Beauty* (2005), and her revitalisation of Forster’s text reflects contemporary ambitions to overcome the burdens of postmodernism envisaged as a “break” from modernism. The cultural practice of revitalising modernism is now termed “metamodernism”; hence, Dr Iwasaki chose to examine the extent to which traditional realism, modernism, postmodernism, or metamodernism is plausible in weighing both Forster’s and Smith’s texts.

Together, these presentations highlighted the relevance of Forster’s works to the world in which we presently live, leading to a lively discussion between the audience and the panellists. The symposium has proved that Forster will continue to be an important figure in the study of English literature in the years to come.

Reviews

Emma Sutton and Tsung-Han Tsai, 2020. *Twenty-First-Century Readings of E.M. Forster's Maurice*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp. 281

**Fraser Riddell
Durham University**

The scholarly ambition and intellectual range of the essays collected in Emma Sutton and Tsung-Han Tsai's new volume suggest that scholarly work on E.M. Forster retains a pleasing energy and vibrancy in the author's anniversary year. These nine chapters—and a comprehensive critical introduction – make an adept and convincing case for *Maurice* (1913 [1971]) as “a more complex and more conflicted book than previously acknowledged” (21). One of the great strengths of the volume is its emphasis on *Maurice's* genesis as the product of queer forms of collaboration—the manner in which it came into being through supportive dialogue and exchange in Forster's wide social circles. Charlotte Charteris, for example, deepens our understanding of Forster's long friendship with Christopher Isherwood by tracing the complexities of the “master” and “pupil” relationship in their respective texts. Her chapter draws on a wealth of theoretical material – late Foucault, Jack Halberstam, Lee Edelman – to suggest how these writers explore the formation of inter-generational queer cultures. Insights on sterility, and the significance of what Edelman calls “reproductive futurity”, are particularly astute. (Forster's “Little Imber” [1961], his science fiction fantasy of male parthenogenesis, might provide an alternative perspective here too).

Gemma Moss's chapter helpfully reminds us that this novel – unlike the child in “Little Imber” – was not the product of an exclusively gay male *milieu*. Her chapter draws

attention to Forster's close friendship with Florence Barger, whose support did much to bolster Forster's confidence in finding a language to express his same-sex desire. Indeed, one of the distinctive contributions of the volume is the manner in which it refocuses attention on the place of women in the novel itself. Anna Watson's chapter suggests that the apparent "flatness" of women characters in *Maurice* is a function of Forster's decision to focalize much of the novel through Maurice and Clive's limited perspectives. Readers will likely disagree on quite where to draw the line between Forster's "problematization" and his "enactment" of this "marginalization" (125). Moss's perceptive discussion of the influence of the "social purity" movement on Forster's work suggests one explanation for the text's often thinly-veiled misogyny: that women, in such discourses, frequently function as the guardians of precisely the normative sexual and domestic traditions that the text aims to challenge.

The collection also enriches our appreciation of the striking ways in which *Maurice* engages with its broader cultural, philosophical and religious contexts. Joseph Bristow examines how Forster looks back to the culture of British Aestheticism and negotiates the early-twentieth century notoriety of Oscar Wilde. Revisiting Maurice's characterization of himself as an "unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort", Bristow situates the novel in the aftermath of Lord Alfred Douglas's 1913 libel proceedings against Arthur Ransome and his *Oscar Wilde: A Critical Study* (1912). The chapter revisits Robert Martin's influential reading of the novel in terms of a tension between late-Victorian Hellenism and Edward Carpenter's "homosexual democracy", to suggest that the relationship between these intellectual currents in the novel is more complex than this reading acknowledges.

