

# Towards Forsterian Mobilities through Public Transport as Public Space

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**Abstract:** Writings of place experience contribute to mobility studies by casting light on individual perspectives and the shaping of memory by art. E.M. Forster had consistent but varied interest in public transport (PT) settings, especially those of trains but also trams and buses. Forster studies benefit from exploring his treatment of PT while asking if there are mobilities that are specifically Forsterian. Literary studies of mobilities develop here within the context of an interdisciplinary project concerned with the kinds of public space found on and around PT. In grasping the mobilities of an individual writer, biographical evidence is both indispensable and problematic. Forsterian mobilities repeat and modify those of earlier English literary authors, as when a journey in *Howards End* echoes one in W.M. Thackeray's *Pendennis*. Equally, PT networks such as the tramway of Alexandria were for Forster markers of modernity. Most importantly for Forsterian mobilities, PT travel facilitates personal boundary-crossing.

**Keywords:** Forster, E.M.; public transport; mobilities; literary urban studies; individuality

## Introduction\*

This article investigates some of the diverse public transport (hereafter PT) representations in E. M. Forster's varied fiction and non-fictional writings, written over a seventy-year period. Isolating representations of PT from other mental and physical acts of movement means cutting off Forster's walks from his bus or taxi rides. In dialogue with this century's interdisciplinary humanities and social

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sciences research into mobilities, the article therefore seeks, as groundwork for a study of PT in Forster, to identify and understand specifically Forsterian mobilities: the sorts of move characteristic of Forster and his writings. By engaging with the current mobilities paradigm in the social sciences and humanities, studies of Forsterian mobilities would link individuals' conscious awareness of personal movement and boundary-crossing, including the shaping of that into art, and matters that are beyond individual comprehension such as the interaction of very large numbers of bodies, human and other, in a transport network.

Humanities scholars working on mobilities often focus on a single transport mode or its settings. Benjamin Bateman (2015), for instance, extracts from Forster's work representations of experience in railway stations and carriages. Others concentrate on the horse-drawn cab, the tram, the bus, the car and the ocean liner (Gavin 2015; Lowe 2015; Shelley 2015; Stobbs Wright 2015; Wagner 2015). For Bateman, "brief escapes, aleatory pleasures, and passing surges of emotion" characterise the Forsterian railway journey (Bateman 2015, 196). Forster related to PT and the encounters it generates as an individual and as a creative artist, but the manifestation *in* his writings of these technologies and the spaces associated with them is also revealing of his era.

In this essay, after surveying the theoretical landscape, including the notion of PT as public space, I turn to applications in literary studies of the new mobilities paradigm. Individuality is an unsolved problem within research into mobilities. The mobilities paradigm, after all, has often aligned itself with "posthuman" positions including the non-representational theory developed in cultural geography to trace non-conscious bodily movements (Anderson 2019; McCormack 2012; Merriman and Pearce 2017). Three brief case studies of Forsterian mobilities follow. The first concentrates on fiction and non-fiction which Forster wrote during his twenties, examining Edwardian representations of cross-class random encounters between people on trains and trams. The second connects Forster and a notable literary predecessor, William Makepeace Thackeray, via a key late-twentieth-century work of criticism on Forsterian mobilities, by Frederic Jameson. Thirdly and finally, I glance at Forster's 1923 essay collection *Pharos and Pharillon*, in which the tramway is a core aspect of modernity in presenting Alexandria to a (largely) English audience. The research develops earlier examinations of Forster, space and place (Finch 2011; Finch 2016, 153–72), but the analyses presented here are entirely new. In the article, these investigations develop in conjunction with a current multidisciplinary research project: "Public Trans-

port as Public Space in European Cities: Narrating, Experiencing, Contesting” (PUTSPACE; Tuvikene et al. 2021). The objective shared by the interdisciplinary team on this project is to humanise transport research by exploring the different kinds of public space that exist, actually and potentially, around PT modes such as buses, trams and metro systems.