In a similarly astute contribution, Finn Fordham marshals a fascinating range of sources to analyse Forster's sense of the "soul" in *Maurice*, ranging from philosophical and scientific works on Platonism, idealism and materialism to sexological treatises in English and German. In its fraught negotiations between the values of "body" and "soul", Forster's novel reflects prevalent concerns in modernist literature about the uncertain origins of the self. Fordham explores these questions through a dazzling close reading of textural variants between editions of the text by P.H. Furbank (1971) and Philip Gardner (1999), returning us to puzzles of smudged commas (or is it a full stop?) in typescripts at King's College Library. Questions of the "soul" arise in different ways in Krzysztof Fardoński's discussion of the role of religion in the novel. In his closely attentive reading, Fardoński dwells on how character's encounters with orthodox religion – specifically, the Anglican Church – are integral to the structure of the novel, and to its central concern with societal control and repression. His approach is a valuable reminder that the religious

persecution of LGBT minorities is by no means confined to the past, and that Forster's text still speaks powerfully to the plight of these communities today.

The book's third section, "Afterlives," presents a fascinating discussion of *Maurice's* reception and transformation in contemporary literature, film and online fanfiction. David Medalie illuminates the novel's concern with the "social fabric" of Forster's England by positioning it in the context of the "New Liberalism" of the early twentieth century. This is expertly traced in Forster's use of legal and political imagery invoking the "organic". The relationship of gay men with the wider "body politic" in the text comes into sharper focus through a comparison with Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988). For Medalie, the contrast of these texts' visions of the social helps to guard against assumptions of a teleology of gay liberation. There is, though, a danger here of imposing on Hollinghurst's text a rather limited sense of the forms that queer sociality might take. For Medalie, Hollinghurst's text is a dystopian indictment of Thatcherite atomization; others may place a greater emphasis on its keen sensitivity to spaces in which gay men collectively negotiate identity (whether in the gym, or the archive). Howard J. Booth sets *Maurice* alongside Damon Galgut's "biofiction" *Arctic Summer* (2014) to think more carefully about the function of allegory in the respective texts. Close attention to Forster's passing allusions to Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) allows Booth to reveal the text's place in an English literary tradition of dissent and radicalism, for which allegory was a significant resource. Reading Forster alongside Walter Benjamin's work foregrounds the sense of "change, loss and ruination" (204) in a text that balances its moments of melancholy with a quiet if tenacious utopian hopefulness.

The volume's final chapter – and in many respects its most distinctive – is Claire Monk's discussion of the novel's film adaptation by Merchant Ivory in 1987, and the wealth of responses to the text in twenty-first-century online fanfictions. While some contributors to the volume are perhaps too insistent in their arguments for the novel's complexity, for Monk it is precisely the "simplicity" of *Maurice* that has made it such a rich site for readers' subsequent engagement. Strikingly, Monk encourages us to understand the text's composition as underpinned by similar affective investments as fanfiction today: speculation, playfulness, imagination, possibility. These insights are combined with scrupulous archival work on the fraught process of film adaptation by James Ivory and Ismail Merchant, a reminder of the admirable "commitment" and "defiance" (234) of a film produced at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

There are occasional moments in the collection where claims for the novel seem, perhaps, a little too insistent. Forster himself might raise a sceptical eyebrow at the

suggestion that this is a text which “goes to the edge of language and of realist fiction” (128). Debates about Forster’s “Modernism” (with a capital “M”?) still seem to shape readings determined to argue for an unacknowledged formal radicalism in his work. This might lead us to overlook more immediate models for Forster’s fiction, particularly in the case of *Maurice*. Recent scholarship on early twentieth-century middlebrow fiction, for example, might offer alternative ways to account for this text’s shifts of tone (irony, sentimentality, earnestness, hopefulness) and mix of genres (*Bildungsroman*, romance, fairy tale). Overall, though, this is a deeply satisfying collection, diligently edited by Emma Sutton and Tsung-Han Tsai and handsomely produced by Liverpool University Press. It will undoubtedly send readers to the greenwood afresh, copies of *Maurice* in hand.

**Krzysztof Fordoński and Anna Kwiatkowska (eds.), 2021.
The World of E.M. Forster – E.M. Forster and the World.
Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, pp. 167**

Ewa Kujawska-Lis

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The book, which commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of E.M. Forster's death and marks the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the International E.M. Forster Society, presents a collection of essays that serve as a significant contribution to the academic discussion concerning Forster and his place in the contemporary artistic world. The duality suggested by the title is reflected in the structure of the volume which is neatly and logically divided into two parts. Part one offers a handful of insightful novel scholarly readings of Forster's narratives, whereas part two engages in examinations of Forsterian influences traced in other literary and non-literary texts.

The collection opens with the essay by Francesca Pierini entitled "Such is the working of the southern mind'. A Postcolonial Reading of E.M. Forster's Italian Narratives." It focuses on the reconstruction of the connection between Britain and the South of Europe in the so-called "Italian novels." Pierini convincingly argues that this relation should be perceived as an important aspect of a process of identity building of the British nation.

The second chapter, "Opposed but Inevitable: E.M. Forster's Reaction Against and Acceptance of 'Cultural Selection' in *A Passage to India*," by Tarik Ziyad Gulcu discusses the most acclaimed of Forster's novels from the perspective of a 'cultural selection' which is to echo Darwin's natural selection. Yet, in his investigation, apart from the titular

narrative, Gulcu additionally presents the idea of selection against a broader spectrum of voices of Forster's contemporaries, like Virginia Woolf, Bertrand Russell or Angus Wilson.

Next, Sławomir Koziół, the author of the third chapter entitled "‘You Mustn't Say Anything against the Machine’. Power and Resistance in E.M. Forster's Short Story ‘The Machine Stops’,” offers a well-informed and convincing reading of the writer's only science-fiction story. He presents his analysis in the context of theoretical deliberations of Michael Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, with reference to biopolitics.

Part two begins with Mihaela Cel-Mare's chapter "(Re)visiting E.M. Forster's Adaptations. A Transmedial Perspective on *Where Angels Fear to Tread*." The analysis sets to compare the 1963 stage reworking of the novel by Elizabeth Hart and the 1991 screen adaptation by Charles Sturridge. She draws our attention to the fact that the two adaptations differ in their scene focalizations, i.e. while the stage version's main concern is the motif of disagreements between the characters, the film centers around Lilia's identity shift induced by her leaving England.

The essay that follows, entitled "What's Behind Their Umbrellas? Symbolic Consideration of Umbrella in E.M. Forster's *Howards End* and Katherine Mansfield's Selected Short Stories" by Anna Kwiatkowska, engagingly explains the intricacies of symbolic meanings of an umbrella, otherwise quite an ordinary object, and their impact on the narrative structures of the respective writers' works. The author argues convincingly that while in Mansfield's stories an umbrella emphasizes certain features of the characters, in Forster's novel it becomes an indispensable part of the character's life.

The next chapter by Paweł Wojtas, "Crippling Commitments: Charting the Ethics of Disability in Forster and Coetzee," follows suit and compares the works by Forster with the oeuvre of another writer. Wojtas offers an extremely interesting reading of Forster's and Coetzee's writings and the fictionalization of disability in particular through the prism of Kierkegaard's philosophical approach to self.

The volume closes with the chapter by Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz titled "E.M. Forster's *The Longest Journey* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child*: Continuation or Opposition?" The essay is a most noteworthy comparative study of two intertextually linked novels. The author's line of argumentation, which is logically composed, well-informed and clear in its execution, shows how Hollinghurst's narration, with its postmodern features, draws on Forster's modernist fiction.

In short, this compact volume surveys a surprisingly broad spectrum of ideas related to E.M. Forster's writings and their echoes in literary works of both his contemporaries

and those of the contemporary artistic world. The different perspectives employed by the contributors as well as various contexts of their deliberations offer the reader a truly multidisciplinary experience. The essays prove that there is still room for engaging, academic discussions devoted to this Edwardian author, his work, and its intertextual echoes. The book definitely uncovers new grounds, stimulates, and invites a further exchange of ideas related to Forster's oeuvre and its place in the world of literature and literary studies. The collection reads very well and, accordingly, while studying each respective chapter, one has an irresistible feeling that the Forsterian "only connect" spirit permeates the whole volume. It is a must-read for his academic fans.