### **Biography, Distance and Mobility in Forsterian Transport Representations**

During Forster’s lifetime the materialities of PT, and notably those of train travel, structured daily life in England in England, the British Empire and beyond. Among the geographical settings of all his novels and stories written before World War One is a specific spatial zone: one extending around London and encompassing suburbanising countryside and older urban settlements themselves expanding steadily. The limits of the area are positioned a couple of hours’ train journey from the metropolis. Industry, institutional building, motorized road transport and speculative construction of houses appear in this body of writing as emerging features of a broader London hinterland containing the university cities of Oxford and Cambridge, towns like Tonbridge in Kent, counties like Hertfordshire and Surrey and, on the perimeter, the cathedral city of Salisbury. This particular complex of imaginative place is both conceptual and occupies a place in real-world cartographies, as when the voice of an ironized authorial narrator in *Howards End* invites readers to look northwards from England’s South Coast (see Finch 2016, 153–72). This place zone, a broader South of England, underpins and structures Forster’s fictions of his native country in complex and multiple ways, operating through their own cartographies (Finch 2011, 66–69). The southern English zone, with its own internal complexity, exists in a dialectic – often implicit – with the overseas places on which it depends for income, those in a peripheral position both financially and governmentally, places such as Egypt and India.

As well as being a location for encounters, and therefore meaningful, PT has distinctive qualities as a type of space for Forster, a fact that emerges when biographical evidence is put alongside that found in his writing (both fiction and non-fiction). Forster met the love of his life, Mohammed el Adl, on an Alexandria tram where the latter worked as a conductor (Watt 1983). Biographers and commentators from P.N. Furbank (1978) onwards have informed readers of apparently mundane events like this but have not so far grasped the importance

to Forster's mental and sexual development of encounters in PT space – and therefore of that space's own qualities both for him and for others. As argued in transport geography and the sociology of mobilities, distance is temporal and spatial but also social; it calls for analysis in itself, rather than just use as a tool in spatial analysis, and it has political dimensions, not least in our times related to sustainability and to conceptualizations of time (Banister 2010; Handel 2018). Following the pioneering work of Wolfgang Schivelbusch, research into the identities and experiences fostered by the coming of the railway has often emphasized the mechanization involved in the timetable, or acts of spectating in which the world beyond the window is reframed as a landscape (Schivelbusch [1977]; Revill 2011). The train in Forster, this article claims, has a socially in-between character. It provides in its carriages a zone of social connection, just as its rails connected settlements that lay many miles apart.

Trains' varied mobilities punctuate Forster's fiction and non-fiction. The train was Forster's main mode of connection between London and the part-suburban, part-rural county of Surrey, his main home throughout the period 1904–1945 (Finch 2011, 177–231; Gardner 2014). In the former, it is during a train journey that Maurice Hall is sexually propositioned by a man and then faces a personal crisis that leads him to recognise his true identity as a homosexual (Forster 1971, 131; Finch 2011, 114–15). The train of *Maurice* is thus a stage not just for in-betweenness and ambivalence but fuller transformations at least in self-perception. In Forster's non-fiction, meanwhile, people who entered the countryside of southern England from its towns, most often by train, become figures for social change driven by expanding conditions of urbanity. Forster called a 1940s memoir of his relations with a house at Abinger Hammer "West Hackhurst: A Surrey Ramble" (see Finch 2012; Gardner 2014). Ramblers were people who came from urban centres to the countryside, sometimes with the explicit aim of opening up land in private ownership for public use (Matless 2016). This made them key figures in politicised mobility clashes of the earlier twentieth century in Britain. Forster's essay "My Wood," first published in a left-wing newspaper in 1926, satirised rural property-owners' attitudes towards day-trippers to the countryside who leave "paper," "tins" and other evidence of themselves behind (Forster 1996: 23; see Finch 2011: 206–07). For Forster, identifying himself (via the title of the 1940s memoir) as a Rambler meant identifying with town-dwellers rather than playing the part of a genteel countryman, and the same choice of identification runs through many of the case studies here.