***E.M. Forster. His Longest Journey*, documentary, DVD,
November 2020. Produced and directed by Adrian
Munsey & Vance Goodwin. Narrated by James Wilby**

Anna Kwiatkowska

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

The year 2020 was to witness several events commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of E.M. Forster's death. Sadly, due to the pandemic, some of them (such as conferences and seminars) scheduled for this year had to be cancelled. However, the anniversary has not been forgotten or postponed altogether. One of the events which can be counted among those that addressed the anniversary celebrations was the release of a DVD with a documentary on Forster's life and his literary oeuvre.

E.M. Forster. His Longest Journey, produced and directed by Adrian Munsey and Vance Goodwin, is a 50-minute long feature which consists of the fragments of interviews with the people who share the enthusiasm for Forster and his works, and who therefore have written extensively about him, have researched his works, or have been involved in the production of film adaptations based on Forster's novels. The main contributors include Nicola Beauman, Bill Goldstein, James Ivory, Prof. Wendy Moffat, Prof. Max Saunders, and Prof. Santanu Das. Yet, apart from the contemporary voices, we can also hear fragments of archived conversations conducted a couple of decades ago.

The structure of the film is an exciting arrangement of facts from Forster's life, his ideas, as well as photographs of places and people dear to him. They all blend into an engrossing presentation of the writer's figure. Consequently, *E.M. Forster. His Longest Journey* reveals some glimpses of the life of the famous writer. Furthermore, in the

process, the film introduces the spirit of the times Forster lived and loved in – the journey the viewer is taken on begins in the Victorian epoch, into which Forster was born and within the values of which he was brought up, and continues through the Edwardian and interwar war years, up to the post war times. Eventually, the documentary takes us, to paraphrase the words of Forster, to “happier years,” namely to the times when the law regarding homosexuality in England changed (1967), *Maurice* is published (1971), and the novel is eventually also filmed (1987).

As for editing, the moment the documentary starts the viewer is quite abruptly introduced to Forster commenting on himself as a novelist and on the characters from his works. This creates the feeling that the viewer apparently missed the beginning proper on the one hand, yet on the other, such immediacy of the beginning draws our attention to the very words of the writer which soon turn out to be the leitmotif of the whole documentary. In the subsequent shots we encounter, be it in the course of the interviews or in the photographs, different people Forster was in one way or another emotionally attached to. They include also the literary figures whom he called “people” rather than fictional characters. Subsequently, the memories about Forster, his life, and his fiction presented via personal comments of his past friends and the present day Forsterians, are smoothly interwoven with brief scenes from his filmed novels. This peculiar cinematic patchwork brings to mind Forster’s “only connect” phrase, which at some point is also referred to by the speakers. The documentary, thus, reminds of a scrap-book of Forster’s life – the best, the most memorable, the most important bits – all in there, marked, noted, commented. However, such an array of different ideas, names, titles, issues might not be very clear to those who are novices when it comes to the life and work of Forster. For instance, only knowing the context of the writer’s life and literary output, one is capable of matching the faces in the photographs appearing on the screen with the names mentioned by the speakers. That is why some viewers may find the film confusing at places.

Another aspect of the film which is worth noting is the music by Adrian Munsey. It renders wonderfully the melancholy and the nostalgia discernible throughout the film, be it in the way the speakers recall their Forster-related experiences or through the insertion of black-and-white pictures. The music ultimately creates an unobtrusive but meaningful and thus indispensable background. In fact, it is so well selected that when the credits appear and the sound of music comes to the fore, the viewer can appreciate its connection with the theme fully. The shift of focus onto music at closing clearly alludes to the significance of this artistic sphere in Forster’s life. At least this is the case when the audience are aware about this passion of Forster. Otherwise, the film

hardly makes any reference to the writer's interests other than those related to his literary themes or his romantic/sexual fascinations. Perhaps only the piano with an open score visible in one or two photographs showing Forster's room may be an indication of his musical concerns.

Touching upon the themes, the story of his life and writing career is told generally via one of them, that is homosexuality. This seems to be done in order to underline the importance of this issue both in his life and in his works. While watching the film, one has the impression that Forster to some extent accepted the reality which was characterized by a complete lack of acceptance of homosexuality but in which, nevertheless, he had to live. And while hoping and waiting for better times to come and refraining from taking radical steps, Forster gave vent to his liberal thought in his numerous speeches, lectures, broadcasts, and essays or conversations with friends, and, above all, in his letters. Following his idol, Jane Austen, he would comment on and criticize the society in a graceful manner, frequently resorting to irony, his favourite weapon.

The documentary presents the life of Forster in a nutshell. It references his family background, liberalism, tolerance, friendships, and the hardships stemming from the 'confirmed bachelor' status. It vividly portrays Forster's struggles related to him coming to terms with his homosexuality and looking for his place within the hostile societal norms in which he was to live and eventually also to love. However, to those who are quite familiar with the life and work of Forster, this short documentary may seem slightly one-sided, centring merely on him being a novelist and a short-story author. Yet, the general impression is undeniably positive. The elements of the past (black and white photographs, the voice of Forster, the voices of his friends), the elements of the present (the interviews with the scholars, scenes from the adaptations realized after the death of Forster), and the artistic world (the comments of the actors, the works of art, the book covers, Cambridge architecture) amiably intermingle and create the feeling of an impressionistic picture. The individual parts of this picture remind of Chekhovian slices of life – glimpses that intrigue and ask for further investigation. Munsey and Goodwin present the viewer with a couple of scenes, photographs, quotations, as well as personal items like letters and manuscripts, or a fragment of a page of Forster's secret diary, teasingly leaving the rest outside the frames. This secrecy and the limited vision are echoed in the frequently used close-ups on the one hand and the bird's eye view shots on the other. Both ways of presenting veil a certain section of the presented material, inviting thus the viewers to learn more, to go beyond the frames and find out the details about the "slices" of Forster's life-long journey.

Last but not least, I personally found the final scene quite moving and artfully symbolic. It shows the figure of the elderly writer, with his back turned to the viewer, slowly but inevitably disappearing into the green. This metaphorical ending, within seconds, is capable of alluding to a number of issues; first, it makes one think of the title of the documentary, thus creating a compositional frame; second, it points to Forster's favourite novel (*The Longest Journey*); and third, it brings in the idea of Forsterian greenwood ("The Other Side of the Hedge," *Maurice*, *The Longest Journey*, to name but the most obvious texts referring to the idea), which in turn bring to mind the theme of homosexuality.

All in all, the documentary *E.M. Forster. His Longest Journey* manages in less than an hour to present the figure of Forster against a broader social and historical context. It allows the viewer to taste the spirit of the epoch the writer was familiar with, of the times long gone but preserved on the leaves of his narratives. Thus, although short, it offers quite a number of Forster related facts and, what is more, it is at the same time quite powerful in terms of suggesting emotions both of the writer and those who take, or once took, an active interest in his life.

**Heather Green and J.C. Green, 2020. *Forster in 50*.
Dorking: The Cockerel Press, pp. 28.**

**Krzysztof Fordoński
University of Warsaw**

Dorking Museum, located just a few miles away from West Hackhurst, where Forster lived with his mother from 1925 to 1945 in the house designed by his late father, had been planning an exhibition in 2020 to mark the 50th anniversary of E.M. Forster's death. The exhibition was intended to concentrate on the time Forster spent in the region, his involvement in local initiatives and politics, including writing pageants for local societies and running the Dorking Refugee Committee during the 2nd World War. The opening of the exhibition was first postponed to 2021 though and then it has had to be postponed once again on account of the new Covid restrictions.