### Public Transport as Public Space: Politicizing Mobilities; Provincializing the Metropolis

As well as being a noteworthy writer of the age of modernism in British literature, Forster lived through the era in transport history during which vast numbers of people used the PT networks of cities and took trains between them. Private car ownership in Britain only grew to become a mass phenomenon from the 1950s onwards, by which time Forster was already an old man. London's PT networks during Forster's lifetime were not universal resources for movement, equally accessible for all, but were highly stratified in social and spatial terms. The Underground railway (London's metro system) and trains to parts of the commuter belt surrounding London including rural Surrey were middle-class forms of transport, broadly speaking. Other modes such as the tramways of the city had a distinctly working-class image. Fare levels helped generate these differences.

Train, tram and bus travel figures multiple times in Forster's earlier writings, from the death of Rickie Elliot in *The Longest Journey* to the story "The Celestial Omnibus." There are also numerous mentions of PT in the letters and journals. Unsurprisingly, social class perceptions are often central in these, as they had been in earlier writing of the horse bus and stagecoach eras by the likes of Dickens, Thackeray and Trollope. The nineteenth-century horse omnibus of London, historical geographer Richard Dennis (2021) has pointed out, separated people as much as it brought them together. It put travellers into close physical proximity to one another, side by side on the omnibus, but also divided them from those outside it, both from the rich in private carriages and the poor going everywhere on foot. Forster, like Thackeray and the other earlier novelists in the English comic moralist tradition, uses PT experience to reveal character. An example occurs when Charlotte Bartlett's personal muddle appears to readers through her mistakenly alighting at the wrong station of two at Dorking, Surrey, in *A Room with a View* (Forster 1978, 120; Finch 2011, 201). In all of these cases, the publicness of public space is at stake, and transport in vehicles shared with others is a key site for negotiations which are both social and individual.

PT brings multiple types of public space into being (Tuvikene et al. 2021). Public space is itself a term with its own history, and it is inherently two-sided, indicating both an ideal in urban society and many actual physical areas people can enter to encounter one another, including not just squares but railway

station platforms and the interiors of buses (Tuvikene et al. 2021, 2). Research methodologies originating in the humanities bring a “more-than-technological” perspective to fields of study which have long been dominated by approaches originating in engineering, finance and public policy (Tuvikene et al. 2021, 4–9). To think of PT not just as something with a function but as a public space in which people meet and identities are formed is to humanise it. Such a perspective aids the insight that “mobility experiences and systems of mobility are important means of grasping how cities are organized and understood but they should be understood together with the political economy of how PT is made” (Tuvikene et al. 2021, 9).

In effect, this is a political economy critique of the new mobilities paradigm, yet one which equally aims to trace actual mobilities with precision. In its wake, what could Forsterian PT as public space mean? Research into transport mobilities may focus on European cities but will fail analytically if it exaggerates their importance in world histories of mobility. Concepts such as public space need to have their “epistemologies” and history in European thought and urban history “provincialized” (Tuvikene et al. 2021, 18). Such thoughts apply here in that Forster was a European writer trained in the classical tradition whose power was to express how boundaries are crossed, whether geographical or those of social and sexual identities. An understanding of Forsterian mobilities needs to consider his already-mentioned range of writing on non-European, or borderline European, urban sites which were also, in the case of Alexandria and Indian cities, on imperial peripheries.

### **Mobility Studies, Individuality and the Individual Writer**

In 2015, Adrienne E. Gavin and Andrew F. Humphries could say that studies of transport in literature were “rare,” the importance of the topic to the meanings of fiction “often overlooked” (Gavin and Humphries 2021, 1). Projects like PUTSPACE meet the need for more research into literary representations of transport settings and experiences. Equally, the meaning of transport has changed in humanities approaches which put transport into dialogue with other concepts, themselves questionable and debated, and through being set into networks or patterns of traceable movement such as loops (Bissell 2013).

Forsterian mobilities are not just those characteristic of a given human individual but of an individual who was self-consciously a literary artist. Literary

scholars' chief contribution to the new mobilities paradigm so far has been to insist that willed, remembered and narrated movements matter. They go alongside – and to an extent question – the emphasis in actor-network theory and other branches of research positioned as posthuman (on which much of the social science mobilities work depends) on the unwilled, on bodies and the unconscious or semi-conscious mobilities as part of large groups of lifeforms in ecosystems. Literary accounts of mobility are essential materials for social scientists because they retain long-range narratives of experience that are hard to access through other categories of source such as interviews. In the words of Lynne Pearce, “the connection between the urban subject’s apprehension of the material present and his or her personal past” emerges particularly strongly in literary texts such as novels (Pearce 2020, 207). Academic literary scholarship has traditionally been highly subjectivist, whether in its New Critical, postmodernist or ideological forms; posthuman approaches represent a challenge to it. Yet literary texts also provide powerful, perhaps uniquely powerful, evidence of how humans experience mobilities in environments like public space.

An important recent contribution to this new sub-discipline is the 2019 volume *Mobilities, Literature, Culture* edited by Pearce with Marian Aguiar and Charlotte Mathieson. This finds room for work on individual writers alongside studies of particular mobilised spaces (such as the buses of apartheid-era South Africa), accounts of how bodily practices such as running and cycling feel, sites experienced in transit such as the motel and the self-driving car, and genres such as the road movie (Aguiar, Mathieson and Pearce 2019). The book builds on earlier work such as that of Pearce with Peter Merriman in which “a broadened understanding of ‘kinaesthetics,’ through which scholars can examine how movement is enacted, felt, perceived, expressed, metered, choreographed, appreciated and desired” is offered as a guiding principle when humanities scholars work on mobilities (Merriman and Pearce 2017, abstract). Types of literary text including children’s fiction and regional novels develop their own characteristic patterns relating material bodily mobilities and networks to longer-term and intellectualized aspects of human self-consciousness including memory (Murray and Overall 2017; Pearce 2020).

Like Bateman, Nour Dakkak (2019) uses a reading of *Howards End* to juxtapose the varied mobilities of the established railways and the emergent motor car in the modernity of early twentieth-century Britain. Her reading develops the classic account of Forster’s characteristic elusiveness and covert meanings as expressed in what seems a report on the railway journey north from London

which Fredric Jameson offers in his 1990 essay “Modernism and Imperialism” (Jameson 2007). But, unlike Bateman, Dakkak builds her argument around embodiment, a central concept in the posthuman turn away from subject-focused philosophies (Dakkak 2019, 117–18; MacCormack 2012). It is important in literary studies for embodiment in a given moment to be juxtaposed with what Pearce calls “dis-embodiment,” as people feel and remember the impacts of different times and places on themselves, a phenomenon uniquely mediated in literature.

Yet the focus on mobilities that are specifically “Forsterian” means looking at what was individual about Forster as an individual and a creative artist more, perhaps, than seeking in his writings representative qualities of a narrowly defined age of “modernism.” For example the space of PT in Forster’s writings, both fictional and non-fictional, is often the site for glimpses of a desired other who exists across class or ethnic boundary lines. Maurice Hall meets the norms defined in his particular suburb via his fellow commuters from “Sunnington” (a fictional suburb resembling Weybridge in Surrey, where Forster lived from 1904 to 1925) to London on the 8:36 train every weekday morning (Forster 1971, 83; Finch 2011, 114). Coming back from London one day, Maurice meets the stranger who propositions him when the two are alone in the compartment together. Through the consequences of this encounter he is eventually able to meet his own true self. Similarly, qualities of individuality are implicit in earlier studies of mobility as mediated in literary texts. Elsa Court, for instance, reviews the cultural geography of the US motel space, then turns to the particularity of Vladimir Nabokov’s response to this potent location of automobility: “it was his position as a foreigner in America that made him singularly perceptive of the idiosyncrasies of its innocuous everyday culture” (Court 2019, 67). Like Nabokov in America, Forster was always an outsider in Britain. Although it was his native country and he was a privileged intellectual, he spent his life as a gay man living under a regime which criminalised homosexuality; this is an inseparable part of his mobilities’ individuality. The individuality of PT space in Forster is twofold. Forsterian PT space is both a location for encounters, and therefore somewhere charged with meaning through what happens there, and has its own qualities as an in-between, partially public, space. The next section explores this duality by reading one incident in Forster’s second novel, *The Longest Journey*, and connecting that to a non-fictional incident of December 1905 as reported in the writer’s journal.