The museum did publish, however, a short book in tribute to Forster entitled *Forster in 50*. The title is an allusion to the anniversary the book commemorates but at the same time it reveals the idea behind the publication. The plots of five of Forster's best known novels are retold here in 50 words and four illustrations each. As the author, Heather Green, explains in the Introduction, "fifty words is often cited as the maximum word count for a museum object label," the book is thus intended to "bridge the gap between museum label and story." We are invited to experience the book as we do experience a museum exhibition, brief introductions on short panels of text are matched with collections of four striking images for each novel.

The black-and-white illustrations, combining in a collage-like manner original drawings with short cut-out fragments of texts (of the novels but not exclusively) and snippets of historical illustrations such as maps, represent single scenes taken from the five novels.

J.C. Green chose from each of them four crucial moments. They may be represented by crucial objects such as the umbrella which opens the section dedicated to *Howards End*, or by a characteristic location such as the British Museum where Maurice and Alec meet, and sometimes by vast panoramas such as the vista of Florence, broad but at the same time somewhat claustrophobic, in *A Room with a View* section. They are all a testimony of a very personal and creative reading of Forster's fiction.

The book is addressed to seasoned Forsterians who will certainly enjoy the creative approach to well-known stories. It may, however, be equally attractive to all those who have yet to discover Forster for themselves as the very first introduction to his fiction.

Copies of the book are available through the museum website www.dorkingmuseum.org.uk

Call for Papers

E.M. Forster – Shaping the Space of Culture

7 June 2021

International E.M. Forster Society
University of Warsaw
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

Confirmed Keynote Speakers:
Prof. Claire Monk (de Montfort University)
Prof. David Scourfield (Maynooth University)

We would like to invite you to an international conference on the life and works of E.M. Forster, the first on-line forum to be organised by the International E.M. Forster Society. The idea to organize the meeting of Forster scholars and fans on the 51st anniversary of Forster's death and the 11th anniversary of the founding of the Society, originated partially from the cancellation of the Cambridge anniversary conference which was to be held in April 2020 (awaited by many of us so anxiously) and partially from the desire expressed by several members of IEMFS to meet and share the ideas despite the circumstances and against the odds.

The title of the conference calls for yet another evaluation of the presence of Forster and his oeuvre in the world of culture. The word 'space', a commodious term, in the title of our conference is to reflect, in the first place, a vast array of angles in which Forster and his works, both literary and non-literary ones, can be approached. But above all the

notion of the space of culture is to underline the multicultural and multidimensional character of Forster's works and ideas. In his novels, shorts stories, lectures, or radio broadcasts, the writer created the space which is a meeting point of various fields of human activities, a construct allowing for interdisciplinary collaboration. His narratives feature many voices, many geographies, and many cultures. Space, thus, can stand for numerous notions and can accommodate for scholarly discussions enclosing different subjects and areas of knowledge. As for the other word from the title, equally important, 'shaping', it also has a double-layered meaning. On the one hand, it refers to Forster's creativity, his way of shaping fictional worlds and, in turn, the way his writing became a part of Modernist culture. On the other hand, 'shaping' is to express the importance of Forsterian element in the present-day culture, its ceaseless influence on the thinking and writing of others.

Subsequently, we would like to enquire into the rich and complex worlds created by Forster a century ago and to see how his works, and the values he stood for within British and world culture(s) got recontextualized in the 21st century. We are also interested in the responses in literature, arts, social history his writings continuously generate half a century after his demise. We are, therefore, keen on considering all possible aspects of Forster's oeuvre and life, as perceived by various theories, methodologies, and schools. Consequently, the discussions concerning contemporary receptions of the writer as well as the extent to which and the way in which different cultures influence the shaping of our perception of Forster nowadays are welcome, too.

The conference is free and it will take place on June 7th, 2021 on Zoom approximately from 1 to 7 p.m. CET. The conference itself will include keynote lectures and discussions on submitted papers/presentations (specific form of the discussion will depend on the number of submissions). The presentations/papers themselves will be made available in two forms – the participants may record them on video and we will put these videos on a special YouTube channel, or send them in written form (Word files, preferably) and we will upload them to a cloud. All participants will receive links to the submitted papers and presentations. It is possible to participate in the conference without a paper but you have to register in order to receive the links.