### Cross-Class Random Encounters around Trams and Trains circa 1905

The sixth chapter of the novel's first section, "Cambridge," is the one in which protagonist Rickie Elliott turns away from his intellectual friend Stewart Ansell, from the university city of Cambridge and from "imagination" (Forster 1984: 59). The latter is symbolised by "a fragment of a little story he had tried to write last term," which has a setting in Sicily recalling Forster's own early stories. Most of the chapter is dedicated to Rickie and Ansell's arrival in Cambridge at the beginning of term. A tram accident brings Rickie into contact with a member of a different social class from his own, his bed-maker ("bedder") or servant at college, Mrs Aberdeen. Unlike their contemporaries Tilliard and Hornblower, Rickie and Ansell do not hail hansom cabs (private-hire horse-drawn carriages) when a PT accident happens: "the wheels fell off the station tram" (Forster 1984, 55).

"Let's get out and walk," muttered Ansell. But Rickie was succouring a distressed female – Mrs Aberdeen. "Oh, Mrs Aberdeen, I never saw you; I am so glad to see you – I am so very glad." Mrs Aberdeen was cold. She did not like being spoken to outside the college, and was also distraught about her basket. Hitherto no genteel eye had ever seen inside it, but in the collision its little calico veil fell off, and there was revealed – nothing. The basket was empty [...]. All the same, she was distraught, and "We shall meet later, sir, I dessy," was all the greeting Rickie got from her. (Forster 1984, 55–56)

The tram thus links social classes but not in any easy or idealistic way. Rickie and Ansell board a second PT vehicle, identified as "the slow stuffy tram that plies ever twenty minutes between the unknown and the market-place" (Forster 1984, 57). This spatial identifier, "the unknown," indicates how the lives of Mrs Aberdeen and other ordinary Cambridge citizens remain, in Rickie's phrase, "hidden" off-stage in this spatial "unknown" which has a Cambridge toponym for him, the name of the working-class suburb Barnwell (Forster 1984, 56).

The chapter narrates Rickie's shift from personal relations with Ansell towards a conventional and socially acceptable marriage to Agnes. His friendship with Ansell is not just a potential love relationship between a single-sex couple but also a cross-class friendship, albeit one of a much more subdued and even barely visible kind, since it is between two Cambridge undergraduates, than other such

relationships in Forster's writing and imaginative biography. The "lame shepherd" Forster met then sought again at Figsbury Ring outside Salisbury in 1903 was a symbol of the sort of man he wanted to connect with (Forster [1903–09]: 129). The love between Maurice Hall and Alec Scudder would be an example from the fiction; so would Forster and el Adl, as well as Forster and the police officer Bob Buckingham, from the life. Ansell's background is "plebeian" and Rickie tells Agnes Pembroke that he "isn't a gentleman." Later, readers hear from the narrating authorial voice that Ansell's father is "a provincial draper of moderate prosperity," prosperous enough to support his son's studies of philosophy (Forster 1984, 30, 7, 29). The apparently low-interest, everyday (and even to be avoided as socially infra dig, as by Tilliard and Hornblower) environment of the urban or inter-city PT vehicle is thus part of Forster's artistic structure as a vital contributor to the possibility of such relations. Broadly, the mundane aspects of urban modernity are to be welcomed, Forster claims, in that they bring people together in ways that earlier hierarchies denied or disabled.

The passage in which Rickie meets Mrs Aberdeen plays down the possibility that social change might be fuelled by cross-class encounters that happen in the environments of PT. Rickie's remarks to Ansell after the brief conversation following the tram accident seem naïve forebears of Forster's later 'only connect' motto. Rickie speculates that "bedders are to blame for the present lamentable state of things, just as much as gentlefolk" and, somewhat presumptuously, asserts that Mrs Aberdeen "ought to want me to come [and visit her at home]. She ought to introduce me to her husband" (Forster 1984, 56). The tone is subtly different when we examine a comparable encounter on a train through Cambridgeshire in December 1905, which Forster recorded in his "Notebook Journal," with "a ganger's wife and child." Work on *The Longest Journey* "was well under way" during this month (Heine 1984, xxxiii). This encounter perhaps inspired the conversation following the tram accident in the novel. In support of such a claim is Forster's statement in his diary that the woman encountered "had the charm of Mrs Tabor" (Forster [1903–09], 141). Mrs Tabor was Forster's bedmaker at King's College, Cambridge (Gardner 2011: 219, f.n. 169) and her surname echoes in that of the novel's Mrs Aberdeen.

The train-carriage encounter happened at March, in the Fenlands of the Isle of Ely, on a longer-distance train (Forster was travelling from Hunstanton in Norfolk to Manchester). This was in other words not on urban PT exemplified by the city tram, but still not far from Cambridge. Forster reports opening a door for this woman and child so they can enter his compartment, then the wom-

an's conversation, which focuses on the fatal effects of poverty and inequality triggered, in this case, by a greedy landlord. The woman tells him that another child of hers died, "because the landlord had turned them out in the winter with a week's notice, and they hurried into a house 'where you could put plates under the door.'" She continues: "'The railway has made March and you may say spoiled it - at least for poor people,'" that is, because of rising rents (Forster [1903-09], 140). Forster's journal note has at least implications of political content, if nothing more direct than that: such conditions should not exist. Forster does not seem to have thought, as Rickie does, that working-class people like the ganger's wife are "to blame [...] just as much as gentlefolk." In the novel, this is to say, the political consequences of knowledge gained through cross-class encounters on PT recede in the ironic treatment of Rickie as naïve protagonist.

### Duplicities and Redoubling: Jameson, Forster, Thackeray

Late-twentieth-century Forster scholars including Frederic Jameson and others advanced political readings on a global scale that linked with locality. Jameson's account of *Howards End* in his 1990 "Modernism and Imperialism" merits reconsideration with the specific mobilities of a given transport type, the railway, in mind. Jameson reads *Howards End* via Mrs Munt's journey early on in the novel's plot to its titular house, Helen Schlegel having written to announce her engagement to Paul Wilcox. The passage, Jameson says, is revealing of "Forster's duplicities," concealed by its apparent "amiable simplicity" (Jameson 2007, 158). On this argument, the novel contains "pockets of philosophical complexity [...] hidden away" beneath its surface. We could redeploy Court's adjective for the motel in Nabokov and call the surface of *Howards End* "innocuous," in narrative terms (Court 2019, 67). The novel remains amenable to "everyday" and even avowedly right-wing readings, after all (e.g. North 2019). Such Forsterian "pockets," Jameson claims, are specifically meditations on the philosophy of space. Important to them is Forster's individual use of mobilised spatial settings such as the view that a railway carriage affords. Few would contest the truth of Court's assertion that outsiders have a particular way of seeing that is unavailable to those for whom the matter seen is not foreign. But outsiders can misinterpret as well as be perceptive. The challenge is that particular types of grouped identity (as a being embodied somehow, as gendered, via "race" or class perceptions) exist alongside both full subjective individuality and a biological commonality as a species member.

Jameson's moves, drawn from Freudian psychoanalytic technique, remain appealing because they tolerate doubleness, the simultaneous presence of radical others, in a literary text with its own unconscious. He reads *Howards End* in terms of "substitution": "of rivalry for exploitation, and of a First World set of characters for a Third World presence" (Jameson 2007, 156). In the age of imperialism, Forster's readers are presented with a thing called the English novel and instructed not to see empire in it, Jameson claims. Yet, like Court, Jameson obscures the question of whether mobilities can be characteristic of an individual. Both the novel overall and the scene of Mrs Munt's travel to Hertfordshire from London by train "under innumerable tunnels [...] to rescue Helen from this dreadful mess" in particular demonstrate to Jameson a critical desideratum (Forster 1975, 29). Namely, "recoordinating the concept of style with some new account of the experience of space, both together now marking the emergence of the modern as such" (Jameson 2007, 159). Style is conceived by Jameson as individual, unlike "the emergence of the modern," clearly a broader phenomenon.