Proposals for a 20-minute long presentation or a paper up to 6000 words should consist of a 150 word abstract and a short biographical note including your academic affiliation (if available), they should be sent to the following address emforster2021@gmail.com. Proposals are welcome until March 1st 2021 – the authors of the accepted papers will be notified within a month of the acceptance. The submissions

should be made by May 21st 2021 although we will greatly appreciate it if they are sent in earlier to give other participants as much time as possible to watch or read them.

We intend to publish a reviewed collection of essays following the conference as a special issue of the *Polish Journal of English Studies* (issue 7.2/2021). The journal is available online (from the web page and through several data bases) and the special issue will also be available in print. We will expect submissions by July 15th 2021 in order to publish the issue by the end of 2021. If you intend to submit your paper, please check the information for contributors at: <http://pjes.edu.pl/start/>

All further details will be available from the website of the Society:

<http://society.emforster.de>

and on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/409977416897829>

Facebook users may also consider following our page at

<https://www.facebook.com/IEMFS>

or joining the group of our Society at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/448009452056029/>

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Procedura recenzowania i przyjmowania do druku

„Language and Literary Studies of Warsaw” (Rocznik Naukowy Lingwistycznej Szkoły Wyższej w Warszawie) to interdyscyplinarne recenzowane pismo naukowe ukazujące się raz w roku. Zapraszamy do składania do druku artykułów dotyczących wszelkich aspektów studiów filologicznych i językoznawczych, studiów literaturoznawczych, kulturoznawczych oraz historycznych. Publikujemy artykuły w językach polskim i angielskim, ale interesują nas artykuły dotyczące np. języka i literatury np. Niemiec, Francji czy Hiszpanii. Zachęcamy również do składania do druku recenzji lub proponowania książek do zrecenzowania.

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1. Artykuł powinien zawierać od 4000 do 8000 słów (włączając cytaty tekstowe, przypisy i bibliografię).
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 Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.
 Cytowana w tekście w formie: (Pollan 2006, 69)
 Książka z dwoma autorami:
 Ward, Geoffrey C., i Ken Burns. 2007. *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945*. New York: Knopf.
 Cytowana w tekście w formie: (Ward i Burns 2007, 52).
 Artykuł w czasopiśmie naukowym:
 Weinstein, Joshua I. 2009. *The Market in Plato's Republic*. „Classical Philology” 104: 439–58.
 Cytowany w tekście w formie: (Weinstein 2009, 440)
 Artykuł w książce:
 Kelly, John D. 2010. *Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana*. W *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, pod redakcją John D. Kelly, Beatrice Jauregui, Sean T. Mitchell i Jeremy Walton, 67–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
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 - Book with two authors:
Ward, Geoffrey C., and Ken Burns. 2007. *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945*. New York: Knopf.
 - Article in a scholarly journal:
Weinstein, Joshua I. 2009. “The Market in Plato’s *Republic*.” *Classical Philology* 104: 439–58.

Chapter in a book:

Kelly, John D. 2010. "Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana." In *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, edited by John D. Kelly, Beatrice Jauregui, and Jeremy Walton, 67–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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Authors' biodata

John Attridge is a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of Surrey, conducting research on the representation of working-class lives in the fiction of E.M. Forster and historical evaluations of the author's views of class delineations in Edwardian England. This research also aims to link to wider cultural debates in the twenty-first century around identity politics, and how such re-readings of texts might provide a valuable historical re-evaluation of class consciousness within the English literary canon. John obtained a BA in English Literature and an MA in Modern and Contemporary Culture, Language and Thought from the University of Sussex. He also previously delivered a paper on Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* at the conference "Captivity and Culpability: The Discipling Subject in the Cultural Imagination" organised by the Human Rights Consortium in Senate House, London.

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