A dimension largely unacknowledged by Jameson in "Modernism and Imperialism" is that of direct literary influence. Jameson and other writers on the railway mobilities of *Howards End* (e.g. Bateman 2015) do not mention the close resemblance between the opening plot gambit of *Howards End* and that of Thackeray's 1848–50 novel *Pendennis*. Having heard that his nephew Arthur Pendennis has suddenly become engaged to a partner considered shocking and unsuitable, the socially proper and narrow-minded (but caring) Major Pendennis, Arthur's uncle, travels by stagecoach to an unnamed south-western county of England identifiable with Devon to rescue the boy-man (Thackeray 1994, 1–6, 83–94). In both cases an uncle or aunt motivated by a fear of social shame rushes across the country using the longer-distance transport mode of the era in an ultimately successful effort to prevent a hasty marriage.

Both Thackeray and Forster build plotting around a depiction of the changing mobilities of their moment – stage coach to railway in Thackeray (the railway is being built in the rural area at the end of *Pendennis*); railway to motor-car in *Howards End*. Another doubling from those already grasped by Jameson, like home versus colonial (or the double life central to *Maurice*) is thus a doubling of Forster's tale with Thackeray's. This is at once a matter of two individualities, Forster's and Thackeray's, each marked by a personal style, and a representational quality characteristic of realism, concerned with

the era's characteristic transport modes and characters who can seem representative. Mrs Munt and Major Pendennis stand for characteristics of the English upper middle classes, and sub-categories within those classes, during specific historical phases. Forster offers readers with whom he shares a background in reading and English social class the witty gesture of alluding to *Pendennis* via the resemblance between the two quests. Later readers are much less likely to have read *Pendennis* than Forster's initial readers were. They are therefore less likely to get the joke, or to grasp what it highlights, namely that socially conservative forces and apparently disruptive transport technologies go hand in hand. The transport narrative of *Howards End* is additionally a repetition of that in *Pendennis* in another respect. This is that both share a position in industrial modernity, or Jameson's "modern as such," which has as a characteristic the repeated introduction of new modes of transport and the obsolescence of the existing ones, themselves quite recently novel.

The singleness of an individual's mobility thus comes into contact with a doubleness threatening to redouble again and again in Derridean fashion and so threaten any singleness of identity or individuality. Individual mobilities, indeed, are always shadowed by the disappearance of individuals into crowds. Next, we move in time and space from England in 1910 Egypt during and after the First World War, and from the novel to the essay form.

### ***Pharos and Pharillon: The Ramleh Tramway Equals Modernity***

Forster wrote of Alexandria for the Hogarth Press in 1923 via a binary: *Pharos and Pharillon*. The former was "the vast and heroic lighthouse" of Alexandria in antiquity, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. *Pharillon*, not famous before Forster, was a name, he claimed in the introduction to his book, derived from "an obscure [...] low rock" which "then slid into the Mediterranean." If *Pharos* stood for antiquity, *Pharillon* was a label he applied "to modern events and to personal impressions" (Forster 1923, 10). Here, then, is the pairing of antiquity and modernity which appears again and again in Forster's writing. The relationship between the two, as elsewhere in Forster, is that of a complex dialectic rather than a binary in which one excludes the other. *Pharos and Pharillon*, for all its concern with twentieth-century notions of modernity, is a book in a nineteenth-century English prose tradition which combines the literary essay-cum-memoir of Charles Lamb or Thomas De Quincey

with the Dickensian journalistic sketch. Yet there are breaths of the kind of internal, reflective perspective, as opposed to descriptions of externals, which Virginia Woolf, denigrating their predecessors, found Forster praiseworthy for in her essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," for instance in the sketch "Between the Sun and the Moon" (Forster 1923, 82–85). And there is the Wordsworthian nature writing of "The Solitary Place" (Forster 1923, 86–90).

As indicated by *Pharos and Pharillon*, Forsterian mobilities are complex acts of boundary crossing but tend to involve binaries: ancient and modern; masculine and feminine; urban and rural; upper class and lower class. In this, they contrast with other patterns of literary mobility representations. For instance, a major tradition of London writing during the twentieth century is of multi-polar urban movement by bodies/subjects whose paths overlap. Woolf, Samuel Selvon and Michael Moorcock are examples of twentieth-century London writers in this tradition, all of them displaying a special interest in PT experiences.

*Pharos and Pharillon* is a storyteller's juxtaposition of the ancient (or pre-modern) city and the modern. As in numerous accounts, literary and sociological, modernity begins in the later eighteenth century here, but there is a glance forward to what seems its consummation or ultimate symbol:

Since the boat that had brought them was owned by a Christian, they were forbidden to enter the Western Harbour, and had to disembark not far from the place where, in more enlightened days, the Ramleh Tramway was to terminate. All was barbarism then, save for two great obelisks, one prone, one erect "Cleopatra's Needles," not yet transferred to New York and London respectively. (Forster 1923, 59)

Here, the tramway stands for "the comforts of the modern" that were absent as were "[t]he glories of the antique" when the English traveller Eliza Fay (whose writings Forster afterwards edited) arrived in Alexandria en route for India in 1779. It is not alone in thus standing for modernity, since Forster also points out "the hotels, the clubs, the drainage system, the exquisite Municipal buildings" as exemplifications of the twentieth century there. His view of the city is as somewhat exotic, but as a European periphery or in-between site connecting East and West, rather than as fully orientalist.

## Conclusion

Forsterian mobilities include the specific mobilities of industrial modernity but extend beyond that to what for humans are bodily universals – like walking. Forster’s interest in contemporary mobilities is a vital part of the idea he called “Pharillon” when discussing Alexandria, one combining “modern events and [...] personal impressions.” The latter, for him, existed in imaginative dialogue with old-established sorts of mobility, as exemplified by a *Commonplace Book* entry (see Finch 2011, 219):

I used to think a grass grown lane more real than a high road, but it is an economic anachronism, kept up by people [...] who have spare cash. Something in me still responds to it, and without indulging in that response I should be shallow, wretched, yet oh that I could hitch my wagon on to something less foolish. (Forster 1985, 36–37)

The mobilities here operate on paths connecting country houses along which their owners can walk to meet each other without entering the outside world of the “high road.” Forster’s response blends nostalgia with a satisfaction in the mundane details of the present and even the sweeping away of “anachronism.”

The liberation potential of PT mobilities is a recurrent topic in Forster’s writings, both fictional and non-fictional. It lurks in the encounters between the fictional Rickie and Mrs Aberdeen, and that between the non-fictional Forster and the ganger’s wife and her child who entered the train at March. It is more overtly present in the London-bound train in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* which enables Philip Herriton and Caroline Abbott to speak freely (Forster 1976, 73–78; Finch 2011, 250). And it is present on the real-life London bus where, as a passenger in March 1905, Forster witnessed the encounter between a bus-conductor and a “red-moustached loafer.” For the young writer this meeting exemplified the decency of working-class Englishmen (Forster [1903–09], 133; Finch 2011, 249–50). Existing research into literary mobilities has indicated how writers (such as Anna Sewell in her young adult novel *Black Beauty*) work through the “accuracy” of their transport representations towards “empathy” with humans’ and animals’ experience of urban modernity (Gavin 2015, 102, 114). Valuable as such approaches are, Forsterian mobilities can be grasped as something more than a key to the affective dimensions of a particular environment, rather as social acts including transgressive moves across class lines and across the lines

separating countries and cultures. In other words, studying Forsterian mobilities means refocusing Forster studies around social class, but doing so with particular attention to the construction and porosity of boundary lines.

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